Disrupting Supervisor Incivility: The Role of Compassion in Navigating Subordinates' Responses

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original and have conformed to the regulations on the use and declaration of Generative AI, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work. I hereby certify that no Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) tools have been used in the creation of the thesis.

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Affect (or emotion)	The feeling or emotion targets experience (e.g., in relation to the supervisor and supervisor incivility) (APA Dictionary of Psychology, nd).
Behavioural responses	Actions performed by targets in response to supervisor incivility. The action may be overt (e.g., telling the supervisor the behaviour is perceived as uncivil) or covert (e.g., ignoring supervisor incivility) (e.g., Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024).
Cognition	The mental process of thinking (see also 'incivility frames') (APA Dictionary of Psychology, nd).
Common humanity	Recognising that failure and suffering is a part of the shared human experience. Believing that everyone deserves humane treatment regardless of personal failures. Common humanity is the second of the three facets of self-compassion (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021).
Fierce self-compassion	The protective side of self-compassion. Saying "*no*" to others' aggressive and harmful behaviour – communicating one's boundaries firmly but kindly. A behavioural expression of kindness, which is the first of the three facets of self-compassion (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021).
Incivility frames	The interpretation and meaning that targets ascribe to supervisor incivility.
Isolation	Isolating an individual – oneself or another – psychologically by seeing personal failure and suffering as unique to that individual. Isolation is more extreme than judgement, and the opposite of common humanity (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021).
Judgement	Criticising an individual for their failures and personal suffering. Judgement can be self- or other- directed (e.g., the target sees themselves as deserving of supervisor incivility, or they criticise the supervisor for supervisor incivility). Judgement is the opposite of kindness (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021).
Kindness	Being understanding when confronted with individuals' failures and personal suffering. Identifying and meeting one's needs for physical and psychological wellbeing. Kindness can be self- or other- directed and includes balancing the fulfilment of one's needs with the fulfilment of the needs of others. Kindness is the first of the three facets of self-compassion (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021).
Mindfulness	Turning one's attention to one's negative cognitions and emotions with acceptance. Mindfulness prevents individuals from being overwhelmed by negative reactivity and acting on intense emotions, like anger. Mindfulness is the third of the three facets of self-compassion (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021).
Non-reciprocal responses	The target does not behave in the same way in response to supervisor incivility. Supervisor incivility is not returned in kind (e.g., Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024).
Overidentification	Becoming absorbed in one's negative cognitions and emotions so that one is overwhelmed by negative reactivity. Overidentification prevents oneself from seeing one's negative cognitions and emotions

	objectively. Overidentification increases the likelihood that one will act on intense emotions, like anger. Overidentification is the opposite of mindfulness (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021).
Psychological conditions (or psychological mechanisms)	Mental processes that influence targets' behavioural responses to supervisor incivility, including targets' focus of attention, cognitions, and affects.
Reciprocal responses (or reciprocation)	Supervisor incivility is returned in kind. The target behaves in a similar way to the uncivil supervisor (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).
Supervisor incivility	Supervisors' low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent that violates workplace norms for mutual respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).
Workplace incivility	Low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent that violates workplace norms for mutual respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). 'Workplace incivility' refers to in-person incivility. When incivility occurs in virtual environments (e.g., email), it is referred to as 'cyber incivility' (see Lim & Teo, 2009).

Disrupting Supervisor Incivility: The Role of Compassion in Navigating Subordinates' Responses (Sarah Jane Kennedy)

Abstract

Rude and discourteous behaviour called 'incivility' is prevalent and increasing in organisations. The literature on incivility has focused primarily on its harmful effects and maintenance. Research has shown that incivility is costly to targets' wellbeing, and its harmful effects can spread among employees via self-reinforcing cycles. While this work has been critical in establishing the significance of incivility, it is insufficient for establishing how to disrupt these self-reinforcing cycles. Recently, scholars' attention has turned to describing non-reciprocal responses, which are purported to occur when the instigator is afforded more power than the target (e.g., supervisor incivility). The purpose of my study is to explore subordinates' non-reciprocal responses to supervisor incivility and, in particular, the positive psychological conditions within which they occur. I adopted a qualitative approach and interviewed 43 people regarding their experiences of supervisor incivility before conducting reflexive thematic analysis of the data. Using self-compassion theory to assist analysis, I found that a minority of interviewees maintained cycles of incivility via reciprocation, while most disrupted incivility via responses called 'unmitigated affiliation', 'retreat', and 'setting boundaries'. I differentiate these subordinate responses to incivility and argue that they are influenced by the direction of compassion towards self vs. supervisor. This study provides empirical evidence on the conditions under which non-reciprocal responses incivility emerge, offering a foundation for future theoretical development on the role of positive psychological processes in the interruption of incivility. My analysis regarding unmitigated affiliation brings to attention a non-reciprocal response that undermines personal wellbeing, thus, indicating a novel and important site for intervention. My analysis regarding boundary setting introduces a non-reciprocal response that supports personal wellbeing, thus, indicating a novel and potentially important response to encourage among targets.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Chapter Outline

Workplace incivility, in particular supervisor incivility, has pervasive negative effects and its disruption will be the focus of this thesis. This introduction chapter lays the groundwork for the overall thesis by presenting the major issues within the extant literature on targets' behavioural responses to supervisor incivility. I show that there is a dearth of knowledge regarding the disruption of workplace incivility via non-reciprocal responses. I present the overall research objectives and questions which are concerned with subordinates' behavioural responses to supervisor incivility, in particular, non-reciprocal responses. Furthermore, I introduce the theoretical and practical contributions of the study, which include identification of subordinates' behavioural responses to supervisor incivility, and, in particular, the positive psychological conditions under which certain non-reciprocal responses emerge. Finally, this chapter concludes with the structure of the overall thesis.

1.2 Major Issues in the Extant Literature

Rude and discourteous behaviour, which is a subtle form of mistreatment called "*incivility*" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), is prevalent and increasing in organisations (Akella & Lewis, 2019). Incivility can be brought about by supervisors, coworkers, and customers alike (Namin et al., 2021). Workplace incivility is a costly problem. Incidents of incivility can accumulate over time to harm employee wellbeing (Holm et al., 2021). Furthermore, workplace incivility can have far reaching effects beyond the instigator and target, for example, on bystanders (Holm et al., 2015) and in the family domain (Marchiondo et al., 2020). The large costs that incivility creates for employees can translate into substantial financial costs for organisations (Porath & Pearson, 2013). Hundreds of articles have been devoted to the factors associated with workplace incivility (i.e., antecedents, outcomes,

mediators, and moderators) (Han et al., 2022). Despite this attention, scholarship on incivility faces fundamental challenges that must be addressed.

The literature on workplace incivility has focused primarily on its harmful consequences and maintenance. Experiencing incivility has been linked to negative psychological and affective consequences, including increased stress and diminished wellbeing (Hershcovis et al., 2017; Miner et al., 2012). Additionally, many studies have shown that experiencing incivility may lead to burnout (e.g., Sliter & Boyd, 2015) and turnover intentions (e.g., Holm et al., 2015). Further, research suggests that the negative affective consequences of experiencing incivility, such as burnout, undermines employees' job performance (e.g., Rahim & Cosby, 2016). Alongside the focus on the harmful consequences of incivility, the literature has primarily focused on its maintenance. The focus on the maintenance of incivility means that the literature on targets' behavioural responses has primarily emphasised reciprocation, and the continued deterioration of workplace relationships (e.g., Hershcovis et al., 2018; Holm et al., 2015; Rosen et al., 2016; Torkelson et al., 2016). Studies show that employees reciprocate incivility directly and to innocent bystanders, and its harmful effects can spread via self-reinforcing cycles (e.g., Greco et al., 2019; Park & Martinez, 2022). Furthermore, the research suggests that targets' negative affect, lack of equanimity (or level headedness) and willpower underlie self-reinforcing cycles of incivility (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Hughes et al., 2023; Su et al., 2022, p. 22). Altogether, these studies highlight a concerning trend of pervasive negative effects and negative cognitive-affective reactions among targets that reinforce rather than disrupt workplace incivility. Existing research has yet to provide a comprehensive explanation of instances where incivility does not develop into something more prolonged and serious (Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024). As a result, little is known about how targets disrupt self-reinforcing cycles of incivility and mitigate harmful effects (Zhong et al., 2023).

1.3 Research Objectives

Recently, scholars' attention has turned to theorising non-reciprocal responses to incivility (see Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024). Cortina et al. (2022) suggested two non-reciprocal responses to instigators of workplace incivility – (i) retreat and (ii) affiliation – and Jorgensen et al. (2024) extended their work suggesting a third – the (iii) freeze response. These non-reciprocal responses to incivility are purported to be more likely when the instigator is afforded more power than the target (Cortina et al., 2022). Although this power differential is inherent in supervisor-subordinate relationships, surprisingly few studies have investigated behavioural responses to supervisor incivility specifically, nor in any great depth (Jorgensen et al., 2024). In particular, the behavioural responses that interrupt self-reinforcing cycles of supervisor incivility and lessen its harmful effects are under-explored. This is a significant issue as the extant literature suggests that supervisor incivility may be more harmful than incivility from other sources (e.g., Hussain et al., 2023), and supervisor incivility has unique negative effects that incivility from other sources does not create (e.g., Mavrommatidou et al., 2023). Beyond its significance to subordinates, understanding how to disrupt supervisor incivility, and lessen its harmful effects, is particularly important to organisations. Research indicates that the subordinate-supervisor relationship influences organisational improvement and the stability of the organisation's membership. Specifically, it has been found that employees work harder for supervisors with whom they have high quality relationships (Martin et al., 2016). Furthermore, research suggests that "*people don't quit jobs; they quit bosses*" (Gallup, n.d. in Scandura & Meuser, 2022, p. 310). In a poll of over one million workers, 75% of respondents who had voluntarily quit a job did so because of a poor relationship with a boss (Gallup, n.d.). Hence, the foundational research question that motivated this study is:

RQ1. How do subordinates respond to supervisor incivility?

Furthermore, this study is concerned with exploring positive psychological conditions that may contribute to subordinates' non-reciprocal responses to supervisor incivility. This objective emerged through my analysis of my data (see Section 1.4) and, further, relates to a key issue in the extant literature. Recent theorising has focused on the negative psychological and social conditions that contribute to targets' non-reciprocal responses to workplace incivility. For example, Cortina et al. (2022) propose that when targets appraise incivility as a threat to their social status, they are likely to retreat. Further, Jorgensen et al. (2024) propose that when targets blame themselves, they are likely to freeze in response to incivility. Furthermore, this research emphasises the potential negative consequences of these 'retreat' and 'freeze' responses, specifically, the harmful effect on targets' health and wellbeing. This research been critical in highlighting the significance of targets' non-reciprocal responses to workplace incivility, in particular, understanding the amplification of harm to targets' health and wellbeing. However, this research overlooks the possibility of behavioural responses that disrupt workplace incivility and mitigate harm to targets' health and wellbeing. Moreover, the workplace incivility literature overlooks positive psychological conditions, like self- kindness and compassion, and focuses on negative psychological constructs, like self-blame (see Jorgensen et al., 2024), that may contribute to targets' non-reciprocal responses. Knowledge of these positive psychological conditions will be critical in allowing us to shed light on how individuals may protect their personal wellbeing if they experience supervisor incivility. Although targets are not responsible for the experience of workplace incivility, or its negative consequences, it is important to understand the ways in which targets may protect personal wellbeing if they encounter workplace incivility (see Zhong et al., 2023).

1.4 Research Approach

As knowledge of non-reciprocal responses to incivility, especially supervisor incivility, is nascent, I adopted a qualitative approach. I interviewed 43 people who had experienced supervisor incivility and conducted reflexive thematic analysis of the data (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2022). Early analysis of the data indicated a novel and interesting positive psychological condition – self- vs. supervisor- compassion – that I inferred shaped my participants' responses to supervisor incivility. For example, Jade said, "*it was easier to have compassion for her than to stay really angry . . . and I understood that this was her and just my response had to be about me and that's most important to me*"). Hence, my participants' accounts prompted the inclusion of one further research question: RQ2. How does self- vs. supervisor- compassion shape subordinates' responses to supervisor incivility? Accordingly, I drew from compassion theory (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021) to assist analysis of the behavioural responses related to self- vs. supervisor- compassion. This abductive research approach (see Grodal et al., 2021; Sætre & Van de Ven, 2021) helped me to clearly delineate my participants' (i) behavioural responses to supervisor incivility and the (ii) elements of compassion that I suggest, based on my analysis, contributed to these responses.

As noted previously, prior research has focused on targets' negative affect, and lack of equanimity (or level headedness) and willpower, which have been found to maintain self-reinforcing cycles of incivility (e.g., Su et al., 2022, p. 22). Self-compassion theory (Neff 2003a, 2003b, 2021) offered a new way of understanding targets' cognitive and affective reactions and behavioural responses to supervisor incivility. Self-compassion theory (Neff 2003a, 2003b, 2021) directed my attention to my participants' capacity for kindness (vs. judgement), common humanity (vs. isolation), and mindfulness (vs. overidentification). By iterating between my data and self-compassion theory, I learned of three responses that

disrupt self-reinforcing cycles of incivility and psychological conditions in which they emerged.

1.5 Summary of the Key Findings

I found that although a small number of my interviewees maintained cycles of incivility via reciprocation, most disrupted supervisor incivility via responses which I call 'unmitigated affiliation', 'retreat', and 'setting boundaries'. Further, I show that my participants' response patterns were complex, involving a range of behavioural responses to persistent supervisor incivility. Through my analysis, I differentiate these subordinate responses to incivility and argue that they are influenced by the direction of compassion: self- vs. supervisor-. Moreover, I show that boundary setting, which emerged when self- and supervisor- compassion were in balance, was experienced by my participants as being the most beneficial behavioural response. These interviewees said that setting boundaries on supervisor incivility was beneficial to personal wellbeing, even if the boundary did not inhibit supervisor incivility. However, for my participants, the other responses detrimentally influenced personal wellbeing (for an exception, see the temporary avoidance response to supervisor incivility that I called 'retreat I'). Additionally, I found interindividual and intra-individual variation in relation to my interviewees' evaluations of supervisor incivility. Prior research has identified interindividual variation in peoples' evaluations of workplace incivility, for example, Marchiondo et al. (2018) examined targets' threat versus challenge appraisals. What is notable in this study is that some of my interviewees switched between a compassionate and uncompassionate mindset when evaluating supervisor incivility, at least in the interview setting. As a result, these participants made contradictory appraisals of the supervisor and supervisor incivility.

1.6 Theoretical Contributions

The findings support me in offering five contributions to theory. Four extend recent theory regarding the disruption of self-reinforcing cycles of workplace incivility and mitigating harmful effects (e.g., Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024). My fifth theoretical contribution develops the extant literature on self-compassion in the workplace and personal interpersonal relationships.

1.6.1 Compassion as an Incivility Disruptor

First, I offer new insights regarding the disruption of self-reinforcing cycles of incivility via non-reciprocal responses. The data I offer challenges prior research on targets' responses to workplace incivility. To date, the literature on responses to workplace incivility has primarily focused on reciprocation (e.g., Gallus et al., 2014; Francis et al., 2015; Foulk et al., 2016; Hershcovis et al., 2018; Holm et al., 2015; Rosen et al., 2016; Torkelson et al., 2016), and the negative psychological conditions that underlie self-reinforcing cycles of incivility (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Hughes et al., 2023; Su et al., 2022). Specifically, prior research has focused on targets' negative affect, and lack of equanimity (or level headedness) and willpower, which have been found to maintain self-reinforcing cycles of incivility (e.g., Su et al., 2022, p. 22). Based on studies that show compassion inhibits people's aggressive tendencies (e.g., Miyagawa & Taniguchi, 2022), and that it is associated with relationship health and functioning (e.g., Huynh et al., 2022), along with my interview data, I integrated compassion theory to understand targets' responses to supervisor incivility, especially their non-reciprocal responses. In doing so, I extend the work of Cortina et al. (2022) by introducing a new cognitive-affective condition, self- vs. supervisor- compassion, shedding light on the positive psychological conditions under which targets' non-reciprocal responses emerge.

1.6.2 Identifying New Responses to Incivility

My second contribution is introducing two new constructs to the workplace incivility literature, which I call 'unmitigated affiliation' and 'setting boundaries'. The participants in my research shared examples of unmitigated affiliation that involved focusing on the needs of the instigator to the exclusion of one's own. My analysis regarding unmitigated affiliation brings to scholarly attention a non-reciprocal response that undermines targets' personal wellbeing. Specifically, my participants related unmitigated affiliation to the onset of compassion fatigue (see Figley, 2002) which is a type of job burnout (see Maslach et al., 2001). Prior research has associated workplace incivility with symptoms of burnout (e.g., Hur et al., 2015; Jiang et al., 2017), and researchers have questioned why seemingly minor incivilities can cause such significant damage to targets' personal wellbeing (e.g., Mathews & Ritter, 2019). My analysis regarding unmitigated affiliation offers a new factor that helps to explain the relationship between experienced incivility and burnout. Unmitigated affiliation involves significant self-sacrifice, which appears to amplify the resource consuming effect (see Garrosa et al., 2022) of experiencing incivility. Burnout is a condition characterised by critically low personal resources (see Demerouti et al., 2001). Hence, I suggest that targets who responded to incivility with unmitigated affiliation were more likely to experience burnout than others.

Furthermore, my participants spoke about a novel non-reciprocal response to supervisor incivility which I call 'setting boundaries'. A significant proportion of my interviewees set boundaries in response to supervisor incivility. Setting boundaries refers to confronting incivility directly yet treating the instigator sensitively. Like reciprocation – a behavioural approach response (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2022) – setting boundaries is also a behavioural approach response to incivility. However, unlike reciprocation (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2022), my interpretation of my

data is that setting boundaries is underpinned by a positive cognitive-affective state – self – and supervisor- compassion – and is beneficial to target's personal wellbeing.

1.6.3 Intraindividual Variation in Targets' Behavioural Responses

I found that my participants' response patterns were complex, involving a range of behavioural responses to persistent supervisor incivility. Specifically, I found that a significant number of my participants alternated between 'retreat I' and two or more of the other behavioural responses identified in this study (i.e., reciprocation, retreat II, unmitigated affiliation, and setting boundaries). This is a significant finding as within the workplace incivility literature targets' behavioural responses are generally treated as if they are static, involving only one behavioural response (for one exception see Irwin et al., 2024). Recently, researchers have proposed that targets' behavioural responses to persistent workplace incivility are likely to involve more than one response category (see Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024). My findings support these proposals and provide a starting point for further exploration of these complex behavioural response patterns.

1.6.4 Compassion Mindsets and Incivility

Furthermore, I offer new insights regarding targets' evaluations of supervisor incivility. Through my analysis, I found that some of my participants switched between a compassionate and uncompassionate mindset when evaluating supervisor incivility, at least in the interview setting. As a result, these interviewees expressed contradictory appraisals of the supervisor and supervisor incivility. Prior research has generally focused on targets' negative ways of thinking about, and making sense of, workplace incivility. For example, the attribution of blame to oneself or the instigator (e.g., Zhan et al., 2024). I build upon this research by highlighting that, while some individuals evaluate supervisor incivility negatively, at times others evaluate supervisor incivility benignly (i.e., compassionately), at least in the interview setting.

1.6.5 Self - vs. Other-Directed- Compassion in Interpersonal Workplace Relationships

Lastly, I contribute to the compassion literature in organisational studies and studies of personal relationships. Prior theory has identified "*noticing*" and "*feeling*" one's suffering as significant to behaving self-compassionately in the workplace (see Dodson & Heng, 2022, p. 184). I extend this work substantially by (i) exploring the relationship between self- and supervisor-directed compassion and (ii) showing a relationship between specific facets of compassion (e.g., 'low kindness and low mindfulness', self- and supervisor-) and specific interpersonal behaviours (e.g., retreat II). Notably, I infer from my data that when self-and supervisor- compassion are in balance, (i.e., 'high kindness and high mindfulness', self- and supervisor-), subordinates oppose supervisor incivility by setting boundaries. Similarly, studies of compassion in personal relationships rarely include its expression in more than one direction. Prior research has focused primarily on self-compassion but does not consider the effect of also giving, or denying, compassion to another (e.g., Lathren et al., 2021). My findings suggest including self- and other-directed compassion in future studies, to develop a thorough understanding of how compassion influences interpersonal behaviour in close personal relationships.

1.7 Thesis Overview

This thesis is organised into five chapters including Chapter One the introduction; Chapter Two the literature review; Chapter Three the methodology and methods; Chapter Four the findings; and Chapter Five the discussion and conclusion. This introduction has highlighted what is known about targets' responses to incivility and identified a gap in our knowledge of non-reciprocal responses to supervisor incivility, in particular, the positive

psychological conditions in which these responses emerge. It also includes a statement of the research objectives and questions, as well as the contributions this research makes to the literatures on workplace incivility and self-compassion in interpersonal relationships. Chapter Two will provide an overview of the literature on workplace incivility including harmful effects. In particular, Chapter Two highlights that knowledge of non-reciprocal responses, especially non-reciprocal responses to supervisor incivility, is nascent. Following this, I argue that self-compassion may be particularly useful to extend theory of non-reciprocal responses as self-compassion inhibits aggression and supports interpersonal relationship health and functioning. Additionally, I highlight studies suggest that compassion for the instigator (also called 'other-directed compassion') may inhibit the reciprocation of incivility providing an opportunity for non-reciprocal responses, like affiliation (see Cortina et al., 2022), to occur instead.

Chapter Three will outline the methodology and methods underpinning this research, including the interpretivist philosophy and qualitative research design. Within this, data collection methods, specifically, the qualitative interview; participant characteristics; and the ethical principles guiding the study are discussed. Chapter Four presents the findings which centre around two themes. First, 'self- vs. supervisor-compassion based responses' and, second, 'compassionate and uncompassionate incivility frames'. Before addressing my research questions, Chapter Four provides an analysis of the specific behaviours my interviewees encountered and categorised as 'supervisor incivility'. Further, I explore, first, gendered differences in terms of incivility type and targets' behavioural responses to incivility. Second, power differences in terms of targets' behavioural responses to incivility, according to whether the participant held a position of formal power, or not, in their respective organisation. Third, I explore differences in terms of targets' behavioural responses to incivility, when the supervisor incivility was targeted versus generalised.

Chapter Five follows with a discussion of the empirical findings. Also discussed are the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research. Chapter Five ends with the conclusions drawn from this study, which emphasise the role of compassion (self- versus supervisor-) in preventing supervisor incivility from developing into something more prolonged and serious (e.g., employee exit).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Outline

This literature review is divided into three parts. In part one, I outline the distinctions between workplace incivility, abusive supervision, and bullying. In doing so, I emphasise why workplace incivility serves as the focal point of this research, paying particular attention paid to its costly consequences for individuals and organisations. Additionally, I distinguish in-person from cyber incivility, highlighting why in-person workplace incivility is the primary concern of this study. Furthermore, I discuss the relational nature of workplace incivility, emphasising the significance of supervisor incivility to the target and beyond. In doing so, I emphasise why supervisor incivility serves as the focal point of this research. Finally, I critique the literature on bystanders' responses to incivility. I argue that the interruption of incivility generally relies on the target and, thus, that the target's behavioural response demands special and focused attention.

In the workplace incivility literature, there are three major theories concerning targets' behavioural responses (i.e., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024). In the second part of this literature review, I critically evaluate the three major theories concerning targets' behavioural responses to the instigators of incivility (i.e., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024). In doing so, I identify complementariness and differences and gaps in knowledge of targets' behavioural responses to workplace incivility. I demonstrate how recent theories (i.e., Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024) extended significantly Andersson and Pearson's (1999) notion of 'departure'. Andersson and Pearson (1999) use departure to refer to non-reciprocal, or non-retaliatory, responses to workplace incivility. Specifically, Cortina et al. (2022) suggest two non-retaliatory responses to workplace incivility – retreat and affiliation – and Jorgensen et al. (2024) suggest a third – freeze. Despite these important developments, I reveal that there are significant gaps in our knowledge regarding targets' behavioural responses to workplace

incivility. For example, concerning the conditions that contribute to one non-retaliatory response over another, and the various forms that each non-retaliatory response may take. Moreover, I highlight several ways in which qualitative analysis may assist in expanding knowledge of targets' behavioural responses, in particular non-retaliatory responses. This critical analysis provides the foundation for the first of my two research questions, which is presented at the conclusion of part two of this literature review.

In part three, I present compassion theory (self- vs. other-directed) as a useful lens through which to advance the literature on targets' responses to incivility, in particular non-reciprocal responses. I highlight that self-compassion is associated with healthy personal relationships and overcoming difficult and challenging circumstances in personal relationships. In particular, I draw from studies of self-compassion and hostility to suggest that self-compassion may generate the opposing psychological conditions to those that produce an incivility spiral. My review of the literature suggests that compassion (self- and other-directed) may be important in understanding the consequences of incivility, however, we don't yet know how compassion (self- and other-directed) influences targets' behavioural responses to incivility. Hence, my second research question is concerned with the role of compassion in subordinates' responses to supervisor incivility, which is stated at the end of this literature review chapter.

2.1.1 Differentiating Workplace Incivility from Similar Constructs

The workplace mistreatment literature includes a proliferation of overlapping constructs such as workplace incivility, abusive supervision, and bullying (Hershcovis, 2011). While these concepts share similarities, it is crucial to clarify their distinctions to ensure theoretical precision in this study. In this section, I outline the distinctions between workplace

incivility, abusive supervision, and bullying. These are summarised in Table 1 and include: (i) key features, (ii) prevalence, (iii) intent, (iv) severity and frequency, (v) consequences, (vi) power imbalance, and (vii) organisational policy. In this section, I critically evaluate these three constructs, emphasising why workplace incivility serves as the focal point of this research.

Table 1

Similarities and Differences: Incivility, Abusive Supervision and Bullying

	Definition	Key Features	Prevalent?	Intent required?	Severity & Frequency?	Consequences	Power Imbalance?	Addressed in policy?
Incivility	Low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent that violates workplace norms for mutual respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).	Verbal and nonverbal. Passive rather than active. Indirect rather than direct. Subtle rather than overt rudeness and disrespect.	Yes, pervasive.	No explicit intent required.	Mild to moderate, can be episodic or persistent.	Cumulative risks for targets and the entire system. May escalate to abuse and bullying.	Possible (e.g., supervisor incivility) but not required.	Generally, no.
Abusive supervision	Subordinates' perception of sustained hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours from their supervisor (Tepper, 2000).	Verbal and nonverbal. Active rather than passive. Direct rather than indirect. Overt rather than covert hostility.	No, a low base rate phenomenon.	Often intentional.	Moderate to severe and persistent overtime.	Significant risks for subordinates and the subordinate-supervisor relationship. 'Positive' effect on subordinates' job performance.	Yes, always supervisor → subordinate.	Yes.
Bullying	Repeated negative acts that create a power imbalance and cause severe	Persistent harassment, exclusion, or aggression that	Generally considered a low base rate phenomenon. Certain at-risk	Intent is usually present.	Severe and persistent over a long period.	Severe risks for targets such as posttraumatic stress,	Always involves a power imbalance.	Yes.

	harm (Einarsen et al., 2011).	is associated with trauma.	groups and sectors have been identified.		suicidal ideation, and disability.

2.1.2 Workplace Incivility

Andersson and Pearson's (1999) article, "*Tit for Tat? The Spiraling Effect of Incivility in the Workplace*", introduced the concept of workplace incivility. Incivility has become one of the most studied constructs in the workplace mistreatment literature (Han et al., 2022; Hershcovis, 2011). However, Andersson and Pearson's (1999) remains "*the most influential theoretical article*" on workplace incivility published to date (Miner et al., 2018, p. 321; Woolum et al., 2024). Andersson and Pearson (1999, p. 457) defined workplace incivility as "*low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others.*". An example of workplace incivility is speaking to a fellow co-worker in a condescending tone (Cortina et al., 2001). In the incivility literature, there are two key actors: the 'target' and the 'instigator'. The 'target' refers to the individual who perceives rudeness or disrespect from a relationship partner (Schilpzand et al., 2016). The relationship partner who exhibited rudeness or disrespect is referred to as the 'instigator' of workplace incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Workplace incivility can come from individuals inside (e.g., leaders, supervisors, or co-workers) and outside the organisation (e.g., customers, clients, or patients and their families) (Schilpzand et al., 2016). It is sometimes difficult to differentiate the target from the instigator of workplace incivility, for example, when incivility is reciprocated. Indeed, the tit-for-tat model of incivility shows the target and instigator switching roles, as each reciprocates the incivility of the other (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Workplace incivility demands special and focused attention because of its pervasiveness. Porath and colleagues investigated the prevalence of workplace incivility in the USA in several studies in the 2010s (e.g., Porath & Pearson, 2013, 2010), reporting that 99% of the employees in their studies had witnessed incivility and 96% had been targeted

(see Porath & Pearson, 2010). Recent studies show that workplace incivility continues to be a prevalent problem. In a study of the Swedish retail sector, 493 (62%) participants said workplace incivility is a significant problem. Of these 493 participants, 82% had experienced incivility from co-workers, customers or managers, and 85% had witnessed incivility from at least one of these sources (Hasson & Villaume, 2024). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of incivility in hospitals found that the pooled prevalence of experienced incivility was 25.0% and witnessed incivility was 30.1%. Of the 41 studies that were analysed, 21 were conducted in the USA, five in Canada, three in Israel, and two in Switzerland and Saudi Arabia (Freedman et al., 2025). These differences in the prevalence of incivility may be due to contextual factors, like social and cultural differences. For example, persons from the Middle East are considered more collectivist and give more importance to maintaining interpersonal relationships than Westerners (Chaudhary et al., 2022). Accordingly, Middle Easterners may report less incivility than their Western counterparts, thereby lowering the pooled prevalence found in this meta-analysis of incivility in hospitals.

Andersson and Pearson (1999) argue that incivility is related to more serious forms of workplace aggression like sexual harassment, abusive supervision, and bullying. Like these other negative behaviours, incivility violates workplace norms for treating people with dignity and is likely harmful to the target. Yet they also assert that incivility is set apart from these ‘cousin constructs’ by two differentiating features: a low intensity and an ambiguous intent to harm (see also Hershcovis, 2011).

Andersson and Pearson (1999) categorise incivility as a minor to moderate form of workplace mistreatment due to its low intensity. Though it is unclear exactly what ‘low intensity’ means to Andersson and Pearson (1999), it is used in their article as a synonym for non-physical. Specifically, they emphasise that less intense forms of workplace mistreatment are “*verbal rather than physical, passive rather than active, indirect rather than direct, and*

subtle rather than overt" (p. 453). In this way, workplace incivility is different to sexual harassment, which can include unwanted physical contact and is sex-based (Cortina & Areguin, 2021), and violence, which includes physically aggressive behaviour (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). However, there is a lack of consensus in the incivility literature regarding the definition of 'low intensity'. Some researchers define low intensity in relation to the persistence and frequency of the behaviour and assert that "*bullying can be assumed to be of a higher intensity than incivility because of its persistence and frequency*" (e.g., Herschovis, 2011, p. 503). Nonetheless, most of the research adopts a 'frequentist perspective' and shows that workplace incivility is a persistent environmental factor that gradually undermines individuals (Woolum et al., 2024).

A further reason for focusing on workplace incivility in this study is because it results in cumulative harm. One incident of an eyeroll or an unreturned email is minor. The repeated daily accumulation of these small slights is associated with significant risks for targets (e.g., emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction and increased turnover intentions; Chris et al., 2022). Furthermore, workplace incivility can become a low-grade infection that erodes the entire system. Incivility cascades through the system when targets punish innocent co-workers rather than instigators, a phenomenon called 'direct displacement' (Meier & Gross, 2015; Pearson et al., 2000). Observers of workplace incivility may model the behaviour, creating new targets of incivility (Pearson et al., 2000). Workplace incivility spreads through word-of-mouth, when targets tell co-workers about these incidents (Pearson et al., 2000).

The large costs that incivility creates for employees can translate into financial costs for organisations. It has been estimated that the financial cost of workplace incivility is $14,000 per employee per year (see Porath & Pearson, 2010). Incivility is financially costly to organisations because it is positively associated with absenteeism (e.g., Porath & Pearson,

2012), counterproductive work behaviour (e.g., Henderson & Mathews, 2024), and turnover (e.g., Read & Laschinger, 2013). Also, workplace incivility is negatively associated with task performance (e.g., Chen et al., 2013) and job performance (e.g., Haq et al., 2024). These visible consequences of workplace incivility are manifestations of the less visible consequences for targets. Experiencing workplace incivility has been linked to numerous negative (i) affective, (ii) attitudinal, (iii) physiological consequences (for prior reviews, see Cortina et al., 2017; Han et al., 2022; Schilpzand et al., 2016; Woolum et al., 2024; Yao et al., 2022).

2.1.2.1 Affective Consequences

A large body of evidence suggests that experiencing incivility is associated with negative emotions, like fear, anger, and sadness (e.g., Abubakar et al., 2018; Hershcovis et al., 2017; Miner & Eischeid, 2012; Pearson, 2012; Pearson et al., 2001; Porath & Peters, 2014; Reio, 2011; Torres et al 2017; Zhou et al., 2015). Targets have also reported feeling distressed by workplace incivility (e.g., Abubakar, 2018; Adams & Webster, 2013; Cortina et al., 2001; Lim & Tai, 2014). Research suggests that targets' personal lives can suffer as workplace incivility contributes to end-of-work negative affect (e.g., Zhou et al., 2015). Furthermore, experiencing incivility is associated with a reduction in positive affective states like relaxation (e.g., Foulk et al., 2018) and vitality (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2018); work-related motivation (e.g., Bradley et al., 2015) and work engagement (e.g., Read & Laschinger, 2013); psychological need fulfilment (e.g., Foulk et al., 2018) and thriving (e.g., Gkorezis et al., 2013).

Many studies have shown that experiencing incivility is not only upsetting, but it can also be stressful (e.g., Beattie & Griffin, 2014; Clark & Springer, 2010; DeSouza, 2011; Halpin et al., 2017; Klingberg et al 2018; Miner et al., 2012; Oyeleye et al., 2013; Schilpzand

et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2013). Some research has linked experiencing incivility to symptoms of burnout (e.g., Oyeleye et al., 2013; Sliter & Boyd, 2015; Sulea et al., 2012; Welbourne et al., 2015). Specifically, experiencing workplace incivility can heighten targets' emotional exhaustion (e.g., Hur et al., 2015) and cynicism (e.g., Jiang et al., 2017). Experiencing incivility has even been linked to symptoms of psychological ill-health, such as depression and anxiety (e.g., Carter & Loh, 2017; Wing et al., 2015).

2.1.2.2 Attitudinal Consequences

Experiencing incivility has been found to negatively affect targets' work-related attitudes. Experiencing incivility can result in targets regarding the organisation as unfair (e.g., Griffin, 2010). Experiencing incivility can undermine targets' trust in the organisation (e.g., Miner-Rubino & Reed, 2010), workgroup regard (e.g., Miner-Rubino & Reed, 2010), and the sense of community, or belongingness, present among fellow co-workers (e.g., Gkorezis et al., 2013; Tingle et al., 2014; Welbourne et al., 2016). Targets of incivility are less committed to the organisation (e.g., Karim et al., 2015), and report less satisfaction with their job (e.g., Giumetti et al., 2016) and work life (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2018). Additionally, many studies link experiencing incivility with targets' turnover intentions (e.g., Cortina et al., 2001; Cortina et al., 2013; Porath et al., 2010; Ward-Smith et al., 2018). This is concerning as it has been suggested "*that turnover intention is the immediate antecedent to real turnover behavior*" (Namin, et al., 2021, p. 26). A meta-analysis indicates that the association between experienced incivility and turnover intention is stronger in academia compared to other sectors (e.g., Namin et al., 2021).

Workplace incivility can influence targets' personal lives via the effect of incivility on targets' personal attitudes. Studies have linked experiencing workplace incivility with a reduction in satisfaction with personal wellbeing (e.g., Lim et al., 2008), and one's marriage (e.g., Ferguson, 2012), and home life (e.g., Miner et al., 2012). Experiencing incivility is

associated with work-to-family conflict (e.g., He et al., 2021) and dysfunctional parenting via the effect of incivility on parental attitudes (e.g., Dionisi & Dupré, 2023).

2.1.2.3 Physiological Consequences

In addition to these affective and attitudinal consequences, experiencing workplace incivility can translate into physiological injury. Experiencing incivility is associated with a reduction in physical wellbeing (e.g., Lim & Cortina, 2005; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007; Read & Laschinger, 2013). Targets have reported problems with sleeping (e.g., Demsky et al., 2018) particularly when their partner works in the same organisation (e.g., Fritz et al., 2019), and symptoms of physical ill health like strain (e.g., Hershcovis et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2017). Among nursing faculty staff, experiencing incivility was associated with an increase in headaches and digestive problems (Sherrod & Lewallen, 2021). A frustrated need for social belongingness coupled with the embarrassment associated with experiencing workplace incivility, has been found to explain targets' physiological injury (Hershcovis et al., 2017). Also, research suggests that the energy lost from coping with incivility hinders targets' ability to self-care and, therefore, targets' health suffers as a result (see Garrosa et al., 2022). Research indicates that incivility is difficult to eradicate from the workplace, and one of the reasons for this is its ambiguity (Schwarz et al., 2017).

The second differentiating feature of workplace incivility is that its intent is ambiguous. Andersson and Pearson (1999) highlighted that, first, the instigator of incivility may not be aware that they are treating fellow co-worker(s) uncivilly. For example, in one study, a manager said "*having people wait to start a meeting because the CEO is behind schedule . . . It is disrespectful, even if he doesn't realize it*." (Pearson et al., 2001, p. 1398). Second, the instigator may be aware of their intent to harm the target, but the target may not notice the incivility and malintent. In this instance, the incivility is theorised to have little to no effect on the target (e.g., Cortina, et al., 2022). Third, there may be no incivility, but a

person might suspect, due to hypersensitivity, incivility to have occurred – a proposal that was later supported (e.g., Sliter et al., 2015). Furthermore, because incivility is ambiguous it is difficult to detect, and, therefore, incivility is generally excluded from workplace policy (Woolum et al., 2024).

Moreover, workplace incivility demands special and focused attention as targets are somewhat 'on their own' when deciding how to respond behaviourally. Incivility falls outside of the organisation's official purview as there are no incivility-focused laws – at least not in Ireland and or across the European Union. In one study, people who perceived themselves to be targets of incivility complained that organisations turn a blind eye, which was dubbed the "*wilful blindness*" of incivility by researchers (see Doshy & Wang, 2014, p. 38). Furthermore, research suggests that managers are reluctant to address 'minor wrongdoings' like incivility. This reluctance comes from the stress of such confrontations, and managers' desire to avoid interpersonal conflict themselves if possible (Von Bergen & Bressler, 2023). These findings are particularly concerning as, left unchecked, persistent incivility can lead to more serious forms of workplace mistreatment, like abuse and bullying.

Workplace incivility demands special research attention as it may escalate in severity and lead to abuse and bullying (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Studies of workplace bullying that adopt a process approach provide empirical support for this 'escalation hypothesis'. These studies found that bullying begins with covert negative behaviours that escalate into overt aggression (for a review, see Krishna et al., 2023). A meta-analysis of the reciprocity of negative workplace behaviours – that includes incivility, bullying, abusive supervision, and sexual harassment – also provides support for the escalation hypothesis of incivility (see Greco et al., 2019). Furthermore, Samosh (2019) found that although most of his study respondents defined incivility similarly to Andersson and Pearson (1999), eight percent included bullying in their personal definition. The preceding research suggests that this

smaller cohort of respondents may have experienced the "*tipping point*" at which workplace incivility becomes more like bullying (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 461).

2.1.3 Abusive Supervision

Abusive supervision is the "*sustained display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors, excluding physical contact"* (Tepper, 2000, p. 178). The construct focuses on one particular instigator, the supervisor. Examples of abusive supervision that have been provided by Bennet Tepper (2000, p. 178) who conceived the construct include: "*Your thoughts are nothing; you are nothing ... if you were in my toilet bowl I wouldn't bother flushing it. My bathmat means more to me than you ... you don't like it here, leave!*". Compared to workplace incivility, abusive supervision occurs relatively infrequently or at relatively low levels (for a review, see Fischer et al., 2021). Epidemiological studies suggest that between 10 − 6% of American workers experience abusive supervision regularly (Tepper et al., 2004). Similarly, Schat and colleagues (2006) assert that approximately 13.6% of American workers are affected by abusive supervision.

Tepper et al. (2017) argue that people who are willing to label a supervisor 'abusive' perceive the supervisor to "*meet an unusually strong standard for destructiveness and insensitivity*" (p. 127). From the perspective of the target of abuse, there is no suspicion or confusion regarding the supervisor's intent to harm. In this way, incivility from a supervisor (hereafter called 'supervisor incivility') is set apart from abusive supervision. However, measures of abusive supervision include sample items that overlap with sample items in the Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina et al., 2001) (e.g., 'my supervisor is rude to me') (see Hershcovis, 2011). So, although the definition of workplace incivility excludes abusive behaviour, abusive supervision is operationalised to include incivility. This overlap in sample

items is indicative of the view that supervisor incivility may coincide with, or escalate into, abusive supervision (see Klaussner, 2014).

Abusive supervision is associated with significant risks for subordinates. For example, a meta-analysis has shown that abusive supervision undermines subordinates' job satisfaction, organisational identification and commitment, psychological and physical wellbeing, and justice perceptions (see Zhang & Liao, 2015). This meta-analysis also showed abusive supervision negatively affects subordinates' interactions with supervisors and family members (work-to-family conflict). Nonetheless, some studies have identified so-called 'positive effects', for example, abused employees improve their job performance to prevent future abuse (e.g., Ali et al., 2025). Examination of these so-called 'positive effects' of workplace mistreatment is unusual, and largely unique to the abusive supervision construct. However, it is important to highlight that these studies do not endorse abusive supervision. They shed light on why some supervisors may persist with behaving abusively, and some organisations may overlook the abuse.

2.1.4 Workplace Bullying

Bullying is "*the systematic mistreatment of a subordinate, a colleague or a superior, which, if continued and long-lasting, may cause severe social, psychological, and psychosomatic problems in the target*" (Einarsen et al., 2011, p. 1977). Other terms used to refer this phenomenon are emotional abuse (Keashly et al., 1997), aggression (Baron & Neuman, 1996) and harassment (Báguena et al., 2011), all of which emphasise the intensity of workplace bullying. WorkSafe Victoria (nd) provide case studies that show the intensity of workplace bullying, including one from a man called 'M' (a pseudonym). M's supervisor called him gay, used offensive language towards him, and encouraged other employees to

call him names. Among other abuses, he had a live mouse put down the back of his shirt by a colleague and was spat on.

Workplace bullying is generally considered a low base rate phenomenon, although its prevalence varies across countries and organisational contexts. Ciby and Raya (2015) examined the prevalence of workplace bullying across continents by analysing 30 studies. Based on studies that used the self-labelling method, Ciby and Raya (2015) found that rates of workplace bullying vary between 1−12.4% across continents with two notable exceptions, a British (24.7%) and a Greek (47%) sample. It has been found that smaller organisations have a lower prevalence of workplace bullying compared to larger ones (Lagabrielle et al., 2022). Furthermore, variations in the prevalence of workplace bullying have been attributed to occupational status and work process. Specifically, it was found that unskilled workers reported the highest prevalence of bullying whereas managers and supervisors reported the lowest prevalence (Ortega et al., 2009). Moreover, leadership or management style has been associated with perceptions of workplace bullying. It was found that autocratic leadership was the strongest predictor of claims of observations of bullying at work (Hoel et al., 2010). Although workplace bullying is generally less common than workplace incivility, bullying can be quite common in certain contexts, such as those with the aforementioned features.

Although there is a history of disagreement regarding the definition of workplace bullying, there is consensus that workplace bullying includes three features (Ciby & Raya, 2015). The principal feature is exposure to negative social behaviour in the workplace. The second feature is the frequency and duration of exposure. This was defined as exposure to at least one negative social behaviour experienced weekly over a period of 6 – 12 months (Leymann, 1996), whereas incivility can be a one-off incident (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). The third feature concerns a power disparity between the perpetrator and victim. There must be a real or perceived power disparity between the perpetrator and victim, so that the victim

finds it difficult to stop the bullying (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2003; Salin, 2003). Conversely, Andersson and Pearson (1999) argue that people tend to reciprocate incivility in-kind – a pattern which is sometimes called the 'fight' response to incivility (e.g., Cortina et al., 2022).

Workplace bullying is associated with significant serious risks for targets. Like incivility and abusive supervision, bullying has been associated with reduced job satisfaction, organisational and affective commitment; and increased psychological and physical health problems and turnover intentions (see Hershcovis, 2011; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). The risks associated with workplace bullying exceed those found in lower-level mistreatment like workplace incivility. While both are associated with decrements in health and commitment (Hershcovis, 2011), the defined intensity of bullying introduces uniquely debilitating risks. Research indicates that targets of bullying are specifically vulnerable to post-traumatic stress (Nielsen et al., 2015) and suicidal ideation (Leach et al., 2017), often leading to long-term work exit via disability pensions (Berthelsen et al., 2011).

Because bullying and abuse are "*generally identifiable and uncommon*", most workplaces have policies to stop such behaviour (Woolum et al., 2024, p. 2). As part of the EU Framework for Health and Safety at Work (2007), employers are required to prevent harassment and violence (European Commission, 2007). In Ireland in particular, employers must prevent workplace bullying and abuse by law (see Section 60(1)(a) of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (No. 10 of 2005) (Irish Statute Book, 2005). The Health and Safety Authority and the Workplace Relations Commission provide guidance for employers regarding the preparation of anti-bullying policies. Further, the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre provides related scientific reports concerning, for example, cases of bullying brought to the Workplace Relations Commission (see Mazzone & Kiernan, 2019) and addressing ageism in the workplace (see Salomão Filho et al., 2022). An anti-bullying policy should tell employees

who they can contact for support about a possible bullying case. The policy should advise employees on how to confront the bully, and the steps the organisation will take on the target's behalf if the confrontation is ineffective. The policy should also advise employees on how to seek assistance from the Workplace Relations Commission, if they are unhappy with the organisation's response to a case of bullying.

2.1.5 The Significance of these Differences to Targets of Incivility

I have outlined how workplace incivility, abuse, and bullying are distinct conceptually from one another. Further, I suggest that these distinctions are likely significant experientially to the target. Specifically, the ambiguity of incivility may result in considerable rumination for targets (e.g., Demsky et al., 2019), as they decide whether they have been mistreated or not, and who or what is to blame (e.g., the instigator or an environmental factor). Furthermore, whether the construct is addressed in organisational policy or not affects targets' response choices. Workplace policies concerning bullying and abuse instruct targets how to confront these behaviours and access support. These policies outline the preventative measures that organisations must take to stop these forms of mistreatment, if the target's efforts are ineffective. In Ireland and across the Europe, organisations must provide this assistance to employees by law. However, there is no standardised guidance from organisations about how to interrupt incivility, as exists for bullying and abuse. As a result, targets may adopt a trial-and-error approach to interrupting incivility, and some of behavioural responses may exacerbate the problem (Zhong et al., 2023). Targets may put up with workplace incivility, not knowing how to respond and lacking the necessary guidance and support.

Interim summary. To ensure theoretical precision in this study, I have differentiated workplace incivility from abusive supervision and bullying. The distinctions are summarised in Table 1 and include: (i) key features, (ii) prevalence, (iii) intent, (iv) severity and frequency, (v) consequences, (vi) power imbalance, and (vii) organisational policy. In doing so, I have highlighted why workplace incivility serves as the focal point of this research. I have argued that workplace incivility demands special and focused attention for three reasons. First, the pervasiveness of workplace incivility which generally exceeds abusive supervision and bullying. Second, the potential for cumulative harm that is associated with incivility that can spread throughout the system. Third, the lack of guidance and support available to targets to assist them to constructively confront workplace incivility. In the next section, I differentiate in-person from cyber incivility, emphasising why in-person incivility serves as the focal point of this research.

2.1.6 Differentiating In-person from Cyber Incivility

Workplace incivility can be exhibited in-person or online, when it is called 'cyber incivility'. Cyber incivility is defined as "*communicative behaviour exhibited in computer mediated interactions that violate workplace norms of mutual respect*" (Lim & Teo, 2009, p. 419). Despite the variety of communication tools available online to employees (e.g., Zoom, MS-teams, etc.), cyber incivility in the workplace is predominantly studied from the perspective of work email (see Shahwar & Dhar, 2024). Indeed, in the literature the terms cyber incivility and email incivility are often used interchangeably. In-person and cyber incivility are similar conceptually but distinct experientially. Like in-person incivility (see Section 2.1.2), the primary distinctive feature of cyber incivility is an ambiguous intent to harm. Unlike in-person incivility, many forms of cyber incivility (e.g., email incivility) occur

in a private cyber space (e.g., one's inbox) which out of sight of bystanders who might intervene (Shahwar & Dhar, 2024).

Cyber incivility has received less research attention than in-person workplace incivility (Shahwar & Dhar, 2024). Nevertheless, the extant literature indicates that cyber and in-person incivility lead to similar negative consequences. For example, targets of in-person incivility have reported feeling distressed (e.g., Abubakar, 2018; Adams & Webster, 2013; Cortina et al., 2001; Lim & Tai, 2014), and targets' personal lives can suffer as in-person incivility contributes to end-of-work negative affect (e.g., Zhou et al., 2015). Similarly, morning cyber incivility has been associated with midday negative emotion (see Zhou et al., 2022), and end-of-workday distress and distress the following morning (see Park et al., 2018). Furthermore, the extant literature indicates that cyber and in-person incivility have similar boundary conditions. For example, Taylor and Kluemper (2012) found that people high in neuroticism – a trait associated with experiencing high levels of negative affect – were more likely to act aggressively when exposed to in-person incivility compared to those low in neuroticism. Further, a study has indicated that people high in neuroticism were more likely to experience burnout when exposed to cyber person incivility compared to those low in neuroticism (see Giumetti et al., 2012).

Although the research on cyber incivility is nascent, there is evidence that in-person workplace incivility has stronger negative effects that cyber incivility. Researchers collected data from 231 participants who were surveyed about the work-related consequences of in-person and cyber incivility. They found that in-person and cyber incivility were both significantly correlated to job satisfaction, burnout, and turnover intentions. However, in-person incivility was more strongly correlated with these consequences than cyber incivility (Heischman et al., 2019). This is, perhaps, due to the heightened emotional cues and physical 'presence' involved in such encounters. While both in-person and cyber incivility are distinct

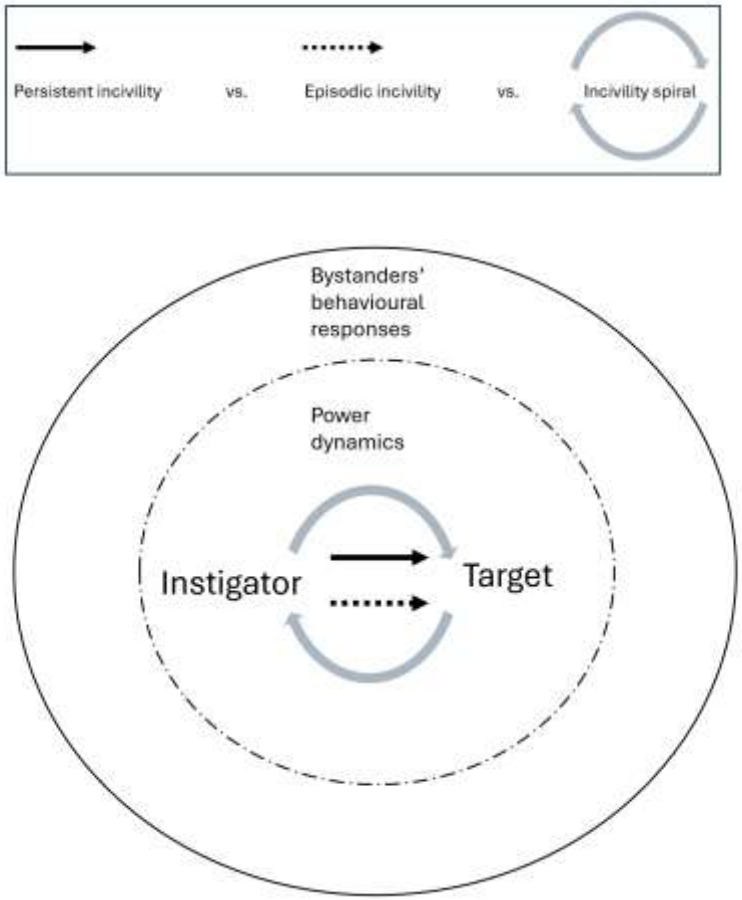
and valuable avenues for research, the intense negative impact of in-person incivility suggests it deserves concentrated attention. While the research design of this study allowed participants to recall experiences of supervisor incivility across any medium (including virtual and asynchronous platforms) (see Section 3.3), this study gives concentrated attention to in-person incivility.

2.1.7 Workplace Incivility: The Instigator, Target and Context

The workplace incivility literature indicates that the instigation of incivility and the targets' behavioural responses are influenced by several factors. In this section, I provide a theoretical framework (see Figure 1) that grounds this study in the literature regarding these factors. In doing so, I integrate two perspectives regarding workplace incivility and targets' behavioural responses: the trait perspective and the relational perspective. The factors discussed in this section include the (i) characteristics of the instigator and target, (ii) power dynamics concerning the target-instigator relationship, and (iii) the social context in which incivility occurs. Regarding the target-instigator relationship, I focus on 'supervisor incivility', emphasising that the incivility supervisors direct toward subordinates demands special and focused attention. Regarding the social context, I focus on the behavioural responses of bystanders to workplace incivility. In doing so, I emphasise that the interruption of workplace incivility generally relies on the target and, thus, the target's response demands special and focused attention.

Figure 1

Relational and Dynamic Model of Workplace Incivility



Inspired by Aquino & Lamertz (2004, p. 1024)

To begin this section, I focus on one of the individuals at the centre of incidents of workplace incivility: the target (see Figure 1). Studies regarding the antecedents of workplace incivility generally focus on the characteristics of targets and adopt the victim-precipitation model. The victim-precipitation model was put forward by criminologist Hans von Hentig and defence attorney Beniamin Mendelsohn (Cortina et al., 2017). At the heart of the model is the idea that people invite victimisation and lead instigators into temptation to do wrong. Overtime, the victim-precipitation model fell out of favour with criminologists. However, the model had a renaissance of sorts in workplace aggression research, including the area of incivility (for a history, see Cortina, 2017). The effect of this renaissance is that much is known about the characteristics of people who perceive themselves to be targets of incivility.

2.1.8 The Victim-Precipitation Model of Incivility

Milam et al. (2009) argue that certain personality traits are associated with behaviours people find more, or less, palatable. They propose that the personality traits associated with 'less palatable' behaviours increase the risk of experiencing workplace incivility, because people form negative impressions of those who possess such traits. For instance, Milam et al. (2009) propose that low agreeableness manifests in uncooperative stubborn behaviour that one's fellow co-workers may find provocative. Similarly, they propose that the nervousness and insecurity associated with high neuroticism may be bothersome to others and, thus, invite punishment. They found that people who are rated by fellow co-workers as neurotic and disagreeable reported experiencing more incivility than those lower in these traits.

Likewise, high negative affectivity has been associated with experiencing workplace incivility. Han et al. (2022) proposed that people high in negative affectivity are inclined to

express negative emotions, such as sadness, frustration, and dissatisfaction, that may be unattractive to others and, thus, invite punishment. Walker et al. (2014) found that incivility from a specific customer led to reciprocation toward that customer, and this occurred as a function of an employee's accumulated perceptions of customer incivility. However, this two-way interaction was only observed among those low in negative affectivity. Service employees high in negative affectivity were more reactive to a specific customer's incivility regardless of their general perceptions of customer incivility. Sliter et al. (2015) also found that people high in trait anger are more likely to perceive the ambiguous behaviours of others as uncivil compared to those low in trait anger. Conversely, meta-analyses have found that the personality traits people generally find attractive protect those who possess such traits from experiencing incivility. Han et al. (2022) found that positive affectivity, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience negatively correlated with experienced incivility. Yao et al. (2022) also found that agreeableness and self-esteem negatively correlated with experienced incivility. Viewed through the lens of the victim-precipitation model, these findings suggest that people who possess 'attractive' personality traits are perceived in a positive light by others. Thus, people with these traits invite less punishment from others.

Stigmatised identities have also been associated with perceiving and experiencing workplace incivility from others. Cortina et al. (2013) found that people of colour, but especially African American women, reported experiencing more incivility than other groups. Though, Smith et al. (2021) found that people who identify as white reported experiencing more incivility than people of colour. Settles and O'Connor (2014) found that women reported experiencing more incivility at conferences than men. However, Lim and Lee (2011) found that women reported experiencing incivility with a lesser frequency than men. Additionally, Lim and Lee (2011) found that age predicted experiences of incivility such that

younger people reported more incivility than older people. Similarly, being a novice in one's field has been linked to experiencing incivility from those who are more experienced (Peters, 2014).

Other personal characteristics, like weight and motherhood status, have been found to explain differences in the perception of workplace incivility. Sliter et al. (2012) found that those who were classified as overweight or obese reported more incivility than those with a lower body mass index. Additionally, Miner et al. (2014) found that mothers of three children reported experiencing more incivility than those with fewer or no children. However, Gloor et al. (2018) found the opposite. Women with no children reported experiencing more incivility from their counterparts (i.e., childless men) than women with children. Gloor et al. (2018) suggest that this occurs because the counterparts of early career women anticipate that these women will take maternity leave sometime in the future. Unsure of when this will happen and in anticipation of this period of 'inconvenience', it was proposed that childless men punish early career women with incivility.

Cortina (2017) highlighted the problems and dangers associated with the victim-precipitation model. Cortina argues that by holding targets responsible for their own mistreatment the instigator's behaviour is justified. Furthermore, focusing on the target as the cause puts the onus on targets to prevent any workplace aggression that may be directed towards them. Cortina (2017) called for researchers to reject the victim-precipitation model and put forward the perpetrator predation paradigm as a more favourable analytic lens. The perpetrator predation paradigm focuses on the other individual at the centre of incidents of workplace incivility: the instigator (see Figure 1).

2.1.9 The Perpetrator Predation Paradigm of Incivility

Prior to the introduction of the perpetrator predation paradigm, there had been some study of the characteristics of the instigators of workplace incivility. Meier and Semmer (2013) found that people high in trait anger and narcissism are at greater risk of instigating incivility. Sliter and Jones (2016) examined the topic from the perspective of the target, asking customer service employees about their perceptions of the personality traits of uncivil customers. Service employees associated disagreeableness and neuroticism with customers' instigation of incivility. Nandedkar (2016) continued this theme regarding the importance of negative affect to the instigation of incivility. He found that people notice when their co-workers have better supervisory relationships than the relationship they possess with their own supervisor. Nandedkar (2016) suggests that such an unfavourable comparison would evoke feelings of inferiority, hostility, and resentment toward those with the desired supervisory relationship. These feelings of envy, in turn, were expected to predict the instigation of incivility. Nandedkar (2016) found support for his hypotheses.

Other studies have shown that perceptions of injustice and the emotional exhaustion that can accompany these perceptions predict the instigation of incivility. Blau and Andersson (2005) found that people who are dissatisfied with their jobs, exhausted, and who have experienced distributive injustice, instigate incivility. Sayers et al. (2011) further included interactional and procedural injustice, and psychological contract violation, in their analysis. They found that all three forms of violation contributed to peoples' instigation of workplace incivility. Additionally, incivility at home was found to 'spill over' such that family members' incivility led to targets' negative workplace behaviour (e.g., Bai et al., 2016; Lim & Tai, 2014). Furthermore, Semmer et al. (2010) found that being overworked because of being assigned illegitimate work tasks contributed to instigated incivility. The idea that emotional exhaustion, psychological distress, and burnout fuel peoples' uncivil

behaviour is supported by several other studies (e.g., Pettita & Jiang, 2019; Roberts et al., 2011; Zivnuska et al., 2020).

Links have also been drawn between peoples' job involvement and the instigation of workplace incivility. People who are obsessed with their job were found to have no time for niceties, particularly when working in organisations that prize mastery and learning (Birkeland et al., 2016). Similarly, other studies indicate that high trait conscientiousness can predispose people to behaving uncivilly (e.g., Sliter & Jones, 2016; Taylor & Pattie, 2014). Setar et al. (2015) also found that high job involvement and job stress was associated with incivility instigation, and Pettita and Jiang (2019) drew links between emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and workplace incivility.

Lata & Chaudhary (2020) examined the link between dark triad personality traits and the instigation of workplace incivility. Dark triad traits include Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism. The dark triad personality is "*deceitful, aggressive, emotionally cold, socially malevolent, and inclined towards self-promotion to varying degrees*" (p. 2). Lata and Chaudhary (2020) found that people high in such traits were predisposed to instigating incivility. Similarly, Min et al. (2019) found that, along with the dark triad, sadism was positively associated with the instigation of incivility. Sadism refers to a tendency toward treating others cruelly for the purposes of feeling power or pleasure. In their study, it was found that sadism was a better predictor of the mistreatment of one's co-workers than the dark triad.

The victim-precipitation model led to investigations of the characteristics of targets that may 'invite' workplace incivility from others. The perpetrator predation paradigm positions instigators as responsible for their own uncivil behaviour and encourages investigation of factors beyond the target that may predict incivility, such as the instigator's

characteristics. The relational perspective offers a different way of viewing workplace incivility. From a relational perspective, the role that an individual fulfils in a particular relationship will influence the likelihood that they will experience incivility from the relationship partner, and their behavioural responses (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004). For example, targets of customer incivility may respond civilly as they enact a service role in these relationships. Further, targets' civil responses to customer incivility are likely to be influenced by the socially defined reality that the 'customer is always right' (Robertson & O'Reilly, 2020). An individual with formal power may be especially ready to be uncivil to a less powerful counterpart, because power makes it easier to be uncivil without consequences (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Pearson & Andersson, 2000). In the next section, I integrate the literature regarding supervisor incivility, highlighting four reasons why supervisor incivility demands special and focused attention.

2.1.10 Power Disparity in the Target-Instigator Relationship: Supervisor Incivility

"*To date, there are surprisingly few studies that investigate how the source of the incivility impacts on employee outcomes.*" (Jorgensen et al., 2024, p. 4). Still, the extant literature suggests that source – particularly in the case of supervisor incivility – matters for four reasons. First, supervisors are at particularly prone to instigating incivility. Second, studies indicate that the negative consequences of supervisor incivility may be worse than incivility from other sources. Third, supervisor incivility has unique effects that incivility from other sources does not create. Fourth, the subordinate-supervisor relationship influences the stability of the organisation's membership and organisational improvement.

2.1.10.1 Supervisors' Predisposition to Instigating Incivility

Supervisors are particularly prone to instigating incivility in the workplace. Research has shown that being in a position of power can encourage people to behave in aggressive ways (e.g., Foulk et al., 2018). Furthermore, a study has shown that peoples' bases of power influence how they yield that power with others. Power can be derived from a person's formal position in an organisation (e.g., leader, supervisor, etc.), or from knowledge and the ability to perform well in a job role, which is called personal power. It was found that positional power was positively associated with instigating incivility, whereas personal power was negatively associated with instigating incivility but positively associated with altruism. These findings led the researchers to conclude that not all sources of power are equal in impact: some build, while other sources of power break, people (Yoon & Farmer, 2018).

People in positions of power are especially prone to acting aggressively when they perceive themselves to be lacking control (Warburton et al., 2006) and in a disadvantaged position compared to others (Fast et al., 2012; Greitemeyer & Sagioglou, 2016). A person with positional power can perceive themselves to be lacking control if they are promoted but lack the experience to perform well in their new job role. Similarly, a person in a position of power can be disadvantaged in relation to social status. Though a supervisor's rank affords them (i) control over valuable resources and enables them to (ii) impose their will on, and (iii) control the outcomes of others, they may have low prestige and be disliked by fellow co-workers (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006). Experimental research indicates that the combination of high power and low status is particularly risky. Fast et al. (2012) found that participants assigned to a 'high-power, low-status' condition chose more demeaning activities for others to be forced to complete. For example, having to act like a dog in front of the research team.

Pearson and Porath (2005, p. 11) also found "*that those with greater power have more ways to be uncivil and get away with it.*". Specifically, they found that lower-level employees

were limited to covert acts of omission when behaving uncivilly. For example, subordinates may overlook, or 'forget' to fulfil, a request from a supervisor. For those with positional power, it was concluded that "*there are more opportunities to be uncivil at will.*" (p. 11). For example, greater power allowed people to delay and disrupt meetings, interrupt fellow co-workers' tasks and conversations, and even to have the odd temper tantrum at work when frustrated. Pearson and Porath (2005) found that those with higher power indulged in these incivilities seemingly without consequence. They also highlighted that because those with power seemed to get away with behaving uncivilly, they could become habitual instigators.

2.1.10.2 Stronger Effects of Supervisor Incivility

Research indicates that the negative consequences of supervisor incivility may be worse than incivility from other sources. Potipiroon and Ford (2019) found associations between supervisor incivility and targets' (i) turnover intentions, (ii) organizational deviance, and (iii) poorer task performance. Shin and Hur (2022) found that the negative impact of incivility on targets' work performance is stronger and more enduring when the instigator is in a position of power. Similarly, Hussain et al. (2023) concluded that supervisor incivility had a stronger adverse effect on organisational commitment than co-worker incivility. Supervisor incivility may even override the influence of environmental factors on targets' work engagement (see Ugwu et al., 2023). Ugwu et al. (2023) examined the associations between incivility (i.e., supervisor and customer), job insecurity, and work engagement, in Nigeria where job opportunities are limited due to economic uncertainty. In such conditions, a positive association between job insecurity and work engagement is expected because people strive to protect their employment status. However, it was found that – even in these hostile economic conditions – supervisor, but not customer, incivility weakened the association between job insecurity and work engagement.

2.1.10.3 Unique Effects of Supervisor Incivility

Supervisors are often considered to be one of the primary authorities of the organisation. For this reason, supervisor incivility has unique effects that other forms of incivility do not. Specifically, supervisor incivility was found to directly undermine targets' psychological safety (Mavrommatidou et al., 2023). Similarly, supervisor incivility was found to have a direct relationship to nurses' turnover intentions while incivility from others (i.e., doctors, fellow nurses, and patients/visitors) did not (Jiang et al., 2023). In a study of patient safety culture, incivility from patients or visitors adversely affected nurses' unit-level patient safety culture perceptions whereas supervisor incivility adversely affected nurses' hospital-level patient safety culture perceptions. Again, it was suggested that this difference in effect is explained by the supervisor's position of power which encourages subordinates to perceive the supervisor as a representative of the organisation (Alquwez, 2023).

2.1.10.4 The Importance of the Subordinate-Supervisor Relationship to the Organisation

The quality of the subordinate-supervisor relationship has serious implications for the improvement and stability of the organisation. Research indicates that supervisors are more generous to subordinates with whom they have high quality relationships. For example, supervisors provide these 'favoured' subordinates with more emotional and tangible support. This increased support has been found, in turn, to enhance subordinates' creativity which is a key driver of organisational improvement (Liao & Hui, 2021). Supervisors give more constructive feedback to subordinates with whom they have high-quality relationships. It has been proposed that high-quality feedback supports subordinates to speak-up, share ideas, and discuss key decisions with the supervisor (Sparr & Sonnentag, 2008). Indeed, research indicates that subordinates with high-quality supervisory relationships enjoy more open communication with the supervisor, are more likely to share opportunities, and give their honest opinions on work matters (Liao & Hui, 2021). Through the exchange of ideas,

opportunities, and expertise, organisations can improve in ways that would not be possible if communication was more limited.

The treatment subordinates receive from people in positions of power also has implications for how hard subordinates work for the organisation. As discussed, supervisors favour those with whom they have high-quality relationships. This can lead to feelings of obligation for the receiver of such favours, which can drive the receiver to work harder as means to pay back the favour (Martin et al., 2016). Being the focus of someone's favour also increases liking: people feel positively about those who treat them well. Increased linking of the supervisor, in turn, can motivate the subordinate to strive to meet the supervisor's demands. A study has shown that perceiving favourable treatment from a leader enhances followers' task performance (Martin et al., 2016).

The quality of subordinate-supervisor relationships also has implications for the stability of the organisation's social network. Research suggests that the adage "*people don't quit jobs; they quit bosses*" is true (Gallup, n.d. in Scandura & Meuser, 2022, p. 310). A Gallup poll of over one million US workers found that 75% of respondents who had voluntarily quit a job did so because of a poor relationship with a boss. It has been proposed that peoples' relationships with their bosses influences loyalty to the organisation more than the quality of their job role or the prestigiousness of the organisation (e.g., Nietfeld 2021; Scandura & Meuser, 2022). This is explained by the law of reciprocity previously discussed, and the concept of job embeddedness (Scandura & Meuser, 2022). As has been discussed, subordinates who are favoured reward the generosity of supervisors by working harder. The more subordinates contribute to the organisation the more embedded they become in it. The subordinate has sacrificed for the organisation and, through this sacrifice, has, for example, established connections with other members and a reputation for being a high performer. Another organisation cannot match these ancillary benefits, and so the subordinate is less

likely to leave the organisation because of everything they have gained in the process of repaying a generous boss (e.g., Harris et al. 2011). By fostering loyalty through generosity, organisations avoid the loss of knowledge that accompanies employee exit (Stovel & Bontis, 2002) and the heavy cost of recruiting new employees (Scandura & Meuser, 2022).

Interim summary. In this section, I integrated the literature regarding the antecedents and consequences of supervisor incivility. In doing so, I emphasised four reasons why supervisor incivility demands special and focused attention. These include supervisors' predisposition to incivility, and the stronger and unique effects of supervisor incivility on the target and the organisation. In the next section, I critique the workplace incivility literature concerning bystanders' behavioural responses, emphasising why targets' behavioural responses serves as the focal point of this research.

2.1.11 Bystanders' Responses to Workplace Incivility

Supervisor incivility not only occurs behind closed doors but is often witnessed by bystanders. In the incivility literature bystanders are often seen as 'victims by proxy' (Niven et al., 2020). For example, witnessing incivility has been associated with reduced personal wellbeing and job satisfaction and increased levels of stress (Holm, 2014). Further, it has been shown that witnessing incivility toward women indirectly increased turnover intentions, first, via elevated negative affect and, second, via increased cognitive burnout (Arena Jr et al., 2024). However, it is too simplistic to view bystanders as merely distal targets of incivility (Niven et al., 2020). Bystanders can respond in ways that interrupt or reinforce workplace incivility. Although experimental studies show that, under certain circumstances, participants say they would defend targets (e.g., Sinclair, 2021), studies of participants' real-life responses suggest bystanders often avoid or reinforce workplace incivility (e.g., House, 2018).

2.1.11.1 Bystanders to Incivility: Factitious vs. Real-life Scenarios

A small number of experimental studies have examined factors associated with bystanders' constructive behavioural responses to workplace incivility. Power dynamics and fear of retaliation are primary inhibitors of bystanders' constructive intervention. Specifically, Jungert and Holm (2022) found that the instigator's level of power influences bystanders' constructive behavioural responses. They presented participants with one of two scenarios – a manager being uncivil toward a subordinate, or a subordinate being uncivil toward a manager. They found that those assigned to the 'uncivil manager' condition were more likely to say they would 'defend the target' and 'offer the target support' than those assigned to the 'uncivil subordinate' condition. This is an important study that highlights the significant impact of power dynamics on bystanders' constructive behavioural responses to workplace incivility. Similarly, Sinclair (2021) examined bystanders' willingness to support and defend a fictitious 'co-worker' treated in a condescending manner by another fictitious 'co-worker'. They found that women reacted more strongly emotionally to witnessing incivility and were more willing to support and defend the fictitious co-worker than men. The gender difference in helping intentions was particularly prominent when the co-worker attributed the incivility to gender discrimination. This is an important finding that highlights the significant impact of gender and gender discrimination on bystanders' behavioural responses to incivility.

While important, the scenario-based studies previously discussed may not have captured for these participants the true difficulty of confronting instigators of workplace incivility in real-life. Regarding Jungert and Holm's (2022) study, in real-life, these participants would risk retaliation victimisation from the manager, or simply the loss of the manager's good opinion. When the 'confrontation' is imaginary, it may be easy to assume that one would 'do the right thing' and defend the target of incivility. Similarly, Sinclair's (2021) 'uncivil co-worker' scenario may not have captured for these participants the

difficulty of confronting one's co-workers, especially those with whom one has established positive relationships. In real-life, it may be easier to ignore or justify the incivility of a work friend than it is to defend, for example, a lesser known, or less well-liked, co-worker. Indeed, research suggests that multiple cues impact bystanders' decisions to help targets of workplace incivility. These cues included how good of a performer the target is and whether the bystander has a high workload (see Jensen & Raver, 2021). This study highlights that bystanders' decisions to interrupt incivility are not only based on 'doing the right thing', like protecting the less powerful or standing up to gender discrimination, but are influenced by self-focused factors, like cost versus reward. Indeed, a study of bystanders' real-life responses suggests that the cost of interrupting workplace incivility often may not be considered worth the reward (see House, 2018).

House (2018) interviewed nurses about their responses to nurse-to-nurse incivility and identified an overarching theme of nurses avoiding confrontation to avoid retaliation victimisation. These interviewees said that they were reluctant to intervene in nurse-to-nurse incivility and that in many cases they perceived the risk of retaliation victimisation to be too high. The interviewees overlooked nurse-to-nurse incivility especially when they thought the incivility was rooted in interpersonal differences. They said that witnessing nurse-to-nurse incivility had become a normal part of work, and they recognised that their acceptance of the mistreatment of their co-workers contributed to this normalisation. A study of employee silence and psychological safety in higher education institutions has shed further light on this issue (see Mazzone et al., 2024). This study shows that bystanders are silent when they do not feel psychologically safe enough to voice their concerns about workplace mistreatment, specifically, bullying. This study focused on the voices of those who had not only witnessed but also experienced workplace bullying. The researchers found that targets of workplace bullying may experience a particular sense of helplessness that may make raising concerns

about workplace bullying especially difficult. This study highlights the importance of creating a psychologically safe work environment in which even the most vulnerable employees feel comfortable to raise concerns about workplace mistreatment, like bullying and incivility. Research has also linked the passive witnessing of supervisor incivility to bystanders' suppression of anger (see Her & Sin, 2024). It was found that individuals high in power distance and collectivism were more likely to suppress their anger. Individuals high in power distance are inclined to view superiors as possessing special status and, hence, may also view supervisors as entitled to behave uncivilly. Individuals high in collectivism place importance on interpersonal relationships and prefer avoidance strategies in situations of conflict. Hence, power distance and collectivism act as buffers, mitigating the influence of anger on bystanders' behavioural responses to supervisor incivility.

Moreover, bystanders may actively reinforce workplace incivility at times by modelling the behaviour themselves. Holm et al. (2021) examined the relationship between witnessed (time 1) and instigated incivility (time 2) over a period of six months. They found that the relationship was strongest when bystanders' levels of control, support, and job embeddedness were high. The researchers highlighted that high levels of control and support are job resources, and they suggested these resources may serve as vicarious reinforcements for uncivil behaviour. Further, they suggested that those with high levels of control may be particularly powerful organisational members and, thus, they may instigate incivility without fear of repercussions. They also suggested that in environments where workplace incivility is normalised those embedded in the job are likely to conform to this norm. While the growing literature on bystanders highlights the complex social architecture surrounding workplace mistreatment, it also reveals a pervasive tendency toward observer avoidance and normalisation. Given that the research indicates that bystander intervention is often inhibited by power dynamics and social costs, it is imperative to refocus on the target's own agency

and internal processing. Thus, this research moves beyond the 'observer' perspective to investigate how targets themselves navigate and respond to incivility when external support may be absent.

2.1.12 Summary of Part One

In part one of this literature review, I have clarified the distinctions between workplace incivility, abusive supervision, and bullying. In doing so, I have emphasised why workplace incivility serves as the focal point of this research. Additionally, I clarified the distinctions between in-person and cyber incivility. In doing so, I have emphasised why in-person incivility serves as the primary concern this research. The workplace incivility literature indicates that the instigation of incivility and the targets' behavioural responses are influenced by several factors. In this section, I provided a theoretical framework (see Figure 1) that grounds this study in the literature regarding these factors. After the introduction of this framework, I integrated two perspectives regarding workplace incivility and targets' behavioural responses: the trait perspective and the relational perspective. Following the relational perspective, I emphasised why supervisor incivility serves as the focal point of this research. Finally, I critiqued the literature on bystanders' responses to incivility. I have argued that the interruption of incivility generally relies on the target and, thus, that the target's behavioural response demands special and focused attention. In part two of this literature review, I critically evaluate the three key theories regarding targets' behavioural responses to workplace incivility. In doing so, I identify complementariness and differences and gaps in knowledge of targets' behavioural responses. This critical analysis provides the foundation for the first of my two research questions, which is stated at the conclusion.

2.2 The Three Major Theories Concerning Targets' Behavioural Responses

In the workplace incivility literature, there are three major theories concerning targets' behavioural responses (i.e., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024). In this second part of the literature review, I critically evaluate these three key theories. In doing so, I identify complementariness and differences and gaps in knowledge of targets' behavioural responses to workplace incivility (see Table 2). I show that recent theories (i.e., Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024) extend significantly Andersson and Pearson's (1999) notion of 'departure'. Andersson and Pearson (1999) use 'departure' to refer to non-reciprocal or non-retaliatory responses to workplace incivility. Cortina et al. (2022) suggest two non-retaliatory responses to workplace incivility – retreat and affiliation – and Jorgensen et al. (2024) suggest a third – freeze. Despite these developments, our knowledge of targets' behavioural responses to incivility remains incomplete. In particular, the literature lacks a clear framework for characterising the conditions that lead to specific non-retaliatory choices. To address this, I propose that qualitative inquiry offers a vital pathway for expanding our understanding of the varied forms these responses can assume. This critical analysis provides the foundation for the first of my two research questions, which is stated at the conclusion of this section of the literature review.

Table 2

Theories of Targets' Behavioural Responses to Incivility: Complementarities, Differences and Gaps in Knowledge

Theory	Theorised response(s).	Explanation given.	Consequences of the response?	Complementarities?	Differences?	Gaps?
Tit for tat? The spiraling effect of incivility in the workplace (Andersson & Pearson, 1999)	Reciprocation	***Incivility is tit-for-tat when:*** Perceived interactional injustice. Negative affect (+). Desire for reciprocation (+). ***Escalates to coercion when:*** Perceived damage to social identity. Anger (+). Desire for revenge (+).	Persistent incivility may escalate to coercive behaviour and physical aggression. Some targets may 'depart' from incivility i.e., respond in a non-retaliatory manner. Bystanders may model incivility and initiate a 'secondary spiral'.			The theory mentions, but does not expand on, the notion of 'departure' or non-retaliatory responses to incivility. Empirical research suggests that targets' behavioural responses to workplace incivility may be less orderly, or more complex, than Andersson and Pearson's theory suggests.
The embodiment of insult: A theory of biobehavioral response to workplace incivility (Cortina et al., 2022)	Reciprocation	More likely when targets appraise incivility as a threat to their social status. More likely when the organisational culture/climate promotes 'toxic competition'.	Extends or increases targets' physiological stress response to incivility.	Cortina et al. (2022) agree that reciprocation is a significant response to incivility. They extend Andersson and Pearson's (1999) theory by associating reciprocation with the upregulation of	Andersson and Pearson (1999) assert that perceiving incivility as damaging to one's social identity leads to coercion. Coercion is a more intense response than like-	

			targets' physiological stress.	for-like reciprocal incivility.	
Retreat	More likely when targets appraise incivility as a threat to their social status. More likely when the organisational culture/climate promotes 'toxic competition'.	Extends or increases targets' physiological stress response to incivility.	Elaborates on Andersson and Pearson's concept of 'departure'. Cortina et al. (2022) define retreat as 'fleeing the scene', or the 'flight' response to incivility. This and the use of the term 'threat' suggests that retreat is a fear-based response, although the researchers do not explicitly use the term 'fear'. Extends Andersson and Pearson's (1999) theory by associating retreat – a form of departure – with the upregulation of targets' physiological stress.	Andersson and Pearson (1999) make an opposing assertion, that is, that perceiving incivility as damaging to one's social identity leads to coercion. Retreat is behavioural avoidance whereas coercion is behavioural approach.	Identifying the conditions that contribute to retreat rather than reciprocation. Differentiating the various forms that retreat takes. Is retreat always fear/threat-based? Or might retreating from incivility driven by other psychological conditions? Does 'retreating' always amplify targets' stress levels? Or might retreat be experienced as a self-protective response?
Affiliation	More likely when targets appraise incivility as a threat to interpersonal relationships.	Supports the reduction of targets' physiological stress response to incivility.	Further elaborates Andersson and Pearson's concept of 'departure'. Affiliation is partially defined as 'repairing the relationship with the		Identifying the conditions that contribute to affiliation (other than a threat appraisal). What forms does affiliation take?

				instigator of incivility'. Extends Andersson and Pearson's (1999) theory by associating affiliation – a form of departure – with the down regulation of targets' physiological stress.	Understanding the target's experience of affiliating with the instigator of incivility. Might affiliation be depleting, or stress increasing, for targets?
	Recruit support from others.	More difficult for marginalised workers.	If successful, supports the reduction of targets' physiological stress response to incivility.	Further elaborates Andersson and Pearson's concept of 'departure'. Cortina et al. (2022) define the recruitment of support as asking one or more individuals for assistance, advice, comfort, information, or intervention.	What personal characteristics – other than marginalisation – influence targets' behavioural responses to incivility? For example, are there gender differences in targets behavioural responses?
Kick me while I'm down: Modeling employee differences of the impact of workplace incivility on employees' health and wellbeing (Jorgensen et al., 2024)	Freeze	A past trauma. Depletion of the target's personal resources. The target blames themselves for the experienced incivility.	Deleterious impact on targets' health and wellbeing	Extends Cortina et al.'s (2022) theory by including the freeze response in the range of possible non-retaliatory responses to incivility.	The freeze response is typically associated with experiencing intense aggression. Do targets respond to a low intensity behaviour, such as incivility, by freezing?

All three of the aforementioned theories.		Are targets responses to persistent incivility simple, involving only one of the six responses depicted in these theories, or does the response pattern include a range of actions? The three theories focus on the negative conditions that influence targets' behavioural responses. Are there any positive conditions that influence targets' behavioural responses to incivility?

2.2.1 The Reciprocation or "Fight" Response

Andersson and Pearson's (1999) paper is the earliest and most influential theoretical article published on targets' responses to workplace incivility (Woolum et al., 2024). Although Andersson and Pearson mention that not all targets will reciprocate workplace incivility, they focus exclusively on theorising reciprocal or retaliatory responses. According to their theory, people get locked into a recurring "*fight*" response to incivility (Cortina et al., 2022, p. 5). Andersson and Pearson (1999) describe how a single incident of incivility can trigger a spiral of increasingly coercive forms of behaviour that, eventually, result in physical assault. Their theory was inspired by data published in the 1990s (i.e. Northwestern National Life Insurance Company Report, 1993; Romano, 1994) that indicated that physical assault was a problem in some U.S. workplaces. The incivility spiral identifies the psychological conditions of the old adage 'hurt people hurt people' (see Table 3). An incivility spiral has three stages: the starting point, the tipping point, and the blow-up response.

Table 3

The Psychological Conditions of An Incivility Spiral

The starting point	**The tipping point**	**The blow-up response**
1. Perceived interactional injustice. 2. Negative affect (+) 3. Desire for reciprocation (+)	1. Perceived damage to social identity. 2. Anger (+) 3. Desire for revenge (+)	1. Desire for revenge maximises. 2. Impulse toward physical assault.

Adapted from Andersson & Pearson (1999) and Miner et al. (2018)

2.2.2 The Starting Point

Andersson and Pearson (1999) propose that an incivility spiral begins, first, when one person, ('individual A'), perceives another person's behaviour ('individual B') as unjust (i.e. in violation of norms for respect). The perception of injustice, Andersson and Pearson (1999) posit, results in, second, the experience of negative affect. Negative affect is said to cause, third, a desire for reciprocation within 'individual A' which, in turn, predicts incivility (see Table 3). If one of the people involved does not "*depart*" (p. 460) from the spiral – by behaving in a non-retaliatory manner – this pattern of cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses continues and, therefore, an incivility spiral is said to be created. In this way, a thoughtless act, for example, can prompt the recipient to make an impolite remark toward their 'thoughtless' counterpart. In this – the first stage – incivility is contagious and has passed from instigator to target.

2.2.3 The Tipping Point

Andersson and Pearson (1999) further delineate the psychological conditions under which an incivility spiral becomes a spiral of coercion. Andersson and Pearson argue that experiencing incivility results through a three-part process in coercive behaviour when, first, incivility is interpreted as harmful to one's social identity. This perception, they propose, triggers different affective, cognitive, and, ultimately, behavioural responses, to those that underlie the persistence of incivility. Perceived damage to one's social identity, second, causes anger which leads to, third, a desire for revenge that, in turn, results in coercive behaviour (see Table 3). If the target of the coercive behaviour interprets the behaviour as having damaged their social identity, then, a spiral of coercion is said to be created. In this –

the second stage – incivility is transformed. Coercive revenge is different to minor, ambiguous, and accidental, incivilities.

2.2.4 The Blow-Up Response

Andersson and Pearson (1999) proposed that following a series of coercion, one person's desire for revenge becomes non-proportional. Miner et al. (2018) later re-labelled this non-proportional response a "*blow-up response*" (p. 9). They propose that a blow-up response to incivility is asymmetric in the sense that it is a much more aggressive reaction than the behaviour that triggered it. In this way, persistent verbal abuse, for example, can prompt the target to threaten their 'abusive' counterpart with a physical attack. Threats of physical attack mark the second transformation of what started as incivilities of a low intensity. Andersson and Pearson (1999) use the term low intensity as a synonym for 'non-physical'.

2.2.5 Evidence of Incivility Spirals

It is unclear from the extant literature if incivility spirals develop as Andersson and Pearson (1999) proposed (Gervasi et al., 2022; Greco et al., 2019). One cause of this confusion is in the way that incivility has been measured. Workplace incivility is generally assessed using the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS) (Cortina et al., 2001). One problem with the WIS is that it is unclear to whom exactly the respondents have been uncivil, because the target is specified as 'supervisors' and/or 'co-workers'. The lack of specificity in terms of the instigator and target of incivility means it is unclear if incivility spirals develop directly – between two particular people – as is proposed by Andersson and Pearson (1999).

Nevertheless, a significant number of studies show that experiencing incivility from 'someone at work' is associated with instigating incivility toward 'someone at work' (e.g., Bunk et al., 2011; Bunk & Magley, 2013; Burnes & Pope, 2007; Foulk et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2015; Gallus et al., 2014; Ghosh et al., 2011; Hershcovis et al., 2018; Holm et al., 2015; Porath & Pearson, 2012; Rosen et al., 2016; Taylor & Kluemper, 2012; Torkelson et al., 2016; van Jaarsveld et al., 2010). Furthermore, Greco et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis of the reciprocity of negative work behaviours (NWBs). Their meta-analysis included workplace incivility, abusive supervision, and bullying, among other negative workplace behaviours. Greco et al. (2019) acknowledge the problem with ascertaining if people reciprocate negative work behaviours directly (i.e., at the instigator), or indirectly (e.g., at innocent bystanders), or both. Nonetheless, they found that, first, experiencing NWBs from 'someone at work' is associated with instigating similar NWBs toward 'someone at work'. Second, that experiencing NWBs from 'someone at work' is associated with instigating more severe NWBs toward 'someone at work'. Third, that experiencing NWBs from 'someone at work' is associated with instigating less severe NWBs toward 'someone at work'. These findings suggest that Andersson and Pearson's (1999) proposals regarding the contagion and escalation incivility may be valid, but also that the de-escalation of incivility can occur. These findings reinforce the possibility of alternative behavioural responses and response patterns, when there is a lack of retaliation from targets of workplace incivility. They raise the possibility that targets responses to incivility may be more complex than Andersson and Pearson's (1999) theory suggest.

2.2.6 The Psychological Conditions of An Incivility Spiral

As highlighted previously (see Table 3), Andersson and Pearson (1999) put forward several negative psychological conditions that may facilitate the creation of an incivility spiral. Subsequent studies provided support for their ideas that targets' (i) cognition, (ii) affect, and (iii) self-regulation ability, influence the creation of incivility spirals.

2.2.6.1 Targets' Cognitions

Subsequent studies indicated that experiencing workplace incivility is associated with cognitions similar to those proposed by Andersson and Pearson (1999), like perceptions of injustice. For example, Caza and Cortina (2007) found that workplace incivility is associated with perceptions of the organisation as unfair and unjust. They also found that when the source of the incivility was in a position of power, these relationships were strongest. Miner and Cortina (2016) found that observing incivility toward women is associated with perceptions of interactional injustice, particularly among men the more they observed female-directed incivility. Furthermore, Foulk et al. (2016) examined Andersson and Pearson's (1999) proposal that workplace incivility is contagious. They proposed that, even after a single incident, exposure to incivility results in learning and modelling which, in turn, allows incivility to spread from one pair of interacting people to another. They found that incivility activates the concept of rudeness in peoples' minds. This is an unconscious but powerful effect. By making the incivility concept more accessible, experiencing incivility from 'someone at work' results in incivility toward 'someone at work'. Foulk et al. (2016) results, they argued, explain why incivility can appear so very random to targets. Incivility may be an echo of the instigator's prior experiences with another person, which targets may not have awareness of or witnessed.

Target meaning-making also appears to impact response choice. People that are blamed for their incivility are more likely to experience reciprocal incivility (Porath et al., 2008; Porath & Pearson, 2012). The social context influences the assignment of blame. The experience being shared, rather than solitary, has been found to reduce self-blame for incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2016). The attribution constructed regarding the cause of incivility influences how individuals feel and behave in response to it. People with a hostile attribution bias (Kabat-Farr et al., 2018; Zhou et al., 2015), and those who believe that the instigator intended to hurt them, are more emotionally affected by incivility (Marchiondo et al., 2018). Also, the extent to which people are deemed to be accountable for their uncivil behaviour influences whether displacement (e.g., punish a bystander) or direct aggression (i.e., punish the instigator) occurs in response (Porath et al., 2008; Porath & Pearson, 2012).

2.2.6.2 Targets' Affect

Other studies have focused on the emotional consequences of experiencing incivility and affect as the driver of reciprocation. A plethora of studies show that workplace incivility is associated with negative affect (e.g., Clark & Springer, 2010; Pearson et al., 2001; Sulea et al., 2012). Porath and Pearson (2012), for example, found that targets feel anger in response to incivility. Also, that the more anger people felt the more likely they were to reciprocate incivility directly (i.e., against the instigator); unless the instigator of incivility was in a greater position of power then, targets were more likely to displace their anger onto the organisation and its other members. Similarly, Bunk and Magley (2013) found that heightened emotionality mediated the relationship between experiencing and reciprocating workplace incivility. Taylor and Kluemper (2012) also found that people high in neuroticism – a trait associated with experiencing high levels of negative affect – were more likely to act aggressively when exposed to incivility compared to those low in neuroticism.

2.2.6.3 Targets' Self-Control

Longitudinal evidence suggests that time is a key factor in determining whether affect motivates reciprocal incivility. The shorter the timeframe between the events of victimisation and reciprocation, the more likely a target of workplace incivility was to perpetuate incivility. However, the more time that had passed, the less likely targets were to reciprocate incivility (Meier & Gross, 2015). Reciprocation, it appears, depends upon a lack of regulation of 'hot emotions' (e.g., anger) that dissipate quickly, rather than the deliberate nursing of ill-feeling against another person (Meier & Gross, 2015). Other studies support this finding, for example, Rosen et al. (2016) showed that experiencing workplace incivility results in reciprocation toward 'others at work' when there is a reduction in targets' self-regulation ability. Rosen et al. (2016) argued that, when experiencing incivility, targets expend attentional resources trying to (i) understand the instigator's behaviour, (ii) formulate an adaptive response, and (iii) suppress maladaptive responses. These cognitive demands, the researchers argued, result in a reduction in self-control. Being less able to self-regulate, targets are more likely to act on 'hot emotions', like anger, and reciprocate incivility. Similarly, Francis et al. (2015) showed that a high workload – which consumes considerable personal resources – was associated with higher incivility instigation among participants assigned to an 'email incivility' condition. Walker et al. (2014) also found that customer service employees were more likely to respond to incivility with incivility when they were emotionally exhausted, and, thus, less able to exert self-control.

2.2.7 The Incivility Spiral and Supervisor Incivility

Despite this recognition that people may reciprocate incivility from 'someone at work', much less research attention has been given to the reciprocation of supervisor-

instigated incivility (Gervasi et al., 2022; Greco et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the association between supervisor incivility and targets' reciprocal incivility has not been completely ignored. A couple of studies have found that the likelihood of receiving punishment for reciprocal incivility influences peoples' response choices. There may be a weighing of consequences to ascertain if the reciprocation of incivility is a wise response strategy for the target (Porath et al., 2008; Porath & Pearson, 2012). It was also found that reciprocation is less likely to be the chosen response when the instigator is more powerful than the target of incivility (e.g. Bunk et al., 2011; Porath et al., 2008). These studies suggest that the spiral theory of incivility is unlikely to capture common responses to supervisor incivility. They indicate that expanding Andersson and Pearson's (1999) notion of 'departure' may be particularly important for understanding targets' behavioural responses to supervisor incivility.

I suggest that there is one major reason why people are unlikely to reciprocate supervisor incivility. The reciprocation of supervisor incivility is likely to undermine the subordinate's relationship with the supervisor (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Olekalns et al., 2020). Subordinates, however, are motivated in many ways to foster a positive relationship with their direct supervisor. Subordinates who develop a high-quality relationship with their direct supervisor are given more knowledge, and are taught more work-related skills, than their counterparts (Dansereau et al., 1975; Gregersen et al., 2016; Law-Penrose et al., 2016; Liao & Hui, 2021). They are also more likely to receive advice and assistance from that supervisor than their counterparts (Martin et al., 2016). These benefits increase the subordinates' human capital, that is, their economic value to the organisation, which, in turn, can improve a subordinate's chances of career success (Ng et al., 2005). When a supervisor favours a subordinate, the supervisor is more likely to assign them interesting and important work (Liden et al., 2006) and introduce them to more senior people in the organisation. This

allows the subordinate to receive attention and direct praise for their work, and it places them in the forefront of the minds of senior managers which is useful when promotion opportunities arise (Martin et al., 2016).

Subordinates who are successful in developing a 'special relationship' with a supervisor, like a friendship, receive particularly superior treatment (Pan et al., 2021). These patterns of results mirror developments in the leader-member exchange literature which highlights the effects of differential relationships on those who are favoured by supervisors as well as those who are not (Martin et al., 2018). Superior treatment from a supervisor may include, for example, (i) access to 'insider information', that is, information not widely shared throughout the organisation, (ii) participation in the process of making important decisions, (iii) particularly high-performance evaluations, and (iv) increased speed of promotion and promotion opportunities. Conversely, subordinates who are not afforded such special status can struggle to access resources and rewards from their supervisor (see Guan & Frenkel, 2019; Cheung & Wu, 2012).

An additional reason as to why supervisor incivility, and incivility more generally, is unlikely to be reciprocated relates to the association between one's workplace relationships and happiness in work. People's relationships with fellow co-workers and superiors constitute the social environment in which they live their professional lives. People can either invest in making that a rewarding environment or a source of great stress and consternation. Also, to an extent, "*people define who they are in terms of their relationships*" (Leiter, 2013, p. 7). For example, you are your supervisor's good friend or your office partner's nemesis. Furthermore, these relationships provide signals regarding how we are perceived by others, for example, as the MVP (i.e., most valuable player) of the organisation or an incompetent jerk. One self-image is much more positively charged, and provides a greater sense of safety, than the other (Leiter, 2013). Previously, the benefits of a high-quality subordinate-supervisor

relationship have been discussed. However, workplace relationships are about more than what one person can get from another. The co-creation of good quality relationships can bring joy and inspiration into a person's work life. Positive workplace relationships are rewarding in and of themselves, without the trappings of increased opportunities, promotions, and career success (Gersick et al., 2000).

It is, perhaps, for these reasons that the extant literature indicates people do not directly reciprocate supervisor incivility. Instead, a salient narrative is that supervisor incivility elicits displaced aggression from targets (for one exception, see Iqbal et al. 2024). Nauman et al. (2023) found that supervisor incivility is associated with increased work-to-family conflict and interpersonal deviance directed towards customers and co-workers. Yun et al. (2024) also found that supervisor incivility is associated with increased co-worker-directed incivility. Similarly, Naeem et al. (2024) found a link between supervisor incivility and counterproductive work behaviour that was directed toward the organisation. However, this association was weaker among those with an internal locus of control. The researchers argue that an internal locus of control is beneficial to targets of supervisor incivility because this mindset facilitates active coping in response to the stressor. However, what this study, or any of the others discussed, does not tell us is what these 'active coping strategies' entail.

Interim summary. According to dominant theoretical perspectives on incivility, people get locked into a fight response to workplace incivility. Studies show that experiencing incivility from 'someone at work' is associated with instigating incivility toward 'someone at work'. The reciprocation of workplace incivility has been explained by changes in targets' cognitions, affect, and ability to self-control. Only a little research attention has been given to the reciprocation of supervisor-instigated incivility. I have suggested reasons as to why targets of supervisor incivility are unlikely to reciprocate in-kind. Studies indicate that, rather than punish the supervisor for incivility, people displace

their aggression on fellow co-workers, the organisation, and their families. Still, the extant literature does not tell us how subordinates navigate the supervisory relationship following supervisor incivility, for example, how they protect themselves from future supervisor incivility.

In the next section, I critique recent theoretical developments regarding targets' behavioural responses to workplace incivility. I highlight complementarities and differences between the earliest (i.e., Andersson & Pearson, 1999) and most recent theories (i.e., Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024). I outline that, although researchers have expanded Andersson and Pearson's (1999) notion of departure, there are significant gaps in our knowledge. For example, concerning the conditions that contribute to one non-retaliatory response over another, and the various forms that each non-retaliatory response may take. Furthermore, I identify potential weaknesses in recent theories of targets' behavioural responses to workplace incivility. For example, I challenge Jorgensen et al.'s (2024) hypothesis that targets may freeze in response to workplace incivility. Moreover, I highlight several areas where qualitative analysis may assist in expanding knowledge of targets' behavioural responses to incivility, in particular non-retaliatory responses.

2.2.8 A Biobehavioural Theory of Response

As noted previously, Andersson and Pearson's spiral theory of incivility was published in 1999. It wasn't until 2022 that an alternative theory of target responses was put forward. Cortina et al. (2022) published "*A Theory of Biobehavioral Response to Workplace Incivility*" in the Journal of Management. Cortina et al. (2022) agree with Andersson and Pearson (1999) that reciprocation is a significant possible behavioural response to workplace incivility. They extend Andersson and Pearson's (1999) spiral theory, hypothesising that

reciprocation is associated with the upregulation of targets' physiological stress. Further, Cortina et al. (2022) hypothesise that the reciprocation of workplace incivility is more likely when the organisational culture/climate promotes 'toxic competition'. This is a significant extension of Andersson and Pearson's theory as, previously, the conditions associated with reciprocation were of a psychological nature.

However, Cortina et al.'s (2022) hypotheses regarding the reciprocation of workplace incivility are not in complete alignment with Andersson and Pearson's. Cortina et al. (2022) contradict part of Andersson and Pearson's spiral theory of workplace incivility. Specifically, they propose that reciprocal incivility is likely when targets appraise workplace incivility as a threat to their social status. Conversely, Andersson and Pearson (1999) assert that perceiving incivility as damaging to one's social identity leads to coercive behaviour. Coercion is a more intense behavioural response than the like-for-like reciprocation of workplace incivility that Cortina et al. (2022) suggest.

While they make significant contributions to knowledge regarding the reciprocation of workplace incivility, Cortina et al. (2022) predominantly focus on explaining targets' non-retaliatory responses. In doing so, they significantly advance Andersson and Pearson's (1999) concept of 'departure', which refers to targets' non-reciprocal or non-retaliatory responses to incivility. They suggest three non-retaliatory responses to workplace incivility: recruit support (e.g., bystander intervention), retreat (i.e., walk away, avoid the instigator) and affiliation (i.e., make amends to the instigator). As I highlighted in Section 2.1.11, the interruption of workplace incivility generally relies on the target. Hence, this study is focused the target's behavioural response to the instigator of incivility. In keeping with this study's focus, I concentrate on the corresponding behavioural responses put forward by Cortina et al. (2022) (i.e., retreat and affiliation). Cortina et al. (2022) argue it is most likely that targets retreat from, rather reciprocate, or escalate, workplace incivility. Also, they contend that

affiliation is likely a frequent response to workplace incivility. Affiliation refers to making amends to the instigator or befriending the instigator and tending to their needs.

2.2.9 The Retreat Response

Cortina et al. (2022) suggest that retreating from workplace incivility can take many forms, including walking away from an uncivil encounter, avoiding the instigator of incivility, being absent from work, and exiting the organisation. Indeed, studies show that people respond to incivility from 'someone at work' in these ways. Cortina et al. (2003) found that experiencing incivility is associated with medical visits and absentee days. In a later study, they also found that people detached from workplace incivility through different methods of avoidance (Cortina & Magley, 2009). They called these methods "*prosocial conflict avoidance*" and "*assertive conflict avoidance*" (p. 283). Though these terms are not discussed in detail in their paper and have not been elaborated on in the incivility literature that followed. Estes and Wang (2008) found that people avoided workplace incivility by withdrawing from collaborative efforts with the instigator. Furthermore, Porath and colleagues (2013) highlighted that a significant proportion of people (i.e., over 25%) lose work time because of efforts to avoid the instigators of workplace incivility. Experiencing incivility is also associated with turnover intentions (e.g., Namin et al., 2022) and exit from the organisation (Cortina et al., 2003).

2.2.9.1 Gaps in Knowledge Concerning the Retreat Construct

The range of behaviours that Cortina et al. (2022) categorise within the retreat construct is wide. As noted previously, retreat includes walking away from an uncivil encounter, avoiding the instigator of incivility, being absent from work, and exiting the organisation. As a result, the distinct experiences, rich meaning and complexity of the

individual behaviours the retreat construct encapsulates is somewhat lost. For example, walking away from an uncivil encounter is likely to be a different experience subjectively from quitting one's job due to workplace incivility. A qualitative analysis may reveal deeper, more nuanced insights regarding the various forms that the retreat response may take, and such insights may assist in refining the construct and avoiding oversimplification.

Cortina et al. (2022) associate the retreat response with threat appraisals of workplace incivility and the organisational culture/climate, which suggests that retreat is fear-based. Indeed, studies indicate that negative emotions are antecedents of a retreat response to workplace incivility. Porath and Pearson (2012) examined a mediating process and found that people who felt fear and sadness in response to incivility coped through absenteeism and exit (experiencing incivility → fear and sadness → absenteeism and exit). Beattie and Griffin (2014) examined a moderating process and found that high neuroticism plays a role in targets' retreat responses to incivility (experiencing incivility × high neuroticism → retreat responses). They examined one type of retreat response to incivility, which was operationalised via the scale item 'just ignored it'. Beattie and Griffin (2014) show that only people high in neuroticism avoided instigators of incivility, and this was likely because those high in neuroticism appraised incivility as a severe form of mistreatment. Clark et al. (2013) found that people gave three reasons for retreating in response to workplace incivility. These include: (i) fearing negative consequences if one was to confront incivility (see also Porath et al., 2008); (ii) being confused about what can be done to stop incivility; and (iii) being unwilling to invest the time and effort people believed it would take to resolve the problem. This last finding – that people weigh the costs versus benefits of resolving workplace incivility – suggests that the retreat response is not always fear-based. It suggests thoughtfulness and the emotional detachment of a deliberate decision. This finding raises questions regarding the psychological conditions, other than threat or fear, that may be

associated with the retreat response. I suggest that a qualitative analysis may reveal alternative psychological conditions that targets associate with retreating from incivility.

Cortina et al. (2022) argue that the retreat response may extend or increase the targets' physiological stress response to incivility. Little is known about the consequences of the retreat response. Exiting an organisation means severing one's relationship to it and, hence, researchers consider exit an unconstructive response (Cortina et al., 2003). However, if workplace incivility is persistent, perhaps the target may consider exiting the organisation a constructive or self-protective response. Furthermore, along with 'exiting the organisation', Cortina et al. (2022) categorise 'avoiding the instigator' under the umbrella of retreat. One study found that avoiding the instigator of incivility can lead to emotional exhaustion and target-instigated incivility. Further, it was found that targets who were avoidant were less likely to forgive psychologically the instigator's incivility (Hershcovis et al., 2018). However, another study found that avoidance protected targets' job satisfaction from the deleterious effect of incivility (Welbourne et al., 2016). A qualitative analysis may shed light on targets' perceptions regarding the constructiveness of the retreat response, allowing for a deeper understanding of what targets consider a 'constructive', or 'self-protective' outcome.

Little is known about supervisor-instigated incivility and its relation to the retreat response. A couple of studies suggest that people are more likely to avoid instigators of incivility when the instigator is of higher status than the target (see Porath et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2013). However, as noted previously, the subordinate has a lot to gain from developing a high-quality relationship with the supervisor, for example, promotion, promotability, speed of promotion, and salary (e.g., Law-Penrose et al., 2016). This suggests that subordinates may be careful about how they retreat from a supervisor's incivility and will likely re-approach the supervisor. This raises questions of how targets retreat from, and re-approach, an uncivil supervisor.

2.2.10 The Affiliative Response

As noted previously, Cortina et al. (2022) also suggest that people respond to workplace incivility with affiliation. They propose that an affiliative response involves making amends to the instigator or befriending the instigator and tending to their needs. Indeed, a study of customer incivility found that targets sometimes apologise to uncivil customers (Robertson & O'Reilly, 2020). Though, it is unclear if this finding applies to incivility in long-term (e.g., supervisory), rather than temporary, relationships. Yue et al. (2015) also found that service employees are more likely to behave in helpful ways the day after experiencing incivility. However, it is unclear if people are helpful to the instigator of incivility or just to other work colleagues more generally. For example, Ganster et al. (2023) found that partner-instigated incivility led people to be more helpful to fellow co-workers. However, one study indicates the opposite: it was found that experiencing incivility led to less prosocial behaviour (see Ismail et al., 2018).

2.2.10.1 Gaps in Knowledge Concerning the Affiliation Construct

Like the retreat response, Cortina et al. (2022) propose that affiliation is threat-based. Specifically, they argue that affiliation is more likely when targets appraise incivility as a threat to interpersonal relationships. However, given their definition of affiliation – that is, to 'tend-and-befriend' others – it seems likely that this response may also be driven by constructs centred on positive social connection, like compassion and kindness. Constructs centred on positive social connection, like compassion and kindness, appear to intersect with affiliative behaviour. Where affiliation is likely the behavioural expression of the urge to bond with others (Cortina et al., 2022), kindness involves understanding and fulfilling the needs of others and compassion is the desire to reduce the suffering of others (see Neff, 2021). A qualitative analysis may provide a deeper understanding of targets' subjective

experiences of affiliation, especially its potential relationship to positive social constructs, like kindness and compassion.

Cortina et al. (2022) expect the affiliative efforts of targets to support the reduction of targets' physiological stress. However, I note that 'tending-to-and-befriending' others (affiliation) involves expending personal resources (e.g., one's time, energy, etc.). The conservation of resources theory (see Halbesleben et al., 2014, Hobfoll, 1989) indicates that the loss of personal resources, or the threat of such loss, lead to stress processes including increased psychological stress. Regarding the consequences of affiliation following workplace incivility, very little is known. One study indicates that exhibiting communion, that is, behaviour focused on connecting with others, in response to incivility is unconstructive because it leads to experiencing more incivility (Gabriel et al., 2018). This finding makes intuitive sense. If a person's incivility is met with apologies from others, and efforts to meet their needs, workplace incivility may be considered a rewarded behaviour. Thus, the incivility may be repeated to access such rewards again. However, in another study (Linvill et al., 2018), one interviewee recalled that making an effort with the instigator of incivility improved her work experiences. I suggest that qualitative analysis may reveal more about targets' subjective experiences of affiliation, in particular, the ways in which affiliation may be stress increasing or reducing.

Interim summary. Cortina et al.'s (2022) theory of biobehavioural responses to incivility extended significantly Andersson and Pearson's (1999) notion of 'departure'. Andersson and Pearson (1999) use departure to refer to non-reciprocal, or non-retaliatory, responses to incivility. Cortina et al. (2022) suggest two non-retaliatory responses to workplace incivility: retreat and affiliation. I have highlighted that the range of behaviours encompassed within Cortina et al.'s (2022) 'retreat' construct is wide. As a result, the distinct experiences, rich meaning, and complexity of the individual behaviours that the construct encapsulates is

somewhat lost. I have suggested that a qualitative analysis may reveal deeper, more nuanced insights concerning the retreat response, refining the construct and avoiding oversimplification. Cortina et al. (2022) associate the retreat response with threat appraisals of incivility and the organisational culture/climate, which suggests that retreat is fear-based. A qualitative analysis may reveal more about the alternative psychological conditions that targets associate with the retreat response. Cortina et al. (2022) argue that retreat may extend or increase the targets' physiological stress response to incivility. I have highlighted a situation in which targets may consider the retreat response 'constructive' or 'self-protective'. A qualitative analysis may shed light on targets' perceptions of the retreat response, allowing for a deeper understanding of what targets consider a 'constructive' or 'self-protective' outcome.

Like the retreat response, Cortina et al. (2022) propose that affiliation is threat-based. Based on their definition of affiliation – to 'tend-and-befriend' others –I have raised the possibility that affiliation may be influenced by constructs centred on positive social connection. A qualitative analysis may provide a deeper understanding of targets' experiences of affiliation, especially its relationship to constructs centred on positive social connection, like kindness and compassion. Cortina et al. (2022) expect the affiliative efforts of targets to support the reduction of targets' physiological stress. I have questioned whether targets may associate affiliation with stress processes. I suggest that a qualitative analysis may reveal targets' subjective experiences of affiliation, especially the ways in which affiliation may be stress reducing or increasing.

In the next section, I critique theory regarding the 'freeze' response to workplace incivility (see Jorgensen et al., 2024). Jorgensen et al. (2024) argue that the freeze response exists on the same continuum as the 'fight' or 'flight' response – more commonly referred to by incivility researchers as 'reciprocation' and 'retreat'. I highlight that the freeze response is

generally associated with predatory behaviour. I challenge the notion that targets may freeze in response to workplace incivility, emphasising that predatory behaviour is not analogous to workplace incivility. Jorgensen et al. (2024) assert that people are more likely to respond to incivility by freezing when three conditions combine. However, I highlight that two of these conditions are not exclusive to the freeze response and may also lead to reciprocation or affiliative behaviour.

2.2.11 The Freeze Response

The freeze response involves "*a state of hypervigilance and forced immobility*" (Jorgensen et al., 2024, p. 6). In this state, people are highly aware of threat but unable to act on any perceived threats. Jorgensen et al. (2024) argue that the freeze response exists on the same continuum as the 'fight' or 'flight' response – more commonly referred to by incivility researchers as 'reciprocation' and 'retreat'. They propose that all three are "*innate, hard-wired, automatically activated defense behaviors*" (p. 6). They also propose that people are more likely to respond to incivility with a freeze response when three factors combine. First, the target has experienced a past trauma. Second, the past trauma continues to deplete the target's personal resources. Third, the target blames themselves for the experienced incivility. They predict that the freeze response has a deleterious impact on targets' health and wellbeing. Jorgensen et al. (2024) observe that studies of the freeze response to workplace incivility are non-existent.

2.2.11.1 Gaps in Knowledge Concerning the Freeze Construct

I suggest that it is unlikely that the freeze response would be elicited by a low-intensity, ambiguous form of aggression such as workplace incivility. The freeze response has been studied most often in animal models of predator-prey interaction (e.g., rats, Vianna

& Carrive, 2005; mice, Chen et al., 2009; and cuttlefish, King & Adamo, 2006). These animal models show the distinct behaviours that occur before a predator makes physically aggressive contact with prey. Workplace incivility does not refer to predatory behaviour. The definition of workplace incivility especially emphasises ambiguity regarding intention to harm (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Further, the tit-for-tat model of workplace incivility clearly demarcates and distances workplace incivility from physical aggression. Specifically, the tit-for-tat model indicates that coercive behaviour, not incivility, is the immediate precursor to physical aggression in the workplace (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). In human studies, threatening stimuli have elicited freeze-like responses from participants. However, generally these studies involved exposing participants to stimuli that is intense and not analogous to workplace incivility. For example, in one study participants were instructed to detect whether a virtual opponent was drawing a gun or a phone, and to only shoot the virtual opponent, without delay, if they drew a gun (see Hashemi et al., 2021). Another study exposed participants to threatening conditions that simulate 'a predatory grasp' by reducing participants' oxygen consumption. However, despite the intensity of this stimulus, more participants had a retreat- rather than a freeze- like response (20% vs. 13%; Schmidt et al., 2008).

Jorgensen et al. (2024) hypothesise that the freeze response is associated with the depletion of the target's personal resources. However, there is considerable evidence that the depletion of personal resources increases the likelihood that individuals act aggressively when provoked (e.g., Stucke & Baumeister, 2006). These studies suggest that the depletion of personal resources is likely to lead targets to reciprocate, rather than freeze in response to, workplace incivility. These studies are based on the theory that self-regulation is a limited resource, and when this capacity has been depleted by prior use, individuals become less successful at self-regulation (see Baumeister et al., 2007; Denson et al., 2011). Hence,

individuals are more likely to act aggressively if they are provoked. For example, DeWall et al. (2007) had one group of participants sit in front of a donut, and another group of participants sit in front of some radishes. Those in the donut condition experienced desires to eat the donut but were instructed to override them, thereby depleting their self-regulatory resources. Those in the radish condition had to resist a much less desirable food, which, it was hypothesised, would not deplete as much of their self-regulatory resources. Following this, the participants were insulted and then, they were instructed to serve an unspecified quantity of hot sauce to the person who insulted them. The participants were led to believe that this person had a strong dislike for spicy food. It was found that the depleted participants responded to the insult aggressively, serving significantly more hot sauce than the less depleted participants.

Jorgensen et al. (2024) hypothesise that the freeze response is associated with self-blame for the experienced incivility. There is a paucity of research on the effect of self-blame on targets behavioural responses to workplace incivility. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that guilt for experiencing incivility is positively associated with prosocial proactive behaviour in some individuals. Wang et al. (2021) examined the role of guilt in targets' behavioural responses to co-worker incivility. They found that co-worker incivility positively related to guilt, but only among individuals that are high in internal attribution orientation. They also found that guilt was, in turn, positively related to organisational citizenship behaviour among these individuals.

Jorgensen et al. (2024) hypothesise that past trauma increases the likelihood of a freeze response to workplace incivility. However, this hypothesis assumes that the individual's past trauma is unresolved. Just because someone has experienced trauma in the past, does not mean that they will exhibit trauma responses (e.g., fight, flight, or freeze) in the present. Seng et al. (2019) described the 'flow' state that some individuals who have

experienced significant losses, or abusive experiences, exhibit in response to stressors. They note that there are a significant proportion of adults who have resolved their past trauma and respond to everyday stressors calmly 'taking life as it comes'. Indeed, research has shown that victims of disasters can return quite promptly to normative stress responses. For example, a study of adult victims of a fireworks disaster found that these individuals' sensitisation to stressful stimuli dissipated within four years (Smid et al., 2012). Moreover, it has been argued that experiences of past trauma may inoculate individuals against future stress, and "*can represent an advantage over those without such experience*" (Turner & Lloyd, 1995, p. 371). Having learnt from the experience of a past trauma, some individuals may be better equipped to respond effectively to day-to-day stressors, like workplace incivility.

Interim Summary. I have highlighted that the freeze response is associated with predatory behaviour. I have challenged the notion that targets may freeze in response to workplace incivility, emphasising that predatory behaviour is not analogous to workplace incivility. Jorgensen et al. (2024) assert that people are more likely to respond to workplace incivility with the freeze response when three particular conditions combine. However, I have highlighted how two of these conditions are not exclusive to the freeze response and may also lead to reciprocation or prosocial behaviour. Further, I have argued that Jorgensen et al.'s (2024) theorising about targets' past trauma is incomplete, as it overlooks targets' resilience and the possibility of post-traumatic growth.

In the next section, I discuss the possibility of intraindividual variation in targets' behavioural responses to workplace incivility. The extant literature implies that "*the prototypical response to incivility is simple*" involving either one response or another (Cortina et al., 2022, p. 10). For example, based on the spiral theory of incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) numerous studies have investigated whether targets did, or did not,

reciprocate incivility (see Greco et al., 2019). Recently, researchers have suggested that targets' responses to persistent incivility are likely to be much more complex than taking one, static approach (see Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024).

2.2.12 Intraindividual Variation in Responses

Workplace incivility can be a persistent (typical) or episodic (atypical) feature of the target-instigator relationship (Henderson & Matthews, 2024). Persistent incivility refers to a pattern of behaviour between relationship partners. For example, persistent incivility occurs when one relationship partner is generally uncivil to the other (Miner et al., 2018), or when both partners reciprocate each other's incivility, which is called an 'incivility spiral' (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Episodic incivility refers to discrete atypical events that are either increasing or decreasing across time periods (Henderson & Matthews, 2024). Incivility that occurs because the instigator is experiencing of a short period of intense stress is an example of episodic incivility.

Targets' responses to persistent incivility may be simple, involving only one of the responses depicted in the aforementioned theories. However, when incivility is persistent, it may be that the target's response pattern includes a range of actions. It has been suggested that an apology from the instigator "*could move the target out of reciprocation mode and into relationship repair*" (Cortina et al., 2022, p. 11). Similarly, Jorgensen et al. (2024) recognised that targets are unlikely to remain in a frozen state following workplace incivility. Recent theory goes so far as to propose ways in which targets might be supported to make more constructive responses to incivility. Jorgensen et al. (2024) suggest that organisations provide training to targets to reduce self-blame and positively re-frame the meaning of workplace incivility. They argue that such training will interrupt targets' unconstructive responses to

incivility. Along with an apology from the instigator, Cortina et al. (2022) suggest that support from a co-worker could move the target out of one mode of response and into another. For example, the receipt of reassurance may move the target out of 'retreat mode'.

Using vignettes of 'direct' and 'indirect' incivility, Irwin et al. (2024) found that there may be intraindividual variation in targets' responses to workplace incivility. They found that direct incivility was associated with reciprocation, exit, and support seeking, whereas indirect incivility was associated with making 'friendly overtures' to the instigator and ignoring responses. Though the vignettes provided an opportunity to study associations between different types of incivility (direct vs. indirect) and responses (reciprocation, exit, support seeking, etc.), because the scenarios were fictional the constructiveness of the responses could not be explored. Their study coupled with recent theoretical advances in the workplace incivility literature raise questions of the diversity in subordinates' responses to supervisor incivility. A qualitative analysis may provide insights regarding targets' behavioural response patterns, for example, the different types of responses that persistent incivility from a single source elicits.

2.2.13 Research Question One

Recent theory has significantly extended our knowledge of targets' non-retaliatory responses to workplace incivility (i.e., Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024). Cortina et al. (2022) put forward two instigator-directed responses – retreat and affiliation – and Jorgensen et al. put forward a third – the freeze response. Nonetheless, I have identified several weaknesses in these theories that may be effectively addressed through qualitative analysis. For example, current theory fails to account for the factors that influence a target to escalate from a temporary physical retreat (walking away) to a permanent systemic retreat

(quitting). A qualitative approach is therefore essential not just to describe these retreat behaviours, but to account for how targets weigh these options and why certain triggers shift a response from a short-term coping mechanism to a long-term career decision. Furthermore, I have integrated current theories of targets' behavioural responses to workplace incivility with the relevant empirical studies. In doing so, I have highlighted several other gaps in our knowledge of targets' behavioural responses to instigators of workplace incivility, which I have summarised in Table 4.

Table 4

Summary of the Gaps in our Knowledge of Targets' Behavioural Responses to Instigators of Incivility

Theory	**Theorised response(s).**	**Theorised mediators & moderators.**	**Theorised consequences.**	**Empirical research.**	**Gaps?**
Tit for tat? The spiraling effect of incivility in the workplace (Andersson & Pearson, 1999)	Reciprocation	Perceived interactional injustice. Negative affect (+). Desire for reciprocation (+). Perceived damage to social identity. Anger (+). Desire for revenge (+).	Escalates to coercive behaviour and physical aggression. Some targets may 'depart' from incivility.	Reciprocal incivility is associated with: Perceptions of injustice, attributing blame to the instigator, negative affect (e.g., anger) and reductions in self-regulation.	Could the opposite psychological conditions explain non-reciprocal/non-retaliatory responses to incivility? For example, non-critical/kind evaluations of incivility, a compassionate affective state, and self-regulation.
The embodiment of insult: A theory of biobehavioral response to workplace incivility (Cortina et al., 2022)	Retreat	When targets appraise incivility as a threat to their social status. When the organisational culture/climate promotes 'toxic competition'.	Extends or increases targets' physiological stress response to incivility.	Negative emotions, like fear and sadness, are antecedents of a retreat response. People weigh the costs versus benefits of confronting and resolving workplace incivility.	Is retreat always fear/threat-based? Or might retreating from incivility driven by other positive psychological conditions? Does retreating always amplify targets' stress levels? Or might retreat be experienced as a kindness to oneself/self-protective response?
	Affiliation	When targets appraise incivility as a threat to	Supports the reduction of targets' physiological	Customer incivility has led to affiliative behaviours such as	Identifying the psychological conditions that contribute to

		interpersonal relationships.	stress response to incivility.	service employees apologising to the customer. The opposite has been found, experiencing incivility has also led to less prosocial behaviour.	affiliation (other than threat appraisals), for example, compassion and kindness. What forms does affiliation take? Understanding the target's experience of affiliating with the instigator of incivility. Might affiliation be depleting, or stress increasing, for targets?
Kick me while I'm down: Modeling employee differences of the impact of workplace incivility on employees' health and wellbeing (Jorgensen et al., 2024) All four of the aforementioned constructs.	Freeze	A past trauma. Depletion of the target's personal resources. The target blames themselves for the experienced incivility.	Deleterious impact on targets' health and wellbeing	The freeze response is yet to be investigated.	The freeze response is typically associated with experiencing intense aggression. Do targets respond to a low intensity behaviour, such as incivility, by freezing? How do targets typically respond to incivility from a superior? Are targets responses to persistent supervisor incivility simple, involving only one of the responses depicted in these theories, or does the response pattern include a range of actions?

I have shown that surprisingly little is known about targets' behavioural responses to supervisor incivility. Furthermore, beyond threat appraisals and fear, little is known about the psychological conditions that are associated with these non-retaliatory responses to incivility, especially the positive psychological conditions. Given the definition of affiliation – that is, to 'tend-and-befriend' others (see Cortina et al., 2022) – it seems likely that this response may be driven by constructs centred on positive social connection, like compassion and kindness. Compassion and kindness appear to intersect with affiliative behaviour (Neff, 2021). Where affiliation is likely the behavioural expression of the urge to bond with others (Cortina et al., 2022), kindness involves understanding and fulfilling the needs of others and compassion is the desire to reduce the suffering of others (Neff, 2021). A qualitative analysis may provide a deeper understanding of targets' subjective experiences of affiliation, especially its potential connection to positive psychological constructs, like kindness and compassion. Moreover, generally it has been assumed that targets' behavioural responses to workplace incivility are static, involving one of these theorised responses or another. It may be that targets' responses to persistent workplace incivility are not so simple and may involve more than one of the responses depicted in these theories (Cortina et al., 2022). Given the paucity of research regarding responses to supervisor incivility and these gaps in our knowledge, the foundational research question that motivated this study is:

RQ1. How do subordinates respond to supervisor incivility?

2.3 Self – and Other- Directed Compassion

In the following sections (2.3.1 to 2.3.8), I discuss the literature on compassion (self- and other-directed). I present compassion (self- and other-directed) as a useful lens through which to advance the literature on targets' responses to incivility, in particular non-reciprocal responses. I highlight that self-compassion is associated with healthy personal relationships (e.g., Yang et al., 2019) and overcoming difficult and challenging circumstances in personal relationships (Davies et al., 2021). In line with this literature, I raise the possibility that self-compassion may facilitate overcoming difficult and challenging circumstances in workplace relationships, like supervisor incivility. Specifically, compassion may be an affective and cognitive buffer that directly informs the target's appraisal of uncivil behaviour.

In particular, I draw from studies of self-compassion and hostility to suggest that self-compassion may generate the opposing psychological conditions to those that produce an incivility spiral. People are likely to reciprocate incivility when experiencing a reduction in self-control (e.g., Francis et al., 2015; Meier & Gross, 2015; Rosen et al., 2016) and increased negative affect (e.g., Bunk & Magley, 2013; Porath & Pearson, 2012); and when the incivility one has experienced is perceived as unjust (e.g., Caza & Cortina, 2007). Conversely, self-compassion has been associated with increased self-control (e.g., Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021), a reduction in negative affect (e.g., Engel et al., 2021), and thinking benevolently about others' perspectives and circumstances (e.g., Fuochi et al., 2018; Miyagawa & Taniguchi, 2022).

Furthermore, I draw from studies of other-directed compassion (e.g., Duan et al., 2023), to explore how compassion for the instigator may inhibit the reciprocation of incivility providing an opportunity for non-reciprocal responses, like affiliation (see Cortina et al., 2022), to occur instead. Consistent with Cortina et al. (2022), I suggest that targets of

incivility may perceive instigators as having unmet needs that require fulfilment and perceive this 'suffering' as the source of the incivility, potentially prompting affiliation. My review of this literature suggests that compassion (self- and other-directed) may be important in understanding the interruption of workplace incivility. However, we don't yet know how compassion influences targets' cognitive-affective and behavioural responses to workplace incivility. Hence, my second research question is concerned with the role of compassion (self- and supervisor-) in subordinates' responses to supervisor incivility, which is stated at the end of this literature review chapter. Prior to clarifying the compassion-related terminology relevant to this study, I briefly explain how compassion (self- and other-directed) became a focal construct in this study (see Section 3.16.2.1 for further detail).

2.3.1 How Self- and Other-Directed Compassion Became a Focal Construct in this Study

Through the data analysis process (see Section 3.16), I identified compassion as significant to my participants' accounts of their cognitive-affective and behavioural responses to supervisor incivility. For example, Jade said "*I have some kind of compassion for her … I do feel some compassion … there's something driving her that maybe is familiar to me*". Prompted by quotes such as this, I returned to the literature review process and focused on the compassion construct. I moved back and forth between analysing my dataset and reviewing literature on compassion. I found that, compared to other foundational theoretical frameworks in organisational psychology (e.g., conservation of resources theory) (see Section 3.16.2.1), compassion (self- vs. supervisor-) provided the most abductive fit with my data. Specifically, compassion assisted me in explaining the surprising aspects of my that contradicted current theoretical explanations of targets' behavioural responses to workplace

incivility. For example, my participants retreating from supervisor incivility to fulfil a personal need (e.g., respite and recovery) rather than out of fear; and their concern for the psychological needs of the uncivil supervisor as opposed to desiring revenge. Compassion has been defined in many ways. In the next section, I clarify the compassion-related terminology relevant to this study, prior to outlining the potential of the compassion construct to expand knowledge of targets' responses to incivility.

2.3.2 The Compassion Construct: Clarifying Terminology

Compassion has been defined in many ways, but there is consensus that "*its essence is a basic kindness, with a deep awareness of the suffering of oneself and of other living things, coupled with the wish and effort to relieve it.*" (Gilbert, 2013, p. xii). This part of the literature review is concerned, first, with the compassion that is given from oneself to oneself to alleviate one's suffering, which is commonly called "*self-compassion*" (e.g., Neff, 2003b). Second, this literature review is concerned with the compassion that is given from oneself to another person to alleviate their suffering, which is sometimes referred to as "*compassion*" (e.g., Dutton et al., 201) but has also been called "*other-directed compassion*" (e.g., Sahdra et al., 2023), or "*other-oriented compassion*" (e.g., Quaglia et al., 2021). In this study, hereafter these two constructs are referred to as self-compassion and other-directed (or where relevant supervisor-) compassion. Despite being distinguished based on the direction of expression, these two constructs share the same 'essence' and aim to alleviate suffering (Gilbert, 2013; Strauss et al., 2016). In the next section, I discuss the potential of the compassion construct to expand knowledge of targets' responses to incivility.

2.3.3 The Potential of the Compassion Construct to Expand Knowledge of Targets' Responses to Incivility

Workplace incivility is associated with various kinds of suffering. A number of studies have found that experiencing incivility is associated with negative emotions, like fear, anger, and sadness (e.g., Adiyaman & Meier, 2022; Kabat-Farr et al., 2018; Niven et al., 2022), and a reduction in positive affective states like relaxation (e.g., Foulk et al., 2018) and vitality (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2018). Experiencing incivility can be stressful (e.g., Klingberg et al., 2018), and some studies have linked experiencing incivility to symptoms of burnout (e.g., Campana & Hammoud, 2015; Welbourne et al., 2015). Researchers have explicitly used the term 'suffering' in reference to the negative consequences of workplace incivility. For example, Pearson and Porath (2005, p. 16) found that "*where incivility thrives, targets suffer and organizations lose*". Likewise, Ghosh (2017, p. 264) argues that signals of relative social status (e.g., caste) can impact "*the extent to which the victims of workplace incivility suffer from the negative outcomes of psychological distress and turnover in Asian organizations.*" Additionally, Chris et al. (2022, p. 332) suggest that targets' social networks are "*a key component of combatting social isolation when suffering incivility*".

Although incivility is recognised as a source of significant suffering, and compassion is focused on the reduction of suffering, there is little crossover of the literature studying each. Additionally, although compassion, in particular self-compassion, is associated with the health and functioning of personal relationships, there is a dearth of research on compassion in workplace relationships generally (Dodson & Heng, 2022). Compassion may have been overlooked in organisational psychology research due to a historical focus on maximising performance and profit, with which caring for oneself and one's co-workers may be considered at odds (Dodson & Heng, 2022). Another reason that workplace compassion may have been overlooked is the paucity of appropriate scales, which need to be validated and

adapted for organisational research (Dodson & Heng, 2022). Furthermore, there is a paucity of theory about how compassion manifests outside of healthcare settings, which may have deterred researchers from investigating compassion in other organisational contexts (Dodson & Heng, 2022). Nevertheless, drawing on studies of compassion and concepts similar to incivility, like aggression, and studies of compassion in personal relationships generally, I highlight the potential of the compassion construct to expand knowledge of responses to workplace incivility. I highlight that compassion theory (self- and other-directed) may be particularly useful to advance knowledge of non-reciprocal responses to incivility. In the next two sections, I discuss self-compassion and other-directed compassion separately and highlight possibilities and questions regarding responses to incivility in relation to each.

2.3.4 Self-Compassion

Outside of the field of work and organisational psychology, self-compassion has received significant research attention. There are over 4,000 studies focused on self-compassion with new studies being published daily (Neff, 2023). Most of these studies are based on two seminal journal articles. The first is regarding Neff's (2003b) operational definition of self-compassion and the second is the scale to measure it, which is called the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003a). These articles have not only had a guiding influence on studies of self-compassion but also on studies of other-directed compassion. Pommier (2010), for example, adjusted the Self-Compassion Scale to apply Neff's definition in a study of compassion for others. Furthermore, Neff's (2003a, 2003b) theory and research has been applied to formally develop a measure of other-directed compassion that has been validated (Pommier et al., 2020) and is gaining popularity over long-established measures, like the Compassionate Engagement and Action Scales (Gilbert et al., 2017). Unpacking Neff's

(2003a, 2003b) definition of self-compassion is important because it is to this that many researchers are referring when using the broader term ‘compassion’.

2.3.4.1 The Three Elements of Compassion

Neff’s (2003b) definition of self-compassion is based on Buddhist philosophy that “*all conscious beings are intrinsically worthy of humane treatment*” (Neff, 2021, p. 22) and “*compassion is omni-directional*” (Neff, 2023, p.194). Consequently, despite labelling her theory a theory of ‘self-compassion’, Neff’s (2003b) definition includes others as well as oneself. This dual focus is expressed via ‘common humanity’ which is one of three elements that Neff (2003b) proposed constitutes self-compassion. Common humanity is acknowledging that people are imperfect, lead imperfect lives, and everyone suffers occasionally (Neff, 2021). Self-compassionate people are more accepting of their flaws and imperfections, which, in turn, increases their acceptance of the flaws and imperfections of friends’ and family members’ (see Zhang et al., 2020). Common humanity is said to increase feelings of connection to others. Instead of feeling isolated in one’s suffering – believing that everyone else’s life is better – common humanity reminds us that “*pain is a part of the shared human experience*” (Neff, 2021, p. 22). Indeed, studies have associated self-compassion with feelings of social connectedness (e.g., Neff, 2007). Recognising our common humanity is said to foster an attitude that “*we’re all in this together*” when coping with challenges and difficulties (Neff, 2021, p. 23). Hence, through practice of common humanity, people are said to be more careful in their treatment of others (Neff, 2021). Indeed, Ling et al. (2020) found that viewing common humanity scenarios increased healthcare workers’ compassion for patients. Along with common humanity (vs. isolation), Neff (2003b) proposed that self-compassion is comprised of self-kindness (vs. self-judgment) and mindfulness (vs. overidentification).

Self-kindness is "*the motivational core of self-compassion – the desire to alleviate suffering*" (Neff, 2021, p. 23). It is the impulse to help oneself when facing challenges or difficulties, and involves adopting a warm, supportive, and friendly attitude toward oneself. Self-kindness goes beyond merely putting "*a supportive arm around our own shoulder*" and halting self-judgement (Neff, 2021, p. 23). Self-kindness is active – it involves identifying a constructive response to personal suffering that has the potential to make a positive difference. Furthermore, rather than wasting energy on self-judgment, self-kindness provides affective resources, like validation, support, and encouragement, that facilitate constructive coping behaviour (Neff, 2021). In studies of academic setbacks, it has been shown that students high in self-compassion are more motivated, procrastinate less, and use more adaptive coping strategies following a disappointment (e.g., Breines & Chen, 2012; Leary et al., 2007; Neely et al., 2009; Neff, 2004; Woo Kyeong, 2013). Along with self-kindness (vs. self-judgement) and common humanity (vs. isolation), Neff (2003b) proposed that self-compassion involves mindfulness (vs. overidentification).

Mindfulness is the foundation of self-compassion (Neff, 2023). In order to have compassion for one's suffering, people first require the presence of mind to know they are suffering. Rather than avoiding or ignoring aversive thoughts, emotions, and sensations, mindfulness involves present moment awareness so that one can identify when one needs support. Mindfulness is not merely awareness but a balanced type of awareness that prevents people from overidentifying with aversive experiences (Neff, 2023). Instead of ruminating on aversive experiences and creating narratives that one's suffering is definitive and permanent, "*mindfulness mirrors what's occurring without distortion*" (Neff, 2021, p. 21). This perspective enables one to determine a constructive course of action to alleviate personal suffering. Research has shown that people with a low level of self-compassion ruminate more on aversive experiences (e.g., Barnard & Curry, 2011; Neff, 2003; Neff & Vonk, 2009;

Samaie & Farahani, 2011), and that increasing self-compassion decreases peoples' tendency to ruminate (e.g., Neff, 2007). Furthermore, Krieger et al. (2013) found that, among people with depression, a low level of self-compassion contributed to symptom-focused brooding. Brooding can restrain effective problem solving as people are more focused on thinking about their depression than acting to alleviate it.

As is implied previously, each element of self-compassion is structured as a bi-polar continuum ranging from mindfulness to overidentification, self-kindness to self-judgement, and common humanity to isolation (Neff, 2023). The three elements (mindfulness, self-kindness, and common humanity) are said to be interrelated and operate together to reduce personal suffering. In any moment a person can be self-compassionate, or uncompassionate, or at some neutral point in between (Neff, 2023). Miyagawa & Neff (2023) used a mood induction design to explore the dynamics of self-compassion within individuals. They found that compassionate and uncompassionate self-responding operate as opposites of a single dimension. Prior to the self-compassion mood induction, participants reported high compassionate and low uncompassionate self-responding; or low compassionate and high uncompassionate self-responding; or moderate compassionate and uncompassionate self-responding. None of the participants reported experiencing a combination of high compassionate and high uncompassionate self-responding. Following a self-compassion mood induction, the participants reported an increase in compassionate and a decrease in uncompassionate self-responding. These findings support Neff's (2023) structure of self-compassion as a bi-polar continuum. Although the concept has not been explored in any great detail in the context of workplace relationships (Dodson & Heng, 2022), self-compassion appears more regularly in the literature studying personal relationships.

2.3.5 Self-Compassion, Relationship Health and Functioning

Several studies have linked self-compassion to indicators of healthy personal relationships. For example, Huynh et al. (2022) found that the more self-compassionate expectant parents were, the higher quality their relationship with each other. Similarly, Fahimdanesh et al. (2020) found that self-compassion was associated with marital satisfaction among couples with a marriage history of one to ten years. Furthermore, Khosravi & Namani (2021) found that self-compassion was positively associated with family cohesion, which refers to the emotional connection between family members. In an adolescent sample, Yang et al. (2019) found that self-compassion had a positive relationship with trust, which refers to the belief that most people are good-natured and can be depended upon. They also found that self-compassion had a positive relationship with relatedness, which refers to feeling loved by, and meaningfully connected to, others.

There are several explanations for the association between self-compassion and healthy personal relationships. As discussed previously, people find certain personality traits, like extraversion and agreeableness, more 'palatable' than others, and, thus, treat people with these traits better (e.g., Yao et al., 2022). It has been found that self-compassion is positively associated with such traits that invite better treatment from others (e.g., Baker & McNulty 2011). Furthermore, Huynh et al. (2022) found that the more self-compassionate expectant parents were the more acceptance and respect they reported directing toward each other. Also, one other study found that self-compassion had a positive relationship with prosocial behaviour, in an adolescent sample (i.e., Yang et al., 2019). Thus, self-compassion is not only associated with receiving better treatment from others, but self-compassion is also associated with treating others better too. Furthermore, self-compassion has been found to positively associate with forgiveness of a marital partner's transgressions – a factor which plays an important role in happy long-term marriages (Fahimdanesh et al., 2020).

Self-compassion may also support healthy personal relationships through its salutary effects on psychological health and general wellbeing. Healthy, happy people are better resourced and, thus, have more to invest in their relationships, for example, energy and positive emotion. Conversely, people who are stressed may retreat from relationships to conserve personal resources (e.g., Pluut et al., 2022), which, if not addressed overtime, can result in relationship dissolution (e.g., Randall et al., 2022). Several studies indicate that self-compassion protects psychological health and general wellbeing. For example, in a sample of nurses, self-compassion was found to moderate the effect of perceived stress on burnout (Abdollahi et al., 2021). Similarly, Prudenzi et al. (2021) found that self-compassion was associated with less emotional exhaustion among National Health Service employees in the UK. Likewise, among Canadian physicians, self-compassion was positively associated with work engagement and job satisfaction; and negatively associated with emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion (Babenko et al., 2019). Self-compassion has also been positively associated with optimism (e.g., Simões et al., 2016) and resilience (e.g., Delaney & Soundy, 2018). Indeed, Galili-Weinstock et al. (2020, p. 817) argue that self-compassion "*is a robust predictor of psychological health*".

Self-compassion has also been found to protect people from the negative affective consequences of difficult and challenging interpersonal experiences. For example, Dai et al. (2024) found that the association between harsh parenting and depressive symptoms was lessened among adolescents higher in self-compassion. Similarly, Sbarra et al. (2012) found that self-compassion supported the psychological resilience of adults experiencing marital separation. They found that those higher in self-compassion reported less emotional distress in daily life at the start of, and nine months into, marital separation. Furthermore, Davies et al. (2021) found that self-compassion protected the self-esteem of people with intellectual disabilities who had experienced social rejection. They found that those higher in self-

compassion were less likely to feel shame, an emotion associated with self-blame, and had better self-esteem, than those lower in self-compassion. These studies suggest that people higher in self-compassion are better equipped to move past difficult and challenging interpersonal experiences. The studies raise questions regarding the effect of self-compassion in workplace relationships, and whether self-compassion may assist co-workers in moving past difficult and challenging experiences like incivility.

2.3.6 Self-Compassion and Non-Reciprocal Responses

In comparison to the personal relationships literature, there are very few studies on the association between self-compassion and workplace incivility, though the link between self-compassion and workplace incivility has not been completely ignored. One study found that people high in self-compassion felt less emotional exhaustion as a result of experiencing workplace incivility (Anjum et al., 2020). As previously discussed, studies show that emotional exhaustion predicts the instigation of incivility because people who feel overextended are less able to exert self-control (e.g., Hülsheger et al., 2021; Loh & Loi, 2018; Rosen et al., 2016; Su et al., 2022). A second study also found that following an imagined rejection from a supervisor, people higher in self-compassion reported less aggressive inclinations (Miyagawa & Taniguchi, 2022). These studies suggest that self-compassion may inhibit the reciprocation of incivility – otherwise known as "*the starting point*" of an incivility spiral (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 458) – providing an opportunity for non-reciprocal responses, like affiliation (see Cortina et al., 2022), to occur instead.

In the personal relationships literature, studies of concepts similar to incivility, like threats to self-image, suggest self-compassion may provide an opportunity for non-reciprocal responses. Wang et al. (2017) found that when dealing with threats to self-image, people

higher in self-compassion were less likely to respond defensively; instead, they were more likely to fix their mistakes, overcome obstacles, and pursue self-improvement. Although Wang et al. (2017) recruited participants from different populations with distinct cultures (study one sampled from a university in China and study two from the United States via Amazon's Mechanical Turk), the studies had consistent findings. These alternative responses are similar to Cortina et al.'s (2022) "*affiliative*" response to workplace incivility. As discussed previously, Cortina et al. (2022) propose that an affiliative response involves making amends to the instigator of incivility. Implicit in this proposal is that the target has made a mistake or has wronged the instigator of incivility in some way. Hence, the target needs to fix their mistake, or self-improve, to repair the relationship with the instigator of incivility. Wang et al.'s (2017) findings suggest that self-compassion may make an affiliative response to incivility more likely than reciprocation.

Like Wang et al. (2017), other studies have shown that self-compassion inhibits aggressive responses to challenging and difficult interpersonal experiences. For example, Miyagawa and Taniguchi (2020) asked participants to write about a time that they had experienced social rejection and then, operationalised aggression as pin counts in a voodoo doll. They found that people who treated themselves compassionately, and held compassionate goals, were less aggressive than their counterparts. Similarly, in a sample of university students it was found that people high in self-compassion are less likely to communicate aggressively than those low in self-compassion (Arslan & Adıgüzel, 2018). Furthermore, Yang et al. (2020) found that self-compassion decreases the likelihood that people will behave unethically. This effect was explained by moral disengagement. It was found that people high in self-compassion struggle with moral disengagement, which is a strategy whereby people re-frame immoral behaviour so that it appears more acceptable to them. Finding it difficult to justify their own unethical behaviour, self-compassionate people

engage in unethical behaviour to a lesser extent than those lower in self-compassion. This is a significant finding as Ilies et al. (2020) have found that moral disengagement leads to incivility toward co-workers and spouses. They examined the unexpected effects of positive affect and found that, among employees with low perspective taking, positive affect increases incivility via moral disengagement. These studies suggest that self-compassion may buffer against the reciprocation of incivility via its reducing effects on moral disengagement. Moral disengagement is not the only psychological condition through which self-compassion may inhibit an incivility spiral.

Studies indicate that self-compassion may generate the opposing psychological conditions to those that produce an incivility spiral. The psychological conditions that produce an incivility spiral have been previously discussed in this chapter (see Section 2.2.6). To recap, it has been found that people are likely to reciprocate incivility when experiencing a reduction in self-control (e.g., Francis et al., 2015; Meier & Gross, 2015; Rosen et al., 2016) and increased negative affect (e.g., Bunk & Magley, 2013; Porath & Pearson, 2012); and when the incivility one has experienced is perceived as unjust (e.g., Caza & Cortina, 2007). Conversely, as I will explore in detail in the following subsections, self-compassion has been associated with increased self-control (e.g., Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021), a reduction in negative affect (e.g., Engel et al., 2021) and thinking benevolently about others' perspectives and circumstances (e.g., Fuochi et al., 2018; Miyagawa & Taniguchi, 2022).

2.3.6.1 Self-compassion and Self-control

Di Fabio and Saklofske (2020) examined the associations between the Big 5 personality traits, trait emotional intelligence, self-compassion, and other-directed compassion. They found an association between trait emotional intelligence and self-compassion, and trait emotional intelligence and other-directed compassion. Trait emotional intelligence accounted for additional variance in self- and other-directed compassion beyond

that accounted for by the Big 5 personality traits. All the sub-factors that constitute trait emotional intelligence (e.g., self-control, emotionality, well-being, etc.) were found to relate to other-directed compassion. However, a particularly strong association was identified between the sub-factor 'self-control' and self-compassion. Similarly, Arslan's (2016) study suggests an association between self-compassion and self-control. Arslan investigated self-compassion and interpersonal problem solving in a sample of university students. He found a positive association between self-compassion and a willingness to take responsibility for interpersonal problems; responsibility being synonymous with having influence over someone or something (Oxford Dictionary). Furthermore, Arslan found a positive association between self-compassion and constructive interpersonal problem solving.

2.3.6.2 Self-compassion and Affect

Several studies have associated self-compassion with a balanced emotional reaction to challenging and difficult circumstances. Engel et al. (2021) examined the effect of self-compassion training on peoples' fear reactivity to fear-inducing obstacles, like the potential for failure. They found that, compared to a control group, entrepreneurs who had completed a brief loving kindness meditation reported less fear reactivity to the threat of venture failure. Similarly, Liu et al. (2022) found that adolescents high in self-compassion reported less fear of negative evaluation from their peers and this, in turn, was associated with less social anxiety and loneliness. Likewise, Kreemers et al. (2018) found that self-compassion took the sting out of negative job search experiences, like a lack of progress, for the unemployed. Furthermore, Fleischmann et al. (2022) found that a particular facet of self-compassion – called non-judging – was significant to counteracting negative affect. They found that for police officers high in non-judging, the association between work-related stressors and anxiety was not significant. Additionally, McArthur et al. (2017) found that the emotional

balance associated with self-compassion was also associated with academic resilience among underprivileged students.

2.3.6.3 Self-compassion and Cognition

Other studies have associated self-compassion with benevolent thoughts about, and balanced perceptions of, challenging and difficult circumstances. For example, Fuochi et al. (2018) found that 'outgroup members', that is, people who are typically judged more harshly and perceived as more threatening than 'ingroup members', are met with more openness by those higher in self-compassion. This effect was explained by a component of self-compassion called common humanity. Common humanity involves recognising the interconnectedness of people and the difficulties people share, like weakness, failure, and suffering (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021). Fuochi et al. found that people high in self-compassion were more empathic and positive to outgroup members as they scored highly in common humanity. Similarly, Miyagawa and Taniguchi (2022) found that people high in self-compassion thought benevolently about those who they could otherwise judge harshly. They asked participants to reflect on a time that someone had hurt them. They found that people high in self-compassion were more likely to forgive someone for hurting them. They also found that although people high in self-compassion ruminated on the transgressions of others, they did so in a manner described as 'benevolent'. This means that, rather than judging those who had hurt them, people high in self-compassion were more understanding of the hurtful behaviours of others.

Interim Summary. As I discussed previously, studies show that people are likely to reciprocate workplace incivility when experiencing a reduction in self-control (e.g., Francis et al., 2015; Meier & Gross, 2015; Rosen et al., 2016) and increased negative affect (e.g., Bunk & Magley, 2013; Porath & Pearson, 2012); and when the incivility one has experienced is perceived as unjust (e.g., Caza & Cortina, 2007). As I have explored in detail, self-

compassion has been associated with increased self-control (e.g., Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021), a reduction in negative affect (e.g., Engel et al., 2021) and thinking benevolently about others' perspectives and circumstances (e.g., Fuochi et al., 2018; Miyagawa & Taniguchi, 2022). These studies suggest that self-compassion theory may be useful in advancing knowledge of non-reciprocal responses to incivility, specifically the intraindividual, positive psychological conditions involved.

2.3.7 Other-Directed Compassion and Non-Reciprocal Responses

Other-directed compassion is defined as an empathetic response to alleviate another person's suffering (Sahdra et al., 2023). As with self-compassion, a study has shown that other-directed compassion also inhibits peoples' aggressive inclinations. Duan et al. (2023) found that the association between manager abuse and supervisor abuse is weaker among supervisors with higher levels of other-directed compassion. They propose that abused supervisors with higher levels of other-directed compassion chose not to perpetuate the abuse of managers because they are deeply connected to the pain of others. Duan et al. (2023) argued that, rather than amplify the pain of others, supervisors with higher levels of other-directed compassion would attempt to alleviate suffering in the workplace. Similarly, Marcel & Kamalanabhan (2024) made several propositions about the beneficial effects of other-directed compassion on relational wellbeing. They argued that other-directed compassion connects individuals psychologically, because people put more trust in those that behave compassionately. These studies suggest that compassion for the instigator may inhibit the reciprocation of incivility providing an opportunity for non-reciprocal responses, like affiliation (see Cortina et al., 2022), to occur instead. Cortina et al. (2022) were the first to connect targets' responses to incivility with the construct 'other-directed compassion'.

Cortina et al. (2022, p. 7) suggest that people may respond to the instigators of incivility with affiliation by "*tending*" to their unmet needs. In delineating affiliation, they referred to Taylor and colleagues' (2000) organisation of bonding behaviour that likens "*tending*" to "*nurturing and protecting off-spring*". It is possible that targets of incivility perceive instigators as having unmet needs that require fulfilment. As discussed previously (see Section 2.1.9), studies show that instigators of incivility can have poorer quality workplace relationships compared to their colleagues (Nandedkar, 2016) and may have been treated unfairly (Blau & Andersson, 2005; Sayers et al., 2011); and are often overworked and under strain (Semmer et al., 2010; Zivnuska et al., 2020). Targets of incivility may recognise the troubles of instigators and perceive their suffering as the source of the incivility. As discussed previously (see Section 2.2.10.1), it is unclear if targets respond to incivility compassionately with affiliation. To re-cap, one study found that targets sometimes apologise to uncivil customers (Robertson & O'Reilly, 2020). However, another study suggests that targets direct their affiliative efforts to third parties rather than the instigators of incivility (Ganster et al., 2023).

Studies of similar negative behaviour, like abusive supervision, suggest that incivility may invite instigator-directed compassion in the form of affiliation. Tröster and Van Quaquebeke (2021) found that victims of abusive supervision help abusive supervisors because they blame themselves and then affiliate with the supervisor to make amends. Nevertheless, Yu et al. (2023) found that people are unlikely to respond to others' compassionately when they perceive moral badness. To perceive moral badness is to make immoral judgements of a person's character. For example, it is to call someone an 'uncivil person' as opposed to 'a person that behaved uncivilly'. Yu et al. (2023) found that participants withheld compassion when they perceived moral badness, even if the person's suffering was unrelated to their 'immoral character'. This study casts doubt on whether

recognising the troubles of instigators predisposes targets to affiliation. The study suggests that targets' thoughts about the instigator's character are key to understanding compassionate (or uncompassionate) responses to incivility.

2.3.8 Research Question Two

I have presented compassion theory (self- vs. other-directed) as a useful lens through which to advance the literature on targets' responses to incivility, in particular non-reciprocal responses. I have shown that self-compassion is associated with healthy personal relationships and overcoming difficult and challenging circumstances in personal relationships. In line with this literature, I have suggested that self-compassion may facilitate overcoming difficult and challenging circumstances in workplace relationships, like supervisor incivility. In particular, I have drawn from studies of self-compassion and hostility to suggest that self-compassion may generate the opposing psychological conditions to those that produce an incivility spiral. I have outlined that people are likely to reciprocate incivility when experiencing a reduction in self-control (e.g., Francis et al., 2015; Meier & Gross, 2015; Rosen et al., 2016) and increased negative affect (e.g., Bunk & Magley, 2013; Porath & Pearson, 2012); and when the incivility one has experienced is perceived as unjust (e.g., Caza & Cortina, 2007). Conversely, I have outlined that self-compassion has been associated with increased self-control (e.g., Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021), a reduction in negative affect (e.g., Engel et al., 2021) and thinking benevolently about others' perspectives and circumstances (e.g., Fuochi et al., 2018; Miyagawa & Taniguchi, 2022). While my review of the literature suggests that compassion may be important in understanding incivility, we don't yet know how it influences target responses to incivility. Hence, my second, and final, research question is:

RQ2. What is the role of compassion in subordinates' responses to supervisor incivility?

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

3.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter discusses the research design and methods, and the philosophical assumptions that underpin them. The chapter begins with a statement of the research objectives before focusing on the interpretivist philosophy that underpins the overall research approach. Next, I discuss the three types of sampling used and my participants' characteristics. Furthermore, I outline the ethical principles that guided this research in particular the participants' right to withdraw, informed consent, data protection and confidentiality. Additionally, I describe the development of the interview guide, and the qualitative interview process through which I gathered my data. Finally, I discuss how I applied Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019, 2022) 'reflexive thematic analysis' method to my dataset, to answer the research questions.

3.2 Research Objectives

This study aims to explore qualitatively how incivility is managed in workplace relationships, in particular, in the subordinate-supervisor relationship. In doing so, it challenges the notion that incivility creates self-reinforcing cycles and considers subordinates' non-reciprocal responses to supervisor incivility. More specifically, this study explores the role of compassion in managing supervisor incivility and how the direction of compassion, such as self- vs. supervisor-compassion, shapes subordinates' responses. Therefore, the overarching objective of this study is to explore behavioural responses to supervisor incivility, in particular, non-reciprocal responses from the perspective of subordinates, and compassion as a potential mechanism upon which these responses may hinge.

3.3 Research Design

A coherent research design is one in which the methodology (i.e., the philosophical and theoretical assumptions) and methods (i.e., the data collection and analysis techniques) align with the research question(s) that the study aims to address (Edmondson & McManus, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2013). The research questions that this study aims to address are open-ended and focus on process – i.e., how subordinates responded to supervisor incivility – rather than quantification – e.g., how many times subordinates used a particular response to supervisor incivility. Quantitative research is ideal for answering questions of 'how many' whereas qualitative exploratory research is ideal for answering 'how' (process-related) questions (Pratt & Bonaccio, 2016). More specifically, the research questions are concerned with expanding the extant literature regarding responses to incivility, in particular, non-reciprocal responses to supervisor incivility. As theory regarding non-reciprocal responses to incivility is in an emergent stage (e.g., Jorgensen et al., 2024), particularly theory regarding responses in power imbalanced relationships (e.g., Cortina et al., 2022), "*rich, detailed, and evocative data are needed to shed light on the phenomenon*" (Edmondson & McManus, 2007, p. 1162). Such rich, detailed, and evocative data are most likely to be produced when researchers adopt a qualitative exploratory approach to the phenomenon of interest (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). Hence, I decided to adopt a qualitative exploratory approach to research in this study.

3.4 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the underlying beliefs and assumptions that shape how researchers view the world and interact with it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Research philosophy includes assumptions about (i) the nature of reality (e.g., what is a 'supervisory relationship'?

What is a ‘supervisory relationship’ like?); (ii) what constitutes good-quality data (e.g., What is ‘high-quality’ knowledge? And how ‘should’ knowledge be produced?); and (iii) the role of the researcher (e.g., their personal values) in shaping research findings (Crotty, 1998; Saunders et al., 2016). There are a number of different philosophies that researchers can adopt including a pragmatist, positivist, realist, or interpretivist philosophy (Saunders et al., 2019). Pragmatism is focused on producing knowledge that enables action, and pragmatists contend that concepts are only significant if they support intervention (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008).

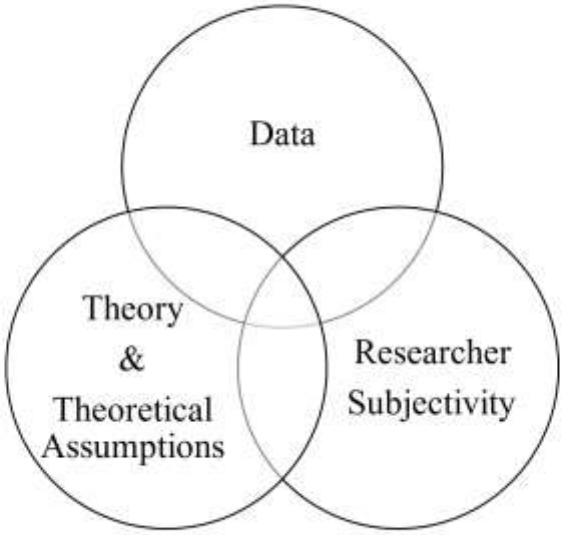
Positivism is associated with the work of philosophers and scientists commonly referred to as the ‘Vienna Circle’ (e.g., Kraft, 2015). Positivists follow a scientific empiricist method which they believe will yield ‘pure data’, which is data that is uninfluenced by the researcher’s subjective interpretations or biases. Positivism is focused on quantification and quantifiable data and often involves collecting data via questionnaires in which participants choose their responses from a list of responses pre-determined by the researcher (e.g., Raza et al., 2023). Extreme ‘direct realists’ believe in the infallibility of the human senses and, consequently, the researcher’s experience of the world is asserted to be an accurate portrayal of the world. Conversely, critical realists assert that reality is not directly accessible through the human senses. Instead of focusing on sensations like their counterparts, critical realists investigate the mental processing of events and experiences, which they believe contribute to people’s ‘sense’ of them. Finally, interpretivism emphasises that people create meaning from their experiences and, thus, people’s knowledge of the world and events is subjective (Saunders et al., 2019).

This study is underpinned by an interpretivist philosophy, which is situated within the qualitative paradigm and is grounded by the values of qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Interpretivist research is concerned with understanding people’s behaviour

(e.g., their behavioural responses to incivility), and the meanings people ascribe to their own, and others', behaviour (e.g., the intentions of an uncivil supervisor) (Johnson & Clark, 2006). Interpretivists recognise the role of their own subjectivity in shaping their research findings. For example, they acknowledge and expect that personal experiences with the research topic may influence the researcher's interpretations of their participants' data (Saunders et al., 2016). From an ontological position, interpretivists believe that phenomena are the result of people's subjective perceptions, and their actions and subsequent social interactions with others. This is the ontological position that underpins Andersson and Pearson's (1999) influential 'spiral theory' of incivility. In particular, Andersson and Pearson emphasise the role of perceived interactional injustice in creating self-reinforcing cycles of incivility, where the instigator's incivility triggers reciprocation from the target which, subsequently, provokes further incivility.

Furthermore, interpretivists contend that the social construction of phenomena extends into the research process itself. Specifically, researchers and participants are believed to co-construct knowledge of phenomena jointly. Further, given that no two researchers or participants are totally alike, different realities or outcomes are possible (Saunders et al., 2019). Interpretivism is synonymous with Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) method of thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2019) argue that researcher subjectivity is not a problem to be eliminated but a resource for doing qualitative data analysis. Research findings are said to be constructed at the intersection of: (i) the data, (ii) the theory and theoretical assumptions applied to the data, and (iii) the personal experiences, beliefs, and analytical skills of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2019; see Figure 2). Consequently, there is a likelihood that different researchers would construct different findings, or themes, from the same dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2023). There is nothing wrong with this divergence in findings – interpretivism and, in particular, the thematic analysis method, is said to allow researchers to

view the same phenomenon from different 'sides' (Braun & Clarke, 2023). These alternative perspectives are considered desirable as they contribute to the development of a fuller knowledge of the phenomenon of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2023). An example of the benefits of such pluralism has been provided by Dempsey et al. (2022), who adopted a multi-perspective approach to understanding the multiple realities of people living with depression.



(Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2022)

Figure 2

Interpretivism: The 'Site' of the Construction of Research Findings

From an epistemological position, interpretivists aim to capture the complexity of the social world, and the subjective realities of their participants, to develop new understandings of social phenomena. To achieve this goal, interpretivists primarily focus on gathering peoples' narratives, stories, perceptions, and interpretations of their realities. This kind of data is gathered so that the researcher can attempt to enter the inner world of their

participants, and understand their subjective perspective, to contribute new theory to the relevant literature (Shaw, 1999). This approach is particularly beneficial to this study as research has predominantly focused on the reciprocation of incivility to the exclusion of non-reciprocal responses (e.g., Hershcovis et al., 2018; Holm et al., 2015; Rosen et al., 2016; Torkelson et al., 2016). Hence, an approach that facilitates seeing targets' responses in a new way is appropriate to challenge researchers' consensus on the self-reinforcing nature of incivility. Interpretivism is aligned with qualitative research methods, like the research interview and thematic analysis of interview data, which capture commonalities and differences in participants' narratives and stories (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Saunders et al., 2016).

3.5 Research Methodology

Research methodology is the plan of action that guides a researcher's choices and, especially, their use of particular research methods (Crotty, 1998). Researchers must make choices regarding the methodology (i.e., qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method research) and time horizon as well as method(s) of data collection (e.g., interview, survey, etc.,) (Saunders et al., 2019). As discussed previously, I decided to conduct a mono-method qualitative inquiry as this approach is particularly suited to my (i) research questions and (ii) interpretivist philosophy, and the (iii) state of the literature regarding non-reciprocal responses to incivility, which is nascent (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

The next decision I made concerned the time horizon of the research, which can either be cross-sectional or longitudinal. Cross-sectional studies consist of data collected at one time point whereas longitudinal studies consist of data collected at three or more points in time (Saunders et al., 2019; Singer & Willett, 2003). Longitudinal research is particularly useful

for measuring daily fluctuations in constructs (e.g., the amount of incivility experienced on Mondays vs. Fridays). Cross-sectional research is particularly useful for establishing how and why a phenomenon occurs (Corley & Gioia, 2011). As my research questions are focused on how people respond to supervisor incivility, rather than how much their response fluctuates over a week or month, I adopted a cross-sectional approach to data collection.

Furthermore, I decided to interview people one-on-one to explore their reactions and responses to supervisor incivility. As noted previously, the qualitative interview method is synonymous with interpretivism and, moreover, has proven useful for garnering rich insights into peoples' responses to workplace mistreatment. For example, research interviews have provided in-depth knowledge of service employees' responses to customer incivility (e.g., Robertson & O'Reilly, 2020). Lastly, I decided that thematic analysis, in particular, reflexive thematic analysis, was an appropriate approach to data analysis. "*The domain of qualitative research is replete with templates, standard protocols for the analysis of qualitative data*" (Harley & Cornelissen, 2022, p. 239). Cited over 214,000 times, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis (TA) is a standard protocol to study peoples' behaviours, thoughts, feelings, and experiences, from an interpretivist position. TA has been useful in expanding knowledge of topics related to this study. For example, employees' perceptions of supervisor transgressions (e.g., Basford, 2014) and service employees' responses to customer incivility (e.g., Robertson & O'Reilly, 2020). Beyond the rigour associated with TA, I found it an appropriate method for this study for two reasons.

First, TA offers the possibility of moving between data- vs. theory- driven analysis, which is often called an abductive approach (Saunders et al., 2016). This flexibility offered the possibility of capturing the voices of participants and interpreting their accounts using themes in existing research on responses to incivility (e.g., Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024) and compassion (e.g., Neff, 2003a, Neff, 2003b). This was particularly important

given that this study is concerned with developing new theory on non-retaliatory responses to incivility by integrating self-compassion theory (e.g., Neff, 2003a, 2003b). Moreover, it was from early analysis of my participants' accounts that I decided to import self-compassion theory to assist data analysis. This decision is discussed in detail later, in the 'data analysis' section of this chapter.

Second, I recognised early in the research process that the findings of this study had the potential for practical application. Non-reciprocal responses to incivility can include behaviours that disrupt self-reinforcing cycles of incivility (Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024). Practitioners may wish to encourage these types of responses among targets of incivility to inhibit the continuation and spread of incivility in the workplace. TA is associated with producing thematic statements that can be readily "*translated into the language of intervention and implementation*" (Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012, p. 1404). Thus, TA was not only attractive from a theory-development perspective but also from the perspective of enhancing the usability of the findings.

According to Braun and Clarke (2021), there are three primary approaches to TA: (i) coding reliability, (ii) codebook approaches, and (iii) the reflexive approach, which involve different philosophical assumptions. A coding reliability approach assumes that there is a single objective reality that resides in qualitative data and is 'waiting to be discovered' by the researcher. Themes are identified based on the frequency with which a topic is raised by the research participants – the most frequently raised topics become themes. The researcher is considered a source of bias, a potential threat to coding reliability. The 'spoiling effect' of researcher bias is managed through the use of multiple coders and achieving a degree of consensus among them, which can be measured using Cohen's Kappa (Braun and Clarke 2013).

The second approach involves the use of a codebook which is a tool that is often used by researchers adopting a coding reliability approach. A codebook maps the progression of the coding process and facilitates coordination of the activities of the analysis team. Reflexive TA (RTA) assumes the opposite of the coding reliability and codebook approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Themes are not thought to reside within the data. Instead, themes are said to be actively constructed from the data, through the researcher's systematic engagement with the data. In line with the philosophy of interpretivism, researcher subjectivity is not a problem to be eliminated but a resource for doing analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Hence, I chose to use RTA to analyse my data.

3.6 Sampling Approach

The sampling strategy for this study included three types: convenience, purposive, and snowball. Initially, I used convenience sampling to recruit participants from my personal and professional network (Coyne, 1997). I used convenience sampling as, given the focus of the research questions and the sensitive nature of the research topic, it would be impossible to identify participants in any other way than through seeking volunteers who have had experience of supervisor incivility. Seeking volunteers independent to the workplace also avoided the ethical issues that would arise if I invited people, via their employer, to inform on their supervisor's behaviour. Convenience sampling involved advertising the study to people who held management positions across various Ireland-based organisations; informing them of the nature of the study; and inviting them to contact me if they, or a member of their network, would like more information about the study (see Appendix A). To facilitate dissemination of the invitation to participate, I created a brief document which others could share via email or employment-focused social media platforms, like LinkedIn (see Appendix

B). I also invited students of the executive education programmes at Dublin City University to participate. I did so by attending programme classes and briefly explaining the study and its aims to the class attendees. Finally, I invited PhD students from other Dublin-based universities to participate in the study. Similarly, I attended research methods classes aimed at PhD students in-person and briefly explained the study and its aims inviting the students to participate. When recruiting students, I emphasised that I wanted to explore their current (i.e., for part-time students), or past (i.e., for full-time students), experiences with supervisor incivility in the workplace.

Following the initial participant recruitment and data collection phase, it became apparent that there was a disproportionate number of female participants in the sample and gathering additional examples of minor incivilities was of interest. Therefore, I altered the sampling strategy to purposive sampling (Patton, 1990). I targeted male participants by emphasising my interest in men's experience of supervisor incivility, when inviting students of the executive education programmes at Dublin City University to participate. I also asked participants at the end of the interview if they could disseminate the invitation to others but particularly to males who may be interested in the study. This alteration in the sampling strategy assisted in recruiting additional male participants to the study. In the latter stages of participant recruitment, I also altered the way in which I presented the study to the students of the executive education programs from which I sampled. I emphasised that the interview would focus on the "*good and the not so good aspects*" of their relationship with a current or past supervisor, and any "*mundane but rude*" actions of the supervisor. I made this change as, up to this point, I had gathered examples of supervisor incivility that constituted acts of commission (e.g., stealing credit for these subordinates' work), and narratives of poor-quality supervisory relationships (e.g., these subordinates had low trust in, or distrusted, the supervisor), and I wanted to extend the dataset so that it also included examples of supervisor

incivility that constituted acts of omission (e.g., the supervisor ignores the subordinate) and narratives of ambivalent, or higher-quality, supervisory relationships (e.g., these subordinates felt positively and negatively about the supervisor, or trusted the supervisor in some regards but not others). This slight rewording of the description of the study assisted in gathering additional examples of minor incivilities, and narratives of supervisory relationships that were not purely negative.

People who volunteered to participate were included in the study if they were working with, or had worked with, a supervisor that they perceived to have behaved "*rudely*" or "*disrespectfully*" toward them. Apart from this, there was no other inclusion criteria. I did not place any restrictions on the duration of the supervisory relationship as theory suggests incivility occurs, and can be impactful, even in brief and temporary workplace relationships (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999) and this has been shown in subsequent research (e.g., Robertson & O'Reilly, 2020). I purposefully did not share the scholarly definition of incivility (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999) with potential participants, nor did I include or exclude participants based on their agreement with the scholarly definition. I simply used the words "*rudeness*" and "*disrespect*" in the invitation to participate, and in dialogue with participants during the interviews. I chose to use these words because they feature in the scholarly definition of workplace incivility – "*uncivil behaviours are characteristically rude or discourteous*" (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). Further, "*rudeness*" and "*disrespect*" are two of the top three words that lay people use to define workplace incivility, along with the word "*harmful*" (see Samosh, 2019, p. 95).

Moreover, in line with my interpretivist position, I was interested in prioritising my participants' conceptualisations of supervisor incivility. I was interested to learn if my participants' subjective conceptualisations of supervisor incivility aligned with the way in which scholars measure workplace incivility, and of any novel examples of supervisor

incivility that my participants may provide. My participants provided examples of supervisor incivility that are similar to items included in the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS) (Cortina et al., 2001). In particular, they provided examples of supervisor incivility that are similar to items one, three, and four, which refer to behaviour that has a demeaning quality. For example, Gwen said, "*She likened me to the junior girl that used to report into me, she said 'At the moment I see no difference between you – you're a senior manager – I see no difference between you and the other girl who just left,' who had four years' experience and was just starting off her career*". My participants also provided novel examples of supervisor incivility that extend the WIS. In particular, some of my participants provided examples of behaviour that has a dominating quality. For example, Bret said, "*He frowned upon people laughing and joking. You couldn't crack a joke … occasionally we will turn the radio up for the News. He walked around unplugging all the radios. 'They are not allowed' he said*".

3.7 Participants

The participants consisted of 43 people who self-identified as having been targets of supervisor incivility. Accordingly, the unit of analysis is at the individual level. Although there is no clear guidance on the number of participants required for qualitative studies, including those that implement RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2016), the number of participants is consistent with the number observed in incivility studies published in peer reviewed journals (e.g., Griffin & Baverstock, 2023; Pattani et al., 2018). Further, the sample size is in line with Saunders and Townsend's (2016) recommendations for interview data (approximately 50 participants), when interview data are obtained from people employed across multiple organisations as is the case in this study. The participants resided in Ireland and worked for Ireland-based organisations. In Table 5, I provide the participant characteristics including the

(i) gender(s) of the dyad, (ii) duration of the relationship, (ii) status of the relationship (ongoing or ceased), (iii) whether the participant held a position of formal power in the organisation (yes or no), and the (iv) industry in which the participant worked. One male participant asked if he could speak about supervisor incivility "*generally*" as he was uncomfortable with the potential risk of identifying specific individuals in any way, including through the use of pronouns, which I understood and accepted. This participant, Rudy, used the word 'supervisors' to refer to the behaviours of the members of an all-male leadership team who are his direct superiors.

Twenty-six of the supervisory relationships in question had ceased at the time of interview, while seventeen were ongoing. In relation to those that had ceased, some had ended in the weeks and months prior to the interview, whereas others had ended a few years prior. I worked to limit recall bias by adopting a critical incident approach to an aspect of the research interviews, which I discuss in later 'Developing the Interview Guide'. Of the relationships that had ended, seven were due to the supervisor exiting the supervisory role and/or the organisation. Five of the interviewees had exited the organisation as they felt pushed out by the supervisor's incivility, and thirteen participants chose to exit for better employment opportunities. One participant left her job role due to an illness that she clearly stated was not related to her experience of supervisor incivility.

Table 5

Participant and Relationship Characteristics

Pseudonym	Gender (Supervisor → Subordinate)	Duration of Relationship	Status of Relationship	Formal Power	Industry
Gwen	Female→Female	1 – 2 years	Ongoing	No	Marketing and Advertising
Mia	Male→Female	6 months – one year	Ceased	Yes	Pharmaceutical
Molly	Female→Female	2 – 5 years	Ceased	Yes	Social care
Erin	Male→Female	2 – 5 years	Ceased	No	Hospitality and tourism
Ava	Female→Female	6 months – 1 year	Ceased	Yes	Technology
Dane	Male→Male	2 – 5 years	Ceased	Yes	Pharmaceutical
Josie	Female→Female	2 – 5 years	Ceased	Yes	Insurance
Anna	Female→Female	2 – 5 years	Ceased	No	Pharmaceutical
Jill	Female→Female	1 – 2 years	Ceased	No	Banking
Eddy	Male→Male	5 – 10 years	Ceased	No	Logistics and supply chain
Bart	Male→Male	5 – 10 years	Ceased	Yes	Agricultural
Paige	Female→Female	2 – 5 years	Ceased	No	Education
Kay	Male→Female	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	Yes	Education

Eve	Female→Female	2 – 5 years	Ceased	No	Engineering
Ben	Male→Male	> 15 years	Ceased	Yes	Engineering
Earl	Female→Male	2 – 5 years	Ceased	Yes	Transportation
Bret	Male→Male	6 months – 1 year	Ceased	Yes	Engineering
Alfie	Male→Male	2 – 5 years	Ceased	Yes	Transportation
Fay	Male→Female	< 6 months	Ceased	Yes	Banking
Penny	Female→Female	5 – 10 years	Ongoing	Yes	Transportation
Wes	Male→Male	1 – 2 years	Ceased	No	Information technology
Polly	Male→Female	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	No	Transportation
Will	Male→Male	5 – 10 years	Ongoing	Yes	Transportation
Jade	Female→Female	2 – 5 years	Ceased	Yes	Human resource management
Una	Female→Female	1 – 2 years	Ceased	No	Charity
Rose	Male→Female	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	No	Education
Sadie	Male→Female	1 – 2 years	Ongoing	Yes	Marketing and Advertising
Sally	Female→Female	1 – 2 years	Ongoing	Yes	Social care
Tessa	Male→Female	10 – 15 years	Ongoing	Yes	Transportation
Kim	Male→Female	6 months – 1 year	Ceased	No	Pharmaceutical
Kitty	Male→Female	2 – 5 years	Ceased	No	Social care
Lucy	Female→Female	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	Yes	Social care
Liv	Female→Female	1 – 2 years	Ongoing	Yes	Information technology
Mike	Female→Male	< 6 months	Ongoing	No	Pharmaceutical

Max	Male→Male	2 – 5 years	Ceased	No	Transportation
Lily	Female→Female	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	No	Education
Leah	Female→Female	1 – 2 years	Ongoing	No	Pharmaceutical
Jake	Male→Male	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	No	Information technology
Rudy	"*Male leadership*"→Male				Transportation
Bert	Female→Male	< 6 months	Ceased	No	Retail
Beth	Male→Female	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	No	Transportation
Cora	Female→Female	2 – 5 years	Ceased	No	Retail
Bob	Male→Male	5 – 10 years	Ceased	Yes	Financial Services

3.8 Ethical Considerations

I adhered to practices associated with ethical research when carrying out this study to minimise the level of risk to participants (Frauenberger et al., 2017). Before collecting any data from the participants, I obtained ethical approval for the study from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix C). The ethical approval process involved completing a detailed form outlining the aims, objectives, and methodology of the study, as well as information regarding how the level of risk to participants would be minimised. The main ethical principles that required consideration were (i) voluntary participation, which I have discussed earlier; (ii) right to withdraw; (iii) informed consent; and (iv) data protection and participant confidentiality which included aligning the handling of participant data with General Data Protection Regulation.

3.9 Right to Withdraw

Participants had the right to withdraw from this study during a two-month cooling-off period that followed their research interview. The right to withdraw was communicated to participants via a 'plain language statement', or information sheet (see Appendix D), which was provided before the interview. None of the people who volunteered to participate withdrew from this study.

3.10 Informed Consent

The plain language statement, or information sheet (see Appendix D), fully informed the participants about the study and how their data would be used. Each participant was provided with a copy of the plain language statement and a consent form, which they were

asked to sign only if they fully understood what participating in the study entailed. By signing the consent form the participants indicated that they had read the plain language statement, understood the information I had provided, and agreed to the conditions of the study. For example, how their data would be protected, the legal limitations to the protection of data, and the two-month cooling-off period which framed their right to withdraw. Furthermore, the participants consented to their interview being audio recorded for transcription purposes. Everyone who volunteered to participate in this study indicated informed consent by signing a consent form (see Appendix E).

3.11 Supporting Distressed Participants

Workplace incivility can be a sensitive and potentially distressing topic. Hence, prior to the interviews, I planned how I would handle participant distress. In keeping with good practice (e.g., Whitney & Evered, 2022), these strategies included (i) being attentive to signs of participant distress, (ii) gently pausing and directing the participants to resources for comfort, and (iii) offering the participant the opportunity to end or reschedule the interview. Specifically, I watched carefully for verbal and non-verbal signs of distress, like changes in tone of voice, crying, bodily tension (e.g., clenching their firsts or hunching their shoulders), or withdrawing (e.g., reducing eye contact, moving or leaning back in their chair). A small proportion of my participants indicated distress during the interview (i.e., Molly, Kay and Jade). In these circumstances, I asked open-ended questions about the participant's cognitive-affective state (e.g., "*I sense this upsetting for you to talk about, how are you feeling in this moment?"*). I listened carefully to their answers, nodded to let the participant know that I was listening, and acknowledged their cognitive-affective state (e.g., "*I understand why you feel this way.*" "*I think I would also feel this way too.*"). I paused these interviews and directed

these participants to resources that I had provided for their comfort (e.g., "*Please take a tissue.*" "*Would you like to take a drink of water? These water bottles are here just for your use*"). Further, I emphasised to these participants that they could pause or end the interview at any time without penalty. None of the participants that indicated distress wanted to stop or take a formal break from the interview. When these interviewees confirmed they were ready, I gently reoriented the conversation back to the focus of the interview (e.g., "*I'm sorry you experienced this, is it okay if I ask you a little more about it?*"). Every participant in this study was given information on support systems available to them in the plain language statement (see Appendix D). However, at the end of these interviews, I especially highlighted these support systems to these participants.

3.12 Data Protection and Participant Confidentiality

As noted, the interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. I recorded the interviews using an Olympus digital voice recorder. After each interview, I secure the audio recording in my Dublin City University Google Drive, which is protected by two-factor authentication. Once uploaded to my Google Drive, I deleted the interview from the digital voice recorder. I received funding from Dublin City University Business School to support this study, and I chose to use some of this funding on a professional transcription service. I employed a professional transcription service that regularly handled sensitive data to convert the interview audio into text files (i.e., word documents). The service agreed to keep my participants' data secure, private, and confidential. I shared the interviews with the professional transcription service using a secure Google Drive folder. Once the interviews had been transcribed, they were deleted from the transcription service's system. I took other steps to protect the privacy and confidentiality of my participants' data. I replaced any

mention of the interviewee's name with a pseudonym and deleted any other identifying information from the transcription (e.g., the name of the organisation). Everywhere that the interviewee identified the supervisor, or another coworker, by name, I replaced the name with a generic identifier. For example, supervisors' names were replaced with the word 'supervisor', or the pronouns that the interviewees used in relation to the supervisor (i.e., he/she/they).

3.13 Qualitative Data Collection

I collected data between February 2020 and January 2022 via research interviews, specifically, semi-structured interviews. Research interviews allow for the collection of rich data concerning peoples' thoughts, feelings, experiences, and subjective perceptions (Lamont & Swidler, 2014). Hence, the research interview method aligned with the interpretivist philosophy of this study. Furthermore, the research interview is particularly appropriate when the research questions are exploratory in nature and address sensitive topics (Saunders et al., 2019), as is the case with this study. There are a number of different types of research interviews including structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Structured interviews involve posing a set of identical, pre-determined questions to participants to limit the influence of the researcher on the data which is called 'researcher bias' (Dijkstra, 1983). This focus on limiting researcher bias is antithetical to interpretivism which values the contribution of the researcher to the study findings (Ryan, 2018).

Unstructured interviews are informal and there are no pre-determined questions. They are recommended in situations of immersion when the researcher(s) works alongside the study participants, as is often the case in participatory action research (e.g., Baum et al., 2006). Semi-structured interviews involve following a list of themes, or key questions, to

gently guide a purposeful discussion (Saunders et al., 2016). The semi-structured interview is flexible and requires the researcher to be responsive to what the participant considers most important in relation to the research topic (Galletta, 2012). I adopted the semi-structured interview method as it best complimented my interpretivist philosophy and overall objectives of this study. This approach was useful as the structured aspect allowed me to compare responses to incivility across targets, and the unstructured aspect elicited rich descriptions of novel psychological conditions that contributed to these responses (i.e., self- vs. supervisor-compassion).

3.14 Developing the Interview Guide

The interview guide was designed to unpack (i) social interactions with a direct supervisor, in particular, incidents of supervisor incivility; (ii) cognitive and affective reactions and behavioural responses to supervisor incivility; and (iii) the influence of supervisor incivility on the subordinate-supervisor relationship subsequently (see Appendix F). To help make the interview experience positive, and encourage participants' openness and honesty, several factors were considered in designing the guide. First, I limited the number of questions that I included in the guide to reduce the burden on the participants and leave space for their contributions to the direction of the interview. Second, the opening questions of the guide were intentionally simple and fact-, rather than emotion-, based. My intention regarding these questions was to garner basic contextual information (e.g., What kind of work do you do? Does this work involve interacting with your supervisor often?) while allowing the participant time to settle into the process. These practices are associated with eliciting rich interview data via the semi-structured method (see Bearman, 2019; Solarino & Aguinis, 2021).

Third, as is implied, my pre-determined questions were suggestions for the conversation rather than rules. In reality, the interviewees often led the conversation as they had much to say about supervisor incivility and their cognitive-affective reactions and behavioural responses. In these instances, I used the guide as a list of themes which I checked against to ensure that the conversation was relevant to my research questions. This flexibility was important as it allowed the participants to raise topics that I had not explicitly included in the guide. For example, my participants spoke a lot about the influence of supervisor incivility, and their behavioural responses, on personal wellbeing, which shaped my research findings considerably. Further, while participants were primarily invited to discuss their individual experiences, they frequently contextualised these events by comparing their treatment to that of their colleagues.

3.14.1 Exploring Real-time Shifts Versus Post-hoc Reinterpretations in the Interview

Following the opening questions, the remaining questions in the interview guide focused on eliciting the 'story' of the participant's relationship with a direct supervisor. I wanted to understand supervisor incivility in the context of an ongoing relationship that involved many previous and subsequent social interactions, as opposed to the snapshots of reciprocation captured in the extant literature (e.g., Hershcovis et al., 2018; Holm et al., 2015; Rosen et al., 2016; Torkelson et al., 2016). Hence, I asked my participants to reflect on the overall trajectory of the relationship with the supervisor, and positive social interactions as well as supervisor incivility and other negative events in the relationship. To gain an understanding of the temporal dynamics of supervisor incivility, I grouped the interview questions according to the (i) initiation ("*I'd like to take you back to when you first started working with your supervisor…*"), (ii) progression ("*To what extent would you say your relationship with your supervisor has changed over time?*"), and (iii) current state ("*Do you*

see yourself continuing to work with your supervisor? Why?") of the participant-supervisor relationship. Further, I included questions concerning the supervisor's positive behaviours, as well as potential incivilities, relating to each to these 'stages' of the participant-supervisor relationship. This allowed me to identify (i) whether the incivility was a one-time incident or a prolonged experience, and variation in the (ii) supervisor's incivilities and (iii) participant's behavioural responses.

Of particular importance to me was identifying the cognitive and affective factors that my participants associated with their behavioural responses to supervisor incivility. To assist in maintaining focus on these factors, I included six questions concerning affect and five concerning the cognitions my participants associated with their behavioural responses to the supervisor, in the interview guide. Specifically, I asked my participants directly about these psychological factors (e.g., "*At the time that this happened, why did you think they were behaving in this way?*" "*How did this make you feel?*").

> "Interviewer: *And how did you feel then, at that time?*
>
> Jill: *I felt it really got me down and it really affected my mental health.*
>
> Interviewer: *Could you tell me a little bit more about that*?"

As a significant proportion of my participants had stopped working with the supervisor, I made sure to inquire if these cognitions and affects were immediate reactions, or if they emerged later.

> "Mia: *It was a very difficult period for me because I had always gotten on very well with my bosses. I have never had a turbulent relationship with really anybody I have worked for, so this was an unusual situation for me.*

Interviewer: *So, it was a new experience for you, how did you make sense of that, back then? What were your thoughts at the time?*"

Furthermore, I used items from the workplace incivility scale (Cortina et al., 2001) to present concrete examples of potential supervisor incivility to my participants. The strategy is useful as it supports participants to recall specific behaviour-related information and, thus, limits recall bias (Munscher & Kuhlmann, 2012). When relevant, I probed these participants' reactions and responses to the example(s). This kind of 'critical incident technique' has been used previously to study targets' attributions and appraisals of workplace incivility (e.g., Marchiondo et al., 2018). Further, eliciting specific information regarding the participants' behavioural responses enabled me to make practical recommendations based on my findings. For example, based on my findings, I recommend encouraging targets to set boundaries on supervisor incivility and describe what setting boundaries entailed for my participants.

3.14.2 Critical Reflection on the Development of the Interview Guide

The design of the interview guide was influenced by the prevailing 'tit-for-tat spiral model' of targets' responses to incivility (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999), which prioritises observable, reciprocal actions (i.e., 'doing'). While I was designing the interview guide, the 'freeze' response and the concept of 'principled non-reciprocity' (see Jorgensen et al., 2024) had not yet gained significant traction in workplace mistreatment literature. The historical focus on 'action' in incivility research created a bias which meant that I overlooked the complex psychological labour involved in choosing not to respond. I did not delve deeply into the likely complex psychological labour involved in choosing not to respond. This is a significant avenue for future research, and, in Section 5.5 of this thesis, I recommend that future studies explicitly investigate the intentionality of inaction.

3.15 Conducting Qualitative Interviews

I interviewed 43 people, face-to-face, on an individual basis about their experiences of supervisor incivility. My interviews lasted 62 minutes on average, however, some were shorter, lasting approximately 45 minutes, and some were significantly longer, lasting over two hours. Many of the interviews were completed in a private meeting room in Dublin City University Business School. However, some were completed at the participant's place of work, or their home, or at a suitable public meeting place, like a quiet restaurant, to accommodate the participant's busy schedule. The latter interviews were conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic when state-wide lockdowns were imposed to limit the spread of the disease. This forced me to be flexible regarding the data collection process and I switched to interviewing my remaining participants via 'DCU Zoom'.

I took a number of steps to ensure participant comfort in the interview process. For instance, when meeting participants in a public place, I arrived early and, where possible, selected a quiet table away from the other patrons. When possible, I sat in the seat facing out toward the restaurant so that the participant, seated opposite, would primarily be facing me. I did this to try to give these participants a greater sense of privacy. As a small token of gratitude for their time, for in person interviews I provided water, tea or coffee. I found the transition to online interviews challenging emotionally as I felt unable to care for these participants in the same way. To regain some influence in this regard, just prior to the interview, I sent these participants an email encouraging them to take steps for their own comfort, like preparing a beverage and finding a comfortable and quiet place for our conversation. These simple, practical considerations are particularly important for ensuring the online interview is a safe and meaningful experience for participants (Engward et al., 2022).

I compared my in-person to my online interviews, for example, in relation to length and the relevance of the data collected and was satisfied that this change had not detrimentally influenced the study. In fact, I found that my shortest interview was a face-to-face interview. These observations are consistent with research that shows online interviews can be as valuable as in-person ones (Thuberg & Arnell, 2022). Further, I compared the interviews completed in private meeting rooms vs. those carried out in public spaces, like restaurants. I was also satisfied that this change in setting had not detrimentally influenced the study. I found that the participants interviewed in public spaces expressed vulnerability and provided sensitive information regarding supervisor incivility similar to their counterparts. This suggests that these participants were not too concerned about other people overhearing the conversation and felt free enough to express themselves sincerely.

I refrained from taking field notes during the interviews based on my prior experiences with interviewing research participants. In my experience, breaks in the emotional connection between participant and researcher can occur whenever the researcher 'over handles' the interview guide, or other objects present in the meeting room. It may be that participants perceive this shift in the researcher's attention as disinterest. Furthermore, rustling notepads, pens, or the interview guide, can pull participants out of their storytelling reverie and disrupt recall of key events (Muswazi & Nhamo, 2013). However, I made field notes directly after the interview concerning quotes, or aspects of the participant's story, or the interview itself, that stood out to me. For example, I noted the mindfulness of Mia who assured me that my probing questions would not "*raise the temperature*" of her emotions. As a result, I paid particular attention to examples of overidentification, which is the opposite of mindfulness, in Mia's interview data. I found that although Mia spoke calmly about experiencing supervisor incivility, she was open about having overidentified with its negative affective consequences. I also noted that Dane asked if he was giving me "*what I needed*" which indicated his

concern with social desirability. After analysing my data, I returned to Dane's field notes to record a potential link between a desire for social desirability and the 'unmitigated affiliation' response to incivility, which I discuss in my findings. As a final example, I recorded a shift in Earl's emotions, from confidence to shame, when he admitted to me that he had "*never told anyone*" about his experience of supervisor incivility before. These notes were useful particularly in the later stages of data analysis, when I was working with second-order codes and themes and felt somewhat removed from the raw dataset. Re-reading my field notes helped me to recall, and re-live, the vividness of the researcher interviews, and the emotional intricacies of their content.

3.16 Qualitative Data Analysis

As noted previously, I decided to adopt Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019, 2022) method of reflexive thematic analysis. In the following sections, I discuss how I applied their tools to my data. I report my analysis of the data in three stages – familiarisation, the coding process, and the generation and refinement of themes.

3.16.1 Familiarisation

I familiarised myself with my dataset, that is, each interview transcript and then, all the transcripts combined into a whole. Familiarisation is developing a detailed knowledge and understanding of the content of interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Familiarisation involves immersing oneself in the content of one's dataset by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts and listening and re-listening to the audio recordings of the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Practically, first, this necessitated converting the audio recordings of the interviews into typed word documents, which in itself is a critical step in the data analysis process (Bird, 2005).

As noted previously, I received funding from Dublin City University Business School to support this study, and I chose to use some of this funding on a professional transcription service. I made this decision with guidance from the literature on producing quality transcripts, which indicates professional transcription for researchers with limited typing skills (e.g., Seidman, 1998; Wellard & McKenna, 2001). It can take several hours for researchers with limited typing skills to convert one hour of audio into text, and it has been argued that the laboriousness of this process can lead to frustration, carelessness, errors, and poor-quality transcripts (e.g., Seidman, 1998). Moreover, it has been argued that researchers with limited typing skills would do better to invest their time in interpretation of the dataset, as opposed to producing sub-par transcripts (Wellard & McKenna, 2001).

To ensure the audio recordings were faithfully transcribed, I discussed punctuation (e.g., the placement of commas, full stops, etc.,), and emotional factors, like my interviewees' sighs and pauses, with the professional transcriber (Wellard & McKenna, 2001). I instructed the transcriber to retain each interviewee's style of communication. For example, if the interviewee spoke in long unbroken sentences, I asked the transcriber to refrain from inserting full stops and commas for the sake of making the transcript more 'readable'. I gave this instruction as the placement of a comma, or full stop, can significantly influence the speaker's message. Furthermore, I asked, to the best of their ability, that the transcriber capture sounds, like murmurs, sighs, laughter, or changes in tone of speech (e.g., "*She did that thing*, *'Hmmmm I don't know, I didn't say that, no, I wouldn't have said it like that"*" Molly).

While I waited to receive the transcript of each interview, I listened and re-listened to the relevant audio recording. Upon receipt, I compared the transcript with the relevant audio recording and made any necessary edits. I found a small number of examples of the transcriber mishearing a word spoken by the interviewee, which I corrected. At this point, I

also anonymised the dataset by replacing any mention of the interviewee's name with a pseudonym, and deleting any other identifying information (e.g., the name of the organisation). Once I had completed these quality checks and privacy-related edits, I imported the transcripts into NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS). Then, I began the second stage of familiarisation.

The second stage of familiarisation involves reading and re-reading each transcript to the point of immersion. The point of immersion is reached when one becomes so familiar with each transcript, and the dataset as a whole, that the main content is almost memorised (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2022). I knew I had reached the point of immersion when I could quote my interviewees from memory during discussions with my supervisors. During the immersion process, I focused primarily on the interesting and surprising aspects of each interview as well as potential patterns across the dataset. I took notes recording my analytic thoughts to support active reading and initiate interpretation of the dataset.

3.16.1.1 Early Identification of Variation in my Participants' Behavioural Responses

The focus of this study is face-to-face incivility as it was the primary site of mistreatment identified by the participants themselves. As prior research had focused primarily on reciprocation (e.g., Hershcovis et al., 2018; Holm et al., 2015; Rosen et al., 2016; Torkelson et al., 2016), I was surprised by the number of non-reciprocal responses to supervisor incivility that the interviewees described. I began developing rudimentary labels, or 'pre-codes', for these responses, producing some basic segments of meaning that I could process cognitively. For example, one of my early pre-codes is 'pleasing the supervisor', which later contributed to the second-order code 'compassion imbalanced toward the supervisor: unmitigated affiliation'. I call this label a pre-code as, although it captured

targets' 'giving' responses to supervisor incivility, it is fairly unspecific. For example, 'pleasing the supervisor' does not specify the psychological conditions that contributed to 'giving' behaviour, or what 'giving' to the supervisor entailed, whereas 'compassion imbalanced toward the supervisor: unmitigated affiliation' does. Nonetheless, such pre-codes provided a starting point for further analysis of the dataset. I initially felt anxiety regarding the range of responses to supervisor incivility described by my interviewees. At this early stage, to manage my anxiety, I drew text-and-image pictures of the sequence of events described by each interviewee. These doodles provided messy but useful snapshots of each interviewees' relationship narrative or story. At a later stage, I built upon this work, tabulating the various types of supervisor incivility and behavioural responses reported by each of my interviewees. These tables show (i) the duration of the experience, (ii) whether supervisor incivility was persistent or episodic, (iii) whether supervisor incivility was generalised or the supervisor targeted the participant (iv) whether the subordinate-supervisor relationship is ongoing or has ceased and (v) whether the participant held a position of formal power, or not, in their respective organisation (see Tables 11 to 15). I present these tables in Section 4.2.2, where I discuss my observations in relation to these factors and the various types of supervisor incivility and behavioural responses reported by each of my interviewees.

3.16.1.1 Early Identification of my Interviewees Pitting themselves Against the Supervisor (self- versus supervisor-)

Additionally, at this early stage, I made notes regarding a 'tension' that I perceived within the dataset. These notes pertained to interviewees pitting themselves against the supervisor (i.e., the self- versus supervisor-) and speaking about an imbalance between themselves and the supervisor. At this early stage of analysis, I was yet to interpret this 'tension' as pertaining to self- vs. supervisor- compassion. The existence of a 'tension', or

imbalance, was interpreted from my surface-level reading of the dataset. For example, I perceived a 'tension', or imbalance, when Mia said "*I always felt that I was going 80% over towards him . . . his thing was 'well, I am manager so you should come 80% towards me' . . . I found that was very difficult to deal with*". These initial notes and doodles provided a bedrock of knowledge that prepared me for the next phase of analysis, which is coding the dataset. Coding required that I return to the raw dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.16.2 The Coding Process

Coding involves working systematically through the entire dataset, to identify segments that are relevant to the research question(s) and apply meaningful 'code labels' to each segment (Braun & Clarke, 2023). A code label is "*a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data*" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). In keeping with these definitions, I read through each transcript in NVivo line-by-line. While reading, I identified any segments of data that were relevant to my primary research question (i.e., RQ1. How do subordinates respond to supervisor incivility?) and created a representative code for each segment. One of the things that stood out to me in the early stages of coding was not only the range of behavioural responses to supervisor incivility, but also the differences in personal wellbeing within and between the participants. This was an aspect of the early coding process that I developed over various rounds until, eventually, I linked particular behavioural responses to particular effects on personal wellbeing. For example, I found that setting boundaries on supervisor incivility supported my interviewees' personal wellbeing.

In the earlier stages of coding, I generated a significant number of initial codes. As the coding process progressed, and my understanding of the diversity of meanings in the dataset

became more precise, my coding was narrower. For example, in the earlier stages of coding, I coded all data that appeared relevant to these subordinates' responses to supervisor incivility, including the influence of their coworkers' reactions. However, my participants' coworkers' reactions are not the focus of this study and would be better examined through one-to-one interviews with these co-workers. Hence, my later coding focused on just the subordinate-supervisor dyad, and these subordinates' cognitions and affects in relation to supervisor incivility and their own behavioural responses.

3.16.2.1 Searching for an Appropriate Framework and Choosing Compassion Theory

Several of my interviewees emphasised the importance of compassion in workplace relationships and, particularly, in relation to responding to supervisor incivility (e.g., Dane, Kim, Leah, Lily, Lucy). Their emphasis on compassion as being important in this process led me to return to the literature to advance my knowledge of this construct. In reviewing the literature on compassion in the workplace and personal relationships, I found that Neff's (2003a, 2003b, 2021) theory provided the most comprehensive account of the cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses associated with the construct. This led me to explore the fit between Neff's theory (2003a, 2003b, 2021) and my data concerning my participants' behavioural responses to supervisor incivility and, ultimately, my second research question:

> RQ2. What is the role of compassion in subordinates' responses to supervisor incivility?

However, prior to the adoption of compassion theory, I considered alternatives to see if these theories better explained these salient patterns in my dataset. These alternatives included (i) conservation of resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014, Hobfoll, 1989), (ii) trait (Costa & McCrae, 1999) and (iii) attribution theory (e.g., Heider, 1958; Kelley & Michela, 1980; Weiner, 1986). Ultimately, I selected compassion (self- vs. supervisor-) as the appropriate

lens to guide my analysis. I did so because compassion theory offered the most abductive fit in that it explained significant parts of my dataset better than these other theories. In the next sections, I provide some examples of when I perceived compassion theory to offer better abductive fit with my data.

3.16.2.2 Conservation of Resources Versus Compassion Theory

Initially, I saw conservation of resources theory (COR) (Halbesleben et al., 2014, Hobfoll, 1989) as potentially useful for interpreting two behavioural responses in my dataset, which I called 'retreat I' and 'unmitigated affiliation'. However, the reasons my participants offered for why they chose these particular responses went beyond protecting resources and indicated either a kindness to self- (retreat I) or to the supervisor- (unmitigated affiliation). Hence, ultimately, I set aside COR (Halbesleben et al., 2014, Hobfoll, 1989) in favour of compassion theory as the more appropriate framework.

As noted previously, I identified differences in personal wellbeing within and between my participants. COR is a foundational framework in organisational psychology that explains individuals' behavioural responses to stressors, like workplace incivility, and differences in personal wellbeing (Halbesleben et al., 2014, Hobfoll, 1989). COR posits that reductions in personal wellbeing are driven by stressors that threaten or diminish valued psychological resources (e.g., one's positive emotion, energy, and attention). The basic tenet of COR is that as individuals lose resources in response to a stressor, they become more defensive of their remaining resources, and so they will behave in ways that protect their remaining resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014, Hobfoll, 1989). One of the behavioural responses in my dataset, which I called retreat I, aligned somewhat with this hypothesis.

Retreat I is a temporary form of avoidance of supervisor incivility and opportunities for supervisor incivility. For example, Beth said "*Sometimes, when I have a question, I'll just ask someone else*". Further, Beth went on to say that 'asking someone else' "*just makes it easier*". While both COR and compassion theory offered explanations for why someone might choose to protect further loss of resources, the theoretical mechanism of self-kindness in compassion theory allowed me to interpret this goal of 'making life easier' for oneself in a way that went beyond COR. Specifically, the self-kindness construct emphasises self- love or care as a motive for 'making life easier for oneself', as opposed to fear and defensiveness which are the focus of COR (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021). For example, Lily said "*You put love into yourself … you know, to make your life good … in all my relationships*".

As noted previously, I identified another behavioural response in my dataset that contradicts the central tenet of COR, in particular, unmitigated affiliation. To re-iterate, the basic tenet of COR is that individuals behave defensively when encountering stressors that threaten their personal resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014, Hobfoll, 1989). However, unmitigated affiliation involves directing one's personal resources to the source of one's stress, that is, the supervisor. For example, Molly said "*Pleasing her … Try harder, work harder for her, that's the road I took, and she was happy to take advantage of it*" (Molly). Further, Molly said that she generally adopted a caretaker role in her workplace relationships. For example, Molly volunteered as a trade union representative, training instructor and mediator. This focus on pleasing the supervisor, and supporting her co-workers, suggests a care, concern, and lack of defensiveness over one's personal resources, that is captured in compassion but not COR theory (see Neff, 2021).

3.16.2.3 Trait Versus Compassion Theory

Trait theory is another foundational framework in organisational psychology that explains individuals' behavioural responses to stimuli, like workplace incivility. The most dominant is the 'Big Five' model of personality that consists of five stable traits: (i) openness to experience, (ii) conscientiousness, (iii) extroversion, (iv) agreeableness, and (v) neuroticism (Costa & McCrae, 1999). I explored whether neuroticism might explain avoidance responses to supervisor incivility (e.g., Retreat I and II). Trait theory posits that those high in neuroticism experience perpetually high levels of negative affect and emotionally instability, which motivates avoidance of stressors (Costa & McCrae, 1999). However, I found that my participants spoke quite neutrally about avoiding supervisor incivility on occasion (e.g., Erin, Josie, Wes, Alfie, Max). "*From a psychological point of view, it's very interesting to see that happen and how people behave around them … in meetings, everyone is holding back … people are just like 'okay, I have to be careful of what I say in front of this person' … and then, everybody relaxes, and you go back to normal. For me, it's just interesting to see. It doesn't affect me*" (Erin). I perceived an objectivity, or mindfulness, in this portion of Erin's narrative that aligns with self-compassion theory (see Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021). Further, this objectivity, or mindfulness, is at odds with the explanation of avoidance behaviour as a form of stress reduction associated with neuroticism (e.g., Boyes & French, 2010). Furthermore, when avoidance of the supervisor was prolonged and involved high levels of negative affect, my participants related this to compassion fatigue. "*I was putting her first … emailing her 'please tell me what you want me to do or what's important to you' … but my stress levels grew, they were just beyond … I couldn't do it anymore*" (Jade).

3.16.2.4 Attribution Versus Compassion Theory

Moreover, my participants' evaluations of the supervisor and supervisor incivility is a significant part of my dataset. Attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley & Michela, 1980; Weiner, 1986) is a foundational social psychology framework that explains how individuals evaluate and assign causes to behaviour. It posits that individuals make sense of other peoples' behaviour by determining whether the cause stems from (i) inside or outside the person, (ii) is permanent or changeable, and (iii) whether the person has control over the cause (see Weiner, 1986). For example, the target may attribute incivility to the instigator's personality, which is inside the instigator, relatively permanent or stable, and uncontrollable. However, I found that the majority of my participants did not evaluate supervisor incivility in this either/or fashion. For example, Ben attributed incivility to the supervisor's advanced age – an uncontrollable factor – and the supervisor's insecurity concerning his succession – a controllable factor. Furthermore, attribution theory does not capture the affective component of my participants' evaluations. For example, the warmth conveyed when Erin praised the supervisor's helpfulness versus the cold condemnation conveyed when Erin attributed incivility to the supervisor's "*wickedness*". However, compassion, which includes kindness for versus judgement of another (see Neff, 2021), allowed me to better explore and capture these affective components of my participants' evaluations.

3.16.2.5 Compassion Theory: Explaining the Surprising Parts of my Dataset

From my literature review, I knew that prior research had focused on targets' (i) negative affect, and lack of (ii) equanimity (or level headedness) and (iii) willpower, which had been found to maintain self-reinforcing cycles of incivility (e.g., Su et al., 2022, p. 22). Self-compassion theory (Neff 2003a, 2003b, 2021) offered me a new way of understanding targets' cognitive and affective reactions, and behavioural responses to supervisor incivility.

Specifically, self-compassion theory directed my attention to my participants' capacity for kindness (vs. judgement), common humanity (vs. isolation), and mindfulness (vs. overidentification). Moving between my data and self-compassion theory (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021), I interpreted my participants' quotes in relation to self- (see Table 6) and supervisor- directed compassion (see Table 7).

As I moved between my data and compassion theory (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021), I revised my coding scheme to accommodate variations and ensure that my coding accurately reflected as much of my dataset as possible. I followed a four-step process to achieve this objective – (i) draft, (ii) test, (iii) refine, and (iv) re-code –which is consistent with Braun and Clarkes' (2006) method. Drafting a code involves creating an initial, tentative label for a segment of data. For example, Molly spoke quite literally about how she stifled her feelings regarding supervisor incivility, "*I would be balling crying in the car going to work, you know, and just arrive at work then shut it down and just brace yourself*", which I initially coded as 'ignoring one's feelings'. However, as I applied the draft code 'ignoring one's feelings' to a subset of my data, I found more accurate examples of 'ignoring one's feelings'. For example, Anna said she gave herself "*a dose of denial*" to cope with her emotional reactions to supervisor incivility. "*Ignoring it, just trying to ignore it*" (Anna). Identifying these more literal examples of 'ignoring one's feelings' helped me to see Molly's quote in a new light. I realised that Molly had provided an example of emotional suppression, as opposed to ignoring her emotional reactions to supervisor incivility, a subtle but important distinction for accuracy. In response, I created the code 'suppressing one's feelings', adding it to 'ignoring one's feelings'. Then, I re-coded my data to group the data segments related to 'ignoring' together and the data segments related to 'suppression' together. Later, in referring back to the element of self-compassion called 'overidentification' (see Neff 2003a, 2003b, 2021), I categorised these codes together, as they are theorised to be a part of this particular element

of self-compassion (see Table 6) (see also Grodal et al. (2021) for a discussion of the role of categorisation in theory building). In this way, I constantly updated my codes, accommodating new observations, refining the meaning of my codes, splitting dissimilar and merging similar categories of meaning.

Table 6

Identifying Elements of Self-compassion in the Participants' Accounts

Self-kindness	**Self-judgment**
Cognitive component	
Being thoughtful and generous regarding one's 'failures', for example, one's cognitive, affective or behavioural responses to supervisor incivility. Emotional tone is warm and gentle or caring.	Being critical of oneself. For example, criticising one's cognitive, affective or behavioural responses to supervisor incivility. Emotional tone is cold, harsh or rejecting.
Behavioural expression	
Taking action to fulfil one's psychological and physical needs, and protecting oneself and one's interests, for example, by confronting supervisor incivility.	Neglecting one's psychological and physical needs. A part of self-sacrifice, in particular, prioritising the needs of the supervisor over one's own.
Mindfulness	**Overidentification**
Turning one's attention inwards to one's cognitions and affects, particularly one's painful cognitions and affects. Specifically, those related to supervisor incivility.	Ignoring one's cognitions and affects, particularly one's painful cognitions and affects. Specifically, those related to supervisor incivility. Suppressing one's negative cognitions and affects, in particular, those related to supervisor incivility.
Observing one's negative cognitions and affects without allowing oneself to overidentify with the negativity, in particular, those pertaining to supervisor incivility.	To lose perspective, or to be unable to view one's experiences, cognitions, and affects neutrally, in particular, those pertaining to supervisor incivility.
Identifying one's personal needs (i.e., one's affective, psychological or physical needs).	Focusing on the supervisor's perceptive, cognitions, or affects, to the point of overlooking or disregarding one's own.

Adapted from Neff (2003a, 2003b, 2021)

An aspect in my dataset that I found particularly surprising is the compassion that a significant number of my interviewees explicitly expressed for the supervisor, despite the supervisor's incivility. In response to these observations, I decided to experiment with

reversing the referent of the three elements of self-compassion. Specifically, I searched for evidence of (i) kindness for the supervisor (vs. oneself), (ii) appreciation for the supervisors' common humanity (vs. one's own), and (iii) mindfulness when thinking about supervisor incivility, in my dataset (see Table 7). While these three elements of self-compassion have been applied to quantitatively examine other-directed compassion (e.g., Pommier, 2010), to the best of my knowledge, I am the first to apply these elements to qualitative data concerning other-directed compassion. Again, this process involved (i) drafting initial codes, (ii) testing their fit with my data, (iii) refining each code based on my data, and (iv) re-coding data segments to group them with the appropriate code. I found refining 'judgement of the supervisor' versus 'isolation of the supervisor psychologically' particularly difficult. Through an iterative process, I eventually distinguished criticism of the supervisor (i.e., 'judgement') from pathologizing the supervisor's personality and negating their humanity (i.e., 'psychological isolation').

Table 7

Identifying Elements of Supervisor-Compassion in the Participants' Accounts

Kindness	**Judgement**
Cognitive component	
Being thoughtful and generous regarding the supervisor's weaknesses and failures (e.g., supervisor incivility). Emotional tone is warm and gentle or caring.	Focusing on the supervisors perceived weaknesses and failings (e.g., supervisor incivility).
Behavioural expression Acting in ways that respect and shows tolerance for the needs, emotions, or interests of the supervisor. For example, sensitively confronting supervisor incivility.	Criticising the supervisor: finding fault with the supervisor in a disapproving way.
Common Humanity	**Isolation (psychological)**

Connecting oneself psychologically to the supervisor. Seeing the supervisor as 'like me'. Connecting one's weaknesses and failures to the supervisor's strengths and successes.	A more extreme state of judgement or criticism. Othering the supervisor: viewing or treating the supervisor as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself. Negating the supervisor's humanity.
Mindfulness	**Overidentification**
Viewing or presenting supervisor incivility 'as it is', without emphasising or de-emphasising the negativity of the experience.	Catastrophising incidents of supervisor incivility. To view or present supervisor incivility as worse than it is, or as having a worse outcome than is realistic.

Adapted from Neff (2003a, 2003b, 2021)

3.16.2.6 Referring to the Extant Literature on Targets' Behavioural Responses to Incivility

As I progressed my analysis, I also moved between my codes and extant theory on targets' behavioural responses to incivility (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024). This abductive approach (Sætre & Van de Ven, 2021) to the refinement of my codes helped to clearly delineate my interviewees' (i) behavioural responses and the (ii) elements of compassion that contributed to them. For example, this approach helped me to differentiate my conceptualisation of unmitigated affiliation, which follows (Helgeson & Fritz, 1999) definition, from Cortina et al.'s (2022) conceptualisation of affiliation. According to Helgeson and Fritz (1999, p. 132), affiliating in an unmitigated manner "*involves placing others' needs before one's own, worrying excessively about others' problems, and helping others to one's own detriment*". This definition, combined with my knowledge of the dataset and self-compassion theory (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021), helped me to link deficits in self-kindness and mindfulness to the occurrence of unmitigated affiliation.

Similarly, by comparing examples of the 'retreat response' provided by my interviewees to those suggested by Andersson and Pearson (1999) and Cortina et al. (2022), I decided to refine the 'retreat' construct by splitting it in two. Specifically, I define 'retreat I' as a temporary form of avoidance of supervisor incivility and opportunities for supervisor

incivility, whereas I define 'retreat II' as a prolonged form of avoidance of supervisor incivility and opportunities for supervisor incivility. Furthermore, by importing self-compassion theory (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021) to make sense of the relevant data segments, I linked self-compassion to retreat I, whereas I found that retreat II arose out of a lack of compassion (self- or supervisor-). I also combined my knowledge of self-compassion theory (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021) with the extant literature on relational boundaries (e.g., Kretchmar & Jacobvitz, 2002), to code the data regarding setting boundaries on supervisor incivility. Again, this helped me to clearly delineate 'boundary setting' and make sense of the psychological conditions within which it occurred in my data.

3.16.2.6 Coding my Interviewees' Evaluations of Supervisor Incivility: The Utility of Compassion Theory

One aspect of the analysis process that I found particularly difficult was coding the data regarding the interviewees' evaluations of supervisor incivility. Prior research had focused on the relationship between a particular appraisal of incivility and a particular response to incivility. For example, detaching from incivility, which is a 'retreat response', has been associated with a mild appraisal of incivility (see Cortina et al., 2009). However, I noticed that, in my dataset, some of my interviewees evaluated supervisor incivility in contradictory ways and switched between these opposing evaluations during the course of our conversation. Initially, I felt uncomfortable about these segments of the dataset and unsure as to how to code them. Self-compassion theory (Neff 2003a, 2003b, 2021) was instrumental in coding these segments of the dataset. Neff's (2023) framework, which conceptualises the three elements of self-compassion as a bipolar continuum, helped me to visualise the shifts in my interviewees' thought processes. For example, from kind evaluations to judgemental evaluations of supervisor incivility. Furthermore, I borrowed from the language of self-

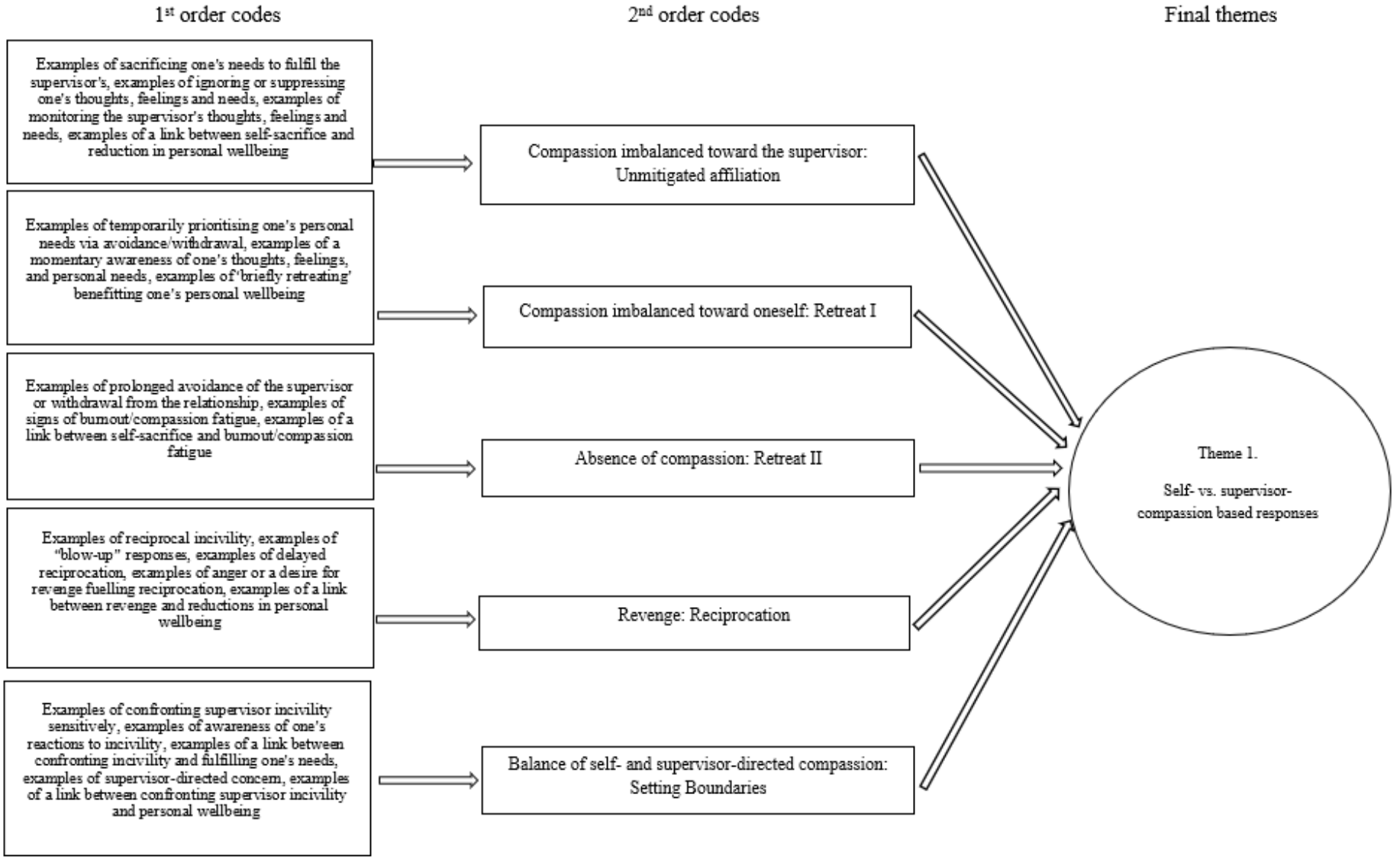
compassion theory, which refers to ‘compassionate mindsets’ (e.g., Phillips, 2021), when naming the relevant second-order code (see Figure 3). I was particularly conscious of the fact that I was analysing cross-sectional rather than longitudinal data regarding my participants’ evaluations of incivility. When coding the relevant data, I took care to differentiate between 'in-the-moment' thoughts, which participants identified as influencing their immediate behavioural responses, and 'longitudinal sense-making' that occurred after the conflict subsided. In particular, I selected quotations to include in the Findings chapter which showed that a proportion of my interviewees readily acknowledged 'longitudinal sense-making'. For example, I highlight that Eddy said that the passage of time can facilitate the adoption of a compassionate perspective on supervisor incivility.

Through this rigorous process of moving between the data segments and relevant theory, I developed distinct first-order codes and compiled the relevant segments for each (see Figure 3). Coding can go on ad infinitum: Researchers must make a subjective judgement about when to conclude the process (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I decided to move on to the next phase, theme generation and refinement, when I judged that my first-order codes adequately captured the diversity in the (i) interviewees’ responses to supervisor incivility, and the (ii) psychological conditions and (iii) personal consequences associated with these responses. Next, I focused on abstracting from these initial codes to second-order codes and themes.

3.16.3 Second- Order Codes, Theme Generation and Refinement

The theme generation process involved (i) reviewing my first-order codes, (ii) removing and/or combining duplicates, and then (iii) checking that each second-order code matched with the particular meanings captured in the relevant first-order code (Braun &

Clarke, 2006). Practically, second-order codes were created in NVivo by selecting, dragging, and grouping first-order codes into the relevant second-order code. For example, the first-order codes (i) ‘sacrificing one’s needs to fulfil the supervisor’s’, (ii) ‘ignoring or suppressing one’s thoughts, feelings, and needs’, (iii) ‘monitoring the supervisor’s thoughts, feelings and needs’, and (iv) ‘a link between self-sacrifice and reduction in personal wellbeing’ were grouped under the second-order code ‘compassion imbalanced toward the supervisor: unmitigated affiliation’.


1st order codes
2nd order codes
Final themes
Examples of sacrificing one's needs to fulfil the supervisor's, examples of ignoring or suppressing one's thoughts, feelings and needs, examples of monitoring the supervisor's thoughts, feelings and needs, examples of a link between self-sacrifice and reduction in personal wellbeing
Compassion imbalanced toward the supervisor: Unmitigated affiliation
Examples of temporarily prioritising one's personal needs via avoidance/withdrawal, examples of a momentary awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and personal needs, examples of 'briefly retreating' benefitting one's personal wellbeing
Compassion imbalanced toward oneself: Retreat I
Examples of prolonged avoidance of the supervisor or withdrawal from the relationship, examples of signs of burnout/compassion fatigue, examples of a link between self-sacrifice and burnout/compassion fatigue
Absence of compassion: Retreat II
Examples of reciprocal incivility, examples of "blow-up" responses, examples of delayed reciprocation, examples of anger or a desire for revenge fuelling reciprocation, examples of a link between revenge and reductions in personal wellbeing
Revenge: Reciprocation
Examples of confronting supervisor incivility sensitively, examples of awareness of one's reactions to incivility, examples of a link between confronting incivility and fulfilling one's needs, examples of supervisor-directed concern, examples of a link between confronting supervisor incivility and personal wellbeing
Balance of self- and supervisor-directed compassion: Setting Boundaries
Theme 1.
Self- vs. supervisor-compassion based responses

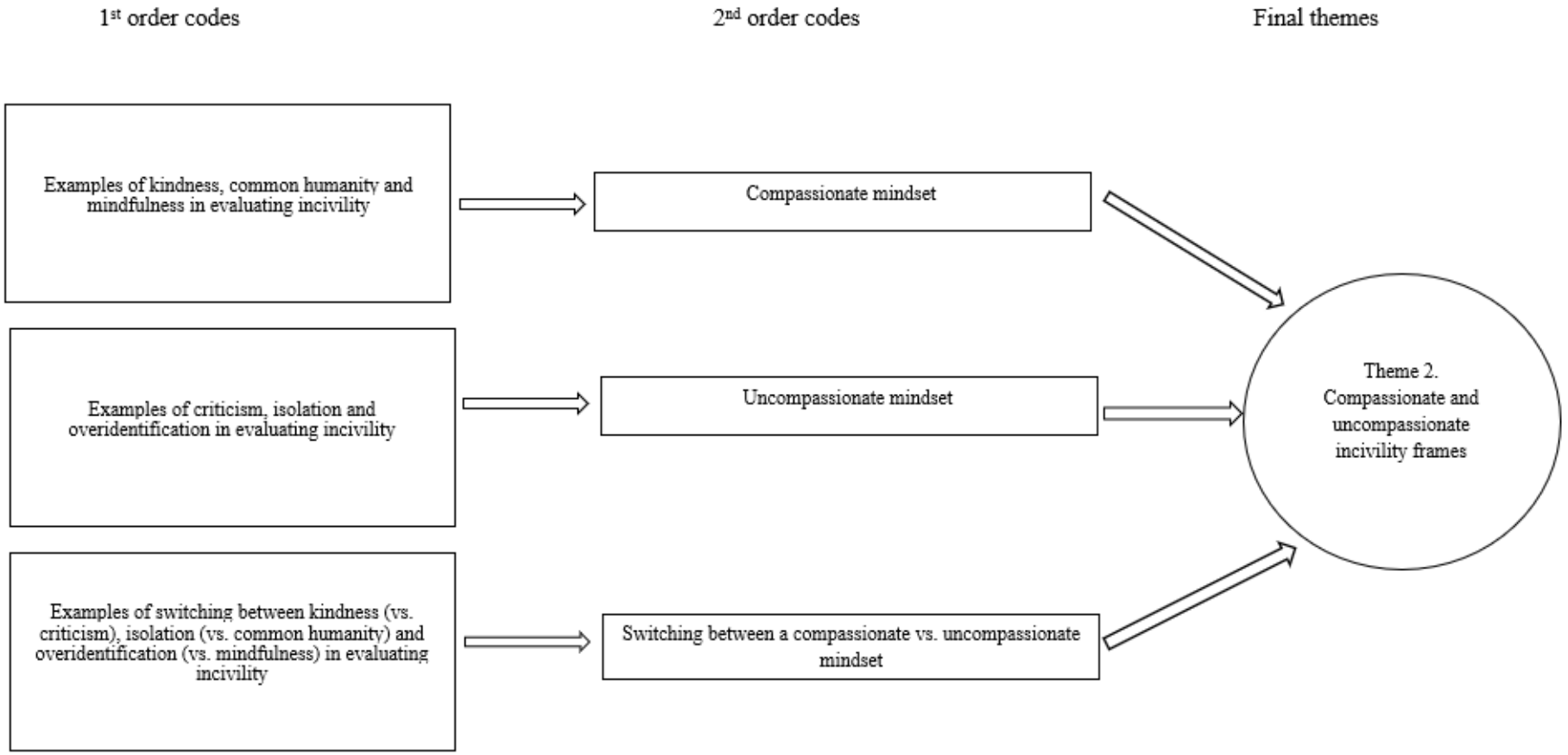


Figure 3

Data Structure: From Codes to Final Themes

As noted previously, I used theory to assist naming the second-order codes. I have given the example of importing from compassion theory (e.g., Phillips, 2021) to name a second-order code ‘switching between a compassionate vs. uncompassionate mindset’. Additionally, I imported from the spiral theory of incivility (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999) when naming the second-order code ‘revenge: reciprocation’. To be clear, these names adequately reflected the meanings captured in the first-order codes, and it was the relevant data that had the greatest influence on the naming of codes. Referring to the theory simply assisted in developing pithy names for codes that, in particular, fit with how the phenomena were being discussed in the extant literature. It was important to me that the second-order codes reflected the language of incivility researchers (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024) given that the output of this process was intended to extend their theories.

I also reviewed my second-order codes in a similar way to how I reviewed my first-order codes. This involved ensuring that there weren’t any duplications at this level and checking that each second-order code captured my ‘analytic takeaways’ in relation to the relevant first-order code. Afterwards, I began to develop candidate themes that I felt captured (i) the first- and second-order codes, (ii) the associated segments of data, and (iii) my two research questions. Through my abductive approach to coding, I had well-developed codes upon which to base my candidate themes. My first theme, ‘self- vs. supervisor- compassion based responses’, stood out in particular and was easier to generate than my second theme, ‘compassionate and uncompassionate incivility frames’. However, I did struggle with centring the mechanism of the responses (i.e., self- vs. supervisor- compassion), rather than the responses themselves (i.e., unmitigated affiliation, retreat I, etc.,), when generating this theme. Discussions with my supervisors assisted me in deciding to prioritise the psychological conditions and then, the associated response. My second theme,

‘compassionate and uncompassionate incivility frames’, was more difficult to generate, as I struggled to put a name to the central organising concept that connected the relevant first- and second-order codes. It was also through discussions with my supervisors that I began to articulate the output of compassion (vs. uncompassionate) mindsets regarding supervisor incivility as ‘incivility frames’.

Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 35) emphasise that even during this late stage of analysis, “*you have to be prepared to let things go!*” and I found this to be true. Up to this point, I had retained codes concerning setting boundaries on incivility that captured the supervisors’ reactions to these subordinates’ boundaries. I made the decision to exclude these codes at this late stage because, when I reviewed my candidate themes, I found that they did not fit with the ‘central organising concept’ (see Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2022) that united my themes. The central organising concept that unites my themes is that responses to supervisor incivility were influenced by self- vs. supervisor- compassion, and balancing both was challenging for targets. The supervisors’ reactions to my interviewees’ boundaries, while interesting, did not address my research questions and did not fit with this central organising concept that unites my themes.

Throughout the analysis process, I also coded data segments that, as the analysis progressed significantly, became ‘outliers’. Outliers refer to segments of participant data that deviate significantly from the main themes constructed from the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2022). These outliers consisted of under-represented or atypical experiences among my participants. I documented these outliers carefully, coding them as I coded any other segment of my data, and retaining them with the NVivo file related to the dataset. I used this data to develop future research recommendations, identifying gaps in understanding and proposing new research avenues (see Section 5.5.1).

Although it was difficult to let go of these codes, being able to eliminate them indicated that my themes were well-developed. Well-developed themes are (i) linked via a central organising concept; (ii) have clear boundaries (i.e., what the themes include and exclude is clear); and (iii) answer the research question(s) (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Once my supervisors and I agreed that the themes had met these criteria, I finalised my two themes. I finalised my two themes by selecting a number of vivid extracts to evidence them. I also created tables and figures to visually represent my findings. For example, I created a coding structure to visually represent the relationships between the segments of data, first- and second- order codes, and the final themes (Figure 3). I used these tables and figures to assist in telling my interviewees' stories of responding to supervisor incivility. I present these stories in the next chapter, my findings chapter.

3.17 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the research design and methods, and the interpretivist philosophy that underpins my overall approach to this research. I have described the three types of sampling used (i.e., convenience, purposive, and snowball) and my participants' characteristics. I have outlined the ethical principles that guided this research including the participants' right to withdraw, informed consent, data protection and confidentiality. Furthermore, I have described the development of the interview guide, and the interview process through which I gathered my data. Lastly, I have discussed how I applied the 'reflexive thematic analysis' method (see Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2022) to my dataset, to answer the research questions.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Chapter Outline

In this chapter, I present my findings which are based on my interviewees' narratives of responding to supervisor incivility. To re-cap, the research questions at the heart of this study are, first, how do subordinates respond to supervisor incivility? And second, what is the role of compassion in subordinates' responses to supervisor incivility? Based on my interpretation of the dataset, I present two themes that answer these questions. Theme one is 'self- vs. supervisor-compassion based responses', and theme two is 'compassionate and uncompassionate incivility frames'. Theme one captures the four responses that I identified in the dataset including (i) unmitigated affiliation, (ii) retreat (I and II), (iii) reciprocation and (iv) setting boundaries on supervisor incivility. Throughout my reporting of these responses, I show how they complement or contradict existing theory on targets' responses (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2022). Furthermore, I differentiate these responses to supervisor incivility, suggesting that they are influenced by the direction of compassion: self- vs. supervisor- (see Table 18). One exception to this is 'reciprocation' which I suggest is underpinned by as an absence of compassion, characterised by anger and revenge.

Seeking to understand why my interviewees responded differently, I explored their evaluations of supervisor incivility as research suggests that the target's appraisal modulates their behavioural response (e.g., Cortina et al., 2022; Marchiondo et al., 2018). Again, I interpreted the data with compassion theory in mind. Theme two captures my interviewees' novel compassionate vs. uncompassionate evaluations of supervisor incivility. Further, this second theme captures my theorising regarding a mechanism that may underpin these evaluations, that is, the adoption of a compassionate vs. uncompassionate mindset (see Table 19).

Before addressing my research questions, I provide an analysis of the specific behaviours my interviewees encountered and considered to represent 'supervisor incivility' (see Section 4.2.1). Next, I present, first, gendered differences in terms of incivility type and targets' behavioural responses to incivility. Second, power differences in terms of targets' behavioural responses to incivility, according to whether the participant held a position of formal power, or not, in their respective organisation. Third, differences in terms of targets' behavioural responses to incivility when the supervisor incivility was targeted versus generalised (see Section 4.2.2). Following this, I provide evidence of compassion (self- and supervisor-) within my interviewees' narratives, showing excerpts that inspired me to use these concepts in my analysis (see Section 4.2.3). Having laid this foundation of knowledge, I present my findings, theme one in Section 4.3 and theme two in Section 4.4.

4.2.1 Supervisor Incivility Experienced by the Participants

Before addressing my research questions, this section provides an analysis of the specific behaviours my interviewees encountered and categorised as 'supervisor incivility'. The vast majority of cases align closely with the established framework (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2001). Where they do not, they reflect a behaviour that the participant interpreted as uncivil or represented a more serious form of workplace mistreatment.

4.2.1.1 Supervisor Behaviour that Falls Inside the Established Conceptual Framework of Incivility

The vast majority of my interviewees described supervisor behaviours that align with the established conceptual framework of workplace incivility. These include behaviour that has a (i) demeaning, (ii) dismissive or exclusionary, (iii) distrusting and (iv) intrusive quality. Table 8 maps these categories of behaviour to the central characteristics that workplace incivility is purported to have (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2001; Miner et al., 2018). Specifically, workplace incivility is purported to be (i) passive rather than active, (ii) indirect rather than direct, (iii) subtle rather than overt, and (iv) ambiguous in its intent to harm (see Section 2.1.2 of the literature review chapter).

Table 8

Supervisor Behaviour that Falls Inside the Established Conceptual Framework of Incivility

Characteristics of Workplace Incivility	Participant Quotes
Passive rather than active.	
Behaviour that has a dismissive or exclusionary quality.	"If you made any recommendations of the way you thought something should be done, he would automatically just shoot it down … every single time I had brought something to the table, it was just discarded" (Bret).
Indirect rather than direct.	
Behaviour that has an intrusive quality.	"She would have a little bitching session … but she would suck whoever else was at the table into it with her" (Penny).
Subtle rather than overt.	
Behaviour that has a distrusting quality.	"I found initially there was a lot of challenges around my solutions … I think it was an element of him establishing trust in me, that I'm doing what I say I'm doing, and that I'm making… that my rationale is good, my rationale would be sound" (Kitty).
Stealing credit from the subordinate.	"I would end up with the work, and she would be the one taking the credit for it" (Eve).
Behaviour that has a demeaning quality.	"I say, 'I'm doing my best', and she says, 'What if your best isn't good enough?'" (Gwen).

Ambiguous regarding intent to harm the target.	
Behaviour that has a dominating quality.	"I definitely always kind of felt under the thumb of that supervisor … there was a lot of pressure to communicate exactly what I was doing all the time" (Ava).

Behaviour that has a dismissive or exclusionary quality aligns with the passiveness that is purported to be characteristic of workplace incivility. A noteworthy proportion of my interviewees reported that the supervisor had behaved in a dismissive or exclusionary manner. For example, Josie referred to her supervisor's dismissiveness as a physical presence – "*a thing*" – that felt tangible to those in the supervisor's vicinity.

> "*Like, it was a thing – when you'd go up her desk and speak to her – and everybody knew about this, she'd be working at her desk and she'd leave you standing there and she wouldn't turn her head to acknowledge you, and then she'd go 'yes', like that, you know? She would turn her head just slightly and say 'well, what do you want?'. So, you used to hate going up to her desk*" (Josie).

Behaviour that has an intrusive quality aligns with the indirectness that is purported to be characteristic of workplace incivility. In these examples, the incivility is not immediately obvious as the supervisors' behaviour is superficially friendly or kind. For example, Lily spoke of a "*constant wavering of the boundary between us*". Lily was uncomfortable with the supervisor's attempts at "*trying to be my friend as well as my boss*", because it would involve "*her calling you up to her office and telling you really kind of personal stuff*". Gwen didn't "*want to have the small talk about, you know, 'Oh, how's your nephew?' or 'How's your Mam?'*", as she perceived these questions to be disingenuous.

> "*She is very false and she thinks we can't see through it, but we can, and she shows false concern like 'How's your dog?' and 'how's your baby?', she doesn't give a shit*

how your dog is or how your baby is, but, when the Managing Director is around, butter wouldn't melt in her mouth" (Gwen).

Three behaviours reported by my participants align with the subtleness that is purported to be characteristic of workplace incivility. These include (i) stealing credit from the subordinate and behaviour that has a (ii) distrusting or (iii) demeaning quality. A proportion of my interviewees said the supervisor falsely presented their achievements or ideas as his or her own (e.g., Ava, Paige, Eve, and Jade). This behaviour was subtle as it involved missed recognition which is hard to notice. "*I had come from an organisation that was way better than where I was now and she implemented a lot of what I said in those early days, but I never got credit for it, I was invisible*" (Jade). Additionally, a minority of my interviewees reported supervisor behaviour that has a distrusting quality. For example, Bret said

> "*I had done a report, and I sat down with him and I said, 'There are the figures' and he said 'Oh, that's great. Yeah, that's great. Show me they are real.' I said, 'Sorry?' He said, 'Show me they are real. Show me on your computer where you have this data.' I said, 'Sure, I just printed them off the computer.' 'Show me', he says*'".

In this example, the supervisor is not being overtly aggressive but is subtly undermining Bert's trustworthiness. Furthermore, a substantial proportion of my interviewees reported that the supervisor had demeaned them, and many of these interviewees said they were demeaned repeatedly. For example, Paige said

> "*Before the conference kicked off, I was talking to the track chair and my supervisor came in and said, like, instead of letting me talk about my actual research, she was like, 'Oh, Paige just got married. Paige, come on, pull up your pictures. We'll skip the*

presentation' and I was just thinking, 'You know what? You're demeaning what I'm doing here'".

Again, in this example the supervisor is not being overtly aggressive but is subtly trivialising Paige's work.

Workplace incivility is purported to be ambiguous regarding intent to harm. A substantial proportion of my interviewees described supervisor behaviour that has a dominating quality but is ambiguous regarding intent to harm. For example, Jade perceived the supervisor's stiff body language as a signal of tension and a desire to re-assert control.

> "*She would literally go pale in the face, her knuckles would be clenched and it's not, it's not what would have been said, it would be the unsaid, the body language. She literally would go so stiff. Like you'd feel the tension and go 'What just happened?' So, that's how she would respond when she thinks she's not in control … you felt it … it would be like a very cold breeze would just come into the room*" (Jade).

Furthermore, several other interviewees (e.g., Ava, Gwen, Eddy, Jill, and Liv) said that the supervisor limited their autonomy and used "*micromanagement*" tactics to exert control.

> "*So, like I'm a reasonably high-grade, well-paid person … like I'm self-motivated, independent, I can take a project and run with it and, you know, I should have plenty of autonomy … If I needed to meet somebody in another unit, I would have to go to her and say, 'I could really do with having a meeting with somebody else in another unit, whoever they are,' and then I would be told by her, 'Yeah, you can go ahead and give that person a call.' Isn't that insane?*" (Liv).

Additionally, some of these interviewees said that the supervisor exerted dominance by highlighting and criticising small errors in their work (e.g., Sally, Eddy, and Gwen).

"*We're at the point where she's printing out all my emails, first of all asking to be bcc-ed on everything I send out, printing them out and highlighting if I have a bracket and then a space and then the letter, she's like 'That's bad punctuation'… It's micromanagement to the point of harassment is what it is*" (Gwen).

These behaviours perhaps signal these supervisors' preoccupation with controlling resources and striving for flawlessness, rather than an intent to harm these subordinates.

4.2.1.2 Supervisor Behaviour that Falls Inside Another Conceptual Framework of Workplace Mistreatment

A noteworthy proportion of my interviewees reported behaviour that relates to, but may be something more than, workplace incivility, possibly bullying. These include the supervisor making impossible or unreasonable requests and 'quiet firing' tactics (see Table 9). Quiet firing involves supervisors using subtle, passive-aggressive behaviours to motivate subordinates to resign voluntarily (e.g., Anand et al., 2024). Quiet firing was put forward by Miner et al. (2018) as a potential form of workplace incivility despite its intentionality. For example, Gwen said "*All her notes will be used so that I'll either get fired or she'll stress me out so much that I'll leave*".

Table 9

Supervisor Behaviour that Falls Inside Another framework of Workplace Mistreatment

Supervisor behaviour	Participant Quotes
Making impossible or unreasonable requests.	"Instead of bringing someone else in, I was left doing two roles … I acted in both jobs, and I was doing 12-hour days, four days a week at least … it was an untenable position" (Tessa).
Quiet firing.	"I was moved away from the department that I essentially set up. I was pushed into a sort of nearly like a think tank, you know … Shortly after that, I said, 'I can't put up with this.' I just

	retired, you know. I decided 'I can't take this anymore'" (Earl).

A noteworthy proportion of my interviewees said the supervisor's behaviour aligned with quiet firing tactics. Quiet firing is when the interviewee perceived that the supervisor had attempted to make their job so unpleasant or unrewarding that they would have no choice but to quit. For example, Fay said that the supervisor tried to take away work she was passionate about and expert in and give her work in which she had no interest or expertise. "*He said that I was brought in to be a communications manager, to create content and update webpages. I started laughing. I thought that was a joke at first*" (Fay). Like workplace incivility, quiet firing is subtle and indirect. However, quiet firing more closely aligns with concepts like workplace bullying, in that the behaviour is persistent and is perceived to be intentional (see Section 2.1.4 for a discussion of the characteristics of workplace bullying).

Regarding the supervisor's impossible or unreasonable requests, Molly said "*Some of the things she was asking for managers to do were kind of almost impossible*". Further, Erin said that she and her co-workers found some of the supervisor's unreasonable requests humorous:

> "*We used to keep some of them because they were really funny, we had to write some of these things down because they're so funny … Once we had an event, he wanted to contact Obama to go to the event and I was like 'I don't think Barack Obama is going to reply to you, to be honest'. When I'm telling you that sometimes he would come out with crazy stuff, that's the kind of stuff that I'm thinking about*" (Erin).

However, for the majority of these interviewees, the supervisor's impossible or unreasonable requests were not humorous and involved being given a "*huge workload*" (e.g., Eve), or working during one's personal time (e.g., Molly). Workplace incivility is purported to violate

norms for mutual respect and, in these examples, respect of one's work-life balance. However, these examples, perhaps, go beyond workplace incivility, in that unsustainable or impossible expectations set the subordinate up to fail or put the subordinate in a no-won position.

4.2.1.3 Supervisor Behaviour that Falls Outside the Established Conceptual Framework of Interpersonal Workplace Mistreatment

A proportion of my interviewees reported supervisor behaviours that are not currently represented in the established conceptualisations of workplace mistreatment, like incivility and bullying. Yet these interviewees considered such behaviours a form of supervisor incivility and a part of interpersonal workplace mistreatment. These include behaviour that (i) indicates a lack of support or care for the interviewee, and the supervisor refusing to (ii) take responsibility for their own mistakes and (iii) compromise or demonstrate flexibility (see Table 10).

Table 10

Supervisor Behaviour that Falls Outside the Established Conceptual Framework of Interpersonal Mistreatment

Supervisors' Behaviour	Participant Quotes	Participants' Expectations	Disconfirmation of Participants' Expectations	Perceived negative consequence(s)
Behaviour that indicates a lack of support or care.	"Personally, sometimes I think he's a bit too laid back because you hear of supervisors in the UK that are coaching their guys and they're pushing, pushing, pushing them and sometimes you would think, 'gosh it would be great to get something like that', because you know, sometimes you drift during the year." (Jake)	The supervisor should 'coach' me and push me to perform better.	The supervisor's approach to supervision is perceived to be too lassie-faire.	Not performing as well as one could.
Refusing to take responsibility for one's mistakes.	"Everything then that goes wrong was everybody else's fault. You know, 'It's the system. It's the weather. It's people.' … 'Who now can I blame? I'm not going to take responsibility for this now.' You know? So, I think everybody was kind of getting blamed. I was getting blamed, you know." (Alfie)	The supervisor should manage personal errors by accepting personal responsibility.	The supervisor's approach to error management is perceived to be incorrect.	Errors are attributed incorrectly (e.g., to the participant).
Refusing to compromise or demonstrate flexibility.	"Because I had [an operation], so it means you can walk but you can't sit, you can't drive, and you have to do certain exercises just until it sets in and it bonds all the bones back together, but he wouldn't allow me to work from home even though it benefitted	The supervisor should allow me to work from home as I cannot attend the office due to illness.	The supervisor's decision regarding working arrangements is perceived to be unreasonable.	Sick leave negatively impacts the participant's record of attendance and the organisation.

	the company. I got paid when I was out sick which made no sense, and he made sure they recorded that I was out sick." (Bret)	

I suggest these distinct behaviours are considered forms of supervisor incivility by my interviewees for two reasons. First, these distinct behaviours disconfirmed these interviewees' expectations concerning the supervisor's behaviour. Unmet expectations are the defining feature of a trust violation (e.g., Bies & Tripp, 1996). Trust is based in individuals' expectations about how others should act. These expectations are often based on shared social norms, or standards of behaviour, accepted by a group (Bies & Tripp, 1996). Similarly, the workplace incivility literature assumes that there are shared norms for respect, and behaviour that violates these norms is considered uncivil (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). It may be that these participants conflated the violation of norms for interpersonal trust with norms for mutual respect.

Second, these interviewees associated these distinct behaviours with negative personal consequences (see Table 10). The workplace incivility literature assumes that uncivil behaviour is dysfunctional (see Miner et al. (2018) for a discussion of this assumption). Indeed, a wide range of personal negative consequences has been associated with workplace incivility (see Sections 2.1.2.1 to 2.1.2.3 of this thesis). It may be that these participants conflated feeling mistreated – that is, experiencing negative personal consequences as a result of another person's behaviour – with having been mistreated. However, of the three distinct behaviours identified (see Table 10), two may be associated with the 'classic incivilities' discussed previously (see Table 8). These are refusing to compromise or demonstrate flexibility, which may have distrusting quality, and refusing to take responsibility for one's mistakes, which may have a demeaning quality when the supervisor blames the subordinate for their own mistakes.

4.2.2 Intraindividual Variation in Targets' Responses to Supervisor Incivility

Tables 11 to 15 show (i) the duration of the experience, (ii) whether supervisor incivility was persistent or episodic, (iii) whether supervisor incivility was generalised or the supervisor targeted the participant, (iv) whether the subordinate-supervisor relationship is ongoing or has ceased, and (v) whether the participant held a position of formal power, or not, in their respective organisation. I found that my participants' response patterns were complex, involving a range of behavioural responses to persistent supervisor incivility. Specifically, I found that the majority of my participants alternated between retreat I and two or more of the other behavioural responses identified in this study (i.e., reciprocation, retreat II, unmitigated affiliation, and setting boundaries) (see Section 4.3 for explanations of these behavioural responses).

In the next sections, I present gendered differences in terms of incivility type and targets' behavioural responses to incivility. Furthermore, I present power differences in terms of targets' behavioural responses to incivility, according to whether the participant held a position of formal power, or not, in their respective organisation. Moreover, I present differences in terms of targets' behavioural responses to incivility, when the supervisor incivility was targeted versus generalised.

4.2.2.1 Same Gender Interactions

Three types of supervisor incivility were reported in relation to the female-to-female dyads that were not reported in relation to the male-to-male dyads. These include (i) behaviour that has an intrusive quality (seven female participants), (ii) impossible or unreasonable requests (four female participants), and (iii) quiet firing (four female

participants). Furthermore, two types of supervisor incivility were reported in relation to the male-to-male dyads that were not reported in relation to the female-to-female dyads. These include behaviour that has a distrusting quality (1 male participant) and refusing to compromise or demonstrate flexibility (1 male participant). Regarding these participants' behavioural responses, males and females in same gender relationships reported retreat (I and II), unmitigated affiliation, and setting boundaries. Only the male participants in male-to-male dyads reported reciprocating supervisor incivility.

Table 11

Female to Female Incivility

Pseudonym	Episodic or persistent incivility?	Targeted or generalised incivility?	Duration of relationship?	Relationship has ceased or is ongoing?	Participant's formal power?	Supervisor incivility experienced.	Participant's response(s)?
Gwen	Persistent	Targeted	1 – 2 years	Ongoing	Yes, formal power.	Demeaning quality Dominating quality Quiet firing	Setting boundaries Retreat I Retreat II
Molly	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ceased, empowered exit.	Yes, formal power.	Demeaning quality Dismissive or exclusionary Intrusive quality Impossible or unreasonable requests Refusing to take responsibility for one's mistakes	Retreat I Setting boundaries Unmitigated affiliation Retreat II
Ava	Persistent	Targeted	6 months – 1 year	Ceased, involuntary leaver.	Yes, formal power.	Intrusive quality Dismissive or exclusionary quality Dominating quality Stealing credit Quiet firing	Retreat I Unmitigated affiliation Retreat II
Josie	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ceased, empowered exit.	Yes, formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary quality	Retreat I

						Demeaning quality Dominating quality	Unmitigated affiliation Setting a boundary.
Anna	Persistent	Targeted	2 – 5 years	Ceased, empowered exit.	No formal power.	Intrusive quality Demeaning quality	Retreat I Setting a boundary. Unmitigated affiliation Retreat II
Jill	Persistent	Targeted	1 – 2 years	Ceased, involuntary leaver.	No formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary quality Demeaning Dominating Quiet firing	Retreat I Unmitigated affiliation Retreat II
Paige	Persistent	Targeted	2 – 5 years	Ceased, empowered exit.	No formal power.	Intrusive quality Dismissive or exclusionary quality Stealing credit Dominating quality Demeaning quality	Retreat I Setting boundaries Retreat II
Eve	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ceased	No formal power.	Intrusive quality Dismissive or exclusionary quality Stealing credit Demeaning quality Making impossible or unreasonable requests	Retreat I Setting boundaries Unmitigated affiliation Retreat II

Penny	Persistent	Generalised	5 – 10 years	Ongoing	Yes, formal power.	Demeaning quality Dismissive or exclusionary quality Quiet firing	Retreat I
Jade	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ceased, involuntary leaver.	Yes, formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary quality Dominating quality Stealing credit	Retreat I Setting a boundary. Unmitigated affiliation Retreat II
Una	Persistent	Generalised	1 – 2 years	Ceased, empowered exit.	No formal power.	Demeaning quality Dismissive or exclusionary quality Stealing credit Dominating quality	Retreat I Setting a boundary. Retreat II
Sally	Persistent	Generalised	1 – 2 years	Ongoing	Yes, formal power.	Dominating quality Dismissive or exclusionary quality	Retreat I Setting boundaries
Lucy	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	Yes, formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary quality Making impossible or unreasonable requests Indicates a lack of support or care	Retreat I Setting boundaries Unmitigated affiliation
Liv	Persistent	Generalised	1 – 2 years	Ongoing	Yes, formal power.	Dominating quality Demeaning quality	Unmitigated affiliation Retreat II Retreat I
Lily	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	No formal power.	Intrusive quality	Retreat I

						Stealing credit	Setting boundaries
						Indicates a lack of support or care	Unmitigated affiliation
						Demeaning quality	
						Dominating quality	
Leah	Persistent	Generalised	1 – 2 years	Ongoing	No formal power.	Dominating quality	Setting boundaries
						Dismissive or exclusionary quality	Retreat I
						Impossible or unreasonable requests	Unmitigated affiliation
Cora	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ceased	Yes, formal power.	Intrusive quality	Retreat I
						Demeaning quality	Setting boundaries
						Dominating quality	

Table 12

Male to Male Incivility

Pseudonym	Episodic or persistent incivility?	Targeted or generalised incivility?	Duration of relationship?	Relationship has ceased or is ongoing?	Participant's formal power?	Supervisor incivility experienced.	Participant's response(s)?
Dane	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ceased, the supervisor left the job role.	Yes, formal power.	Dominating quality	Retreat I
						Demeaning quality	Unmitigated affiliation Retreat II
Eddy	Persistent	Targeted	2 – 5 years	Ceased, involuntary leaver.	No formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary quality	Retreat I
						Dominating quality	Reciprocation Setting a boundary. Retreat II Unmitigated affiliation
Bart	Persistent	Generalised	5 – 10 years	Ceased, the supervisor left the job role.	Yes, formal power.	Demeaning quality	Setting boundaries
						Dominating quality Stealing credit	Reciprocation Retreat I Retreat II
Ben	Persistent	Generalised	10 – 15 years	Ceased, empowered exit.	Yes, formal power.	Dominating quality	Retreat I
							Setting boundaries

Bret	Persistent	Targeted	6 months – 1 year	Ceased, empowered exit.	Yes, formal power.	Distrusting quality Dismissive or exclusionary quality Stealing credit Demeaning quality Refusing to compromise or demonstrate flexibility	Retreat I Unmitigated affiliation Retreat II Setting a boundary.
Alfie	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ceased, the supervisor left the job role.	Yes, formal power.	Dominating quality Refusing to take responsibility for one's mistakes Behaviour that indicates a lack of support or care	Reciprocation Setting boundaries Retreat I Unmitigated affiliation
Wes	Persistent	Generalised	1 – 2 years	Ceased, empowered exit.	No formal power.	Dominating quality	Retreat I Setting a boundary.
Will	Persistent	Generalised	5 – 10 years	Ongoing	Yes, formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary quality Dominating quality	Retreat I
Max	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ceased, the supervisor left his job role.	No formal power.	Dominating quality	Setting boundaries Retreat I

Jake	Persistent	Targeted	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	No formal power.	Behaviour that indicates a lack of support or care	Retreat I
Bob	Persistent	Generalised	5 – 10 years	Ceased, empowered exit.	No formal power.	Dominating quality	Setting boundaries.

Table 13

'Male supervisors' to Male

Pseudonym	**Episodic or persistent incivility?**	**Targeted or generalised incivility?**	**Relationship has ceased or is ongoing?**	**Participant's formal power?**	**Supervisor incivility experienced.**	**Participant's response(s)?**
Rudy	Persistent	Generalised	Ongoing	Yes, formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary Dominating quality	Retreat I

4.2.2.2 Mixed Gender Interactions

I observed similar patterns regarding the type of incivility experienced and behavioural responses among mixed-gender dyads. I interviewed three males who experienced incivility from a female supervisor (female-to-male) (see Table 14). These participants reported six types of incivility: behaviour that has a demeaning quality (two participants), quiet firing (one participant), behaviour that has a dismissive or exclusionary quality (one participant), impossible or unreasonable requests (one participant), refusing to take responsibility for their mistakes (one participant), and behaviour that has a dominating quality (one participant). Regarding these participants' behavioural responses, male targets of female incivility reported retreat I (three participants) and II (one participant), unmitigated affiliation (one participant), and setting boundaries (two participants).

I interviewed 11 females who experienced incivility from a male supervisor (male-to-female) (see Table 15). These participants reported eight types of incivility: behaviour that has a demeaning quality (five participants), quiet firing (one participant), behaviour that has a dismissive or exclusionary quality (six participants), impossible or unreasonable requests (three participants), behaviour that has a dominating quality (six participants), behaviour that indicates a lack of support or care (three participants), and behaviour that has a distrusting quality (one participant). Regarding these participants' behavioural responses, female targets of male incivility reported retreat I (ten participants) and II (five participants), unmitigated affiliation (six participants), and setting boundaries (six participants).

Table 14

Female to Male Incivility

Pseudonym	Episodic or persistent incivility?	Targeted or generalised incivility?	Duration of relationship?	Relationship has ceased or is ongoing?	Participant's formal power?	Supervisor incivility experienced.	Participant's response(s)?
Earl	Persistent	Targeted	2 – 5 years	Ceased, involuntary leaver.	Yes, formal power.	Demeaning quality	Retreat I
						Quiet firing	Setting a boundary Retreat II
Mike	Persistent	Generalised	< 6 months	Ongoing	No formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary quality	Retreat I
						Impossible or unreasonable requests	Setting boundaries
						Refusing to take responsibility for one's mistakes	Unmitigated affiliation
Bert	Persistent	Generalised	< 6 months	Ceased, empowered exit.	No formal power.	Demeaning quality	Retreat I
						Dominating quality	

Table 15

Male to Female Incivility

Pseudonym	Episodic or persistent incivility?	Targeted or generalised incivility?	Duration of relationship?	Relationship has ceased or is ongoing?	Participant's formal power?	Supervisor incivility experienced.	Participant's response(s)?
Mia	Persistent	Generalised	6 months – 1 year	Ceased, empowered exit.	Yes, formal power.	Demeaning quality Dominating quality	Setting boundaries Retreat I Retreat II Unmitigated affiliation
Erin	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ceased, empowered exit.	No formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary quality Impossible or unreasonable requests	Retreat I Retreat II
Kay	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	Yes, formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary quality Behaviour that indicates a lack of support or care Demeaning quality	Retreat I Unmitigated affiliation Retreat II
Fay	Persistent	Generalised	< 6 months	Ceased, empowered exit.	Yes, formal power,	Demeaning quality Dominating quality Dismissive or exclusionary quality Quiet firing	Setting boundaries Unmitigated affiliation Retreat II
Polly	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	No formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary quality	Retreat I

Rose	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	Yes, formal power.	Demeaning quality Dominating quality Behaviour that indicates a lack of support or care	Setting boundaries Retreat I
Sadie	Persistent	Generalised	1 – 2 years	Ongoing	Yes, formal power.	Impossible or unreasonable requests Dominating quality	Setting boundaries Retreat I
Tessa	Persistent	Generalised	10 – 15 years	Ongoing	Yes, formal power.	Making impossible or unreasonable requests Behaviour that indicates a lack of support or care	Setting a boundary Retreat I Retreat II Unmitigated affiliation
Kim	Persistent	Generalised	6 months – 1 year	Ceased, supervisor left his job role.	No formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary quality Dominating quality	Retreat I Setting boundaries Unmitigated affiliation
Kitty	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ceased, empowered exit.	No formal power.	Distrusting quality Dominating quality	Retreat I Setting boundaries
Beth	Persistent	Generalised	2 – 5 years	Ongoing	No formal power.	Dismissive or exclusionary quality Demeaning quality	Retreat I

4.2.2.3 Targeted or Generalised Incivility

Thirty-four of my participants said the supervisor was generally uncivil, and they did not think that they were targeted by the supervisor for uncivil treatment. The majority of these participants reported experiencing supervisor behaviour that had a dominating quality (24 participants), and, further, the majority responded to supervisor incivility with the retreat I response (33 participants).

Nine of my 43 participants said that they were targeted by the supervisor for uncivil treatment. The majority of these 'targeted' participants reported experiencing supervisor behaviour that had a demeaning quality (six participants), and, further, the majority responded to supervisor incivility with the retreat I response (eight participants). This suggests that these participants found it especially difficult to approach the supervisor about the supervisors' selective and demeaning behaviour.

4.2.2.4 Participants' Formal Power

Formal power (participants with vs. without) does not appear to matter to the type of incivility experienced or my participants' behavioural responses. Twenty-two of my 43 interviewees held a position of formal power in their respective organisations. Similar numbers of participants with versus without formal power experienced each type of supervisor incivility previously discussed. For example, 13 participants with formal power reported supervisor behaviour that has a dismissive or exclusionary quality compared to 12 participants without formal power.

When comparing those with formal power to those without, the number of participants who set boundaries on supervisor incivility was almost equal (14 participants vs. 13 respectively). Similarly, the number of participants who responded to supervisor incivility

with the retreat I response was almost equal (23 participants with formal power vs. 18 participants without formal power). A greater number of participants with formal power responded to supervisor incivility with the retreat II response compared to those without formal power (13 vs. five participants). Similarly, a greater number of participants with formal power responded to supervisor incivility with unmitigated affiliation compared to those without formal power (14 vs. seven participants). Of the three male participants who reciprocated supervisor incivility, two held positions of formal power in their respective organisations.

Interim summary. In this section, I have provided a structured overview of the specific behaviours my interviewees encountered and categorised as 'supervisor incivility'. The vast majority of cases align closely with the established framework (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2001; Miner et al., 2018). Where they do not, they reflect a behaviour that the participant interpreted as uncivil or represented a more serious form of workplace mistreatment. I have shown that my participants' response patterns were complex, involving a range of behavioural responses to persistent supervisor incivility. I presented (i) gendered differences in terms of incivility type and targets' behavioural responses to incivility; (ii) power differences in terms of targets' behavioural responses to incivility and (iii) differences in terms of targets' behavioural responses to incivility when the supervisor incivility was targeted versus generalised. In the next section, I provide evidence of compassion (self- and supervisor-) my interviewees' narratives, showing excerpts that inspired me to use these concepts in my analysis.

4.2.3 Theoretical Interpretation of the Participants' Accounts of Supervisor Incivility: Self- vs. Supervisor- Compassion

I adopted self-compassion theory (Neff 2003a, 2003b, 2021) to interpret my interviewees' accounts of supervisor incivility and their behavioural responses. In Table 16, I provide a structured overview of some of the data that inspired me to use this concept in my analysis. In particular, I provide examples of what I perceived to be intraindividual in my participants' accounts of self-kindness (vs. self-judgement) and mindfulness (vs. overidentification).

Table 16

Self-kindness (vs. Self-judgement) and Mindfulness (vs. Overidentification) in the Participants' Accounts

Kindness		**Self-judgement**	
Being thoughtful and generous regarding one's 'failures', for example, one's cognitive, affective or behavioural responses to supervisor incivility. Affective tone is warm and gentle or caring.	"I just kind of let my personal and somatic energy just go, like, I didn't track it, you know? Like one day all of a sudden, I found myself really exhausted really badly and so that's what I'm going to watch, **to make sure that I'm okay** … so I'm hoping now going forward that I'm able to be more contained and like, you know, **careful with my time and energy**" (Lily).	Being critical of oneself. For example, criticising one's cognitive, affective or behavioural responses to supervisor incivility. Affective tone is cold, harsh or rejecting.	"Sometimes I have to stop and do yoga breathing to not have a panic attack. **That's just ridiculous** … **in my position in a fairly senior job and 25 years' experience** … I go to the loo and fill my pockets with tissue before I go into the meeting and then **my husband kills me for that**, he goes 'You can't be crying in front of her, that'll show weakness' and I can't help it. He said, 'You didn't cry in front of her, did you?' and I said, 'every meeting'" (Gwen).
Mindfulness		**Overidentification**	
Turning one's attention inwards to one's cognitions and affects, particularly one's painful cognitions and affects.	She said, 'Well, no wonder your daughter has an eating disorder' … **What she said was hurtful, yes.** It was a very personal thing to say. It just came out of leftfield … **I was quite quiet for the rest of the day** and then **I went home and thought about it** and I thought, 'Oh, she hasn't a clue really and it was just a very inappropriate thing to say'" (Cora).	Ignoring one's negative cognitions and affects.	"**My gut told me at the start that she wasn't a very pleasant person** and I thought … I had a … My gut told me that she probably had a screw loose, but **I ignored my intuition**" (Anna).

Observing one's negative cognitions and affects without allowing oneself to overidentify with the negativity.	"I would kind of be annoyed for 10, 15, 20 minutes and then I would move on … But **it wasn't something I went home and worried and ruminated about**" (Bob).	To lose perspective, or to be unable to view one's experiences, cognitions, and affects neutrally.	"I felt it really got me down … To be honest, I couldn't … Until I made the decision to move job roles, **I couldn't see any light. There was no light there** until my mind was made up and I was like, 'No, I am not doing this anymore'" (Jill).
Identifying one's personal needs (i.e., one's affective, psychological or physical needs).	"**I wouldn't change the way I do my work for anybody else**. I do it for the enjoyment of my job **because it pleases me to do it that way**, you know?" (Eve).	Focusing on the supervisor's perspective, cognitions, or affects, to the point of disregarding one's own (i.e., one's affective, psychological or physical needs).	"**I just withdrew completely from trying to shine myself and supported her in her role** because **I figured that's what she wanted** … **I wanted autonomy** but I didn't, most things I didn't do by myself because there wasn't much point, I learned that. That you just involved her and **try and work out what was important to her**" (Jade).

Additionally, I was inspired to analyse my data with supervisor-directed compassion in mind by direct participant quotes. For example, Jade said "*I have some kind of compassion for her … I do feel some compassion … there's something driving her that maybe is familiar to me*". Further, I identified supervisor-directed kindness when Cora said, "*She's like that family member that does things to embarrass you sometimes but at the same time, you love them, do you know what I mean?*". Moreover, cultivating mindfulness was identified as beneficial to the subordinate-supervisor relationship. For example, Lily said

> "*I think my yoga and meditation practice influences everything in my life actually. I found through the yoga, like on the mat, cultivating these qualities absolutely helps me in all aspects of my life and especially relationships and I've done a lot of work on myself, I have I've studied a lot of different meditation techniques and just letting go and just, you know, doing a lot of clearing so I'm you know I'm letting go of my emotional lulls … I'm not holding onto her shit like*".

I adapted self-compassion theory (Neff 2003a, 2003b, 2021) to explore supervisor-directed compassion in the participants' accounts of supervisor incivility (see Table 17). In Table 17, I provide a structured overview of data extracts that inspired me to use the supervisor-compassion concept in my analysis. In particular, I provide examples of what I perceived to be interindividual variation in my participants' accounts of supervisor-kindness (vs. supervisor-judgement), common humanity (vs. isolation of the supervisor psychologically), and mindfulness (vs. overidentification) in my participants' evaluations of supervisor incivility. I discuss these aspects of my dataset further in Section 4.4, where I present my second theme.

Table 17

Supervisor-Compassion in the Participants' Accounts

Kindness		**Judgement**	
Cognitive component			
Being thoughtful and generous regarding the supervisor's weaknesses and failures (e.g., supervisor incivility).	"Some people have so much going on in their head sometimes and they just don't even think to do the niceties … **I don't think it's down to actually anything malicious**" (Beth). "Most people would be more aware of what they would say to others at work, whereas, if you don't have a filter or if you don't have an understanding of your behaviour, I suppose it's harder if you have to have people point it out to you, it's obviously … **Life can be harder for the person who is rude as well**" (Cora).	Focusing on the supervisor's perceived weaknesses and failings.	"I have **no kind words** to say about that person" (Ava).
Behavioural expression			
Acting in ways that respect and shows tolerance for the needs, feelings, or interests of the supervisor. For example, sensitively confronting supervisor incivility.	"I had to **gently say to her**, 'please bear in mind, I'm only here two and a half days a week, I'm doing my best here. I have a whole other job that I'm also doing as well'. So, I attributed those kind of small, little mistakes to that – what she saw as being a lack of attention to detail – as just being really super stretched	Criticising the supervisor: finding fault with the supervisor in a disapproving way.	"So, I would have always had the sense that **that person was fake** … I think I always just knew that any interaction like that I would have with that person wasn't going to be a very natural one …" (Ava). "I don't think he cares very much about anyone to be honest, except himself,

	in a job that I was only given two and a half days to do but actually took four or five days to do" (Una). "**I have respect for her**, even at times where I might not agree with her, or be fond of something she's done" (Sally)		and now **that's not me being bitchy**" (Kay).
Common Humanity		**Isolation**	
Connecting oneself psychologically to the supervisor. Seeing the supervisor as 'like me'. Connecting one's weaknesses and failures to the supervisor's strengths and successes.	"I'm sure there are people that have their own opinions about me and that **I am not everybody's cup of tea**" (Rudy).	A more extreme state of judgement or criticism. Othering the supervisor: viewing or treating the supervisor as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself. Negating the supervisor's humanity.	"Either they were **completely delusional, or evil**" (Ava). "**He was really narcissistic**, the way he operated. It was like he crushed people. He could do it really well. He could do it really well. He could crush them but charismatic in a way … I don't know if that even makes sense" (Fay).
Mindfulness		**Overidentification**	
Viewing or presenting supervisor incivility 'as it is', without emphasising or de-emphasising the negativity of the experience.	"**I never worry**, you know. **I look at a thing, I figure out how to fix it**, or I'll find somebody else that can fix it, **or I just accept it** that that's just what it's going to be." (Max)	Catastrophising incidents of supervisor incivility: to view or present supervisor incivility as worse than it is or as having a worse outcome than is realistic.	"You know the way if you're calm, you're kind of down here? I don't know how else to describe it, but when you're anxious, your kind of heightened and your awareness is up here? So, smaller things that maybe not… Things that never would have caused you to panic beforehand are now making you panic, you know? **It's like making a mountain out of a molehill**, kind of. In your head it's massive – and it's not." (Kim)

Interim summary. Thus far, I have provided an analysis of the specific behaviours my interviewees encountered and considered 'supervisor incivility'. Additionally, I have provided evidence of self- and supervisor- compassion my interviewees' narratives, showing excerpts that inspired me to use these concepts in my analysis. In the next section, I address my research questions. To re-cap, the research questions at the heart of this study are, first, how do subordinates respond to supervisor incivility? And second, what is the role of compassion in subordinates' responses to supervisor incivility? Based on my interpretation of my interviewees' narratives, I present two themes that answer these questions. Theme one is 'self- vs. supervisor-compassion based responses', and theme two is 'compassionate and uncompassionate incivility frames'.

4.3 Theme 1. Self- vs. Supervisor-Compassion Based Responses

As noted, in theme one, I illustrate my interviewees' responses to supervisor incivility and suggest psychological conditions that may underpinned them (i.e., self- vs. supervisor-compassion). In the following sections, I iterate between my data and extant literature to delineate and theorise these interviewees' responses. Each section follows a four-part structure: (i) definition of the response and its relationship to similar constructs in the extant literature; (ii) situating the response in current incivility theory in particular Cortina et al.'s work (2022); (iii) illustrating how self- vs. supervisor- compassion may have shaped the response; and (iv) showing the impact of the response on my interviewees' personal wellbeing. Table 18, which is positioned at the end of these sections, provides further illustrative quotes of the compassion balance that I relate to each of the relevant responses. The first response I discuss is unmitigated affiliation which, based on my interpretation of the data, occurred when compassion was imbalanced toward the supervisor.

4.3.1 Compassion Imbalanced Toward the Supervisor: Unmitigated Affiliation

Defining Unmitigated Affiliation

Some of the participants in my study shared responses that involved focusing on the needs of the instigator to the exclusion of one's own. Through my analysis, I identified this as a form of unmitigated affiliation, which is a way of pursuing social connection with instigators of incivility and this was very much apparent for a proportion of my interviewees. Unmitigated affiliation is similar to the personality trait "*unmitigated communion*" (see Helgeson & Fritz, 1999) which involves "*focusing on others to the exclusion of the self*" (p. 132). Examples of unmitigated affiliation in my data include (i) doing elements of the supervisor's work without credit (e.g., Eve, Jade); (ii) accepting extra work from the supervisor when one is overextended (e.g., Anna); (iii) attending work "*on your time off*" to avoid upsetting, or irritating, the supervisor (e.g., Molly); and (iv) reluctantly providing the supervisor with emotional support (e.g., Eve, Jade, Lily). "*Calling you up to her office and you know telling you really kind of you know personal stuff*" (Lily).

Situating Unmitigated Affiliation

Cortina et al. (2022, p. 7) were the first to put forward "*affiliation*" as a response to workplace incivility. However, the unmitigated affiliation in my data differs from their conceptualisation of affiliation in that affiliation involves confronting incivility directly and constructively (e.g., having a conversation with the instigator about incivility) (Cortina et al., 2022). The examples provided by Cortina et al. imply that affiliation is similar to cooperation, or collaboration, between the target and instigator of incivility. Further, Cortina et al. propose that affiliation downregulates the stress response associated with experiencing incivility. Accordingly, affiliation is suggested to be beneficial to targets. In contrast, the participants in my research shared examples of unmitigated affiliation that does not involve confronting incivility. For example, Anna said, rather than confront the supervisor about the

incivility to improve the relationship, she thought "*I can make it better by being nice*". Moreover, unmitigated affiliation involves disregarding the limits of one's personal resources, or "*energies*" (see Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 1989). For example, Eve said "*I would sit with her for the whole day and be drained by her*". Thus, unmitigated affiliation is similar to sacrificing oneself for the instigator (see Righetti et al., 2020) and is detrimental to the target. For example, Molly emphasised how hard she had worked for the supervisor but "*I don't know if it served me*". The detrimental influence of unmitigated affiliation on targets' personal wellbeing is discussed at the end of this section. Next, I illustrate from my data that targets respond to supervisor incivility with unmitigated affiliation when compassion is imbalanced toward the supervisor. My interpretation of my data is that unmitigated affiliation is related to deficits in two of the three elements of self-compassion (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021). First, a deficit in self-, but an excess of supervisor-directed-, kindness. Second, a deficit in mindfulness.

Psychological Conditions of Unmitigated Affiliation

Regarding the satisfaction of personal needs, self-kindness means fulfilling oneself emotionally, psychologically, and physically (Neff, 2021; Yarnell & Neff, 2013). The interviewees who responded with unmitigated affiliation found satisfying their personal needs difficult, when doing so would interfere with the needs of others' particularly supervisors' (e.g., Anna, Eve, Fay, Josie, Eddy, Kay). For example, Jade's supervisor delayed work until the night before project deadlines. Although Jade warned the supervisor that she would not work late to meet a deadline, Jade went back on her promise. Jade's experience illustrates the interpersonal pressure created when supervisors delay work until project deadlines. While Jade had initially established a boundary regarding her working hours, the supervisor's visible distress prompted a shift in Jade's priorities. Jade sacrificed a recovery opportunity to assist the supervisor and reduce the supervisor's distress.

"*I'd said to her, 'I'm getting my hair done on a Thursday evening', I said, 'there's no need for us to be last minute around this…' on the Thursday, I was called into the office. The shit was hitting the fan,* [the supervisor] *was like, 'it was just all overwhelming and too much' … and I just looked, and I said… 'I suppose I'll cancel the hair appointment'*".

Similarly, Mike said his supervisor "*would ask for things at the last second . . . Then I'm the one that has to scram . . . it does annoy me sometimes . . . pretty much a lot of the time . . .* [they are] *very tiring days*". The inability to satisfy one's personal needs relates to a heavy sense of responsibility for others and the consequences of others' actions. For example, Molly said that everything "*depends on me*". Accordingly, Molly invested the bulk of her personal resources in ensuring the supervisor's satisfaction and supporting her co-workers' happiness. Several other interviewees spoke of such over responsibility (e.g., Fay, Lucy, Tessa). Over responsibility relates to the second deficit in self-compassion that I suggest contributed to unmitigated affiliation: mindfulness.

Mindfulness involves observing one's thoughts and feelings "*to actually know what we need, deep down, so that we can give it to ourselves*" (Neff, 2021, p. 34). My analysis suggests that unmitigated affiliation occurred when the interviewees suppressed, or ignored, their internal states, attending instead to the supervisors'. The interviewees spoke of monitoring for signs of the supervisors' thoughts and feelings to predict the supervisors' personal needs. For example, Leah used the supervisor's office door – monitoring whether it was open or shut – and the position of the supervisor's headphones as indicators of the supervisor's need for privacy. Even if Leah needed information essential to her work, she would not approach if the supervisor's door was shut, and her headphones were on.

Several interviewees spoke of monitoring the supervisor's internal state (e.g., Josie, Liv, Molly). For example, Liv said thinking about the supervisor's thoughts and feelings, and

whether she was pleasing the supervisor, "*takes up a portion of my brainpower every day*". With their attention turned towards the supervisor, the interviewees were disconnected from their own thoughts and feelings. For example, Alfie said his wife noticed his irritability concerning supervisor incivility, but he was unaware of his irritation. Molly said she intentionally suppressed her feelings concerning supervisor incivility. "*I would be balling crying in the car going to work … and just arrive at work then shut it down and just brace yourself and get through it kind of thing*". Similarly, Kim said, "*I just went to the bathroom, had a panic attack, felt better, came back to my desk, you know?*".

Unmitigated Affiliation and Reductions in Personal Wellbeing

My data points to a significant role of self-compassion in the response to supervisor incivility. Self-compassion alleviates personal suffering (e.g., Smeets et al., 2014). I suggest that the deficits in self-kindness and mindfulness previously discussed, and the self-sacrifice that is characteristic of unmitigated affiliation, amplified the interviewees' suffering. Although most interviewees spoke negatively of supervisor incivility (an exception to this is Max), those who responded with unmitigated affiliation experienced the greatest reduction in personal wellbeing. For example, Eddy became so ill he was hospitalised. Molly took an extended leave of absence from work, saw a psychiatrist, and was prescribed medication because her "*brain was fried*". Ava's personal wellbeing reduced so significantly that she "*suffered major anxiety*", and once an ambulance had to be called to attend to her symptoms.

There was a consensus that unmitigated affiliation is detrimental to targets (e.g., Eve, Jill, Fay, Bret). Ava wished that she had varied her response to supervisor incivility more as "*things could not have gone worse than they did*". Anna said that responding to supervisor incivility with unmitigated affiliation is "*a fatal mistake*" for targets' personal wellbeing. For my interviewees, unmitigated affiliation often preceded another response to supervisor incivility, which I have called 'retreat II'. Theorising from my data, I define retreat II as an

extreme avoidance, or withdrawal, response to supervisor incivility. Based on my data, I suggest that retreat II relates to the unsustainability of giving, but not receiving, compassion, and the detrimental effect of unmitigated affiliation. I begin discussion of the retreat responses with 'retreat I' which, based on my data, is a less extreme avoidance response to supervisor incivility.

4.3.2 Compassion Imbalanced Toward Oneself: Retreat I

Defining Retreat I

My participants described a temporary form of avoidance of supervisor incivility and opportunities for supervisor incivility, which I identified as 'retreat I'. 'Retreat I' includes, first, occasionally ignoring incidents of supervisor incivility (e.g., Gwen, Lucy, Kitty, Bert). "*I just nod the head here you know just …*(Dane) *Holding back a little bit … you would be like, 'Right, well, I won't say, I won't tell her that, what I'm thinking …', you know?* (Paige)". Second, my participants spoke of reducing the amount of time they spent socialising with the supervisor, which I discuss further next.

Situating Retreat I

In their Biobehavioural theory of responses, Cortina et al. (2022) propose that targets may retreat from workplace incivility. The examples of retreat that Cortina et al. provide centre around the 'flight' response incivility (e.g., walking away from the instigator, or exiting the situation). Cortina et al.'s examples imply that the retreat response is reactive. However, my participants shared examples that suggest retreat I can sometimes be a proactive response based on past experiences of supervisor incivility. In particular, my participants recounted proactively avoiding supervisor incivility by limiting the amount of time spent socialising with the supervisor (e.g., Dane, Bret, Josie). For example, Bret said

"*for the three years he was there, I never went to any of the Christmas parties and this year – he is gone now this year – so I am going to the Christmas party this year with the rest of the staff*". Similarly, Erin chose to avoid any last opportunities for incivility by avoiding the supervisor's retirement party. Having described retreat I, next I discuss the psychological conditions that, based on my analysis, I suggest underpin this response.

Psychological Conditions of Retreat I

Based on my analysis, I suggest that retreat I is a self-, vs. supervisor-, serving response, associated with self-kindness and mindfulness. As noted previously, mindfulness involves turning one's attention inwards and identifying one's personal needs (Neff, 2021). Ignoring an incident of supervisor incivility allowed the interviewees to focus on what was most important to them, in that moment. For example, Liv chose to overlook an incident of supervisor incivility during a conversation about a current opportunity for promotion, because preserving her future promotion opportunities mattered more to her than confronting the incivility.

> "*I ran a business for ten years and employed eight people okay, so I definitely have line management experience … when she told me I wasn't shortlisted for the role she's saying it's because of a lack of line management experience … so you're getting this polar opposite message … So, I just said, 'Is there anything else? Is there any other feedback you want to give me?'*" (Liv).

Liv ignored the supervisor's incivility to avoid jeopardising the supervisor's favour and, thus, protect her prospects. "*I'm not just going to stagnate*" (Liv). Retreat I is associated with fulfilling one's personal needs, which is an expression of self-kindness (Neff, 2021). For example, limiting the amount of time spent socialising with the supervisor provided much-needed respite from supervisor incivility (e.g., Bret, Penny, Eve). Furthermore, interviewees

said they intentionally ignored incidents of supervisor incivility because doing otherwise may impede their work-related goals. For example, Lily also said ignoring incidents of supervisor incivility was a way to "*play the game*" and protect opportunities for promotion.

Retreat I: Protecting Personal Wellbeing

The relevant participants perceived 'retreat I' as having a protective effect on personal wellbeing, especially regarding their day-to-day emotional experience of work. For example, Paige associated avoiding the supervisor with experiencing fewer negative emotions while working (e.g., dislike). "*I didn't hate her, but I really didn't like her, you know? … So, I didn't want to see her … I didn't have small talk with her*" (Paige). Similarly, Josie said that avoiding the supervisor was a way of 'managing' the supervisor's incivility and reducing her exposure to negative affective events.

> "*I knew how to manage her as in keep away from her…like it was a thing – everybody knew about this – she'd be working at her desk and she'd leave you standing there and wouldn't acknowledge you then go* [turns head slightly] *'Yes … well, what you want?' So, you used to hate going up to her desk so any chance you could avoid going up to her desk, you would do that instead*" (Josie).

Furthermore, Eve spoke of her breaks away from the supervisor as a means to decompress, after which she would return "*feeling human again*". Hence, for some of my interviewees, retreat I was not merely a strategy to reduce negative affect but also to recover from negative affective events such as supervisor incivility.

4.3.3 Absence of Compassion: Retreat II

Defining Retreat II

In contrast to retreat I, some of my participants' stories reflected a more prolonged form of avoidance of supervisor incivility and opportunities for supervisor incivility, which I labelled retreat II. The participants in my study who shared examples relevant to this response seem to be providing examples of a more global response to supervisor incivility, that involves withdrawing from the supervisory relationship. For example, Ava said "*If I have to say 'hi', I'll say 'hi', but I just was not making an effort. I was a professional, but . . . I wasn't going to go beyond what I needed to do*". Furthermore, Anna related her withdrawal from the supervisory relationship to a loss of trust in the supervisor, "*I was very wary of her. … I would be kind of wary of her. I didn't really, I didn't trust her at all*"; whereas for Alfie, withdrawing from the supervisory relationship was a means to "*dilute*", or reduce, the effects of supervisor incivility. "*Kind of able to, I guess, in a sense, dilute what was happening, dilute the situation with him by being able to focus on your interactions with other people*".

Situating Retreat II

Cortina et al.'s (2022) theorising proposes that targets may retreat from workplace incivility. According to Cortina et al.'s definition, retreat is limited – retreat involves walking away from an incident of workplace incivility. However, a proportion of the participants in my study who shared examples relevant to retreat II spoke of leaving one's job role, or the organisation, to escape supervisor incivility (e.g., Jill, Earl, Eddy, Jade). For example, Jill said she went against other peoples' advice about managing supervisor incivility and took a demotion to escape.

> "*I went against the advice of the union, and I stepped down … but I feel now, looking back, I shouldn't have had to … To me, now, and I wish I didn't think this way, but to me now, she won, do you know?"* (Jill).

Similarly, Earl accepted a job role in the same organisation but away from doing the kind of work he was passionate about to escape supervisor incivility. However, in this new role he found himself "*losing the will to live, you know?*" and, soon after the role change, Earl retired. "*I took it quite philosophically at the time … I said, 'OK, feck this if that's the way they want it.' I just sort of … You know? And I was probably too soft on it but …*". Furthermore, I identified that, for many of my participants unmitigated affiliation often preceded retreat II.

Retreat II: Psychological Conditions and Reductions in Personal Wellbeing

As discussed previously, unmitigated affiliation involves focusing on the supervisor to the exclusion of the self. Based on my analysis of my data, I suggest that unmitigated affiliation occurs when there is an excess of supervisor-, vs. self-, compassion. Furthermore, I suggest that retreat II occurs when the deficit in compassion expands such that the interviewees lacked compassion for the supervisor as well as themselves. The relationship between these responses suggests that when compassion is primarily directed outward, targets exhaust the resources required to be compassionate, to themselves or the instigator of incivility. Retreat II resembles compassion fatigue (see Figley, 2002) which is a type of job burnout (see Maslach et al., 2001) that was first identified among nurses (see Joinson, 1992). The interviewees in this study, who reported responses in line with retreat II described an overwhelming exhaustion, physical illness, cynicism and detachment, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment.

Overwhelming exhaustion appeared to undermine the interviewees' ability to be compassionate. For example, Fay said "*I've gone to my doctor I'd say about four times . . . I'm like 'I'm exhausted. I'm so tired'. She's like, '*[Interviewee], *it's completely burnout'".* Being in this tired, vulnerable state discouraged the interviewees from social interaction, particularly from social interaction with the supervisor. "*I no longer wanted to be in that kind of in a, like put myself in a vulnerable position where I'll be hopeful that they will be, that they would change or that they would be nice*" (Ava). Overwhelming exhaustion was accompanied by symptoms of physical illness. For example, Bret said "*I actually lost weight at that time . . . it would make you sick*". Overwhelming exhaustion and symptoms of physical illness were linked to increased absenteeism from work. "*I was properly sick, couldn't work for two weeks . . . very physically sick, and mentally and emotionally worn out*" (Una). Furthermore, a proportion of my interviewees said they emotionally detached from the supervisor and job role saying "*fuck*" him/her and "*fuck*" it respectively (e.g., Erin, Dane). Cynicism and emotional detachment were self- as well as supervisor- directed. "*In terms of my general sense of self-esteem and self-worth, like, they just went way down*" (Ava). Additionally, the interviewees experienced reductions in their sense of professional efficacy, "*you begin to* [question]*, 'am I just not able for the job or…?*'" (Jade), which also contributed to prolonged avoidance behaviour. "*I just didn't really have a lot of confidence in what I was trying to do, which unfortunately meant that I stopped trying to do a lot of it as well*" (Ava).

As noted previously, for some of the interviewees, retreat II contributed to cessation of the relationship with the supervisor. These interviewees perceived themselves to be involuntary leavers. Involuntary leavers are those who left the job role (i.e., for another, often inferior, position in the organisation), or the organisation, because they felt forced out by the supervisor's incivility. Miner et al. (2018) were the first to suggest that employees may use workplace incivility as a means to push others out of the organisation. Involuntary leavers

perceived that they had been robbed of, first, the choice to stay – "*you actually have to leave the company*" (Eddy) – and second, the time required to secure other employment. "*I'm obviously now unemployed and, as far as I'm concerned, it's because of that situation . . . I was a very central member of the* [executive] *team.*" (Ava). These involuntary exits were experienced by interviewees as being disempowering and unpleasant. "*Obviously like you go through all the emotions of like leaving the company and struggling with the fact that I'm now unemployed . . . I get very stressed about not having a job*" (Ava).

Interim summary. To re-cap, based on my analysis, I suggest that retreat I, a temporary avoidance response to supervisor incivility, occurred when compassion was temporarily imbalanced toward oneself. Furthermore, my interviewees spoke of a prolonged avoidance response, which I suggest occurred when there was an absence of self- and supervisor- compassion, which I call retreat II. Theorising from my data, I identified that, for some of my participants, unmitigated affiliation often preceded retreat II. In the next section, I outline an approach, rather than an avoidance response, to supervisor incivility that I identified from my data. In keeping with seminal theory (i.e., Andersson & Pearson, 1999), I call these interviewees' uncivil response to supervisor incivility 'reciprocation'. As incivility and aggression are unrelated to compassion (Neff, 2021), I draw on the tit- for-tat theory of incivility (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999), and its later extensions (e.g., Miner et al., 2018), to explain reciprocation.

4.3.4 Revenge: Reciprocation

Defining Reciprocation

Supervisor incivility was regarded as reciprocated when the interviewees said they behaved uncivilly (see Anderson & Pearson, 1999), or aggressively (see Hershcovis et al.,

2011), toward the supervisor. My data challenges the tit-for-tat theory (i.e., Andersson & Pearson, 1999), as only three of the forty-three interviewees said they reciprocated supervisor incivility (i.e., Eddy, Bart, and Alfie). In these cases, supervisor incivility was primarily reciprocated via acts of omission rather than commission. Acts of omission included withholding of informational and tangible support from the supervisor. For example, Alfie knew that the supervisor found financial planning difficult. Prior to perceiving supervisor incivility, Alfie would "*cover*" for the supervisor by answering finance-related questions on the supervisor's behalf. However, following repeated incidents of supervisor incivility Alfie stopped supporting the supervisor. "*I wouldn't volunteer the information*". Motivated by a desire for revenge, Alfie intentionally put the supervisor in a difficult position. "*I knew he would never want to come asking for my help or advice so I would just let him stew on it*".

Only one interviewee (i.e., Bart) gave an example of reciprocal incivility that constituted an act of commission. Bart said he did his "*best*" to compromise the supervisor's job security during an audit of the company. Bart tried to show the auditors that the supervisor had instructed him to breach industry regulations.

> "*I was trying to let them see that we were supposed to do a certain amount of water testing, and I was instructed not to do it, because he would have been in total shite . . . I just tried to bury him*" (Bart).

The use of the word "*bury*" is telling regarding the intensity of Bart's desire for revenge. This was not Bart's only reference to an intense desire for revenge. He also said, "*I wouldn't even tell you what I would do with that man now if he was dying on the floor".*

Psychological Conditions of Reciprocation: Anger and Revenge

Incivility and aggression are unrelated to compassion: "*Compassion can be fierce and brave, but it is not aggressive*" (Neff, 2021, p. 39). However, Andersson and Pearson's

(1999) spiral theory accounts for reciprocal incivility, and the relationship between incivility and aggression. Andersson and Pearson (1999) propose that the exchange of incivility gradually escalates to vengeful aggression. Additionally, they propose that the escalation of incivility to aggression is determined by an increase in negative affect. Specifically, Andersson and Pearson propose that frustration and a desire for reciprocation increase to anger and a desire for revenge, as the spiral of conflict persists between individuals. Eddy, Bart, and Alfie agreed that incivility can trigger a tit-for-tat pattern, or self-reinforcing cycle, of conflict via anger and revenge.

However, Bart and Eddie's narratives do not fit with the escalation of negative affect posited by Andersson and Pearson. Bart said interactions with the supervisor became "*personal and nasty*" immediately after the first incident of supervisor incivility. This narrative supports Miner et al.'s (2018) "*blow-up response*" to incivility, rather than Andersson and Pearson's (1999) escalation hypothesis. Miner et al. propose that "*some individuals may respond to uncivil behaviour in a way that is extreme or disproportionate to the initial act*" (p. 9). Bart's immediate desire for revenge suggests that some individuals bypass the emotional process theorised by Andersson and Pearson. In contrast, Eddy spoke of having a "*delayed response*" to supervisor incivility (see Miner et al., 2018, p. 10). Eddy said years had passed since the initial act of supervisor incivility before he behaviourally expressed the anger that he felt. Eddy felt he had suppressed his anger because he believed that responses closer to what I have labelled unmitigated affiliation would encourage the supervisor to treat him better. Eddy shared that he eventually abandoned this belief switching instead to the 'reciprocation' response.

Reciprocation and Reductions in Personal Wellbeing

The interviewees did not consider reciprocation beneficial to personal wellbeing. For example, Alfie said his frustration persisted after reciprocating supervisor incivility and

negatively influenced his behaviour at home. "*My wife . . . She says … She would be picking up on it, yeah, and she was feeling that I was kind of just more irritable at home*". Bart – who gave the most examples of reciprocal incivility – obtained a prescription for "*sleeping tablets*" and "*Xanax*" to cope with the antagonistic relationship. Bart related reciprocating incivility with an increase in anxiety. "*This went on for a long time and I had serious anxiety, serious anxiety. I can't say that I went into a depression, but I had, like, serious anxiety. I am talking about, you know, really bad*". Furthermore, some of these interviewees related reciprocation to a reduction in self-esteem. Alfie and Eddy regretted reciprocating supervisor incivility. Eddy said reciprocating workplace incivility will "*turn you into people that you don't want to be*".

Interim summary. To re-cap, my data suggests that the reciprocation of supervisor incivility is rare. In addition, rather than following a pattern of gradual escalation, two my interviewees spoke of 'blow-up' or 'delayed' reciprocal responses to supervisor incivility. Although compassion is unrelated to reciprocation, based on my analysis, I have suggested that reciprocation occurs when the interviewees acted on their anger and desire for revenge. I have shown that my participants found reciprocation to be detrimental to personal wellbeing. In the next section, I outline a different type of approach response that my interviewees found to be protective of personal wellbeing, which I call 'setting boundaries' on supervisor incivility.

4.3.5 Balance of Self- and Supervisor-Directed Compassion: Setting Boundaries

Defining Boundary Setting

The final category of responses I identified in my data was boundary setting. Setting boundaries refers to confronting incivility directly yet treating the instigator sensitively.

"*Confrontation doesn't have to be a bad word. You can confront someone in a nice way*" (Eddy). For example, Alfie said to the supervisor "'*No. This is clearly your issue, a mistake that you made. You are going to have to deal with it. I will help you, but I am not taking the blame*'". By confronting supervisor incivility in this way, Alfie is taking steps to protect himself and expressing concern for the supervisor. Pointing out incivility but not criticising the instigator's personality was fundamental to setting boundaries sensitively. For example, Gwen focused on her needs rather than the supervisor's personal failures when setting boundaries:

> "*I said this is not working for me, this is not how things work, I don't need to be micromanaged, in fact, I don't need to be managed at all, what I need to be is inspired and she goes 'oh'*".

Situating Boundary Setting

Setting boundaries, or limits, on workplace incivility is a novel concept. In the organisational psychology and management literature, 'boundaries' typically refer to how employees "*effectively manage their work-nonwork interface*" (Trefalt, 2013, p. 1802). For example, some employees manage their work-nonwork interface by not responding to emails outside of working hours (e.g., Cecchinato et al., 2015). However, I use the term 'boundaries' in a different way. Specifically, in a way that is similar to theorists of family dynamics, like Kretchmar and Jacobvitz (2002). According to Kretchmar and Jacobvitz (2002), relational boundaries are the limits, or standards of social behaviour, that parents place upon themselves to foster healthy relationships with their children. An example of crossing a relational boundary is parents involving children in marital conflict (e.g., Wood et al., 2000). Likewise, I use the term 'boundaries' to refer to limits, or standards, concerning acceptable and unacceptable social behaviour of adults. However, in this study, the boundaries that participants set are self- and other-directed. Specifically, the interviewees held themselves to

a standard (i.e., of sensitivity) when speaking to the supervisor about supervisor incivility. Further, the conversation was concerned with imposing a standard of behaviour on the supervisor (i.e., prohibiting supervisor incivility).

Psychological Conditions of Boundary Setting

The experiences that my interviewees shared that were relevant to this response suggest that setting boundaries occurs when self- and supervisor-directed compassion are balanced. Regarding the three elements of self-compassion (see Neff 2003a, 2003b), the interviewees that set boundaries showed mindfulness and self-kindness. As noted previously, mindfulness involves turning one's attention to one's thoughts and feelings, particularly painful thoughts and feelings (see Neff & Dahm, 2015). The interviewees who set boundaries paid attention to the negative thoughts and feelings they associated with supervisor incivility. For example, Anna observed that she experienced supervisor incivility as harsh and oppressive. Anna told the supervisor about her reaction, saying that it felt like he was "*coming down*" on her "*like a tonne of bricks*". Additionally, my other interviewees had identified some particularly painful thoughts and feelings. For example, Jade said:

> "*Like, you know, work being about social connections and so that wasn't there. The autonomy wasn't there. That sense of belonging was not there, so none of the stuff that makes work a good place to be… It was just gone*".

My interviews suggest that my participants' awareness of their cognitive and affective reactions to incivility was not sufficient to set boundaries. Setting boundaries also required the equanimity, or level headedness, that is characteristic of mindfulness (see Shapiro et al., 2018). Although the interviewees observed their negative reactions to supervisor incivility, they did not allow themselves to overidentify with negativity. For example, Ben said "*You kind of detach, you know?*", while Josie noted – "*I'd kind of take it as with a pinch of salt*".

Josie said she attained equanimity by drawing "*a line*", or boundary, internally, which allowed her to "*move on*" from the "*rage*" and "*hurt*" associated with supervisor incivility. Similarly, Sally drew a 'line' between the supervisor's behaviour and her reactions. "*I'm, I kind of, it's her personality and I don't take it personally*".

As discussed previously, self-kindness involves fulfilling oneself emotionally, psychologically, and physically (see Neff, 2021; Yarnell & Neff, 2013). However, this is just one expression of self-kindness. Self-kindness also involves protecting oneself from unjust treatment (see Neff, 2021). According to Neff (2021, p. 33-34), "*when we need to protect ourselves from potential harm… Self-kindness is brave*". Anna said that, before she learned self-compassion, she ignored her intuition concerning supervisor incivility. "*We ignore the voice, I think, inside of us because it's frightening to listen to it, you know, maybe we are not always ready to be brave*". However, when she adopted a self-compassionate mindset, Anna was able to communicate her boundaries. She said that setting a boundary, or limit, on supervisor incivility feels like "*a mixture of being incredibly fearful and incredibly brave at the same time*". Several other interviewees related increased self-kindness to setting boundaries. For example, Eve said:

> "*It has actually made me a little bit harder but in a good way, I think, that you kind of have to be able to stand your ground a bit better, you know? … that you can see what's more important to you, you know?*"

The toughness and self-protection that Eve describes here is called "*fierce self-compassion*" (see Neff, 2021).

However, based on my analysis, I also suggest that self-compassion alone is not sufficient for setting boundaries. Setting boundaries also required supervisor-directed compassion. The interviewees recognised the personal failures and weaknesses of the

supervisor, and how these contribute to supervisor incivility. Moreover, they were kind (vs. critical) of the supervisor's weaknesses and failures. For example, Jade said "*I have some kind of compassion for her*". Further, about supervisor incivility she said, *"I would just see her as being her own worst enemy*". Moreover, the interviewees recognised that supervisors need some latitude to make mistakes. For example, Eddy said he "*put up*" with minor incivilities. However, "*if it crosses the line where it's kind of being nasty and vindictive … the first thing I am going to say is, 'That's rude. If you don't mind stopping that.' … I'll tackle it nicely, you know?*".

As noted previously, an important part of setting boundaries is talking about the boundary with the supervisor sensitively. The purpose of setting boundaries sensitively is to protect the emotional wellbeing of the supervisor. Setting boundaries sensitively involves "*challenging*" supervisor incivility but not being "*vindictive*" (e.g., Sally, Eddy, Earl). The interviewees said that the words used when setting boundaries can influence whether the boundary is perceived as a challenge, or vindictive. For example, when setting a boundary, Anna advises describing the incivility without embellishment. "*Calling it like it is, just exactly as it is, no more and no less … you don't scream, and you don't shout, and you don't rant*". Similarly, Max said he is careful when choosing the words he uses to set boundaries.

> "*I don't like the word angry, I'd never say, 'We'd have an argument', I'd say, 'We had a heated discussion' … if you're just talking about it, perhaps a little heated, you know you can still deal with it rationally and like humanely*" (Max).

Setting Boundaries: Supporting Personal Wellbeing

Regardless of whether the supervisor respected the interviewees' boundaries, my data suggests that setting boundaries was beneficial to personal wellbeing. For example, Lily related setting boundaries to increased positive affect and the accrual of other personal

resources. "*Be in your own energy and your own power … put your energy and love into yourself*" (Lily). Along with an increase in positive affect, setting boundaries distanced the interviewees psychologically from the negative affect associated with supervisor incivility. For example, Anna said that setting boundaries "*is the most powerful thing in life and … it's only when you get older you realise, 'the truth sets you free'*". Furthermore, when supervisors disregarded the interviewees' boundaries, this motivated many interviewees to seek a better job. Many interviewees who set boundaries only to have them disregarded, secured higher paying and more fulfilling work (e.g., Mia, Bret, Ben, Una), whereas a proportion of my interviewees who did not set boundaries became involuntary leavers or lived with regret for not confronting supervisor incivility (e.g., Ava, Jill).

Table 18

Self- vs. Supervisor- Compassion Based Responses

Compassion balance	**Response type**	**Illustrative quote**
Compassion imbalanced toward the supervisor	Unmitigated affiliation	"I was trying to give him the benefit of the doubt . . . Trying to do my best, trying to see the good . . . I felt almost I was giving all of my energy … I was giving everything to change his opinion of me, to make sure he was happy'" (Fay)
Compassion imbalanced toward oneself (temporarily)	Retreat I	"I just zoned out from it a lot … to keep myself sane … just disappear for a while and come back … not talking to people for a few hours gets it all out of your system" (Eve)

Absence of compassion (self- or supervisor-directed)	Retreat II	"I can see now that I was completely burnt out and . . . that supervisor would have superficially been, you know, very concerned . . . I could see that they were only doing that just because they had to tick the boxes, to like look like they were concerned . . . I know that my behaviour started to change . . . I would have started to be a lot more withdrawn. So, like not out of spite or whatever else . . . I was just like 'I actually am not going to win.' Not that well, you know, not that I was looking to win anything but I'm not going to have any real positive experience . . . [and] because of how draining that was, I literally had no time for anything else like . . . Like, I would have come home and just didn't want to do anything . . . Then just in terms of like my self-esteem and self-worth, like, they just went way down (Ava) . . . I think if it's in your nature to be doubtful of yourself or critical of yourself that just played hugely into it (Molly)"
Revenge	Reciprocation	"I was trying to just stick him, get my own – this might sound terrible – get my own back . . . it was just a vicious circle (Alfie) . . . He has since been transferred to another part of the world, thank God, and I mean this in all badness. He had a fantastic house down south

		that the company paid for, for him and his family . . . a beautiful house and now he is in a two-bedroom apartment in a really cold country, and . . . I hope he's freezing!" (Bret)
Balance of self- and supervisor-directed compassion	Setting boundaries	"I was very open with her, and I would tell her what it was like on the team, I'd say what she needed to do or whatever. But I always did it in a constructive way and about behaviours, not about her personally (Jade) . . . you're not going effing and blinding and calling them names . . . Just say it like it is (Anna)"

Interim summary. Thus far, I have outlined my first theme 'self- vs. supervisor-compassion based responses'. I have shown that although a small number of interviewees maintained cycles of incivility via reciprocation (i.e., Eddy, Bart, and Alfie), most disrupted incivility via responses that I have called 'unmitigated affiliation', 'retreat', and 'setting boundaries'. Seeking to understand why my interviewees responded differently, I explored their evaluations of supervisor incivility as research suggests that the target's appraisal modulates their response (e.g., Cortina et al., 2022; Marchiondo et al., 2018). Thus, theme two, 'compassionate and uncompassionate incivility frames', captures my interviewees' compassionate vs. uncompassionate evaluations of supervisor incivility.

4.4 Theme 2. Compassionate and Uncompassionate Incivility Frames

This theme reflects my analysis regarding a key evaluative mechanism; the compassionate versus uncompassionate mindset, through which my interviewees interpret and label supervisor behaviour as uncivil. A compassionate mindset refers to evaluating supervisor incivility (i) kindly, (ii) mindfully, and with awareness of the supervisor's (iii) common humanity. An uncompassionate mindset refers to evaluating supervisor incivility (i) critically while (ii) overidentifying with the experience and (iii) isolating psychologically the supervisor. Through my analysis, I perceived interindividual and intra-individual variation in relation to these two mindsets. As I was unable to collect longitudinal data regarding my participants' evaluations of incivility, I am unable to definitively establish if these changes reflect a real-time perspective shift or a post-hoc rationalisation strategy. Nevertheless, the identification of compassionate evaluations of supervisor incivility is significant, even if they only formed part of a later reappraisal process. Several studies have focused on cognitive reappraisal as a viable strategy for targets to lessen the harm of workplace mistreatment and, in particular, it is considered preferable to its post-event counterpart rumination (for a review, see Zhong et al. 2023). Next, I discuss these compassionate vs. uncompassionate mindsets in detail, beginning with interindividual variation in kindness vs. criticism.

4.4.1 Kindness vs. Criticism

At times, some of my interviewees spoke about evaluating supervisor incivility with kindness rather than criticism. Examples of kind evaluations in my data include (i) expressing warmth and understanding regarding supervisor incivility; (ii) attributing supervisor incivility to factors beyond the supervisor's control; and (iii) empathising with the supervisor's failures, weaknesses, or challenges. For example, Mia said in relation to supervisor incivility

"*it was his first-time managing people to be fair*". This offer of fairness is significant considering Mia left her job role due to persistent supervisor incivility. Furthermore, Ben said he often empathised, or put himself "*in the shoes*", of a supervisor who was also persistently uncivil. Ben empathised with some of the personal limitations of the supervisor and concluded "*I don't know what I could have done better*" in his situation. Further, Ben invited me to empathise with the supervisor. He asked that I "*imagine somebody in their eighties and nineties having to run around*" a "*three-floor company*" to monitor employee productivity, so that I could understand the supervisor's behaviour from the supervisor's perspective.

However, at times, some of my interviewees spoke about evaluating supervisor incivility critically rather than kindly. Critical evaluations involved (i) disregarding external factors that may have contributed to supervisor incivility and, in some instances, (ii) cold condemnation of the supervisor. For example, Bart said "*He wouldn't be a nice person . . . he was a damaged man, he had a broken marriage, and his wife was an alcoholic, and nobody liked him*". Despite possessing an awareness of the difficult personal circumstances of the supervisor, Bart locates the cause of the supervisor's incivility within the supervisor's personality. The supervisor is judged to be a 'bad person' rather than an individual who struggles and, consequently, behaves uncivilly.

4.4.2 Common Humanity vs. Isolating the Supervisor

At times, some of my interviewees saw the humanity of the supervisor instead of isolating the supervisor psychologically. For example, Mia described a situation in which "[The supervisor's] *perception of how the account should be managed and run at the time was off kilter with what myself, and other people in the company, would have seen as the best way to manage it.*". Despite perceiving the supervisor as having an imperfect approach to

management, Mia did not hesitate to say, "*I would hire him in the morning*". Rather than isolate the supervisor, Mia recognised a connection between her own inadequacies and what she perceived to be the supervisor's strengths. "*He's* v*ery, very high functioning, very intellectual, and can bring an awful lot to the party.*". Mia proposed that they combine their strengths to compensate for each other's weaknesses and thrive in their respective job roles. "*I think if we do it together* [the supervisor] *would be able to bring a huge amount of commercial acumen, that I am not as strong on, and I would be able to bring the people pleasing".*

However, a small minority of interviewees isolated the supervisor psychologically instead of recognising the supervisor's common humanity. These interviewees said that they suspected that there was something fundamentally 'wrong' with the supervisor. They psychologically distanced the supervisor from themselves and other 'regular' people by using descriptive terms, like "*narcissist*" (e.g., Fay), that denote the presence of a personality disorder. Some of these individuals recognised that their colleagues did not share this pathologized interpretation of the supervisor's personality. Even so, having access to these alternative perspectives did not lessen the isolation that had been created.

4.4.3 Mindfulness vs. Overidentification

Furthermore, my data suggests that the interviewees differed in the extent to which they practised mindful observation of the supervisor and supervisor incivility. Perceiving someone mindfully means adopting a detached, benevolent lens through which to view the individual (Neff & Dahm, 2015). The interviewees who mindfully observed supervisor incivility tended not to have 'knee-jerk' aversive reactions to supervisor incivility, like anger. Ben called such knee-jerk, aversive reactions to incivility a "*vortex*", and he expressed

gratitude for possessing the skill of mindful observation which allowed him to escape the "*vortex*". "*I call this kind of thing a 'vortex'. The more you are into it, the more it drags you down, you know? And that's the reason why I stopped at that moment. I saw that I was getting into that so … I had that kind of freedom of mind. I was not attached*". Stepping back from the negativity of supervisor incivility provided space psychologically to recognise the supervisor's positive qualities and behaviour. For example, Ben described the supervisor as "*a self-made man*" and someone who "*really did teach me a lot*" despite the persistent incivility.

However, I also found that several interviewees over-identified with, rather than mindfully observed, supervisor incivility. In over-identifying with supervisor incivility, these interviewees catastrophised the incidents. For example, a proportion of my interviewees were concerned that the relationship with the supervisor was only going to get worse and, as a result, some concluded that they 'must' leave the job role. "*I'll either get fired or they'll stress me out so much that I'll leave . . . I think now my entire focus needs to be on getting a new job.*" (Gwen). Moreover, some interviewees over-identified with supervisor incivility as they were narrating their experiences during the interview. For example, despite having had little to no contact with the supervisor for several years, Bart expressed intense anger during the interview.

4.4.4 Switching Between a Compassionate and Uncompassionate Mindset

Along with observing interindividual variation in my data, I also found that many of my interviewees switched between compassionate vs. uncompassionate evaluations of supervisor incivility. Several of my interviewees were aware of this change in mindset and acknowledged it. For example, Jade said that at the time "*it was easier to have compassion*

for her than to stay really angry". However, demonstrating that a compassionate mindset can be difficult to hold onto, Jade followed this statement with: "*Would I hang her out to dry? I always said that I would never tell her if her skirt was tucked into her knickers, and she was about to go on stage.*". Despite experiencing the occasional temptation to allow the supervisor to embarrass herself, Jade continuously returned to a compassionate mindset. She spent much of the interview discussing the supervisor's personal challenges kindly and concluded our interview with the most important piece of feedback that she gave to the supervisor: "*Be kind to yourself*". This instruction was the last thing that Jade said to the supervisor before she left a job role that was "*perfect*" for her, because of persistent supervisor incivility.

Many of my other interviewees alternated between an uncompassionate and compassionate mindset. For example, Molly gradually switched from self-identifying as 'victim' to 'participant' in the decline of the relationship with the supervisor. "*Sometimes I think 'how much of it was her and how much of it was me?'*" Eddy agreed that the passage of time can facilitate the adoption of a compassionate perspective on supervisor incivility. He said "*Years ago, I would dislike the person and think bad of them. Now the way I feel about it is that it's their issue; that they have a problem*". In this example, Eddy switches from perceiving the supervisor as a 'bad person' to a person in a 'problematic situation'. Specifically, he says that the supervisor has a problem rather than the supervisor is the problem.

However, not all switches in the evaluation of supervisor incivility were positive. For example, Erin described losing compassion for the supervisor over time. Although Erin said she evaluated the supervisor as a "*really nice person*" and "*helpful*" in the beginning of the relationship, later she came to refer to him as a "*wicked*" character likening him to "[President Donald] *Trump*". This switch in mindset regarding the supervisor and supervisor

incivility was enduring, and it contributed to Erin's decision to boycott the supervisor's retirement party. Erin's story indicates that time does not always heal the wounds caused by supervisor incivility. Additional examples of the interviewees' switching between an uncompassionate and compassionate mindset are shown in Table 19.

Table 19

Intraindividual Variation in Evaluation of the Supervisor and Supervisor Incivility

Compassionate	**Uncompassionate**	
"Now, I would put it down to that she is very young, and she is still learning because she was young when she got promoted."	"Jesus, she was mad. She was mad."	Eve
"She probably never meant it in fairness."	"If you get on the wrong side of her, you're like going to be axed out of it, like you'd get the face eaten off you"	Mike
"[She's] just emotionally not really available for anyone else."	"She's like 'the queen' . . . even say if we answered an email that she felt like she should have looked at . . . she has to be cc'd on everything."	Lily
	"Well, that was a nickname that I had on him then . . . 'Chaos'."	Alfie

"If something comes up, you deal with it . . . and you move on then, but he didn't seem to … That wasn't his style, you know?"		
"They didn't know in fairness to them."	"I would have said the relationship was manipulative."	Ava
"When I make something or a cake that I know she likes, a couple of times I've brought it into her and put it on her desk, she does be thrilled with herself . . . I don't dislike her as a person."	"She was very much a Jekyll and Hyde type of personality. She's fine . . . laughing and joking and the next time, she could totally cut somebody off."	Josie
"I saw him and rather than have a feeling of kind of anger or rage or 'There is that you-know-what that I used to work with'. . . I actually feel sorry for him because he just looks so miserable."	"A bad reputation . . . it's not a kind of a nickname that would bring a smile to your face."	Eddy

4.5 Conclusion

The research questions at the centre of this study are, first, how do subordinates respond to supervisor incivility? And second, what is the role of compassion in subordinates' responses to supervisor incivility? Based on my analysis of my data, I have presented two themes that answer these questions. Theme one is 'self- vs. supervisor-compassion based

responses', and theme two is 'compassionate and uncompassionate incivility frames'. Theme one captures my participants' responses to supervisor incivility including (i) unmitigated affiliation, (ii) retreat (I and II), (iii) reciprocation and (iv) setting boundaries. From my analysis, I suggest that reciprocation was determined by revenge rather than compassion. I integrated compassion theory (e.g., Neff 2003a, 2003b, 2021) to theorise the psychological conditions that underpin my interviewees' non-reciprocal responses: (i) unmitigated affiliation, (ii) retreat (I and II), and (iii) setting boundaries on supervisor incivility.

First, through my analysis, I have shown that unmitigated affiliation occurred when self-directed kindness and mindfulness was low, and supervisor-directed kindness and mindfulness was high. Second, I have illustrated that, for my interviewees, retreat I occurred when self-directed kindness and mindfulness was high, and supervisor-directed kindness and mindfulness was low. Third, I found that, for my participants, retreat II occurred when self-directed kindness and mindfulness was low, and supervisor-directed kindness and mindfulness was low. Fourth, I have shown that my participants set boundaries on supervisor incivility when self-directed kindness and mindfulness was high, and supervisor-directed kindness and mindfulness was high.

Seeking to further understand why my interviewees responded differently, I explored their evaluations of supervisor incivility as research suggests that the target's appraisal modulates their response (e.g., Cortina et al., 2022; Marchiondo et al., 2018). Thus, theme two, 'compassionate and uncompassionate incivility frames', captures my interviewees' compassionate vs. uncompassionate evaluations of supervisor incivility. I integrated compassion theory (e.g., Neff 2003a, 2003b, 2021) to theorise the psychological conditions that underpin the variation in my interviewees' evaluations of the supervisor and supervisor incivility. In particular, I have illustrated that many of my interviewees alternated between an uncompassionate and compassionate mindset, which contributed to intra-individual variation

in evaluations of supervisor incivility. Figure four captures the relationship between Neff's compassion theory and these aspects of my findings.

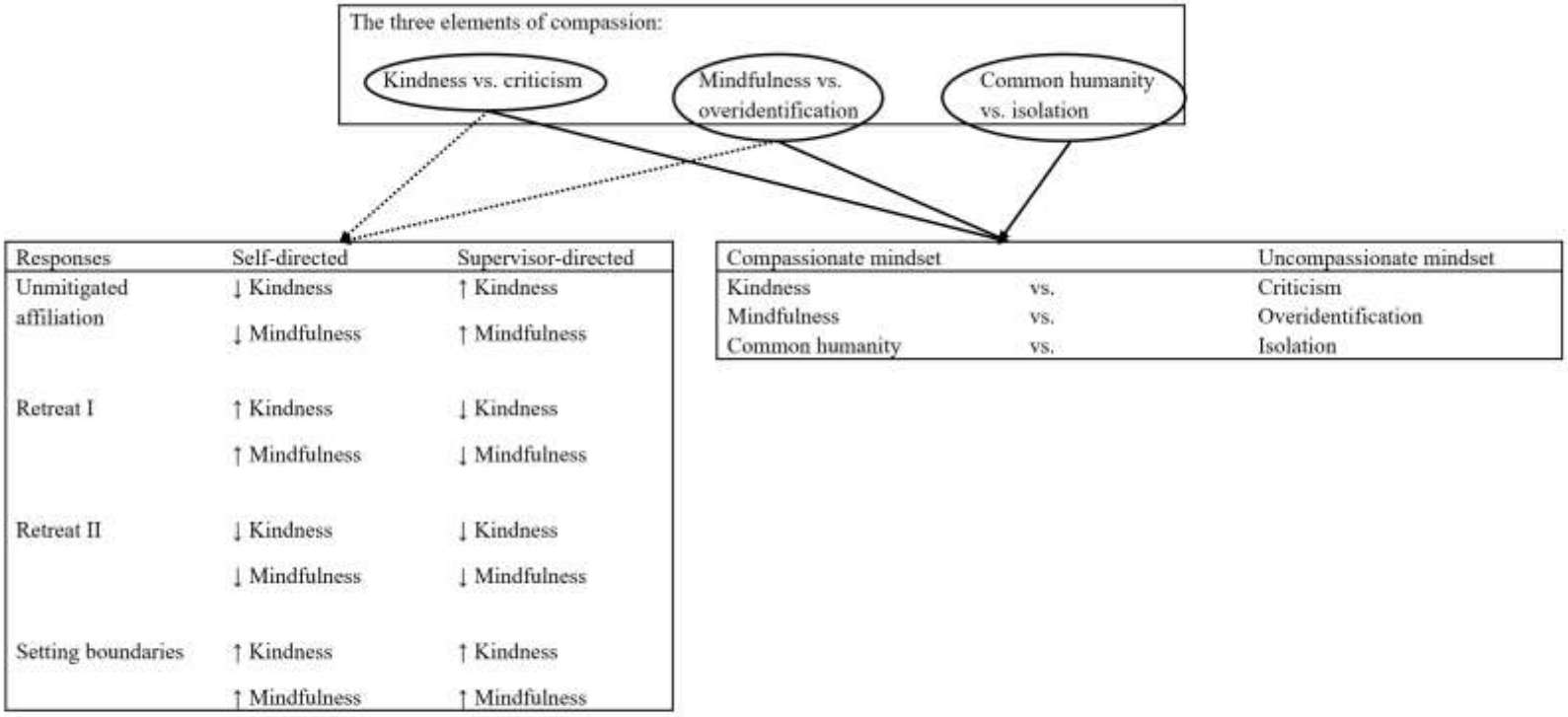


Figure 4

Structure of the Key Findings

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Overview of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how incivility is experienced and responded to in workplace relationships, in particular, in the subordinate-supervisor relationship. This study focuses on two research questions. First, how do subordinates respond to supervisor incivility? And second, what is the role of compassion in subordinates' responses to supervisor incivility? Though a small number of interviewees maintained cycles of incivility via reciprocation, most disrupted incivility via responses which I call 'unmitigated affiliation', 'retreat', and 'setting boundaries'. Through my analysis, I differentiate these subordinate responses to incivility and argue that they are influenced by the direction of compassion: self- vs. supervisor-. First, through my analysis, I show that unmitigated affiliation occurred when compassion was imbalanced toward the supervisor. Second, my interpretation of the data suggests that retreat I, a temporary avoidance response, occurred when compassion was temporarily imbalanced toward oneself. Third, my interpretation of the data suggests that, retreat II, a prolonged avoidance response, occurred when there was an absence of self- and supervisor- compassion. Further, I identified that for my participants unmitigated affiliation often preceded retreat II. Fourth, from my analysis, I suggest that reciprocation was determined by anger and revenge rather than compassion. Lastly, my interpretation of the data suggests that the interviewees set boundaries on supervisor incivility when self- and supervisor- compassion were balanced.

The last of these responses, boundary setting, was experienced by my participants as being the most beneficial. Specifically, the interviewees shared that setting boundaries on supervisor incivility was beneficial to personal wellbeing, even if the boundary did not inhibit supervisor incivility. However, for my participants, the other responses detrimentally influenced personal wellbeing (for an exception, see the temporary avoidance response to supervisor incivility that I called 'retreat I'). Additionally, I found interindividual and intra-

individual variation in relation to my interviewees' evaluations of supervisor incivility. Prior research has found interindividual variation in peoples' evaluations of workplace incivility (e.g., Marchiondo et al., 2018). What is notable in this study is that some of my interviewees switched between a compassionate and uncompassionate mindset when evaluating supervisor incivility. As a result, these participants made contradictory appraisals of the supervisor and supervisor incivility. These findings support me in offering several contributions to theory and practice concerning the disruption of self-reinforcing cycles of incivility and mitigating harmful effects.

5.2 Contextualising my Findings within the Incivility Literature

In this section, I return to the key theories and studies introduced in the literature review chapter concerning four behavioural responses to instigators of incivility: reciprocation, retreat, affiliation, and freeze (see Section 2.2). In doing so, I emphasise complementarities and differences between my findings and prior research regarding targets' behavioural responses to incivility (see Table 20).

Table 20

Complementarities and Differences: My Findings vs. Prior Research Regarding Behavioural Responses

Theory	**Theorised response(s)**	**Theorised mediators & moderators**	**Theorised consequences**	**Empirical research**	**Complementarities**	**Differences**
Tit for tat? The spiraling effect of incivility in the workplace (Andersson & Pearson, 1999)	Reciprocation	Perceived interactional injustice. Negative affect (+). Desire for reciprocation (+). Perceived damage to social identity. Anger (+). Desire for revenge (+).	Gradually escalates to coercive behaviour and physical aggression. Some targets may 'depart' from incivility.	Reciprocal incivility is associated with perceptions of injustice, attributing blame to the instigator, negative affect (e.g., anger), and reduction in self-regulation.	Three of my forty-three interviewees said they reciprocated supervisor incivility. These participants associated reciprocal incivility with anger and a desire for revenge.	Only three of my interviewees said they reciprocated supervisor incivility. This tentatively suggests that it is more common for targets to depart from supervisor incivility than reciprocate. One of my interviewees' narratives support Miner et al.'s (2018) "*blow-up response*" to incivility, rather than Andersson and Pearson's (1999) escalation hypothesis. Further, another interviewee reported delayed reciprocation, also hypothesised by Miner et al. (2018).

The embodiment of insult: A theory of biobehavioral response to workplace incivility (Cortina et al., 2022)	Retreat	When targets appraise incivility as a threat to their social status. When the organisational culture/climate promotes 'toxic competition'.	Extends or increases targets' physiological stress response to incivility.	Negative emotions, like fear and sadness, are antecedents of a retreat response. People weigh the costs versus benefits of confronting and resolving workplace incivility.	Among my interviewees, retreat was a common response to supervisor incivility. I associate the second type of retreat that I identified with negative affect. Specifically, retreat II resembles compassion fatigue which is a type of job burnout.	I identified two types of retreat. I associated the first type with self-compassion, which is a positive cognitive-affective state. Further, the relevant participants perceived retreat I as having a protective effect on personal wellbeing.
	Affiliation	When targets appraise incivility as a threat to interpersonal relationships.	Supports the reduction of targets' physiological stress response to incivility.	Customer incivility has led to affiliative behaviours, such as service employees apologising to the customer. The opposite has been found; experiencing incivility has also led to less prosocial behaviour.		A noteworthy proportion of my interviewees affiliated with the supervisor in an unmitigated manner. Unmitigated affiliation involved focusing on the needs of the supervisor to the exclusion of one's own. I associated unmitigated affiliation with, first, a deficit in self-, but an excess of supervisor-directed-, kindness.

						Second, a deficit in mindfulness. Unmitigated affiliation was experienced as depleting, or stress increasing, for targets.
Kick me while I'm down: Modeling employee differences of the impact of workplace incivility on employees' health and wellbeing (Jorgensen et al., 2024)	Freeze	A past trauma. Depletion of the target's personal resources. The target blames themselves for the experienced incivility.	Deleterious impact on targets' health and wellbeing	The freeze response is yet to be investigated.		My interviewees did not recount freezing in response to supervisor incivility.
All three of the aforementioned theories.						A significant proportion of my interviewees switched between compassionate vs. uncompassionate evaluations of supervisor incivility. Responses to persistent supervisor incivility appear to be complex; my interviewees responses included

						a range of actions. In particular, I suggest that unmitigated affiliation increases the likelihood that targets will respond to persistent supervisor incivility with the retreat II response. I identify a novel response to incivility – setting a boundary – which the relevant participants perceived had a protective effect on personal wellbeing.

5.2.1 Reciprocation

Three of my forty-three interviewees said they reciprocated supervisor incivility. The rarity of reciprocal supervisor incivility in my data aligns with studies that have shown reciprocation is less likely to be the chosen response when the instigator is more powerful than the target of incivility (e.g. Bunk et al., 2011; Porath et al., 2008). Nonetheless, this finding supports Andersson and Pearson's (1999) primary hypothesis that some targets may reciprocate incivility. Furthermore, these participants associated reciprocal incivility with anger and revenge which is indicative of an absence of compassion (see Neff, 2021). This finding is consistent with prior studies that have focused on the negative affective consequences of workplace incivility (e.g., Clark & Springer, 2010; Pearson et al., 2001; Sulea et al., 2012); and negative affect as the driver of reciprocation (e.g., Bunk & Magley 2013; Taylor & Kluemper, 2012).

Contrary to Andersson and Pearson's (1999) gradual escalation hypotheses, one of my interviewees reported a blow-up response to supervisor incivility. This blow-up response is consistent with Miner et al.'s (2018) proposal that "*some individuals may respond to uncivil behaviour in a way that is extreme or disproportionate to the initial act*" (p. 9); and studies that link reciprocation with reductions in targets' self-regulation (e.g., Rosen et al., 2016). These studies show that, being less able to self-regulate, targets are more likely to act on 'hot emotions', like anger, and reciprocate workplace incivility. Further, this particular participant indicated that he interpreted the relevant episode of supervisor incivility as an identity threat. Andersson and Pearson (1999) propose that an identity threat appraisal leads to a tipping point; such that reciprocal incivility escalates to coercive behaviour. Indeed, it appears that this participant reached such a tipping point, by appraising the relevant episode of supervisor incivility as threatening to his social identity. Furthermore, one of my interviewees reported delayed reciprocation. This is consistent with Miner et al.'s (2018) proposal that targets may

delay retaliation for "*a week, month, or even a year*" (p. 10). There is scant research on delayed reciprocal workplace incivility. However, the literature on motivation and aggression suggests that angry rumination influences delayed retaliation. For example, West et al. (2022) showed that participants with agnostic traits preferred delayed-but-greater retaliation over immediate-but-lesser.

5.2.2 Retreat I & II

Among my interviewees, retreat was a common response to supervisor incivility. This is consistent with Cortina et al.'s (2022) proposal that it is most likely that targets retreat from, rather reciprocate, or escalate, workplace incivility. I identified two types of retreat response (I & II) in my data. Retreat I is similar to the type of avoidance behaviour examined by Estes and Wang (2008), who found that targets responded workplace incivility by withdrawing from collaborative efforts with the instigator. Retreat II is similar to the type of avoidance behaviour examined by Namin et al. (2022) and Cortina et al. (2003), who linked experiencing incivility with turnover intentions and exit from the organisation respectively.

Based on my analysis of the data, I suggest a relationship between retreat II and targets' negative cognitive-affective state. Specifically, the absence of self- and supervisor-compassion. This is consistent with previous studies, for example, Porath and Pearson (2012), that showed targets who felt fear and sadness – which are negative cognitive-affective states – responded to incivility with absenteeism and exit. My findings in relation to retreat II build on this existing evidence, emphasising the profound psychological, affective, and physical consequences that targets of persistent supervisor incivility may experience. Specifically, the interviewees who reported responses in line with retreat II described an overwhelming

exhaustion, cynicism and detachment, a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment, and physical illness.

While previous research has focused on negative forms of retreat (e.g., organisational exit; Namin et al., 2022) and negative cognitive-affective antecedents (e.g., threat appraisals; Cortina et al., 2022), my findings regarding retreat I suggest the potential for positivity. Specifically, through my analysis, I identify a relationship between retreat I and self-compassion, which is a positive cognitive-affective state. Further, I found that the relevant participants perceived retreat I as having a protective effect on personal wellbeing. Prior to this study, positive psychology constructs, like compassion and the potential resilience of targets, have largely been excluded from the incivility literature (for one exception, see Marchiondo et al. 2018 who examined challenge appraisals of incivility).

5.2.3 Affiliation vs. Unmitigated Affiliation

A noteworthy proportion of my interviewees responded to supervisor incivility with affiliative behaviour. This finding is consistent with Cortina et al.'s (2022) proposal that people respond to incivility by making amends to the instigator or befriending the instigator and tending to their needs. Cortina et al. (2022) propose that affiliation supports the reduction of targets' physiological stress response to incivility. Notably, my participants engaged in a form of unmitigated affiliation characterised by an exclusive focus on the supervisor's needs at the expensive of their own. This self-sacrificing orientation proved to be psychologically depleting and significantly increased stress levels. Consequently, these findings broaden our understanding of affiliation by identifying this distinct form that is more maladaptive in nature. Further, it suggests that the psychological consequences of affiliation may vary; depending on whether affiliation is mitigated or unmitigated. While Cortina et al. (2022) link

affiliation to a negative cognitive-affective state (i.e., threat appraisals of incivility), my interpretation of my data is that unmitigated affiliation is connected to supervisor-directed compassion, which is a positive cognitive-affective state. Specifically, I connect unmitigated affiliation with a deficit in self-, but an excess of supervisor-directed-, kindness. Prior to this study, the incivility literature has excluded constructs centred on positive social connection, like other-directed compassion, and the perspective that individuals forego personal interest to benefit workplace relationships (see Righetti et al., 2020).

5.2.4 Setting Boundaries

A noteworthy proportion of my interviewees set boundaries in response to supervisor incivility. Setting boundaries refers to confronting incivility directly yet treating the instigator sensitively. Like reciprocation – a well-established behavioural approach response in the incivility literature (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2022) –setting boundaries is also a behavioural approach response to workplace incivility. However, unlike reciprocation (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2022), my interpretation of my data suggests that setting boundaries is underpinned by compassion (vs. anger/revenge) and is beneficial to the target's personal wellbeing. My participants shared that setting boundaries on supervisor incivility was beneficial to personal wellbeing even if the boundary did not inhibit supervisor incivility. This was an unexpected finding; however, my data suggests that the reason boundary setting was beneficial is because boundaries contributed to feelings of empowerment among the relevant participants. Setting a boundary on supervisor incivility appeared to alter the participants' self-perception from targets, or victims, of incivility to being in control of the experience. This aspect of the findings is encouraging as a recent study has shown that employees who have a sense of personal control experience less workplace

incivility (see Young et al., 2021). Moreover, my analysis regarding boundary setting offers new insights that shed light on how targets can mitigate the harm of incivility, which is a nascent area of research (Zhong et al., 2023). How to foster the psychological conditions that support boundary setting is discussed later, as part of the practical implications (see Section 5.4).

5.2.5 Persistent Incivility and Intraindividual Variation in Targets' Responses

My participants reported experiencing persistent supervisor incivility. This finding aligns with research that has shown that supervisors are particularly prone to instigating incivility in the workplace. For example, Pearson and Porath (2005) found that those with higher power indulged in incivilities seemingly without consequence. Further, they highlighted that because those with power seemed to get away with behaving uncivilly, they could become habitual instigators.

I found that my participants' response patterns were complex, involving a range of behavioural responses to persistent supervisor incivility. This is a significant finding as in the workplace incivility literature targets' behavioural responses are generally treated as if they are simple, involving only one behavioural response (for one exception see Irwin et al., 2024). For example, based on the spiral theory of incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), many studies have examined whether targets did, or did not, reciprocate incivility (see Greco et al., 2019). Recently, researchers have proposed that targets' responses to persistent incivility are likely to involve more than one response category (see Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024). My findings support these proposals and provide a starting point for further exploration of the relationships between the diverse responses to persistent supervisor incivility. Specifically, I found that a significant number of my participants alternated

between ‘retreat I’ and two or more of the other behavioural responses identified in this study (i.e., reciprocation, retreat II, unmitigated affiliation, and setting boundaries). This finding aligns with Irwin et al.’s (2024) vignette study of intraindividual variation in targets’ responses to workplace incivility. They found that incivility was associated with making ‘friendly overtures’ to the instigator and ignoring responses, which are similar to the behavioural responses that I call ‘affiliation’ and ‘retreat I’. My study builds upon this research by exploring real-life, rather than fictional scenarios, which allowed me to identify the perceived constructiveness of the responses pertaining to my participants’ wellbeing. Specifically, my participants said that unmitigated affiliation contributed to a reduction in personal wellbeing whereas and retreat I had a supportive influence on personal wellbeing. Moreover, I shed light on the structure of the relationship between two non-reciprocal responses to incivility: unmitigated affiliation and retreat II. I found that, for a noteworthy proportion of my participants, unmitigated affiliation preceded retreat II.

5.2.6 Compassionate Mindsets and Incivility

Through my analysis, I found that some of my participants switched between a compassionate and uncompassionate mindset when evaluating supervisor incivility. As a result, these interviewees expressed contradictory appraisals of the supervisor and supervisor incivility. Prior research has generally focused on targets’ negative ways of thinking about, and making sense of, workplace incivility. For example, the attribution of blame (to oneself or the instigator) (e.g., Zhan et al., 2024); and negative appraisals of incivility, like threat appraisals (for one exception, see Marchiondo et al. 2018 who examined targets’ challenge appraisals of incivility). I build upon this research by highlighting that while some individuals evaluate supervisor incivility negatively others evaluate supervisor incivility benignly. This

finding is significant because a potentially constructive coping strategy for targets is to "*change or broaden the way they think about aggression incidents*" (Zhong et al. 2023, p. 530). For example, when the incivility is minor, targets can think of the potential benign reasons that underlie it, such as the work-related stress the instigator may be experiencing. Regardless of the exact framing, compared to negative evaluations of minor incivilities, a benign evaluation is more likely to reduce harmful effects (Zhong et al., 2023).

5.3 Contributions to Theory

My work offers four important contributions to theory: four extend the workplace incivility literature and one develops the extant research on self-compassion in workplace relationships.

5.3.1 Compassion as an Incivility Disruptor

First, I offer new insights regarding the disruption of self-reinforcing cycles of incivility via non-reciprocal responses. The data I offer challenges prior research on targets' responses to workplace incivility. To date, the literature on responses to workplace incivility has primarily focused on reciprocation (e.g., Gallus et al., 2014; Francis et al., 2015; Foulk et al., 2016; Hershcovis et al., 2018; Holm et al., 2015; Rosen et al., 2016; Torkelson et al., 2016), and the psychological conditions that underlie self-reinforcing cycles of incivility (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Hughes et al., 2023; Su et al., 2022). While this work has established the importance of workplace incivility, it is insufficient for establishing how to disrupt, or divert, self-reinforcing cycles of incivility. To explore this issue, I adopted an alternative perspective concerning targets to that conveyed in prior research.

Prior research has focused on targets' negative affect and lack of equanimity (or level headedness) and willpower, which have been found to maintain self-reinforcing cycles of incivility (e.g., Su et al., 2022, p. 22). However, I assumed targets to be capable of compassion as well as the established assumptions regarding negative reactivity and losses of self-control following incivility. Based on studies that show compassion inhibits people's aggressive tendencies (e.g., Miyagawa & Taniguchi, 2022) and that it is associated with relationship health and functioning (e.g., Huynh et al., 2022), along with my interview data, I integrated compassion theory to understand targets' responses to supervisor incivility. In doing so, I extend the work of Cortina et al. (2022) by introducing a new cognitive-affective condition, self- vs. supervisor- compassion (Neff 2003a, 2003b, 2021), that sheds light on the conditions under which targets respond with one non-reciprocal response over another. This study is the first to shed light on the positive psychological conditions of non-reciprocal responses and is particularly relevant to calls for research regarding the disruption of workplace incivility cycles (see Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024).

5.3.2 Identifying New Responses to Incivility

My second contribution to the incivility literature is identifying new non-reciprocal responses. Recently, researchers have called to attention categories of non-reciprocal responses to instigators of incivility that merit investigation. For instance, Cortina et al. (2022) suggested two non-reciprocal responses to workplace incivility – (i) retreat and (ii) affiliation – and Jorgensen et al. (2024) suggested a third – the (iii) freeze response. My findings extend these theoretical ideas, in particular, by moving beyond the description of non-reciprocal responses to understanding when or why such responses occur. Self-compassion theory (e.g., Neff 2003a, 2003b, 2021) offered a new way of understanding

targets' cognitive and affective reactions, and behavioural responses to incivility. Self-compassion theory directed my attention to the participants' capacity for kindness (vs. judgement), common humanity (vs. isolation), and mindfulness (vs. overidentification). In doing so, I identified three responses that disrupt self-reinforcing cycles of incivility and the psychological conditions that contributed to them, extending theory (i.e., Cortina et al., 2022; Jorgensen et al., 2024).

Furthermore, I introduce two new constructs to the incivility literature which I call 'unmitigated affiliation' and 'setting boundaries'. The participants in my research shared examples of unmitigated affiliation that involved focusing on the needs of the instigator to the exclusion of one's own. My analysis regarding unmitigated affiliation brings to scholarly attention a non-reciprocal response that undermines targets' personal wellbeing. Specifically, my participants related unmitigated affiliation to the onset of compassion fatigue (see Figley, 2002) which is a type of job burnout (see Maslach et al., 2001). Prior research has associated incivility with symptoms of burnout (e.g., Campana & Hammoud, 2015; Oyeleye et al., 2013; Sliter & Boyd, 2015; Sulea et al., 2012; Welbourne et al., 2015;). Specifically, experiencing incivility has been associated with heightened emotional exhaustion (e.g., Hur et al., 2015) and cynicism (e.g., Jiang et al., 2017), and symptoms of psychological ill-health, like depression and anxiety (e.g., Carter & Loh, 2017; Wing et al., 2015). Previously, researchers have questioned why seemingly minor incivilities can cause such significant damage to targets' wellbeing (e.g., Mathews & Ritter, 2019). My analysis regarding unmitigated affiliation offers a new factor that helps to explain the relationship between experienced incivility and burnout. Unmitigated affiliation involves focusing on the needs of the instigator to the exclusion of one's own, and such self-sacrifice appears to amplify the resource consuming effect (see Garrosa et al., 2022) of experiencing incivility. Hence, targets who responded to incivility with unmitigated affiliation were more likely to experience burnout –

a condition characterised by critically low personal resources (see Demerouti et al., 2001) – than others. Importantly, unmitigated affiliation is a behaviour and, thus, is amenable to change. Practices to reduce unmitigated affiliation are discussed later in the practical implications section (see Section 5.4).

The other new category of non-reciprocal response my participants spoke about is setting boundaries on supervisor incivility. A significant proportion of my interviewees set boundaries in response to supervisor incivility. Setting boundaries refers to confronting incivility directly yet treating the instigator sensitively. Like reciprocation – a behavioural approach response (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2022) –setting boundaries is also a behavioural approach response to incivility. However, unlike reciprocation (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2022), my interpretation of my data suggests that setting boundaries is underpinned by a positive cognitive-affective state (compassion) and is beneficial to the target's personal wellbeing. Although targets are not responsible for the experience of supervisor incivility, or its negative consequences, it is important to understand the ways in which targets may protect themselves if they encounter supervisor incivility (see Zhong et al., 2023). My finding regarding setting boundaries highlights a problem-focused behavioural response that may support targets to feel more in control of the experience. However, it is important to note that my participants highlighted that setting boundaries required certain skills. Specifically, holding themselves to a standard (i.e., of sensitivity) when speaking to the supervisor about supervisor incivility, and being kind (vs. critical) of the supervisor's weaknesses and failures. It is possible that voicing one's boundaries directly to the instigator of incivility could potentially further expose targets to negative consequences, such as retaliation (see Cortina & Magley, 2003), if these skills have not been mastered. Further research is needed to understand how targets may be supported to use boundaries to interrupt incivility. In the practical implications section, I suggest targets, first,

focus on self-compassion practices to support personal wellbeing. Further, research has shown that increases in self-compassion also support other-directed compassion (Sahdra et al., 2023), which, as I have discussed previously, is necessary for setting boundaries sensitively.

5.3.3 Intraindividual Variation in Targets' Responses

Consistent with Cortina et al.'s (2022) proposal, I found that my participants' response patterns were complex, involving a range of behavioural responses to persistent supervisor incivility. The implication of this finding is the need to understand if the behavioural response captured in a particular study is part of a larger, pattern of behaviour, or if the behavioural response is the result of a specific episode of workplace incivility and is atypical within the relationship. Furthermore, I shed light on the structure of the relationship between two non-reciprocal responses to incivility: unmitigated affiliation and retreat II. I found that, for a noteworthy proportion of my participants, unmitigated affiliation preceded retreat II. Further, that my interviewees connected both of these behavioural responses with reductions in personal wellbeing. These findings support future theorising regarding how different categories of behavioural response combine to contribute to the deleterious effects of supervisor incivility on targets' personal wellbeing.

5.3.4 Compassion Mindsets and Incivility

I offer new insights into targets' evaluations of supervisor incivility. I found that some of my participants switched between a compassionate and uncompassionate mindset when evaluating supervisor incivility, at least in the interview setting. As a result, these interviewees expressed contradictory appraisals of the supervisor and supervisor incivility.

To date, research on predicting the incivility response has primarily focused on the appraisal process and is of a cross-sectional research design (e.g., Cortina & Magley, 2009; Marchiondo et al., 2018). This prior research has been critical to establishing a relationship between targets' perceptions of incivility and behavioural responses. My findings regarding the instability of targets' appraisals suggests a need to develop the research further, specifically, to capture the possible temporal dynamics of such mixed appraisals. I have shown that some targets alternated between compassionate and uncompassionate appraisals of incivility, at least in the interview setting. If these findings reflect real-time shifts, this punctuated process of making sense of incivility may act as a "*stimulus for change in a relationship*" (Thompson & Holmes, 1986, p. 503), in which instability in how one thinks about the supervisor's incivility results in instability in the relationship from one day to the next.

5.3.5 Self- vs. Other-Directed- Compassion in Interpersonal Workplace Relationships

By integrating self-compassion theory (Neff, 2003a, 2003b) to understand the incivility response, I also contribute to the compassion literature in organisational studies and studies of personal relationships. Organisational studies have focused primarily on providing compassion to coworkers to the exclusion of self-compassion (e.g., Dutton et al., 2014). By integrating self-compassion theory (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021) to understand the incivility response, I shed light on how self-compassion occurs in the workplace, specifically, in the subordinate-supervisor relationship. Recent theoretical work has identified "*noticing*" and "*feeling*" one's suffering as significant to behaving self-compassionately in the workplace (see Dodson & Heng, 2022, p. 184). I extend this work significantly by exploring (i) the

relationship between self- and supervisor- compassion, and (ii) showing how the interaction of specific facets of compassion (e.g., 'low kindness and low mindfulness', self- and supervisor-) contributes to the occurrence of specific responses (e.g., retreat II). For example, based on my analysis, I suggest that when self- and supervisor- compassion are in balance, (i.e., 'high kindness and high mindfulness', self- and supervisor-), subordinates oppose supervisor incivility by setting boundaries.

As I have shown in the literature review chapter, the research regarding self-compassion and interpersonal functioning has primarily focused on personal relationships. Studies of personal relationships have associated self-compassion with relationship health and functioning (e.g., Fahimdanesh et al., 2020; Huynh et al., 2022; Khosravi & Namani, 2021), and the inhibition of aggressive responses to relationship partners (e.g., Miyagawa & Taniguchi, 2022; Wang et al., 2017). My data supports this research in showing that self-compassion relates to non-reciprocal responses to incivility, such as setting boundaries. Moreover, my findings add to the self-compassion literature by showing that other-directed compassion, specifically, supervisor-compassion, influences non-reciprocal responses to incivility. For example, based on my interpretation of my data, I suggest that it is the combination of supervisor-, but not self-, compassion that contributes to unmitigated affiliation. This is a significant contribution as studies of compassion in personal relationships rarely include expression in more than one direction. Specifically, prior research has focused on self-compassion but does not consider the effect of also giving, or denying, compassion to another (for one exception see Beattie, 2023). My findings suggest including self- and other-directed compassion in future investigations, to develop a fuller understanding of how compassion shapes interpersonal behaviour in personal relationships.

5.4 Practical Implications

Prior research has vividly captured peoples' experiences of other types of incivility, for example, customer incivility (see Robertson & O'Reilly, 2020). This is the first study to delve deeply into peoples' experiences of and behavioural responses to supervisor incivility from a qualitative approach. For most of my participants, supervisor incivility was a negative, even distressing experience, that was difficult to manage. When I combine the subgroups that resigned because of supervisor incivility – either as 'involuntary leavers' or as an 'empowered exit' – it is evident that organisations ignoring this issue may risk losing valued employees. However, the relationship between workplace incivility and turnover is not new and has also been evidenced in numerous prior studies (e.g., Holm et al., 2015; Hur et al., 2015; Karim et al., 2015; Rahim & Cosby, 2016; Ward-Smith, 2018). The new message that my study has for managers and practitioners is that people require assistance concerning their current efforts to disrupt supervisor incivility. Most of my participants did not reciprocate supervisor incivility and were not maintaining cycles of incivility in the relationship. However, their non-reciprocal responses to supervisor incivility were often detrimental to personal wellbeing. Furthermore, I found that such detrimental non-reciprocal responses related to the participants' difficulties with expressing self-compassion. Although more research is needed to support the relationships between self- vs. supervisor- compassion and the responses included in my data, at the very least my findings point to the benefits of self-compassion (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2021) for targets. Hence, I recommend that managers and practitioners encourage self-compassion in the workplace.

One way in which managers and practitioners can encourage self-compassion in the workplace is to model self-compassion for others (Wasylyshyn & Masterpasqua, 2018). Managers can model the present moment awareness that is characteristic of mindfulness by calmly acknowledging challenging situations (e.g., 'This deadline is challenging, and I am

feeling some stress in relation to it, but I'm confident that we can meet this challenge') (Jazaieri & Rock, 2021). Further, managers can model the equanimity or level headedness that is characteristic of mindfulness by practicing non-judgement aloud (Jazaieri & Rock, 2021). For example, if a project doesn't go well, a manager may acknowledge that their knee-jerk reaction is to label the project a 'failure' but, having considered what is true, they conclude instead that a lot has been learnt through the process. Furthermore, managers can model common humanity when they perceive negative behaviour by (i) considering the similarities between themselves and the 'poorly behaved' co-worker and (ii) acknowledging the shared causes of negative behaviour in the workplace (Jazaieri & Rock, 2021). For example, a manager could say 'I know I can be disagreeable when I'm tired, or stressed, too, what can I do to improve this scenario with you?'. Jazaieri and Rock (2021) posited that types of these practices can enhance self-compassion in the workplace and, in particular, may be useful when navigating challenging interpersonal relationships.

My analysis regarding unmitigated affiliation brings to attention a non-reciprocal response that undermines targets' personal wellbeing, thus, suggesting a novel and potentially important site for intervention. My interpretation of my data suggests that when targets are preoccupied with directing compassion to the instigator of incivility, self-compassion may offset against unmitigated affiliation. Specifically, based on my analysis, I suggest increasing targets' self-kindness and mindfulness to offset against unmitigated affiliation. Evidence-based practices to enhance self-kindness and mindfulness are freely available to all those with internet access (e.g., Halamova et al., 2020; Smeets et al., 2014; Woodfin et al., 2021). These include, for example, audio guided practices to induce a self-compassionate mindset and identify personal needs; and psychologically detach from stressors and reduce negative emotion. For those who are hearing impaired, written exercises pertaining to the same outcomes are also available (see self-compassion.org). The free availability of these expert-

guided practices is significant. To date, suggested incivility interventions involve costly, organisational-level activities to which few people have had access (see Leiter, 2013). While these intervention studies are critical to understanding how organisations can eliminate cultures of workplace incivility, they are less helpful to lone targets seeking relief from suffering. By identifying elements of compassion that may be lacking, and highlighting available tools to enhance them, this study supports such targets.

My analysis regarding boundary setting introduces a non-reciprocal response that limits the potential for harm, thus, suggesting a novel and potentially important response to encourage among targets. My analysis suggests that balancing self- with supervisor-compassion enables targets to confront supervisor incivility directly and sensitively. I am not aware of any other research regarding how to confront workplace incivility sensitively. This issue is particularly significant to people targeted by a direct supervisor. Subordinates are motivated in many ways to avoid risking the quality of the relationship with a direct supervisor. For example, subordinates who develop a high-quality relationship with a direct supervisor are given more resources and impactful work than their counterparts (Dansereau et al., 1975; Martin et al., 2016). These benefits increase the subordinates' human capital, which, in turn, can enhance a subordinate's chances of career success (Ng et al., 2005). Subordinates who successfully develop a friendship with a supervisor receive especially superior treatment (Liao & Hui, 2021). Subordinates who are not afforded such status can struggle to access resources and rewards from their supervisor (see Cheung & Wu, 2012; Guan & Frenkel, 2019). Hence, my findings regarding setting boundaries are particularly relevant to those experiencing supervisor incivility. The interviewees shared several pieces of advice in relation to setting boundaries on supervisor incivility. In particular, my data suggests that pointing out incivility but not criticising the instigator's personality was fundamental to setting boundaries sensitively.

5.5 Limitations & Future Research Recommendations

Although the qualitative approach I chose allowed me to gather the rich information required for conceptual refinements, it is subject to limitations. First, although my sample size is commensurate to that of other relevant studies (e.g., Robertson & O'Reilly, 2020), I gathered few accounts of reciprocal incivility via the qualitative interview method. As a result, my ability to contribute to theory on the reciprocation of supervisor incivility (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Miner et al., 2018) was limited. My participants may have been reluctant to disclose reciprocating supervisor incivility because of issues related to vulnerability and social desirability. Although often a positive and therapeutic experience (e.g., Birch & Miller, 2000), the process of a qualitative interview can be emotionally exposing for some interviewees and cause feelings of vulnerability. Participating in a qualitative interview involves meeting a stranger, revealing one's inner life, and risking being identified and/or misrepresented in the research report as well as experiencing emotional pain during the interview (see Wolgemuth et al., 2015). Admitting that one has been uncivil, much less to a supervisor, may be particularly exposing and, thus, further deter disclosure. Research has shown that simply witnessing incivility can elicit feelings of shame and guilt among employees (e.g., Miranda & Welbourne, 2020). These are painful emotions that can contribute to employee silence (Kirrane et al., 2017). I suggest that reciprocating supervisor incivility may have elicited similar feelings for the relevant participants. Shame and guilt, coupled with the exposure that accompanies the qualitative interview method, may have deterred the relevant participants from admitting reciprocation. Future investigations could benefit from another, less emotionally exposing method of qualitative data collection. Lee et al. (2020) suggest that self-disclosure technologies, like Chatbot, provide ways of asking participants probing questions on sensitive topics without the need for a face-to-face interview. They argue that people are likely to make more self-disclosures when interviewed

by a virtual agent rather than a human interviewer because of a reduction in vulnerability. As these technologies progress, they offer new ways to explore how, why, and when people maintain self-reinforcing cycles of incivility.

Second, retrospective bias is a concern as a number of my participants recalled past experiences of supervisor incivility rather than accounts of current incidents. The 'retrospective bias impact' occurs when people incorrectly recall past experiences and, in particular, overestimate the influence of past experiences on their affective wellbeing (e.g., Wilson et al., 2003). I worked to avoid this pitfall by seeking participants who currently worked with an 'uncivil supervisor'. Moreover, I was successful in recruiting a large number of participants whose relevant supervisory relationship was 'ongoing'. Furthermore, I worked to minimise retrospective bias by using nondirective questions about 'significant social interactions' with the supervisor, to gather specific information from my participants regarding supervisor incivility (Huber & Power, 1985). Nonetheless, it is possible that, for those speaking of past experiences, the passage of time blurred the memory of supervisor incivility and one's reactions. Future investigations could limit retrospective bias by collecting participant data immediately following incidents of supervisor incivility. This approach would require predicting when supervisor incivility may be most likely. Research on incivility instigation provides guidance as to when supervisor incivility may be most likely. Studies suggest that supervisors are likely to act uncivilly during periods of high work demands when exhaustion is heightened (e.g., Blau & Andersson, 2005; Semmer et al., 2010). For example, I suggest interviewing retail employees about supervisor incivility during the weeks of December due to the demands of the Christmas shopping period.

Third, my sample was fairly homogeneous, and it cannot be assumed that people with different characteristics would respond to supervisor incivility similarly. For example, although I worked to increase the number of males included in the study, my sample

consisted primarily of women. Additionally, my data suggests a possible gender difference: Only the male participants spoke of reciprocating supervisor incivility. This may be a consequence of proscriptive gender norms regarding male vs. female aggression, and social desirability bias, which prevent female participants from admitting 'angry behaviour' in self-report studies (e.g., Bartz et al., 1996). Thus, the findings are partially influenced by the higher proportion of women in the sample. Hence, I encourage researchers to explore if the responses I describe fit with other groups' responses to supervisor incivility. In particular, I advise further exploration of responses to persistent supervisor incivility among males.

Moreover, because my sample was fairly homogeneous, including almost exclusively white Irish individuals, I was unable to explore incivility experiences among minority groups. Cortina et al. (2013) found that targets' gender and race influenced vulnerability to workplace incivility, which, in turn, predicted targets' turnover intentions. Evidence of moderated mediation was also identified, with target gender and race interacting to predict incivility experiences, such that women of colour experienced the most workplace incivility. Beyond gender and race, several other factors are associated with vulnerability to workplace aggression, for example, (i) disability and neurodivergence (see Wolbring et al., 2025); (ii) being LGBTQ+ (see Maji et al., 2024); and specific life circumstances such as (iii) being a refugee or asylum seeker (see Afsharian et al., 2021). However, workplace incivility has rarely been examined through the lens of disabled people (see Wolbring et al., 2025) and, to the best of my knowledge, is yet to be examined through the lens of neurodivergence. Research regarding the incivility experiences of LGBTQ+ employees is nascent. However, a study has shown that LGBTQ+ employees experience more workplace incivility than cisgender/heterosexual employees. Further, workplace incivility positively predicted alcohol consumption and burnout among LGBTQ+ employees (Rodriguez, 2024). Indeed, even when LGBQ+ employees report similar levels of victimisation as non-LGBQ+ employees, they

experience greater psychological distress (see Mazzone et al., 2025). It is important that future research focuses on the workplace incivility experiences of these and other minority groups, and especially the experiences of those who belong to multiple minority groups and may be most vulnerable. In particular, I suggest future research focuses on how to protect minority groups from experiencing workplace incivility and empower those in the minority to set boundaries on incivility if it occurs. Furthermore, I suggest that organisational change initiatives focused on diversity, equity and inclusion may be especially useful contexts in which to address these research questions, given their emphasis on reducing microaggressions, like negative verbal comments and subtle exclusion tactics, which are analogous to workplace incivility (see Pandey et al., 2025).

I found that some of my participants switched between a compassionate and uncompassionate mindset when evaluating supervisor incivility, at least in the interview setting. As a result, these interviewees expressed contradictory appraisals of the supervisor and supervisor incivility. However, because I was unable to collect longitudinal data regarding my participants' evaluations of incivility, I am unable to definitively establish if these changes reflect a real-time perspective shift or a post-hoc rationalisation strategy. To definitively determine if these changes reflect a real-time perspective shift within targets, one would need to adopt the experience sampling method, which requires real-time participation from individuals within their natural working environment (see Fisher & To, 2012). This experience sampling method would require participants report on their thoughts regarding the supervisor and supervisor incivility in real-time, several times daily, for a period of weeks. In this way, the method reduces participants' memory bias as well as capturing participants' in-the-moment cognitions, which, in turn, may be linked to specific behavioural responses (see Fisher & To, 2012). A longitudinal approach would allow researchers to assess changes in targets' appraisals of incivility and build a dynamic model of the relationship between

targets' appraisals and behavioural responses. My findings offer a significant starting point for the design of such studies. In particular, the findings suggest operationalising compassionate evaluations of workplace incivility which is significant as prior research has focused on negative appraisals, like measuring the offensiveness of the uncivil act (e.g., Cortina & Magley, 2009).

My participants prioritised in-person accounts of supervisor incivility. Consequently, I was unable to develop knowledge of targets' behavioural responses to workplace incivility that occurs on virtual and asynchronous platforms. My participants may have prioritised in-person accounts, perhaps, due to the heightened emotional cues and physical 'presence' involved in such encounters. Furthermore, although I gathered some of my data during the COVID-19 pandemic when remote working became common practice, over half of my sample spoke about a past relationship with a supervisor that had ceased prior to the pandemic and the move to remote work. Additionally, a significant proportion of my participants who spoke about their relationship with their current supervisor were key workers (e.g., social, health, retail and transportation workers), providing essential public services during the pandemic. These participants maintained an in-person relationship with the supervisor despite the pandemic, as they were required in-person in the workplace. It may also be for this reason that my participants prioritised in-person accounts. Nevertheless, remote work contexts represent a distinct and valuable avenue for future research. The relevance of cyber incivility increases as organisations' reliance on digital communication increases, especially as cyber incivility can lead to negative consequences such as heightened stress, emotional exhaustion, decreased job performance and higher turnover intentions (Giumetti et al., 2013; Park et al., 2018; Shahwar and Dhar, 2024).

As with the research on in-person incivility, studies of cyber incivility have focused on targets' negative behavioural responses that magnify harm, for example, instigating

incivility toward one's co-workers (e.g., McCarthy et al., 2020). I found targets of in-person supervisor incivility may constructively confront incivility by setting boundaries, and that setting boundaries protected personal wellbeing. Although targets are not responsible for the experience of cyber incivility, or its negative consequences, it is important to understand the ways in which targets may protect personal wellbeing if they encounter cyber incivility (see Zhong et al., 2023). Hence, I suggest that targets' self-protective behavioural responses to cyber incivility represent a distinct and valuable avenue for future research.

This study focuses on targets' behavioural responses to incivility and, in particular, on 'doing' rather than 'non-doing'. The initial interview design was influenced by the prevailing tit-for-tat spiral model of targets' responses to incivility (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999), which prioritises observable, reciprocal actions. At the commencement of this study, the 'freeze' response and the concept of 'principled non-reciprocity' (see Jorgensen et al., 2024) had not yet gained significant traction in workplace mistreatment literature. I have identified that participants' motivations for 'non-doing' were often embedded in their justifications for 'retreat I' (See Section 4.3.2). However, I have not delved into the likely complex psychological labour involved in choosing not to respond. This is a significant avenue for future research, and I recommended that future studies explicitly investigate the intentionality of targets' inaction.

Finally, I recommend exploring responses to supervisor incivility not only from a longitudinal but also a dyadic perspective. To my knowledge, researchers are yet to study 'target' and 'instigator' pairs pertaining to supervisor incivility. A dyadic approach is particularly pertinent to testing my findings, as many of the constructs I refer to involve the relationship partner (i.e., the supervisor). For example, unmitigated affiliation involves identifying and meeting the supervisor's needs. This raises the question, when targets respond to incivility with unmitigated affiliation, do instigators feel fulfilled? This is an important

research question because, if unmitigated affiliation is fulfilling to instigators, then, this may explain the persistence of incivility. Only a dyadic approach to the study of unmitigated affiliation can accurately show if the response is rewarding to instigators and, thus, reinforcing to incivility. Although the dyadic research design is complex, studies like Petrocchi et al.'s (2019) investigation of doctor-patient trust are useful exemplars for incivility scholars. Nonetheless, it must be noted that recruiting pairs of employees to inform on the negative aspects of the working relationship raises ethical issues. Asking two people to repeatedly reflect on the presence of incivility in the relationship may contribute to conflict. Hence, I recommend that dyadic studies of incivility form part of a larger investigation into the positive and negative incidents that shape workplace relationship generally. Broadening the focus of such investigations to include positive (e.g., civility) as well as negative (e.g., incivility) incidents may offset against contributing to conflict in the relationship. This strategy may also make such studies appear more appealing to potential participants.

5.5.1 Alternative Theoretical Interpretations

To ensure a balanced perspective and avoid over-extending my findings, I highlight some exceptions to the themes that I constructed from my dataset. While compassion theory offered the most abductive fit, explaining surprising aspects of my data such as my participants' compassion for the supervisor, I identified a small number of divergent data segments. These exceptions to the main themes are significant as they provide potential alternative explanations for the relevant behavioural responses to supervisor incivility and are important avenues for future research.

5.5.1.1 Retreat I: Potential Alternative Explanations

Although self-compassion largely framed retreat I as a pursuit of personal wellbeing, for a subset of my participants, the catalyst was actually a fear of 'retaliation victimisation'. Retaliation victimisation refers to instigators' reprisals for targets' behavioural responses to workplace incivility, in particular targets' behavioural approach responses (see Cortina et al., 2003). A minority of my participants feared that if they confronted supervisor incivility they would experience more or worse supervisor incivility. For example, Bert emphasised that he and his co-workers' jobs were precarious, and so he thought "*you will get more hours if you can just suck it up*" (Bert). Additionally, Gwen said "*if I say anything to her, it just makes her worse*" (Gwen). I suggest that a potential reason fear was salient for these participants is because of their particular vulnerability. Unlike the rest of my participants, Bert completed unskilled work for an employer that utilised low-hour contracts. He was also living away from home for the first time and, as a result, was experiencing a reduction in social support. Gwen was persistently experiencing one of the more intense forms of supervisor incivility that I identified in my dataset, quiet firing, where supervisors use subtle, passive-aggressive behaviours to motivate subordinates to resign voluntarily (e.g., Anand et al., 2024). For example, Gwen said "*All her notes will be used so that I'll either get fired or she'll stress me out so much that I'll leave*". Further, Gwen said that her husband was angry that she had cried in front of her supervisor. Although Gwen is a well-paid, more senior professional, her subjective experience is similar to Bert's. She too perceived employment insecurity and a lack of familial support. I suggest these conditions amplified these participants' vulnerability, which may have, in turn, primed them for fear and behavioural avoidance. Research indicates that targets may be faced with two undesirable alternatives. Although vocally resisting interpersonal aggression can result in retaliation victimisation, enduring mistreatment without voicing resistance is associated with health-related costs (see Cortina et al., 2003). Hence, I

suggest future research focuses on how to cultivate compassion for targets so that, if incivility occurs, instigators respond compassionately to targets' vocal resistance, and targets' co-workers, friends, and family, provide effective emotional support.

5.5.1.2 Setting Boundaries: Potential Alternative Explanations

While self- and supervisor- compassion were generally useful in explaining setting boundaries on supervisor incivility, in particular the significance of confronting the supervisor sensitively, a minority of my participants linked setting boundaries to expressions of self-confidence or self-efficacy. For example, Josie said that she had started to cognitively-affectively respond to workplace stressors more mindfully, taking them "*with a pinch of salt*", and she believed that "*if I experienced it again, I would definitely say it, confront it, because I'm more confident in myself*". Furthermore, Jill, who expressed regret about not confronting supervisor incivility, said

> "*If I was in that position now, it would be a completely different story, but then I suppose I have grown up a lot in the past few years, you know, I would be more confident in going against somebody who is superior to me, if that makes sense?*"

Two other interviewees expressed similar views, including Ann ("*I would have been, you know, just younger and I wouldn't have had as much self-esteem as now*") and Sally ("*I'd be older and more confident in my role now, I'd be more able to hold my own, I've probably changed a lot since we first started working together*"). These minority views are important for understanding the full scope of the positive psychological conditions that contribute to setting boundaries on supervisor incivility. They suggest that belief in one's ability to take control over interpersonal interactions is a significant psychological condition, which, along with self- and supervisor- compassion, supports targets in setting boundaries.

5.5.1.3 Retreat II: Potential Alternative Explanations

While the absence of compassion (self- and supervisor) (Neff, 2021) was generally useful in explaining retreat II, in particular my participants' withdrawal from the supervisory relationship and reductions in personal wellbeing, a minority of my participants linked retreat II to two other conditions. These conditions include, first, the supervisors' unresponsiveness to boundaries concerning supervisor incivility and, second, a lack of organisational support. Some of my participants emphasised that the supervisor was unresponsive to boundaries concerning supervisor incivility (e.g., Earl, Molly, and Jade). Molly said that the supervisor was unwilling to listen when she attempted to set boundaries on supervisor incivility. "*She didn't want to hear me … I don't know if she was unwilling or unable to take it in … but she was all about making sure you weren't heard*". Earl said that, when he attempted to set a boundary, the supervisor justified the incivility. "*I did say it to her at the time … I did question it … She just said … It was just some justification she seemed to have constructed*". Further, Jade said that, despite explaining to the supervisor how the supervisor's behaviour was negatively impacting the team, "*she didn't understand*". "*I used to openly have conversations with her, explaining things to her … she didn't understand. She couldn't read the room. She didn't know what was happening*". Moreover, a minority of my participants emphasised that a lack of organisational support contributed to a feeling of helplessness, which was characteristic of the retreat II response. In particular, Molly said "*I didn't have anyone else to go to … she was our CEO and my direct supervisor*". Further, Gwen said "*there's no HR department in Ireland … the HR function is located in* (country) *… so I don't have a person that I could go to*". These minority views are important for understanding the social conditions that contribute to the retreat II response. They highlight the importance of psychoeducation concerning respecting co-workers' boundaries, and accessibility of

organisational representatives (e.g., human resources professionals) that offer support for targets of incivility.

5.5.1.4 Unmitigated Affiliation: Potential Alternative Explanations

Although supervisor-compassion often drove the self-sacrificing nature of unmitigated affiliation, some participants viewed the behaviour as a reflection of their personality and dedication to the job role rather than a reaction to the supervisor. Specifically, regarding the significance of personality, Eddy said

> "*I think personality is important, how you actually deal with it. Should you be assertive? Should you not be assertive? Me and my sister – we were raised to be kind of very subservient, work hard, we didn't realise, you know, maybe the hardest worker doesn't necessary be treated the best. As horrible as it sounds, it's kind of a … You know, it can be a tricky world out there sometimes.*"

This suggests that, in addition to other-directed compassion, individuals' deep-seated values and thought patterns, which are learnt in childhood, may drive unmitigated affiliation. Regarding the significance of passion for the job role, Fay said "*You prioritise your work over other things because it's really important to you and you love what you do*". This suggests that, in addition to other-directed compassion, individuals' love for the job role may drive unmitigated affiliation, such that work-related demands are prioritised over other significant personal needs.

Conclusion

Research on responses to workplace incivility has primarily focused on reciprocation (e.g., Hershcovis et al., 2018; Holm et al., 2015; Rosen et al., 2016; Torkelson et al., 2016), and the conditions that underlie self-reinforcing cycles of incivility (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Hughes et al., 2023; Su et al., 2022). While this work has established the importance of workplace incivility, it is insufficient for establishing how to disrupt self-reinforcing cycles of incivility. In this research, I explore how subordinates respond to supervisor incivility, in particular, how subordinates disrupt supervisor incivility via non-reciprocal responses. I interviewed 43 people who had experienced supervisor incivility and conducted reflexive thematic analysis of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Guided by my participants accounts, I used self-compassion theory (Neff, 2003a, 2003b) to assist analysis. Though a small number of interviewees maintained cycles of incivility via reciprocation, most disrupted incivility via responses called 'unmitigated affiliation', 'retreat', and 'setting boundaries'. Through my analysis, I differentiate these subordinate responses to incivility and argue that they are influenced by the direction of compassion: self- vs. supervisor-. My research contributes to the literature on targets' responses to incivility in four main ways. First, I extend the work of Cortina et al. (2022) by introducing a new cognitive-affective condition, self- vs. supervisor- compassion (Neff 2003a, 2003b, 2021), that sheds light on the conditions under which targets respond to incivility with one non-reciprocal response over another. Second, I offer two new non-reciprocal responses to the workplace incivility literature – 'unmitigated affiliation' and 'setting boundaries' – which have opposite effects on targets' personal wellbeing. Third, I show that targets' behavioural responses to persistent supervisor incivility are generally complex, involving a range of behavioural responses. Fourth, I show that some targets switch between a compassionate and uncompassionate

mindset when evaluating supervisor incivility, at least in the interview setting. This finding is significant as prior research has generally focused on targets' negative ways of thinking about, and making sense of, workplace incivility. Further, compared to negative evaluations of minor incivilities, researchers have argued that benign evaluations are more likely to reduce harmful effects (Zhong et al., 2023). My findings indicate encouraging self-compassion in the workplace, and I highlight freely available resources to support managers and practitioners in this endeavour.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Recruitment Information Sheet

Dear [name],

I am a PhD student studying rudeness and disrespect in the workplace under the supervision of Dr Yseult Freeney and Dr Lisa van der Werff, Dublin City University. I would be very grateful if you would participate in our research project which focuses on **employees' experiences of rudeness and disrespect from their supervisor**.

The aim of the study is to understand if, and how, supervisors' rude behaviours influence their subordinates' relationship with them. I also would like to understand how the context of the disrespectful acts (e.g. how peoples' thoughts and feelings regarding their supervisor and their organisation) influences their potential consequences (e.g. if the employee-supervisor relationship changes as a result of the acts).

To this end, if you have experienced **any rudeness or disrespect from a supervisor**, **no matter how minor** it may seem, **I would like to interview you** to explore, first, these experiences and, second, your relationship with the supervisor, at your earliest convenience. The interview will take approximately one hour.

I will arrange your interview to suit you: I can travel to meet you, or I can interview you via Zoom, or you are welcome to come to DCU Business School to complete the interview. The information you provide will be treated with the **strictest of confidence**. Please contact me, Sarah Kennedy, sarah.kennedy56@mail.dcu.ie, for more information or to indicate interest in taking part.

If you know of any other employed individuals that this study may be relevant to, I would be very grateful if you could **pass along this invitation** to them. I believe that the understandings gained from this study will help to highlight the importance of the emotional aspect of workplace relationships and, in particular, how so-called 'minor' transgressions can affect important workplace relationships. I very much appreciate your contribution to this ambition.

Thank you in advance for your time,

Best wishes,

Sarah.

Sarah Jane Kennedy	Dr Yseult Freeney	Dr Lisa van der Werff
PhD student	Supervisor	Supervisor
DCU Business School	DCU Business School	DCU Business School
sarah.kennedy56@mail.dcu.ie	yseult.freeney@dcu.ie	lisa.vanderwerff@dcu.ie

Appendix B – Recruitment Memo

Research Study on Supervisor Rudeness and Disrespect

Sarah Kennedy, a PhD student at DCU Business School, is currently recruiting interviewees for a study on disrespectful supervisors in the workplace.

The study aims to explore employees' experiences of supervisor disrespect, how it affects them and in particular how it impacts their working relationship with the individual in question.

If you have in the past, or if you are currently experiencing, disrespect from a superior at work Sarah would be delighted to interview you. The incidents in question may be big or small – all are of interest.

This research has been approved by the DCU Ethics Committee. Participation in the research study is confidential.

Please contact Sarah directly at sarah.kennedy56@mail.dcu.ie if you would like more information about the study and to get involved.

Appendix C – Ethics Committee Approval

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

DCU

Ms Sarah Kennedy
Dublin City University Business School

28th February 2019

REC Reference: DCUREC/2019/019

Proposal Title: Exploring supervisor incivility as a potential turning point in the supervisor-subordinate relationship and its embedded nature.

Applicant(s): Ms Sarah Kennedy, Dr Yseult Freeny, Dr Lisa Van Der Werff

Dear Colleagues,

Further to expedited review, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this research proposal.

Materials used to recruit participants should note that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Dónal O'Gorman
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee

DCU
Research & Innovation

Taighde & Nuálaíocht Tacaíocht
Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath,
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Appendix D – Plain Language Statement

Dear Participant,

This study is being conducted by Sarah Jane Kennedy, a PhD student, under the supervision of Dr Yseult Freeney and Dr Lisa van der Werff, lecturers and organisational psychologists from DCU Business School. The research is being conducted to, first, understand employees' working relationship with their supervisor and, second, how this relationship may change over time. Participation involves the completion of an interview.

I will arrange your interview to suit you: I can travel to meet you, or I can interview you via Zoom, or you are welcome to come to DCU Business School to complete the interview. The interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. Transcriptions will be stored anonymously and will be accessible only to the research team. Your identifying data (e.g. your name and contact details) will be held until the research project is completed and then destroyed through the deletion of the electronic record. Your interview data will be pseudonymized, so that the information you provide cannot be used to identify individuals; stored securely; and used only for research purposes. Information compiled from the interviews will only be reported in aggregate form with any identifying information removed, and **the information you provide will remain strictly confidential**. Please note, confidentiality of information provided cannot always be guaranteed by researchers and can only be protected within the limitations of the law – i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim, or mandated reporting by some professions.

The findings of the study will be used in the production of a thesis that will be submitted, by Sarah, to the examinations board to fulfill the requirements of a doctoral degree of philosophy. The findings of the study will also be used for research purposes, for example, to create papers for publication in academic journals to inform the scholarly community of the knowledge generated. Your participation in the study is voluntary and is greatly appreciated. It is possible to withdraw from the study during the two-month cooling off period after your interview has been completed. Please contact Sarah at sarah.kennedy56@mail.dcu.ie during this time to withdraw from the study.

I would like to draw your attention to some resources that are available to you should you feel you need any support following participation in this study. The following services offer confidential, non-judgemental, emotional support and information to those contacting their help lines:

The Samaritans

www.samaritans.ie

Tel: 116 123

Text: 087 2 60 90 90

Email: jo@samaritans.ie

Aware

www.aware.ie

Tel: 1800 80 48 48

Email: supportmail@aware.ie

Thank you in advance for your time and effort in participating in my research. If you have any questions regarding the study, or the progress of the project, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah at sarah.kennedy56@mail.dcu.ie. Please note, this research is made possible by university funding, in particular, the DCU Business School Scholarship. If you have any concerns about the study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000. The supervisors of this study can also be contacted using the details featured at the end of this document should you have any questions or concerns for them.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Kennedy.

Sarah Jane Kennedy	Dr Yseult Freeney	Dr Lisa van der Werff
PhD student	Study Supervisor	Study Supervisor
DCU Business School	DCU Business School	DCU Business School
sarah.kennedy56@mail.dcu.ie	yseult.freeney@dcu.ie	lisa.vanderwerff@dcu.ie

Appendix E – Consent Form

The lead researcher for this project is Sarah Jane Kennedy (PhD student, Dublin City University) who is being supervised by Dr Yseult Freeney and Dr Lisa van der Werff, lecturers and organisational psychologists from DCU Business School. We may be contacted if you have any questions or concern relating to this research project at sarah.kennedy56@mail.dcu.ie or yseult.freeney@dcu.ie or lisa.vanderwerff@dcu.ie.

Please read through the statements below and select the relevant answer.

- I have read the research overview provided on the previous page.

  Yes/No

- I understand the information provided. ***Yes/No***

- I understand that I am being asked to be interviewed and that the interview will be recorded for transcription purposes.

  Yes/No

- I understand that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary. ***Yes/No***

- I understand that I may withdraw from this research during the two-month cooling-off period that follows today's interview.

  Yes/No

- I understand that my responses will be kept confidential and that no extracts used from my interviews will be attributable to me.

  Yes/No

- I understand the legal limitations to the protection of data.

  Yes/No

- I am aware of the contact details for the lead researcher and her supervisors.

Yes/No

- I consent to participate in this research. ***Yes/No***

Participant signature _____

Appendix F – Interview Guide

Warm-up questions

How long have you worked with your supervisor?

What kind of work do you do at the moment? Does this work involve interacting with your supervisor often?

I'd like to take you back to when you first started working with your supervisor...

What kind of work did you do back then? To what extent did this involve interaction with your supervisor then?

What did you know about your supervisor before you started working with them?

What were your first impressions of your supervisor?

What was your relationship with them like in the beginning?

How did you rate your supervisor at the time?

If positive: What did they do that made you think they were a good supervisor?

How did these behaviours make you feel?

How did your supervisor's behaviour influence how you related to them?

If negative: What did they do that made you think they were a poor supervisor?

How did these behaviours make you feel?

How did your supervisor's behaviours influence how you related to them?

As time went on and you worked with your supervisor for longer ...

To what extent would you say your relationship with your supervisor has changed over time?

Were there any specific events that helped to strengthen the relationship, or weaken the relationship/make it more difficult?

Directly probing for supervisor incivility…

Now we're going to go through a list of examples of workplace behaviours. A supervisor may ...

- Neglect saying please or thank you to you.
- Interrupt or "speak over" you.
- Be inattentive to or seem uninterested in your contribution.
- Use e-gadgets when interacting with you (e.g. their mobile phone).
- Fail to give you necessary information.
- Ignore your emails.
- Rate you lower than you deserved on an evaluation.
- Accuse you of incompetence.
- Take credit for your work.
- Doubt your judgment on a matter over which you have responsibility.
- Ignore you or fail to speak to you.
- Address you in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately.

- Belittle you.
- Dismiss you.
- Give you hostile looks, stares, or sneers.
- Yell, shout, or swear at you.
- Make insulting or disrespectful remarks about you.

Do any of these behaviours' standout to you as something that your supervisor has done?

**If yes,* let's take each example in turn ...

Was this behaviour typical/normal for your supervisor?

At the time that this happened, why did you think they were behaving in this way?

How did their behaviour make you feel?

How did you respond to the behaviour?

To what extent did the behaviour influence how you interacted with your supervisor after this happened?

Prompt – Do these examples remind you of any other behaviour that your supervisor engaged in? Please tell me about this behaviour.

At the time that they did this, why did you think they were acting in this way?

How did their behaviour make you feel?

How did you respond to the behaviour?

To what extent did the behaviour influence how you interacted with your supervisor after this happened?

Has your supervisor ever apologised to you or tried to make amends to you for something they did?

**If yes*, please describe how they apologised (or tried to make amends)?

To what extent did the apology (or their efforts) help your relationship?

Now let's consider what your relationship is like with your supervisor today ...

Today, how do you think about your supervisor?

What have they done recently that makes you think of them as a good supervisor?

How did this make you feel?

How did you respond to this behaviour?

Today, to what extent do you think of your supervisor as a poor supervisor?

What have they done recently that makes you think of them as a poor supervisor?

How did this make you feel?

How did you respond to this behaviour?

Do you see yourself continuing to work with your supervisor? Why?