

Emotional and behavioural responses to everyday incivility

Challenging the fear/avoidance paradigm



Tim Phillips

School of Sociology and Social Work, University of Tasmania

Philip Smith

Department of Sociology, Yale University

Abstract

Although antisocial behaviour has become an issue of political and policy concern, social science lacks basic information on such events. This article explores one aspect of such everyday incivility – how people react emotionally and behaviourally to the badly behaved stranger. Mainstream criminology, as well as the social theory of Goffman and Bauman, is oriented around a fear/avoidance vision. This dominant paradigm is unnecessarily restrictive on intellectual inquiry. A raft of other options including anger/intervention; disgust/aversion and indifference/do nothing are analytically reconstructed from the classical social theory of Durkheim, Elias and Simmel. These various models are applied to incidents coded from the transcripts of the Melbourne Everyday Incivility Project. The results show that emotions and behaviours tend to pair up as predicted. Fear/avoidance, however, is a relatively uncommon response to incivil encounters. Anger/intervention and indifference/do nothing are more frequent. The former is especially associated with events where the respondent is a 'victim', and the latter with those where the respondent is an onlooker. These findings suggest the limitations of current criminological research in areas related to incivility and fear of crime, and have implications for collective efficacy, social capital and broken windows criminology.

Keywords: emotions, everyday life, fear of crime, incivility, social theory, strangers

Around the globe rude and disrespectful behaviour among strangers in everyday situations has been increasingly identified as a social problem. Australia is no exception to this trend with public safety experts, journalists and politicians as central players in the construction and reproduction of debate. The national print media have come to include dedicated stories on the state of commonplace impoliteness and public rage in Australia today (Eccleston, 1998; Safe, 2000). Criminologists have suggested the introduction of 'a nationally stated commitment to decency and civility' (Graycar, 1998: 4), and the current Prime Minister, John Howard, has identified a decline in everyday manners and courtesy as contributing to the occurrence of violence in contemporary Australia (Stephens, 2004). Overseas, the agenda setting British leader Tony Blair has made incivility even more pivotal to his criminal justice politics, declaring that '...the issue of antisocial behaviour is not a marginal issue, it is absolutely fundamental to creating a society where there is a proper sense of right and duty' (Ahmed, 2003). In sum, these accounts suggest the manifestation of a discourse of crisis (Holton, 1990) in framing public talk around the quality of micro-level meetings between unknown others in public settings. Whether real or imagined, the problem of incivility is one that calls for systematic sociological investigation.

This article addresses this need through a focus on emotional and behavioural responses to the badly behaved stranger in everyday life. Specifically, how do people feel and how do they react when confronted with an incivil action by a stranger in a commonplace situation? In so far as intervention against incivility has been touted as a major tool for reducing crime and rebuilding social capital, our theme is a matter of policy relevance (Ellickson, 1996; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). Yet effective intervention, whether at individual or collective levels, is predicated upon an accurate knowledge of how people perceive and respond to incivil conduct. This basic knowledge is lacking. Our contention is that the existing literature approaches this question through a limited frame – one that is seriously flawed because it cuts off certain empirical and intellectual possibilities. We begin by outlining this dominant paradigm with its obsession with fear, avoidance and perceived danger, and its problematic uses of external, observer-defined constructions of incivility. Next we recover some neglected theoretical resources that might enable broader and competing understandings of emotional and behavioural responses to incivil behaviour. These will subsequently be used to interrogate a set of episodes derived from focus group data.

For many, interpretative research has provided a persuasive model for analysing the workings of the interaction order of modern society. Exemplified by the dramaturgical studies of Goffman, work in this tradition has concentrated on how social order is achieved by the individual making habitual use of a variety of behavioural strategies to render daily public life

among strangers possible (Goffman, 1963; Lofland, 1973). Despite potential for diversity, the dominant mood of this literature was established by Goffman's (1971) *Relations in Public*. Beneath the business-as-usual orientation that Goffman's city dweller builds up via a daily routine of interactional accomplishment, there lies a residual sense of suspicion and mistrust. This theme is well illustrated by Goffman's analysis of normal appearances (1971: 238–333). Here there is an explicit concern with the feelings of alarm, unease and wariness that result when the individual perceives disruptions to the interaction order of the public setting. Within this paradigm the emotions that arise from encountering incivil behaviour are largely reduced to fear and anxiety. Incivil conduct is assumed to be perceived as threatening and subsequent action strategies primarily as taking the form of retreatism and avoidance. This position finds its current expression in Bauman's analysis of the spread of mixophobic sentiments in the contemporary metropolis. Mixophobia is 'the drive towards islands of similarity and sameness amidst the sea of variety and difference' (Bauman, 2003: 110). It is seen to receive material expression in new architectural inventions developed to segregate 'interdictory space' from the wider residential and public territories of the city. Within this environment individual spaces and routines manifest as defensive mechanisms against the stranger and as systems organized to reduce anguish and anxiety.

Goffman's interactionism and Bauman's phenomenological ethics are separated from mainstream criminology by the paradigm chasm that runs between interpretative research on the one hand and a more positivistic, policy relevant discourse on the other. It is surprising, therefore, to find the fear/avoidance coupling repeated on the other side of the epistemological divide. Consider the developed criminological literature on 'incivility' and its consequences, much of which takes its cue from the broken windows hypothesis. Here we find a spotlight on the propensity for incivility to work alongside fear of crime in urban areas to initiate a spiral of urban decay. The argument is that in a cultural climate where fear of being encroached upon by a disorderly stranger is widespread, people avoid public spaces. As established forms of neighbourhood social control disappear, malefactors and delinquents move into the vacuum (Kelling and Coles, 1996; Wilson and Kelling, 1982). Over the past two decades empirical researchers have sought to test the causal relationships suggested by such theory and to improve measurement of the key concepts upon which it is based (Robinson et al., 2003; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). The link between disorder and actual crime patterns has been difficult to prove, due in no small part to the difficulties experienced in disentangling the construct pair (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993) and measuring incivility in a reliable way (Ross and Mirowsky, 1999). Yet, the impact of incivility on *fear* of crime, and to a lesser extent avoidance, has been demonstrated to greater effect (Borooah and Carcach, 1997; Warr, 1994).

Incivility is depicted in this literature as something that is expected in certain parts of the city and amongst certain populations, with 'respectable' people adjusting their lifestyles to minimize contact with perceived neglected areas and anti-social behaviours. Convincing as this may seem, we note that the literature is one that precludes certain outcomes by virtue of its limited scope. The analytic imagination and empirical gaze falls on visible and therefore researcher code-able incivilities in inner city environments – typically those perpetrated by the 'usual suspects' such as the homeless, minority youth and so forth. This approach rules out the wider population of incivilities, for example those in 'respectable' residential locales, those that are unexpected or surprising, or those that escape easy observation because they are fleeting and interpersonal rather than enduring and physical (see Phillips and Smith, 2003). Importantly, such a sub-sample loads the dice in favour of established theory. It weights towards a 'fear' finding in that it looks only to the environments most likely to be strongly negatively coded and avoided by citizens.

Furthermore, 'fear' is privileged analytically as a possible emotional response to incivility in available research tools. The process of responding to a survey called 'fear of crime' or completing a question module under the heading 'fear of crime' conjures up stereotyped imagery, predisposing respondents when partaking in such studies to retrieve a widely available set of common sense understandings about how to feel and act in the face of incivility (fear-avoid [Schudson, 1989]). Surveys in this vein face the danger of setting up the imaginative conditions they purport to discover, with consequent public safety and crime reduction initiatives constructing and perpetuating a dominant discourse that has in effect flowed 'top-down' from authority rather than arisen from the 'bottom-up' from the lifeworld (Bourdieu, 1979).

The overall picture we have, then, is one where 'fear' and 'avoidance' stand out as the dominant responses to incivility. Are there alternatives to this attenuated palette? An examination and analytic reconstruction of diverse resources from social theory allow us to assemble a repertoire of contending descriptions of what might happen when an incivility is encountered. It is ironic that the affect-high response of Goffman (and mainstream criminology) contrasts with the position developed by one of the founders of the interactionist paradigm – Georg Simmel. For Simmel (1997), modernity has resulted in the evolution of a blasé attitude. Although in a sense a defensive response to the incessant psychic shocks of the city, the blasé attitude is a jaded and nonchalant way of seeing, not a fearful one. Simmel's work suggests that unpleasant encounters will generate little more than indifference. Extending this movement in a more positive vein, we come to the *flâneur* of Walter Benjamin (1997), who enjoys navigating the unpredictable waves of jostling crowd movement and the uncertainties of urban life. For the *flâneur* incivility, albeit observed rather than experienced

directly, is something to be courted or flirted with. It is to be sought as a source of amusement and mental stimulation, not avoided. Taken down the social hierarchy we find this theme was elaborated in the popular movie 'Jackass' (Tremaine, 2002) in which the principal characters perform incivilities in an effort to enliven their ennui.¹

Contrasting with Simmel and Benjamin and their arguments for the prevalence of an emotionally cool response in the urban citizen, we find work grounded in historical analysis that has examined transformations among western peoples in etiquette and manners. Exemplary here, of course, is the work of Norbert Elias. His studies highlight cross-national differences (i.e. comparing countries within Western Europe) and the *longue durée* dissemination of new ideas (i.e. from bourgeoisie to lower orders) about acceptable and unacceptable conduct (Elias, 1978). For the purposes of this article, the key insight offered by Elias is that perceived incivility leads to emotions such as disgust. Responses can best be described as forms of action that are aversive in quality. These include, but are not limited to, retreat to sequestered or predictable social environments where interactions with the sources of symbolic pollution can be minimized, or the orientation of the body and gaze away from the unpleasant cultural boundary violating experience. Although it considers popular responses to criminal justice activity (executions, gibbets etc.) rather than stranger incivility, Spierenburg's (1984: 183–99) discussion of emergent 'civilized' norms precisely highlights the ways in which individuals mobilized strategies of aversion when confronted by activities they increasingly perceived as disgusting.

Emile Durkheim (1984) offers yet another plausible alternative emotion/behaviour pattern to the dominant fear/avoidance coupling. From the Durkheimian perspective incivility is a breach of the normative order that rends the fabric of the collective conscience. It generates powerful primary emotions such as anger and outrage. These lead in turn to interventions in the form of negative sanctions which, no matter how graduated in intensity, at some level express disapproval and exact a restitutive vengeance. In sum, by looking to the broader sweep of social theory we can locate a series of contending visions of emotional and behavioural responses to incivility. These can be understood, in a sense, as 'hypotheses' about internal relationships between emotions and actions, as well as predictions about the nature of social responses to incivility. A diagrammatic representation is provided in Figure 1.

- Hypothesis One – Incivil events generate fear and this leads to avoidance behaviour (broken windows, Goffman, Bauman).
- Hypothesis Two – Incivil events engender anger and this produces sanctioning activity against perpetrators in defence of community standards (Durkheim).

Predicted Relationship		
	Emotional Response	Behavioural Response
Social Theory		
H1 Broken Windows Goffman, Bauman	fear	avoidance
H2 Durkheim	anger	sanction
H3 Elias	disgust	avoidance
H4 Simmel, Benjamin	blasé	do nothing

Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of hypotheses: predicted reactions to incivil action by stranger in everyday situation

- Hypothesis Three – Incivil events are seen as disgusting and aversive behaviour results in which the civilized try to minimize contact with pollution and degradation (Elias).
- Hypothesis Four – Incivil events have no strong emotional impact. They are understood as a spectacle or viewed in a world-weary manner, with a typical behavioural reaction being to ‘do nothing’ (Simmel, Benjamin).

Methodology

To evaluate the relevance of these theoretical positions we take our data from the Melbourne Everyday Incivility Project, a study designed to collect information from a range of socially divergent publics about the phenomenon of incivil encounters with strangers in everyday life (Phillips and Smith, 2003). Information from this research is ideal for the purposes of this article because it was collected in a relatively open-ended way. Rather than imposing a restrictive and researcher-centred definition of incivility and its consequences, the investigation was designed to allow participants to draw on personal experiences and to use their own understandings in telling stories about incivil events they had experienced or witnessed.

Our published findings from the project to date have revealed the kinds of actions that are recognized as incivil, where they happen and who does them (Phillips and Smith, 2003). Contrary to media stereotypes and the agendas of ‘broken windows’ criminology, popular understandings of incivil conduct were shown to focus on everyday impolite and inconsiderate behaviours rather than on signs betokening urban decay and the presence of the socially marginal. Furthermore, incivil conduct involved perpetrators from ‘respectable’ social categories and took place in apparently safe environments, such as public transport, shopping malls and

cinemas. We argued that movements around the consumption-oriented city were a major driver of commonplace incivil encounters, with routine activities theory (Cohen and Felson, 1979) and the concept of 'dromology' (Virilio, 1977) – the study of speed in social life, providing considerable analytic purchase on the patterning of reported encounters.

This article moves beyond these robust but we feel rather descriptive findings and interrogates the data a little more theoretically and aggressively to find out 'what happens next?' It examines the consequences that flow from individuals recognizing and coding the behaviour of unknown others encountered in public places as 'incivil'. Specifically, what kinds of emotional and behavioural responses do these events arouse in individual people? Furthermore, how might these emotions and actions be tied together? In addressing these questions, we can consider the extent to which the relationships revealed by the data are consistent with the contending predictions we have derived from social theory.

Let us briefly describe the data. The Everyday Incivility Project was a focus group study conducted in the Australian city of Melbourne in 2000. With a multicultural population of around three and a half million and the usual range of affluent and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, Melbourne is in many ways a typical medium-sized city. Social criteria of age, gender, class and ethnicity were used as bases for group segmentation. Seven groups were formed: elderly, young, females, males, white collar, blue collar and Anglo. Each group was comprised of seven to eight members. A total of 54 people took part in the study. An experienced moderator facilitated each group discussion. Participants were asked to recount and discuss specific incidents of incivil behaviour at the hands of a stranger in everyday life situations, experienced either by themselves or someone known to them, before moving on to talk about general attitudes towards such events, covering such issues as the extent of the problem, its perceived causes and potential solutions. If queried, the moderator was instructed to substitute 'rude' or 'inconsiderate' for 'incivil'. No further information was provided by the moderator in respect to defining the term. A stranger was designated as someone not known to the participant, and thus excluded people in a visible social role such as a bank teller or store assistant. We focus in this study on the first part of the discussion, concentrating in particular on the stories participants told us around what had actually happened or frequently happened to them. We invited participants to recount stories in which they were either an involved party or an onlooker.

In sum, the group discussions generated mention of 294 incivilities. Some 93 of these were presented in the form of elaborated narratives that permitted a more detailed analysis of event sequences and characteristics. Each of the seven focus groups provided between 10 and 18 elaborated stories of this type. Common over all the narratives were a set of structural pre-requisites for this particular form of 'troubles telling' (Pomerantz,

1986). In nearly every case, and with greater or lesser degrees of elaboration and specificity, the stories recounted a setting (e.g. bus, shop, pavement), described the perpetrator of the incivility and their actions. We now provide some broad descriptive information about the stories, in terms of type of incivil behaviour encountered, where it occurred, and who was seen to have done it.

The type of behaviour recounted took the form of 'kinetic incivility' in 65 stories (70 %) and 'verbal incivility' in 28 stories (30 %).² 'Road rage, aggressive and selfish driving' (15 stories), 'queue jumping' (10 stories) and 'people walking into you/inconsiderate use of footpath' (six stories) were the most frequently mentioned forms of kinetic incivility. The most commonly referred to types of verbal incivility were 'verbal aggression' (13 stories) and 'use of inappropriate language' (eight stories). We note again that this range of events is more considerably diverse than that captured by systematic social observation, a technique that is only able to capture a limited sub-set of social incivilities (Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). Verbal incivilities drop out of the frame and kinetic incivility seems to be reduced to groups of young males loitering and hanging out (common), and soliciting, drinking and fighting (so rarely recorded as to be useless for analytic purposes). In short, although systematic observation does a good job in material incivilities in the urban landscape ('broken window' phenomena), our qualitative data do a better job at capturing the subtlety and range of incivility that occur at the face-to-face level.

In terms of where incivil conduct was encountered by participants, four in five of all stories (81 %) referred to a 'utilitarian' setting, while around one in eight (13 %) alluded to an 'expressive' setting. The 'utilitarian' places mentioned with the greatest frequency were 'on the road' (19 stories), 'on public transport/transport stops' (19 stories), 'in the supermarket' (11 stories) and 'on the sidewalk' (10 stories). The most commonly mentioned 'expressive place' was sporting venues (seven stories).

In regard to the perceived attributes of the 'perpetrator' of the incivil conduct, the data we obtained here were decidedly sketchier. By far the most frequently mentioned descriptive term was 'people in general' (41 stories). In terms of specifics, we note that age and gender were the most common attributes used in description. In 27 stories middle-aged and older people were seen as the instigators. Younger people and teenagers were seen to be at fault in 22 stories. Thirty stories attributed responsibility for the incident to males. In 12 stories females were reported as initiating what happened. In nine cases, mixed gender groups were recalled as implicated. Ethnicity and class referents were used infrequently in the stories as ways of marking the identity of the perpetrator.

In sum, we note that although we have good data on the range and location of incivilities encountered by citizens in their everyday lives, information is more limited on the social characteristics of the perpetrators. This

reflects a fact that is evident in reading over the transcripts – participants in the focus groups were more interested in talking about themselves than in describing the stranger. They wanted to tell the group what had happened to *them* and how *they* felt about this. This provided an important resource for our investigations because embedded in the stories were details of the responses and actions of the victim.

Manifest and latent coding systems were developed to analyse the ways in which the participant acted in response to the event (Neuman, 1997). Stories were classified in terms of the dominant emotional or behavioural response that was present. Consistent with the mandate of our hypotheses the emotion coding categories were anger, fear, disgust and indifference. For behaviour, coding groupings were direct confrontation (e.g. remonstrating, pushing, gesturing, staring), covert response (e.g. usually summoning or informing authorities), and avoidance (e.g. looking away, leaving the scene). A residual category captured events where there was no response. Stories were also coded according to whether the person reporting was personally confronted by the stranger in a face-to-face encounter or was merely present at a scene where an incivil occurrence was taking place. For example, if a stranger on a train shouted abuse directly into the face of the informant, the informant was coded as ‘involved’. If, on the other hand, the informant was on a train and witnessed a stranger shouting abuse into the face of someone else in the carriage, this was coded as an ‘observed’ incivility. Some events in the ‘observed’ category took the form of ambient or environmental incivilities where victim status was more diffuse – for example someone on a train shouting abuse at nobody in particular. Multiple coders were used to enhance accuracy in the coding process.

As we have seen, social theorists disagree over the precise dynamics of emotional and behavioural responses to incivility. At a more fundamental level, however, there is consensus respecting the causal sequence involved. All agree that an event is observed or experienced, that this leads in turn to an emotional response and that there is a consequent social action that is driven in part by the emotional evaluation of the situation. This is consistent with core research findings from the interactionist tradition in social psychology (Kemper, 2002). Our analytic strategy replicated this pattern. This involved the initial documentation of the distribution of stories as they fell out along the three key steps in the suggested chain of occurrence. First, was the teller ‘involved’ in the event or was he/she an ‘onlooker’? Second, what was their emotional response? Third, what did they do? We then brought these discrete elements of uncivil events together, by examining in what ways particular behaviour responses (step 3) reflect specific emotional reactions (step 2), and under what conditions emergent associations are augmented (i.e. observed versus involved) (step 1). In what follows we take the reader through the steps, reporting our results in a way that mirrors the logic of inquiry.

Table 1: Type of event: participant role (frequency distribution)

	%	N
Involved in event	54	50
Onlooker to event	46	43
	100	93

Source: Melbourne everyday incivility study, 2000 (N=93), see Phillips and Smith (2003).

Table 2: Type of event by emotional response

	<i>Type of event</i>		
	<i>Involved</i> (%)	<i>Observed</i> (%)	<i>All</i> (%)
Anger/outrage	70	33	53
Fear/unease	2	28	14
Disgust	4	14	9
Blasé	24	26	25
Total (%)	100	100	100
N	50	43	93

Source: Melbourne everyday incivility study, 2000 (N=93), see Phillips and Smith (2003).

Note: Due to rounding not all columns sum to exactly 100%.

Results

Referring to Table 1, in 54 per cent (50 cases) of the events in the set the participant was 'involved'; while in the remaining 46 per cent (43 cases) the participant was an 'onlooker'.

Table 2 shows that the most frequent emotional response to commonplace incivility was anger/outrage. This type of reaction was found in just over half of cases (53 %). The next most recurrent response, a blasé attitude, was associated with one in four cases (25 %). Fear/unease and disgust were each reported as emotional reactions with less regularity. Participants mentioned fear/unease as the felt reaction to everyday incivility in one in seven cases (14 %), while disgust was reported in one in 11 cases (9 %).

Looking more closely at Table 2 we see that the distribution of emotional responses varied between participants who were involved and participants who were onlookers. First, anger/outrage, the most common emotional response to incivility, was about twice as likely to be found in events that the participant had been drawn into rather than events that they had simply witnessed. Seven of every 10 events where the respondent was involved evoked an emotional reaction of anger/outrage (70 %). Yet, only

one in three events in which the respondent was an onlooker involved this kind of response (33 %). The situation was entirely different for the emotions of fear/unease and disgust. These kinds of affective responses were heavily concentrated in cases where the participant was an observer (42 %), and virtually absent when the participant was involved (6 %). In other words, while two in every five 'observed' cases featured an emotional response of fear/unease or disgust, only about one in every 16 'involved' events exhibited a similar affective reaction. A blasé response was equally present across both types of events, constituting the emotional reaction in one in four cases, regardless of the involved or observed status of the participant.

Table 3 shows the distribution of behavioural responses that participants enacted. The most frequent behavioural reaction was doing nothing. In just over half of cases (53 %), the participants did not perform any mode of action. In the remaining cases, participants did something. The most common activity here was some kind of sanction, which was a feature of around one in three cases (35 %). The large majority of these kinds of events involved direct action (30 %), with indirect action only evident in a minority of cases (5 %). Avoidance was a less frequent response, being apparent in some one of eight cases (12 %).

As was the case with emotional responses, the spread of behavioural reactions was somewhat different for involved and observed events. In regard to sanctioning, this form of action was concentrated twice as heavily in events that involved the participant. Nearly half of behavioural responses in the involved group were of this type (46 %), compared to a little less than a quarter for the observed group (23 %). Yet when we probe into the sanctioning category a little deeper, a more layered picture emerges. While this general trend is further enhanced in the case of direct sanctioning (44 % versus 14 %), it falls away in regard to indirect sanctioning.

Table 3: Type of event by behavioural response

	<i>Type of event</i>		<i>All (%)</i>
	<i>Involved (%)</i>	<i>Observed (%)</i>	
Direct sanction	44	14	30
Indirect sanction	2	9	5
Avoidance	12	12	12
No reported response	42	65	53
Total (%)	100	100	100
N	50	43	93

Source: Melbourne everyday incivility study, 2000 (N=93), see Phillips and Smith (2003).

Instead, this kind of response appears to be over-represented in events that the participant observed (9 % versus 2 %). However, we don't make too much of this finding given the small number of cases involving indirect sanctioning. A behavioural reaction of avoidance/aversion was neither concentrated nor dispersed within either type of event. Yet, no reported response was a more common reaction in observed as against involved events. Whereas around two in three incidents (65 %) where the participant was an onlooker involved no reported response, this was only the case in two in five incidents (42 %) that the participant was caught up in.

Table 4 displays the relationship between emotional and behavioural responses for all cases, involved cases and observed cases. The top section of the table pertains to all cases. An initial observation we make here is the propensity of anger/outrage to give rise to a direct sanction. Nearly half of all cases that invoked such an affective response (47 %) led to a direct sanction. No other emotion demonstrated a close to equivalent predictive capacity. Turning to avoidance, we note the observed potency of fear/unease in generating this kind of reaction. Compared to the 12 per cent of all cases that involved an avoidant behavioural response, 38 per cent of the events where the participant felt fear/unease led to this coping strategy. Furthermore, a blasé feeling is distinguished from the other kinds of emotions in terms of its greater likelihood of being associated with no reported response. Whereas around half of all cases involved no reported action (53 %), this figure rose to about three in four cases when preceded by a blasé response (74 %). We have not commented on the emotional bases of indirect sanctioning due to the small N of cases in this category.

What we have discovered so far from Table 4 is that three of the emotional states are strongly associated with specific coping responses: feeling angry with direct sanctioning, feeling fear with avoidance, and feeling blasé with doing nothing. What happens to the relationship between behaviour and emotion when we control for event type? Turning to the middle part of the table, the association between behaviour and emotion for events where the participant was involved, we find anger/outrage associated with direct sanctioning of the offender, and the blasé attitude is related to no reported response. Moving on to the results presented in the bottom part of the table, we find the same pair of relationships replicated. In addition, we find that fear/unease appears to be associated with an avoidant behavioural response under conditions where the participant is an onlooker. Taken as a whole, Table 4 shows that the connection between anger/outrage and direct sanctioning is at its most powerful in events in which the participant is involved. The links between fear/unease and avoidance on the one hand, and blasé attitude and no response on the other, emerge with the greatest clarity when the participant is an onlooker to the event. We now present illustrative cases of each of these discrete relationships.

Table 4: Behavioural response by emotional response: all cases, involved cases and observed cases (column %)

<i>All cases</i>	<i>Emotional response</i>				
	<i>Anger/outrage (%)</i>	<i>Fear/unease (%)</i>	<i>Disgust (%)</i>	<i>Blasé (%)</i>	<i>All (%)</i>
Direct sanction	47	8	25	9	30
Indirect sanction	2	8	12.5	9	5
Avoidance	6	38	12.5	9	12
No reported response	45	46	50	74	53
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
N	49	13	8	23	93

<i>Involved cases</i>	<i>Emotional response</i>				
	<i>Anger/outrage (%)</i>	<i>Fear/unease (%)</i>	<i>Disgust (%)</i>	<i>Blasé (%)</i>	<i>All (%)</i>
Direct sanction	54	0	50	17	44
Indirect sanction	3	0	0	0	2
Avoidance	6	100	50	17	12
No reported response	37	0	0	67	42
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
N	35	1	2	12	50

<i>Observed cases</i>	<i>Emotional response</i>				
	<i>Anger/outrage (%)</i>	<i>Fear/unease (%)</i>	<i>Disgust (%)</i>	<i>Blasé (%)</i>	<i>All (%)</i>
Direct sanction	29	8	17	0	14
Indirect sanction	0	8	17	18	9
Avoidance	7	33	0	0	12
No reported response	64	50	67	82	65
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
N	14	12	6	11	43

Source: Melbourne everyday incivility study, 2000 (N=93), see Phillips and Smith (2003).

Note: Due to rounding not all columns sum to exactly 100%.

(i) Anger and direct sanction: participant 'involved'

... in the city one day I was driving and I just turned into a street and a guy decided to turn as well from a second lane that wasn't a turning lane and he started yelling rather interesting comments at me through the window, I can't quite remember them now but really nice so um ... I threw a few back at him.

[Moderator]: Did you?

There is always idiots on the road and I must say I do that, I don't get out the car and do it or anything but I do get quite angry (Young group).

(ii) Unease and avoidance: participant 'observed'

[on the train to the city] there was a girl about 13 travelling on her own and she seemed to be a bit retarded and she started walking around chatting to the other passengers and she had one of those plastic choker things around her neck ... and then all of a sudden another passenger, a middle-aged man just started ranting and roaring what sort of parents have you got to let you out wearing a dog collar and on your own ... Anyway that fellow got a phone call and had this really loud conversation to his wife and then he's all I'm on the train darling and I'll be home soon sweetheart and I love you ... and then when he hung up he said see, there's my wife she's at home with my children ... and I thought ... it was really intimidating ... and you were scared to make eye contact ... (Female group).

(iii) Blasé and no response: participant 'observed'

I've had lots of standing at entrances of aisles or stopping to speak to people on the footpath, stand in the middle of the footpath and stuff like that. And it doesn't bother me terribly much ... (White collar group).

Figure 2 brings the materials presented thus far together in a single and more complex diagram that allows the comparative likelihood of outcomes to be determined between analytical paths at each level. For example, anger/outrage can be seen as more likely to occur in events where the participant gets involved, while fear/unease is more prone to result when the participant is an onlooker. The diagram also allows us to clarify understanding of actions consequent upon emotions under the different sets of conditions. Again, we can see that direct sanction is probably more an outcome of anger/outrage in events in which the participant is involved. Yet, in events that the participant simply observes, 'no reported response' is the more likely result of anger/outrage. Furthermore, by looking at the N in the cells on the right, the model allows us to examine the likely emotional-behavioural pathway an event will take given an 'involved' or 'observed' event. In the case of events in which the participant is involved, the most likely outcome seems to be anger/outrage – direct sanction (38 %), followed by anger/outrage – no response (26 %) and blasé attitude – no response (16 %). In relation to instances of events where the participant is an onlooker, the distribution of events among possible pathways is more scattered. However, the more common routes are anger/outrage – no response and blasé attitude – no response (each 21 %).

Discussion

Our findings send mixed messages to the social theorists we placed in dialogue. The Durkheimian perspective (Hypothesis 2) fares quite well in so

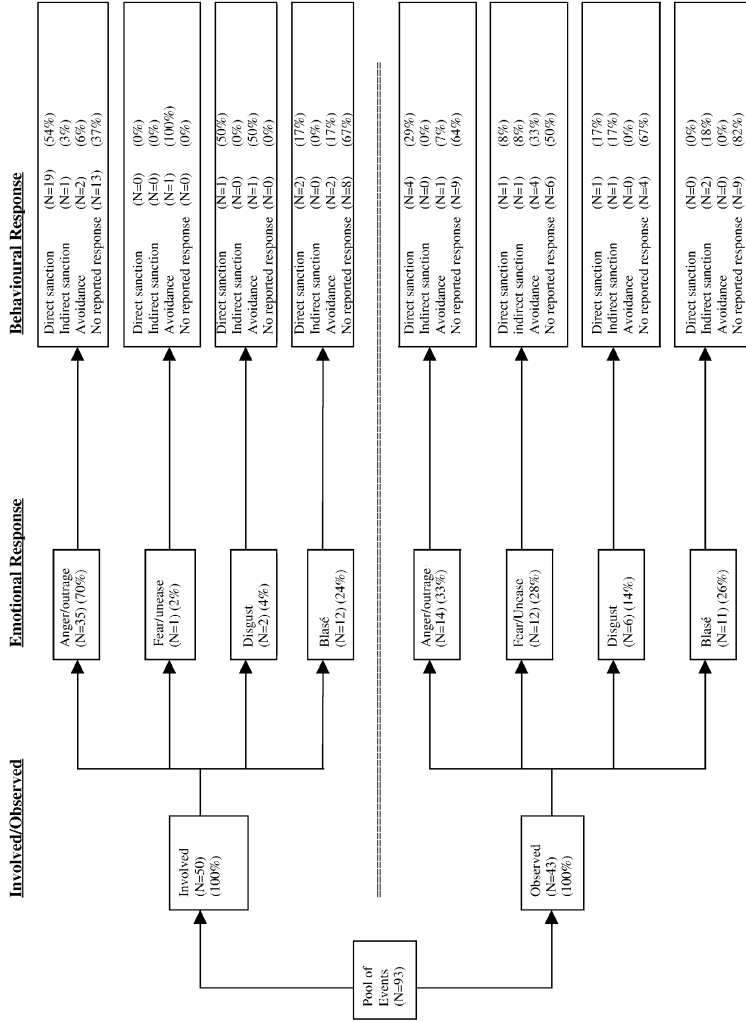


Figure 2: Behavioural and emotional reactions to uncivil actions by strangers in everyday situations: a model of response patterns under ‘involved’ and ‘observed’ conditions

Source: Melbourne everyday incivility study, 2000 (N=93), see Phillips and Smith (2003).

far as anger was the most commonly reported emotional response, being present in 53 per cent of all episodes. Durkheim also correctly predicted an association between anger and sanctions. His was the only emotion pattern found to be strongly and positively related to retribution or attempts at the social regulation of the offending stranger. However, specifying analysis showed that it was within incidents where the informant was directly involved as the victim *in particular*, that anger was at its most potent as a predictor of sanctions. In Durkheim's perspective it does not matter if an incivil event victimizes an individual or a member of the collectivity – outrage will eventuate in all cases due to the all encompassing embrace of the collective conscience. According to Erikson (1966) for example, offences with diffuse victimization in the Massachusetts colony mobilized the entire community. Our research points to a different dynamic – at least insofar as incivilities are concerned. An outraged response is most likely to take place when there has been an assault on the dignity of the concrete self, not the abstract *conscience collective*. Contra Durkheim, incivilities witnessed against others only lead to a response of anger in 33 per cent of cases, compared to a figure of 70 per cent for cases of direct involvement. Furthermore, even when they do generate anger, only 29 per cent of onlooker cases lead to sanctions, as against 57 per cent of involved cases.

Angry individuals are much more likely to take action when they find themselves to be the direct target of an incivility. Why is this? Looking at the transcripts we found little support for the idea that citizens do something because they see themselves as universalistic upholders of the collective conscience, but strong support for the reading of Durkheim specified by Goffman (1967). This holds that the self is sacred and should be respected or surrounded by a certain deference. Consistent with this pattern we found that sanctions and rancorous remonstrations eventuated when respondents saw themselves as having been 'disrespected' by a stranger, with their status as a person and 'moral agent' (Denzin, 1984) subject to challenge. The emotional dynamic that follows has resemblance to that described by Katz (1988) in his treatment of righteous slaughter. Humiliation leads to anger and a desire for revenge as identities are brought into question (Denzin, 1984: 86).

Simmel's model (Hypothesis 4) also came out of the study looking strong. Around a quarter of all reported cases resulted in a blasé response. Given that the individuals in the study are more likely to recall events where a strong 'emotional memory' (Stanislavski, 2002) has been implanted, we suspect that the real proportion of incidents greeted with a blasé response might be considerably higher. Events that can be shrugged off can be easily forgotten. Simmel, and in a more literal sense Benjamin, were also correct to predict that the blasé attitude would lead to a 'walk on by' society. Altogether around 80 per cent of events recognized by respondents as

incivil but engendering a blasé emotion resulted in either no response or aversive behaviour.

The other two hypotheses looked weak. The position advocated by Goffman, Bauman and 'broken windows' criminology (Hypothesis 1) did not fare well at all – a disappointing and surprising result given its institutional dominance. Fear was common only for observed events, and even here it was not the most common emotional response (fear = 28%; anger = 33%; blasé = 26%). This surprisingly poor showing might reflect the fact that a substantial proportion of the reported incivilities in our study were carried out by 'respectable' people in 'respectable' locales (Phillips and Smith, 2003). Even so, it is a finding confirming our claim that we need to study the discrete reaction implications of specific forms of incivility rather than engage in blanket characterizations based upon particular stereotypes. The perspective of Elias (Hypothesis 3), likewise, did not emerge from the study with a strong result, capturing only eight cases in the data set.

Put simply then, the story from social theory is that we need to revisit the classics and look more closely, in particular, at Durkheim and Simmel for alternative ways to understand individual level responses to incivility. What are the possible lessons of this finding for the criminology field? Unlike so many others this article does not directly address or test the proposition that 'broken windows' phenomena generate crime or even fear of crime. What it does suggest is that we need to open up a much broader agenda when it comes to exploring everyday incivility. There is a requirement to look at the full range of incivilities experienced in contemporary society, not just those that can be easily observed by outsiders passing through the streets of blighted neighbourhoods through the tinted glass of their 4WD. Only from this wider and more comparative study can we come to understand what is specific to these rather stereotyped contexts and what is more widely shared. We do not doubt that fear is a common response to certain urban incivilities; indeed our results showed this was one possible result. But it remains just this – one outcome from a broader array. Looking at the full spectrum opens up new avenues for understanding incivility, social capital and collective efficacy as well as the research agendas on these.

Consider the tragic narrative that drives research on urban decay. Pivotal to this position, from the work of Jane Jacobs (1961) onwards, is a belief that disorder threatens social civility more widely, chipping away at public life in the street, shrinking defensible spaces and progressively eliminating the vigilant guardianship of watchful eyes. As we discussed at the outset of this article, this story has continued on into the broken windows paradigm for which incivility is overwhelmingly seen as bad for society, as threatening and as generating fear of crime. It is a presumptive narrative that has impelled research along narrow channels. Let us quickly review these.

There has been a focus on how fear (of crime) is related to social disorder (Kelling and Coles, 1996; Skogan, 1992), but without asking whether

other emotional responses are available or asking for a rank ordering of these. Studies have also explored 'constrained behaviour' as it impacts upon daily routine, largely in the context of exposure to crime but spilling over into thinking about incivility. Although the literature on fear of crime has been refined over the past 10 years, its major achievement has been to elaborate the circumstances under which people experience fear and to conceptually distinguish this from perceived risk and altruistic fear (for review see Ferraro, 1996). There has also been debate on the extent to which items accurately tap into fear through hypothetical scenarios and suggestions that we need to look at specific fears as these relate to specific crimes. As Ferraro points out, to some extent the field is driven simply by the availability of measures in General Social Survey and National Crime Survey (Ferraro, 1996). In sum, there has been a relentless struggle to find out who has fear, how we can measure it and most recently what 'fear' and avoidance might mean (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997). Research effort has gone into the refinement of the fear paradigm rather than trying to move beyond it. Our findings suggest the possibility of a new and far more ambitious agenda. This calls for a comprehensive approach that maps out a range of emotions and behavioural responses and interrogates how these might coalesce with the full spectrum of incivil acts from minor transgressions of the normative order through to more serious crimes.

Such an agenda might confront the fatalism that understands incivility leading inexorably towards the decline of civil society. The initial investigations reported here suggest that although incivil encounters often do meet with emotional and behavioural apathy or avoidance and sometimes with fear, often they do not. Indeed as we have seen, about half of all incivilities generated anger and around a third led to sanctions against the offender. The scenario that Durkheim describes of offences energizing the collective conscience and reminding people of prevalent moral codes still has merit. Looking at our data again we can perhaps identify a reason for the pervasive negativity in mainstream criminological theorizing and the oversight of these more pro-social outcomes. Driven by an overwhelming interest in physical incivilities, and constrained to some extent by its methods, it has in fact concentrated on events that we would call 'observed' incivilities. As can be seen from Table 2, these appear more likely to generate fear and less likely to lead to active sanctions against the offender.

The finding that people can and do intervene to confront incivility needs, however, to be greeted with cautious optimism. One problem is that such activities can lead to a schismogenic dispute escalation (Bateson, 1973) in which efforts to enforce moral codes lead to a spiral of increasing distrust, misunderstanding and violence between parties. This is a scenario that can put individuals at risk, increase perceptions of disorder among onlookers and erode net social capital. As Elias (1987) has argued, the emotion of anger needs to be tightly controlled for a civilized society to emerge. It is

here that ideas of 'collective efficacy' (Carr, 2003; Taylor, 2002) can take on a new salience. The current literature in this area has stressed the institutional and organizational resources required for communities to self-organize, to confront disorder and to subject the negative emotion of fear to rational control. Our project suggests an augmented portfolio in which the control of fear is complemented by the management of anger and the pro-social channelling and mobilization of the powerful, solidaristic emotional energy that it produces. A new focus on emotions could pay additional dividends for collective efficacy theory precisely because the concept has long struggled to differentiate itself from the concept of 'social capital'. Whereas the latter refers to the resource mobilization *potential* of networks and ties, the former is 'a task specific construct that relates to shared expectations and mutual engagement' (Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999: 635). In other words collective efficacy is more about beliefs and the willingness to take actions, not latent social structural resources. A focus on emotions and their consequent action orientations goes to the heart of this theme and provides much needed specificity as to the content of this black box. Although our analytic focus has been on individuals and not communities, it has highlighted the role of subjective and motivational factors in shaping propensities to confront (or not confront) wrongdoing. Pushing the emotion/response model in a more collectivistic direction will provide new insights into the cultural process through which communities can mobilize themselves. Theorizing exactly how emotions can be harnessed for the building of collective efficacy and local civil society is beyond the scope of this article. That said, it is clear that the time has come to move beyond the fear/avoidance paradigm in understanding popular responses to everyday incivilities.

Notes

We thank the anonymous *Journal of Sociology* referees for their valuable comments on the article, Mike Emmison and Barry Schwartz for discussing the ideas in the article with us, Phyllis Mitchell for organizing the focus groups, Valerie Britton Wilson for moderation, Louise Bieser, Philippa Smith and Christine Wells for helping us categorize and code the narratives, and the study participants for agreeing to tell us their stories. The research reported in this article was funded by the 2000 La Trobe University ARC small research grant scheme (Project ID: 13043). An earlier version of the article was presented at the 2003 British Sociological Association Annual Conference, University of York, 11–13 April.

- 1 Possibilities exist for extrapolating from Benjamin's position to one yet further away from Simmel's affect neutral stance. There are potentialities for a more participatory, carnivalesque pleasure that can be distinguished from a sense of ironic amusement and aesthetic diversion. Well captured by Bakhtin's seminal writings (Barta et al., 2001), here we find the rude, dirty and obscene celebrated as a source of libidinal and embodied satisfactions and as a form of rebellion

against conformity and authority (see also Katz, 1988; Presdee, 2000 and Tomsen, 1997). This theoretically intriguing possibility was not supported by our data and has been dropped from discussion.

- 2 The term kinetic incivility captures the range of activities sharing the core feature of involving movement and the inappropriate use of the human body in space including appended tools and objects (e.g. the automobile). We have called kinetic incivility what in Phillips and Smith (2003) we termed physical incivility. This label is problematic in so far as physical incivility is more generally used to capture broken windows style phenomena and is contrasted with social incivilities (fighting, loitering etc.). Kinetic and verbal incivility should be seen as subsets within the social incivilities category.

References

- Ahmed, K. (2003) 'Blair Interview: The Transcript', *The Observer*, July 6, URL: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/politics/story/0,6903,992690,00.html>
- Barta, P., P. Miller, C. Platter. and D. Shepherd (eds) (2001) *Carnivalizing Difference: Bakhtin and the Other*. London: Routledge.
- Bateson, G. (1973) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. St. Albans, England: Paladin.
- Bauman, Z. (2003) *Liquid Love*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Benjamin, W. (1997) *Charles Baudelaire*. London: Verso.
- Boroovah, V. and C. Carcach (1997) 'Crime and Fear – Evidence from Australia', *British Journal of Criminology* 37(4): 635–657.
- Bourdieu, P. (1979) 'Public Opinion Does Not Exist', pp. 124–30 in A. Mattelart and S. Siegelau (eds) *Communication and Class Struggle, Vol. 1*. New York: International General.
- Bursik, R. and H. Grasmick (1993) 'The Use of Multiple Indicators to Estimate Crime Trends in American Cities', *Journal of Criminal Justice* 21(5): 509–516.
- Carr, P. (2003) 'The New Parochialism: The Implications of the Beltway Case for Arguments Concerning Informal Social Control', *American Journal of Sociology* 108(6): 1249–1291.
- Cohen, L. and M. Felson (1979) 'Social Change and Crime Rates: A Routine Activities Approach', *American Sociological Review* 44(4): 588–608.
- Denzin, N. (1984) *On Understanding Emotion*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Durkheim, E. (1984) *The Division of Labour in Society*. New York: Free Press.
- Eccleston, R. (1998) 'We're Through Being Cruel', *The Australian*, March 10: 14.
- Elias, N. (1978) *The Civilising Process Vol. 1: The History of Manners*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Elias, N. (1987) *Involvement and Detachment*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Ellickson, R. (1996) 'Controlling Chronic Misconduct in City Spaces: Of Panhandlers, Skid Rows and Public-Space Zoning', *Yale Law Journal* 105(5): 1165–1248.
- Erikson, K. (1966) *Wayward Puritans*. New York: Wiley.
- Ferraro, K. (1996) 'Women's Fear of Victimization: Shadow of Sexual Assault', *Social Forces* 75(2): 667–690.
- Goffman, E. (1963) *Behaviour in Public Places*. New York: Free Press.
- Goffman, E. (1967) *Interaction Ritual*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Goffman, E. (1971) *Relations in Public*. London: Allen Lane.
- Graycar, A. (1998) 'Crime Prevention Perspectives', paper presented at the Partnerships in Crime Prevention Conference, Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart, 25–7 February.

- Hollway, W. and T. Jefferson (1997) 'The Risk Society in an Age of Anxiety: Situating Fear of Crime', *British Journal of Sociology* 48(2): 255–266.
- Holton, R. (1990) 'Problems of Crisis and Normalcy in the Contemporary World', pp. 39–52 in J. Alexander and P. Sztopmka (eds) *Rethinking Progress*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Jacobs, J. (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House.
- Katz, J. (1988) *Seductions of Crime*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kelling, G. and C. Coles (1996) *Fixing Broken Windows*. New York: Free Press.
- Kemper, T. (2002) 'Predicting Emotions in Groups', pp. 53–68 in J. Barbalet (ed.) *Emotions and Sociology*. Malden, MA: Oxford.
- Lofland, L. (1973) *A World of Strangers*. New York: Basic Books.
- Neuman, W. (1997) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 3rd edn. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Phillips, T. and P. Smith (2003) 'Everyday Incivility: Towards a Benchmark', *The Sociological Review* 51(1): 85–108.
- Pomerantz, A. (1986) 'Extreme Case Formulations – A Way of Legitimizing Claims', *Human Studies* 9(2–3): 219–229.
- Presdee, M. (2000) *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime*. London: Routledge.
- Robinson, J., B. Lawton, R. Taylor and D. Perkins (2003) 'Multilevel Longitudinal Impacts of Incivilities: Fear of Crime, Expected Safety, and Block Satisfaction', *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 19(3): 237–274.
- Ross, C. and J. Mirowsky (1999) 'Disorder and Decay: The Concept and Measurement of Perceived Neighbourhood Disorder', *Urban Affairs Review* 34(3): 412–432.
- Safe, M. (2000) 'All the Rage', *The Australian Magazine*, January 29–30: 18–23.
- Sampson, R. and S. Raudenbush (1999) 'Systematic Observation of Public Spaces', *American Journal of Sociology* 105(3): 603–51.
- Schudson, M. (1989) 'How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols', *Theory and Society* 18(2): 153–180.
- Simmel, G. (1997) 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', pp. 174–85 in D. Frisby and M. Featherstone (eds) *Simmel on Culture*. London: Sage.
- Skogan, W. (1992) *Disorder and Decline: Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American Neighbourhoods*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Spierenburg, P. (1984) *Spectacle of Suffering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stanislavski, C. (2002) *An Actor Prepares*. New York: Theatre Arts Books.
- Stephens, T. (2004) 'Do Manners Make a Safer Nation?', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 January.
- Taylor, R. (2002) 'Fear of Crime, Social Ties and Collective Efficacy: Maybe Masquerading Measurement, Maybe Déjà Vu All Over Again', *Justice Quarterly* 19(4): 773–792.
- Tomsen, S. (1997) 'A Top Night: Social Protest, Masculinity and the Culture of Drinking Violence', *British Journal of Criminology* 37(1): 90–102.
- Tremaine, J. (dir.) (2002) *Jackass: The Movie*. Paramount Pictures and MTV Networks.
- Virilio, P. (1977) *Vitesse et Politique*. Paris: Galilée.
- Warr, M. (1994) 'Public Perceptions and Reactions to Violent Offending and Victimization', pp. 1–66 in A. Reiss and J. Roth (eds) *Consequences and Control*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Wilson, J. and G. Kelling (1982) 'Broken Windows', *The Atlantic Monthly* 249(3): 29–38.

Biographical notes

Tim Phillips is a senior lecturer of sociology at the University of Tasmania, Launceston. *Address:* School of Sociology and Social Work, University of Tasmania, Launceston, Tasmania, Australia 7250. [email: timothy.phillips@utas.edu.au]

Philip Smith is an assistant professor of sociology at Yale University. *Address:* Department of Sociology, Yale University, PO Box 208265, New Haven, CT 06520-8265, USA. [email: philip.smith@yale.edu]