

**“HAES TYTTÖ JOKU OSAAVA PAIKALLE”: CUSTOMER
INCIVILITY AT WORK. A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF
CUSTOMER SERVICE EMPLOYEES’ ACCOUNTS**

Ella Lohilahti
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Faculty Humanities and Social Sciences	Department Department of Language and Communication Studies
Author Ella Lohilahti	
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Customer incivility (i.e., rude and discourteous behaviour by customers) can be regarded as an issue around the world (Sliter & Jones, 2016, p. 208). Many researchers (e.g., Grandey et al., 2007; Wilson & Holmwall, 2013; and LeBlanc & Kelloway, 2002) claim that incivility is more frequent from customers (i.e., organizational outsiders) than from colleagues or supervisors (i.e., organizational members) but there is still only scant research of incivility from customers. Several researchers (e.g., Grandey et al., 2004; and Ben-Zur & Yagil, 2005) also argue that customer incivility can predict, for example, job burnouts and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, customer incivility is an issue which needs to be addressed and researched.</p> <p>The aim of the present study is to examine customer service employees’ perceptions and experiences of customer incivility at work in Finland. First, the study focuses particularly on racism and discrimination from the viewpoint of perceived customer incivility. The second aim of the study is to introduce the many forms of customer incivility experienced by the participants in the sample. Lastly, the study aims to increase understanding and awareness of customer incivility and change the reader’s attitudes or behaviours towards customer service employees if necessary.</p> <p>The research is qualitative, and it employs a questionnaire as a data collection method. Thirteen customer service employees from different occupations responded to the questionnaire, thus, their accounts are examined. The method used to analyse the data is a theory-guided thematic analysis. Thematic analysis can be used in a qualitative study for, for example, coding the content.</p> <p>The findings indicate four different forms of mistreatment from customers in the sample. These four forms of mistreatment are racism and discrimination, prejudicial behaviour against assumed national origin, aggression and violence, and ambiguous forms of incivility. In the sample, customer incivility is not a rare experience since almost all participants reported to have experienced it monthly, or even weekly. The participants report that they utilize some coping strategies to deal with customer incivility. These strategies were seeking social support, planful problem solving, distancing, self-controlling, distracting oneself from the actual emotion, and confronting. The findings validate existing theories and findings from previous research.</p>	
Keywords discrimination, racism, customer incivility, impoliteness, customer-employee interaction, interaction at work	
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Tiivistelmä <p>Epäasiallisen asiakaskäyttäytymisen voidaan ajatella olevan maailmanlaajuinen ongelma (Sliter & Jones, 2016, s. 208). Monet tutkijat (Grandey et al., 2007; Wilson & Holmwall, 2013; ja LeBlanc & Kelloway, 2002) väittävät, että epäasiallinen käytös asiakkailta on yleisempää kuin epäasiallinen käytös kollegoilta tai työnjohtajilta. Silti siitä on vain niukasti tutkimuksia. Useat tutkijat (Grandey et al., 2004; ja Ben-Zur & Yagil, 2005) myös väittävät, että loppuun palamiset sekä työuupumukset ovat epäasiallisen asiakaskäyttäytymisen enteitä. Näiden asioiden vuoksi se on ongelma ja sitä tulisi tutkia enemmän.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tarkastella asiakaspalvelutyöntekijöiden näkemyksiä ja kokemuksia epäasiallisesta asiakaskäytöksestä työpaikoilla Suomessa. Tutkimus keskittyy työntekijöiden näkemyksiin epäasiallisesta asiakaskäytöksestä erityisesti rasismien sekä syrjinnän näkökulmasta. Sen lisäksi tutkimuksen toisena tavoitteena on tutustuttaa lukija epäasiallisen asiakaskäytöksen moniin muotoihin, joita nämä työntekijät tässä tapauksessa olivat kokeneet työpaikalla. Lukija saattaa parantaa tai edistää omaa tietämystään tästä yleisestä asiakaspalvelualoilla kohdatusta ilmiöstä ja ehkäpä lukijan oma asenne ja käytös asiakaspalvelutyöntekijöitä kohtaan muuttuvat tarvittaessa.</p> <p>Tutkimus on kvalitatiivinen ja tiedonkeruumenetelmänä käytettiin kyselyä. Kolmetoista asiakaspalvelutyöntekijää eri aloilta vastasi kyselyyn. Analyysimenetelmänä on teema-analyysi. Teema-analyysiä voidaan käyttää kvalitatiivisissa tutkimuksissa esimerkiksi sisällön koodaamiseen.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittivat, että osallistajat olivat kokeneet erilaisia epäasiallisen asiakaskäyttäytymisen muotoja. Nämä olivat rasismi ja syrjintä, ennakkoluuloinen käyttäytyminen oletettua kansallisuutta kohtaan, aggressio ja väkivalta sekä hienovaraiset huonon käytöksen muodot. Epäasiallinen asiakaskäytös ei ollut harvinainen kokemus näiden kyseisten osallistujien kesken, sillä melkein kaikki osallistajat kertoivat kokeneensa epäasiallista käytöstä asiakkailta kuukausittain tai jopa viikoittain. Tutkimuksen osallistajat kertoivat käyttävänsä tiettyjä selviytymisstrategioita kokiessaan epäasiallisuutta. Nämä strategiat olivat sosiaalisen tuen haku, suunnitelmallinen ongelmanratkaisu, etäännyttäminen, itsekontrollointi, itsensä harhauttaminen oikealta tunteelta ja kohtaaminen. Tulokset vahvistavat jo olemassa olevaa teoriaa sekä edellisten tutkimusten tuloksia.</p>	
Asiasanat syrjintä, rasismi, epäasiallinen asiakaskäyttäytyminen, epäkohteliaisuus, asiakastyöntekijä vuorovaikutus, vuorovaikutus töissä	
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1 INTRODUCTION

As Torres et al. (2017, p. 48) remark “[p]eople aspire to be treated with consideration, dignity, and respect”. Yet, many researchers (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Marks, 1996; Aldisert, 2000; and Daw, 2001) claim that in reality more people treat each other in an uncivil, uncourteous, or disrespectful way at work. This type of rude, impolite, or bad behaviour at work is called workplace incivility. Interestingly, workplace incivility has been described as an increasing problem all over the world (Sliter & Jones, 2015, p. 208). The research on workplace incivility or aggression mainly focuses on supervisors or colleagues as the perpetrators, yet when considering the context of service, customers are an additional origin of incivility and aggression (Ben-Zur & Yagil, 2005, p. 81). Torres et al. (2017, p. 50) give a possible justification for increasing incivility; even fewer employees are expected to do more due to endless demand for more efficiency at work. Moreover, Ben-Zur and Yagil (2005) point out that service providers are expected to respond in a polite manner to an uncivil customer, in fact, even courteous behaviour is expected from employees when facing an aggressive or uncivil customer. This may be one reason for why customers think that it is okay to act uncivilly towards customer service employees – employees are not allowed to “fight back”. Famous statements such as “the customer is always right” demonstrate the substantial power distance between customers and customer service employees (Rafaeli et al., 2012, p. 931). This may also be another reason for customers taking advantage of the situation and being uncivil. Nevertheless, Schildpaz et al. (2016, p. 58) emphasize that workplace mistreatment is, in fact, ubiquitous. Therefore, customer incivility in general, and customer incivility from the viewpoint of racism and discrimination should be brought up in research.

According to Grandey et al. (2004), customer incivility may lead to many negative consequences. Emotional exhaustion and job burnout are common consequences experienced by service employees (Grandey et al., 2004). Additionally, Grandey et al. (2004) point out that an employee who experiences emotional exhaustion may affect organizational outcomes negatively, for example, they may

withdraw or their job performance is affected. Thus, it is also crucial from the organizational point of view to interfere with customer incivility.

Some researchers (e.g., Grandey et al., 2007; LeBlanc and Kelloway, 2002) agree that incivility from customers is more prevalent than incivility from colleagues, supervisors, or managers. Hence, customers are a significant point of interest to examine in the context of incivility. Thus, this thesis focuses merely on customer incivility and customer verbal aggression since there evidently is a gap in the research when it comes to incivility from customers and customer service employees' accounts and experiences of it. Previous studies on customer incivility have primarily been carried out in the field of organizational/industrial psychology and organizational behaviour (Torres et al., 2017, p. 48). However, the present study is interested more in the communicational or interactional perspective of customer incivility. Thus, it adds valuable information to the field of organizational communication.

The focus of the present study is to evaluate customer service employees' perceptions of customer incivility and customer verbal aggression. The aims are to further explore the forms of customer incivility, the frequency of customer incivility, and the coping strategies utilized in the sample. The study is motivated by two distinct reasons. 1) There seems to be an extensive research gap when discussing *customer incivility*, as was already mentioned briefly above. 2) There is also a personal motivation since I have colleagues who have experienced customer incivility in the form of discrimination at work, thus I want to address the issue further. In addition, I have also experienced some forms of customer incivility since I have worked in the customer service industry almost over the past decade. The uncivil behaviours that I have experienced have always been minor, yet discriminatory against my young age. Thus, I felt that I need to bring these matters into the surface, so that the readers could learn something valuable from it and possibly change their behaviour around customer service employees for the better.

There are three research questions employed in the present study which are introduced in the chapter called "Methodological framework". The questions deal with the different forms of customer incivility experienced by the participants, how much of an issue customer incivility appears to be, and the coping strategies utilized by participants when experiencing customer incivility. Customer incivility can be studied in multiple ways using different qualitative or quantitative data collection methods, for example, interviews, observations, quantitative questionnaires, and so on. Yet, the data in the present study was gathered online with a web-based questionnaire, due to the fact that this was the simplest and fastest way to collect data during the Covid-19 situation. Thirteen participants in total responded the survey. Even though this method of data collection was utilized, the study is qualitative in nature. Thus, there were mainly open-ended questions in the questionnaire. The data

analysis method is thematic analysis, more specifically, a theory-guided thematic analysis since there were theoretical concepts guiding the analysis.

This Master's thesis is structured as follows; the introduction is followed by a literature review wherein significant concepts and previous studies are introduced, explained, and examined much further. After the literature review, I present the methodological framework of the present study, followed by the findings and discussion sections. In the conclusion, I discuss the possible limitations of the current study and contribute to future research. The appendix includes the study questionnaire in English and Finnish.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter introduces the reader to the literature utilized in the present study. It presents significant concepts (e.g., incivility, daily hassle, impoliteness, customer verbal aggression, emotional labour, racism, and discrimination) and provides definitions. These concepts and their definitions are important because they establish a foundation for subsequent analysis and help the reader to get acquainted with the background of this thesis. In this section I also examine and compare some of the studies that have been conducted within the frameworks of customer incivility. First, I discuss customer interaction from an organizational perspective and the importance of researching this phenomenon. Second, emotional labour and daily hassle are defined and discussed further. Next, workplace negativity and mistreatment are examined and discussed. After this, workplace incivility is evaluated, and connected to different forms of customer incivility and verbal aggression, impoliteness, racism, and discrimination. Finally, the literature on customer incivility is presented.

Organizational communication is an important part of our everyday communication. Mumby (2013, p. 3) argues that we are organizational beings because we, for example, go to work. Many researchers (e.g., Hochschild, 1983; Ihtiyar, 2018; Iles, 1995; Lundberg & Syltevik, 2016) have studied different aspects of organizational communication. Organizational communication covers many different interactions with many different interactants, for example, employee-employee, employer-employee, and customer-employee interactions. Furthermore, Miller (2008, p. 1) mentions that the discipline of organizational communication contains a large collection of different topical interests. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of research conducted within the frameworks of customer-employee interaction and this research gap needs to be addressed. It is worth addressing and filling this gap since customer-employee interaction (and the struggles that may sometimes arise) is present widely in the customer service industry. Additionally, according to Sliter et al. (2010), there

are more people working at customer service jobs than before, meaning that there are even more people who put themselves in the frontline of incivility from customers.

Customer interaction refers to the interaction between, for example, employees and customers. It can also occur between managers and customers, (e.g., in a store if a customer wants to complain directly to the manager about a product or service) but the present study is oriented towards the first one. Compared to the managers and executives who often interact with people in similar positions, customer service employees interact with a diverse and changing customer force on a day-to-day basis. The study focuses on the customer-employee communication and interaction, especially from the perspective of the employees because they are usually the targets of customers' bad behaviour. Thus, I examine the perceptions of customer service employees.

Von Gilsa et al. (2013, p. 884) argue that many service organizations usually have some display rules for interactions with customers. These so-called display rules, which urge employees to regulate their feelings and emotions (i.e., emotional labour), becomes a salient feature, especially, in the service industry since service employees meet customers daily. Thus, emotional labour is tightly connected to customer service interaction and it will be discussed in the present study. The next chapter explains and discusses these specific display rules, emotion regulation, and emotional labour much further.

2.1 From a daily hassle to emotional labour

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984, as cited in Silva & Caetano, 2013, p. 155), daily hassles can be identified as the small matters happening on a daily basis that may annoy, irritate or distress people. Sliter and Jones (2016, p. 208) note that a daily hassle is a low-intensity stressor experienced regularly. These matters can threaten or harm a person's well-being. Thus, emotional labour becomes a salient concept to consider when discussing these small irritating matters at work. Daily hassles can be, for example, impoliteness and incivility at work. Cortina et al. (2001) also highlight that incivility takes the form of a daily hassle.

Grandey (2000, p. 96) argues that the definition of emotional labour is highly confusing. Grandey (2000) cite three distinct conceptualizations of emotional labour in their research; Hochschild's (1983), Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993), and Morris and Feldman's (1996). All these conceptualisations are similar in ideas, aims and outcomes but differ slightly in few key ways which are discussed below.

Hochschild (1983, p. 7) defines emotional labour as "the management of feeling to create publicly observable facial and bodily display". Hochschild's (1983) definition

claims that managing emotions can be an option for an employee to achieve organizational goals. Thus, emotional labour contributes to organizational outcomes. This definition also suggests that emotional labour requires effort, becoming highly stressful for employees and causing burnouts. Hochschild (1983) is known to be the first to provide a definition of emotional labour. Hochschild (1983) studied flight attendants' use of emotional labour at work. The study found, for example, that women are frequently forced to engage in emotional labour more than men due to unequal power dynamics. Moreover, Hochschild (1983) distinguished "emotional labour" from "emotion work" since the first one is performed publicly for a wage and the latter is performed in private.

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993, p. 88), on the other hand, define emotional labour as "the display of expected emotions by service agents during service encounters". Hochschild's (1983) and Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993) definitions agree that emotional labour has to do with organizational outcomes. Still, with this definition, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) argue that emotional labour does not need conscious effort from employees and can come quite effortlessly. By this they mean that emotional labour should be considered as an observable behaviour rather than as emotion management. Hence, according to Ashforth and Hemphrey's (1993) definition, emotional labour does not require conscious effort, and is not a source of stress for employees.

Lastly, the definition of emotional labour by Morris and Feldman (1996, p. 987) is "the act of expressing organizationally desired emotions during service transactions". This definition, according to Grandey (2000, p. 97), is similar to the ones above, since they all acknowledge that emotions are controlled by individuals and the social settings determine when that happens. Yet, Morris and Feldman (1996) believe that frequency (i.e., how often), duration (i.e., how long) and variety (i.e., how intense) define emotional labour. Grandey (2000, p. 97) argues that this definition claims that emotional labour is a state of being. Therefore, they suggest that this definition of emotional labour does not define the employees' emotion management processes.

The present study utilizes all three definitions of emotional labour since each definition has something that the other definitions lack. Grandey (2000) suggests that an integrated definition ought to be formed for us to be able to understand the components (e.g., deep acting and surface acting) of emotional labour. Deep acting refers to a conscious state where one can adjust their emotions and feelings to fit the situation and show the desired emotion (Grandey, 2000, p. 96). In contrast, surface acting means the regulation of emotional expressions. Nonetheless, the different perspectives of emotional labour complement each other and this is why an integrated definition is utilized in the present study.

Sliter et al. (2010, p. 470) have also a highly similar and simpler way of defining emotional labour; a system through which service employees often regulate their emotions and feelings in the workplace. Employees need to follow certain emotional display rules at work. In fact, Diefendorff et al. (2006) claim that most workplaces in the service industry have display rules, either prescribed, formally set or even unwritten rules. Von Gilsa et al. (2014, p. 884) discuss how statements such as “the customer is always right” or “the customer is the king” are reasons why these display rules exist. In addition to this, Rafaeli et al. (2012, p. 931) recognise that because these formulas or statements (i.e., “the customer is the king” and “the customer is always right”) have inherent notions of power distance between employees and customers, some customers might even feel encouraged to take advantage of employees in service situations.

There are some typical characteristics in customer service workplaces where the employee is forced to engage in emotional labour. Hochschild (2012, p. 147) believes that there are three characteristics in common with workplaces that call on emotional labour; first, a face-to-face or voice-to-voice interaction is needed with the public; second, an emotional state in another person is required to be produced by the worker; and third, the employer is allowed (by the organization through supervision) to train themselves to control their emotional activities. The first one (i.e., a face-to-face or a voice-to-voice interaction) is one characteristic which is a relevant feature in the present study since other forms of interactions (e.g., a written interaction) would require different methods for collecting data and analysing it. Moreover, one cannot be truly sure if someone is being uncivil in a written text because tones or inflections are not present. Text-based (and phone-based) interactions also lack nonverbal behaviours. Thus, especially written form might make it more difficult for the employees to realize whether this customer is being uncivil or not.

Von Gilsa et al. (2014, p. 886) argue that “service with a smile” is a common display rule where a specific level of friendliness is expected. Moreover, Sliter et al. (2010, p. 471) replicated previous research conducted on linking customer incivility and emotional exhaustion aspect of burnout and how customer incivility (or the effects of it) influences customer service quality. Sliter et al. (2010) found out that employees often overly fake positive emotions (e.g., fake a smile) when experiencing incivility. The increased faking might intensify the effects of emotional labour. Nevertheless, Grandey (2000, p. 95) states that the expression or suppression of emotions and feelings results in more efficient and effective interaction at work. Thus, using emotional labour results in more successful interaction at work.

Emotional labour is a significant concept for understanding the psychological and emotional background of employees who work in the service industry. Since emotional labour is, indeed, something that happens on a daily basis at work

(especially when experiencing customer incivility) and since it is a predictor of, for example, customer satisfaction and a successful transaction at work, it is a significant concept to evaluate. Moreover, Sliter et al. (2010, p. 470) argue that customer service employees need to regulate their emotions frequently if they want to produce quality customer service, specifically when experiencing uncivil behaviour or aggression from customers. This also validates that emotional labour becomes a salient aspect in my study since it is deeply associated with customer incivility. Hochschild's (1983) study suggests that emotional labour plays a central role in customer service employees' professional lives, yet it is also a highly fundamental concept in our personal lives. We do not usually speak about it, so, it is essential to consider it in the present study.

Emotional labour can be researched with several methods. The research on motives for emotional labour by Von Gilsa et al. (2014) conducted a diary study (a survey) where the participants were asked to provide emotionally significant and meaningful interactions and fill in interaction protocols. The research by Kirk et al. (2021) employed ethnography as a method. Kirk et al. (2021) observed nurses' use of emotional labour in an emergency department setting. In addition to observation, the study by Kirk et al. (2021) utilized semi-structured interviews. Kim et al. (2018) studied the relationship of employee burnout and emotional labour among nurses. The data was collected with a questionnaire. Thus, both quantitative and qualitative approaches have been used in studies on emotional labour.

Moreover, emotional labour links with the next chapter (i.e., workplace negativity and workplace mistreatment) as employees need to regulate their emotions and feelings when they are mistreated at work, for example, by a customer, manager, executive or even a colleague. The next chapter examines workplace mistreatment and the forms of it, for example, bullying, violence, harassment, incivility, and aggression. All of these require the use of emotional labour from employees because they cannot bully, harass, or use violence towards customers since there are certain tacit (yet, explicit) norms, policies, and rules.

2.2 Workplace negativity and workplace mistreatment

Schilpzand et al. (2016, p. 57) explain that in the literature on organizational behaviour, workplace negativity has been a central subject. Initially, the literature on organizational behaviour concentrated on topics such as bullying, workplace aggression, abusive supervision, and the effects of these behaviours on the targets' well-being (Schilpzand et al., 2016, p. 57). Schilpzand et al. (2016, p. 57) articulate that workplace incivility is, in fact, a new addition into the domain of workplace negativity.

Thus, this confirms that workplace incivility is a recent subfield in the field of organizational communication and behaviour.

Nevertheless, some researchers have studied workplace mistreatment and the forms it takes. For example, Cortina et al. (2001, p. 64) identify bullying, violence, aggression, tyranny, injustice, deviance, and harassment as forms of workplace mistreatment. In addition, McCord et al. (2018, p. 137) pinpoint harassment, bullying, discrimination, and incivility as forms of mistreatment at work. Additionally, Sliter et al. (2011, p. 424) claim that interpersonal conflicts are a type of workplace mistreatment which occur quite frequently at work. Wilson and Holmwall (2013, p. 311), on the other hand, explain that aggression, injustice, and incivility are all constructs which entail mistreatment from customers. All these researchers have similar ways of defining workplace mistreatment. In this study, workplace incivility entails mistreatment from customers, especially in the form of racism, discrimination, but also harassment, bullying, aggression, and incivility in the frames of racism and discrimination. In addition, as McCord et al. (2018) claim, “an employee’s *experience* of workplace mistreatment can take many forms...” (p. 137, emphasis added), the present study focuses on the employees’ experiences and accounts of customer incivility since it is important to take into consideration that everyone perceives incivility differently. This is important since our behaviours are mainly based on our perceptions of different matters. It is also significant to notice that mistreatment can be considered a multifaceted phenomenon. It can be defined and studied in different ways. This means that some people might not even have an intent to act or behave uncivilly towards others, yet the other person might interpret and experience it as mistreatment. Thus, mistreatment can be a difficult concept to grasp and study since we can only access second-hand information.

Interestingly, some studies have focused on group-based workplace mistreatment, in terms of racial minority groups. McCord et al. (2018, p. 137) claim that there is an expectation where women and racial minorities experience mistreatment more regularly than men and white people. McCord et al. (2018) study group-based mistreatment because there is little knowledge about the extent to which specific groups (e.g., women) perceive mistreatment in relation to other groups (e.g., men). The results indicate that women perceive more mistreatment based on sex than men, yet both sexes reported comparable perceptions of other forms of workplace mistreatment. The results also similarly indicate that racial minorities perceive more race-based mistreatment than white people, yet results indicate smaller race differences in other forms of mistreatment at work.

Workplace mistreatment can include many subcategories or subsections. One of these subcategories is workplace incivility. Hence, the next chapter discusses

workplace incivility, what is the commonly used definition of it, and why it is significant to address in the present study.

2.3 Workplace incivility

Workplace incivility was initially researched in the context of employee-employee interaction (Torres et al. 2017, p. 50). Yet, Torres et al. (2017) claim that many scholars have taken an interest in the customer-employee context. Andersson and Pearson (1999) have been said to be among the first to approach on the topic of workplace incivility (cited in Torres et al., 2017).

Various authors (e.g., Cortina et al., 2001; Sliter et al., 2010; Kern & Grandey, 2009; and Torres et al., 2017) explain workplace incivility through Anderson and Pearson's (1999, p. 457) definition, "low intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect". For example, talking in a rude fashion, insulting, or other negative behaviours such as mean gestures are all considered as uncivil behaviour. Caza and Cortina (2007, p. 335), and Kern and Grandey (2009, p. 46) explain how subtle forms of mistreatment such as incivility are more prevalent and occur more often in the workplace than aggressive acts of violence or other extreme behaviours. Sliter and Jones (2015, p. 208) describe that incivility has been considered an increasing problem around the globe. In addition, Sakurai and Jex (2012) argue that incivility come from multiple sources, for example, organizational insiders such as colleagues, managers, or supervisors but also organizational outsiders such as customers or clients. In this study, the focus is on incivility coming from customers due to the unique relationship between employees and customers. The relationship between customers and employees is more complicated than between colleagues since there are issues of anonymity, power, status, and organizational identity. Wilson and Holmvall (2013, p. 311) discuss how not having a shared history gives people their anonymity in customer interactions. However, Sliter et al. (2010, p. 468) point out that workplace incivility has been typically studied in employee-employee interactions which makes the present study relevant since customer-employee interactions are not commonly studied when considering workplace incivility.

McCord et al. (2018, p. 138) consider workplace mistreatment the same as interpersonal mistreatment and they use Cortina and Magley's (2003, p. 247) definition: a "specific, antisocial variety of organizational deviance, involving a situation in which at least one organizational member takes counternormative negative actions or terminates normative positive actions, against another member." McCord et al. (2018, p. 138) change the noun phrase "organizational member" into

“individual” in their text since they are discussing customer-employee situations. Cortina and Magley (2003, p. 247), on the other hand, focus on the employee-employee point of view in their study. The change into “individual” seems accurate and clear since they both have different perspectives of incivility. Cortina and Magley (2003, p. 247) limit the actor to be a part of the organization, whereas McCord et al. (2018) do not restrict the actor to a specific group of people and simply refer to an “individual”.

Sliter et al. (2012, p. 122) point out that in the definition of workplace incivility, the term “ambiguous intent” is significant since it distinguishes incivility from other serious forms of mistreatment. The present study will however also examine those severe forms of mistreatment at work whether it is bullying, violence, or other intentional acts of rudeness. Sliter et al. (2012, p. 122) also mention that incivility occur more frequently than, for example, workplace aggression. Workplace aggression can be seen as a severe form of mistreatment and it is said to be easily identified as a type of mistreatment because of a clear intent to harm the target (Sliter et al., 2012, p. 122).

According to Sliter et al. (2010, p. 468) incivility can be seen as an interpersonal phenomenon since it has a perpetrator (i.e., the person acting in an uncivil way) and the target (i.e., the person who perceives the incivility from the perpetrator). Sliter et al. (2011) found out that especially customer-related (social) stressors occur more often than co-worker-related (social) stressors. According to Glomb (2002), verbal incivility is one of the most common varieties of aggression that employees struggle with at work.

Sliter et al. (2012, p. 121) claim that the number of people working in service industry has increased which would explain the increased number of employees experiencing daily hassles, social stressors, and incivility at customer service workplaces. This demonstrates that when there are customer service employees and customers, more incivility is targeted at these employees. Schilpzand et al. (2016, p. 58) also emphasize that workplace incivility is ubiquitous. Thus, there seems to be no escaping from it.

In addition, it is essential to note that the present study examines the perceptions and accounts of incivility, meaning that individuals can experience incivility differently; some might not consider some uncivil acts uncivil whereas some might consider not smiling or not saying “hi” exceptionally rude. Thus, everyone perceives incivility differently. As mentioned earlier, incivility can also be a difficult concept to understand and research. What if the person being accused of uncivil behaviour towards another person has not actually acted uncivilly, yet the “target” still perceives the behaviour as uncivil? Again, we can only study the accounts of employees who have perceived that they have been targets of customers’ bad behaviour. Therefore, we cannot regard the employees’ accounts of incivility as truths or facts.

2.4 Customer incivility and customer verbal aggression

Customer incivility is a more focused concept than workplace incivility since the latter can be explored not only from the customer-employee point of view but also from the employee-employee or employer-employee points of view. Yet, customer incivility can be associated solely with customer-employee interaction.

Customer incivility is specified as deviant behaviour perpetrated by a customer or a client, often with an ambiguous intent to harm an employee (Sliter et al., 2010, p. 468). Wilson and Holmwall (2013, p. 310), and Sliter and Jones (2016, p. 209) argue that rude gestures or expressions from customers (such as sighing or rolling eyes), addressing an employee in an unsuitable manner (such as "Hey you!"), failing to say "thank you" and "please", or, for instance, grumbling and complaining about slow service, and customer using a patronizing tone of voice (Robertson & O'Reilly, 2020 p. 798) are all instances of customer incivility.

Sliter et al. (2010, p. 469) claim that the increase in service-related jobs means that even more people are placing themselves in positions in which they might experience customer incivility. Yet, this view might be contested today since there seems to be a vast amount of self-service automatons, for example, in fast-food restaurants and service bots in places such as online pharmacies, banks, and shops. Thus, one does not necessarily need a face-to-face interaction when everything can be done online with a bot.

Walker et al. (2017, p. 165) argue that two types of customer incivility exist; targeted and nontargeted customer incivility. The latter, nontargeted customer incivility refers to incivility that has no target, for example, a product. This study concentrates more on the first one (i.e., targeted customer incivility) as it refers to incivility targeted at a specific party, for example, a customer service employee.

Research by Walker et al. (2017, p. 169) focus on verbal incivility rather than general incivility because many service employees interact with customers over the phone and, according to Glomb (2002), verbal incivility is the most common variety of aggression that customer service employees experience. The present study does not necessarily restrict itself to only verbal incivility, yet it is expected that more verbal incivility experiences will occur in the sample.

Customer verbal aggression is somewhat different from customer incivility. In customer (verbal) aggression, there is an obvious intent to harm or injure the target (Schat & Kelloway, 2005), that is, the employee. In contrast, and in terms of customer incivility, the intent is ambiguous. Andersson and Pearson (1999) also argue that the intensity in aggression is higher than in incivility. Yet, they (1999) believe that there is a clear distinction between these two concepts. Andersson and Pearson (1999) point out that the other can be an antecedent or a consequence of the other, for example, an

unintentional rude act (incivility) can evolve into aggression and vice versa. Since incivility is only considered to be ambiguous in terms of intentionality, the present study focuses on aggression as well.

Because customer incivility and aggression may sometimes be highly stressful, exhausting, and consumptive, some employees have come up with their own coping strategies when experiencing rude or impolite behaviour. Lazarus (1999) describes coping as “the effort to manage psychological stress” (p. 111). As one may already acknowledge, individuals usually develop their own coping strategies when dealing with stressful people or situations. Lazarus (1999, p. 111) claims that no universally effective or ineffective coping strategies exist and the effectiveness depends on the individual. Moreover, efficacy depends not only on the individual, but also on the threat that the individual is facing, the level or stage of the stressful situation or encounter, and the outcome method (Lazarus, 1999, p. 111). There can be multiple coping strategies, for example, distancing, confrontive coping, self-controlling, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planful problem-solving, seeking social support, and positive reappraisal (Lazarus, 1999, p. 115; Folkman & Lazarus, 1988).

In addition to Lazarus’s (1999) research, Wheeler et al. (2013) evaluated coping strategies among nurses when experiencing discrimination. The five coping strategies introduced were ignoring, excusing the behaviour, confronting, changing units or shifts, leaving their positions, and putting more effort into working to prove themselves (Wheeler et al., 2013, p. 355). Similar strategies could be expected among the participants in the sample.

The next chapter deals with impoliteness. Customer incivility is rude and impolite behaviour, which makes impoliteness a broad topic to research and understand. Hence, it is significant to also consider impoliteness in the present study. Intercultural impoliteness is an important and relevant topic of consideration in the present study since the thesis discusses, for example, racism and discrimination coming from customers. Racism and discrimination are also major issues in intercultural communication since both are prevalent and visible in today’s world.

2.5 Impoliteness

Impoliteness is a central topic in the field of pragmatics, although Kecskes (2015, p. 43) points out that the research on the phenomenon has only recently become popular. Interestingly, Kecskes (2015, p. 43) also points out that the research on *politeness* has already been popular since Brown and Levinson (1987). Briefly and simply explained, politeness refers to behaviour that is respectful to others whereas impoliteness refers to disrespectful behaviour. Nonetheless, there are multiple definitions of impoliteness

and this thesis provides two definitions: Bousfield's (2008) and Culpeper's definitions. The thesis uses these definitions because they are highly influential in the field and useful for the present study. Bousfield (2008) defines impoliteness as follows:

"I take impoliteness to be the broad opposite of politeness, in that, rather than seeking to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs), impoliteness constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts (FTAs) which are purposefully delivered:

- i. Unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation is required, and/or,
- ii. With deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, 'boosted', or maximised in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted." (Bousfield, 2008, p. 72).

The definition by Bousfield (2008) gives us a good starting point on the concept of impoliteness because it tells us simply that impoliteness is the opposite of politeness. Yet, the definition does not take into account contextual or situational factors. Culpeper (2010) defines impoliteness in a different way:

"Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organisation, including, in particular, how one person's or group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviours always have or are presumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence. Various factors can exacerbate how offensive an impolite behaviour is taken to be, including for example whether one understands a behaviour to be strongly intentional or not." (Culpeper, 2010, p. 3233)

In the present study, Culpeper's (2010) definition is utilized because it takes into consideration that impoliteness is not always intentional (Culpeper et al., 2003). Bousfield's (2008) definition explains that there is a clear aspect of intentionality when discussing impoliteness. Moreover, the contextual and situational factors are taken into account in the definition provided by Culpeper (2010).

Mugford's (2018) study discusses critical intercultural impoliteness within a globalised context. They (2018) examine call-centres in Mexico and how Mexican bilingual telephone agents must adopt new strategies for handling perceived impoliteness, aggression, and disrespect from customers (Mugford, 2018, p. 173). The study focuses on specific incidents of racism, rejection, and insults. Mugford's (2018) concept of critical intercultural impoliteness was developed as a means for understanding how employees (the agents) effectively and actively attempt to succeed in overcoming discrimination and the sense of feeling powerless. Mugford (2018, p. 181) found that the interactants (the agents) developed a set of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic resources, for example, delaying with a response and playing with language. The freedom to answer in their own way to a rude customer was highly limited, hence, the employees needed to find new ways for responding in a conflict

situation. Off-record strategies were utilized. Off-record strategies include “metaphor, understatement, tautologies, hints, and other means of indirect communication, theoretically allow the speaker to attribute more than one intention to the utterance” (Bousfield, 2008, p. 60). Bousfield (2008, p. 59) advises one to opt for an off-record strategy if there is a situation with a huge face threat. In addition, Bousfield (2008, p. 59) adds that one could even opt to speak nothing or shift the topic of the conversation. In the present study, the employees’ strategies for dealing with customer incivility become significant aspects to examine.

Haugh (2010, p. 139) claims that the relationship between culture and politeness has been studied to a large extent within the past thirty years. Yet, Haugh (2010, p. 139) stresses that research on intercultural politeness has been less common. Haugh (2010) also describes the research on intercultural politeness as the study of (im)politeness that arises in intercultural interaction (pp. 139-140). Wierzbicka (2010, p. 43) defines culture through cultural scripts which can refer to unspoken values, norms, and practices in each society. While the present study does not utilize these cultural scripts, it is worth pointing out that some researchers (such as, Wierzbicka, and Haugh, 2010) utilize them in their research. The cultural scripts are not researched further in this study since Haugh (2010) and Wierzbicka (2010) have different understandings of culture. Culture is seen as a set of norms, beliefs, and characteristics in a specific group. This way of defining culture is highly contested and has been criticised.

In addition to Haugh (2010), Kecskes (2015) has also studied impoliteness in the context of interculturality. Kecskes (2015, p. 43) argues that impoliteness might work differently in the context of interculturality, especially, when the language spoken is not L1. Kecskes (2015) suggest that the “polite or impolite load of expressions and utterances may be lost” in intercultural interactions (Kecskes, 2015, p.43). It is important to mention that due to interculturality, impoliteness is perceived differently. In addition to interculturality, some believe that culture as a social construct may also have an influence on impoliteness. This means that people can create impoliteness solely by judging another person’s background.

In general, impoliteness can be interpreted differently in various contexts and discourses. As Culpeper (2005, p. 41, cited in Bousfield, 2008, p. 54) explains that out of context, singular words or phrases are not intrinsically and immediately considered polite or impolite, yet many phrases, for example, “Hello, how are you?” and “You fucking cunt!”, are, in fact, polite and impolite respectively across many discourses. Thus, I argue that sometimes impoliteness is not perceived. In situations such as above (i.e., “you fucking cunt!”), it is not the individual’s own perception of impoliteness because the phrase would be impolite in any context or discourse.

The next chapter discusses racism and race as a social construct, but also racism in Finland. Racism is intertwined with incivility, aggression, and impoliteness since it is rude, impolite, and degrading to make a negative comment about someone based on where they, for example, live or come from.

2.6 Racism

The idea of race exists because we bring it into existence. Racism exists because we bring races into existence. Jena Declaration by Fischer et al. (2019) emphasize that the concept of race is the result of racism. The division of people into races (based on, e.g., skin colour) justifies open and hidden racism (Fischer et al., 2019). This is the notion of race that this research agrees on, yet there are multiple other researchers who do not agree with this definition. The present study takes this stance because I believe that we are all the same in the end and there is no reason to divide people into any categories which put us into different positions in society. Moreover, since people tend to judge people by their visible characteristics, it is no wonder that there is still racism and discrimination against the majority of people.

There are multiple definitions of racism. Some researchers also use “racism” and “discrimination” interchangeably. Ladson-Billings (2000, cited in Rodgers, 2015, p. 1) reasons that the notion of racism is contested due to its various meanings. Some believe that racism can be experienced only by black people, while some believe that everyone, for example, Russians, Asians, Aboriginals, Mexicans (and the list goes on) can also experience racism. The present study is interested in racism experienced by everyone because I believe that in Finland, there is racism against black people, but also against for example Russians, Finnish Swedes, and Romani people. Mannila (2020, p. 24) confirms that, for example, Romani people experience discrimination at work but also in public places in Finland. Mannila (2020, p. 24) also remarks that there is no such record for Sami people, yet some data refers to structural discrimination against Sami people. Moreover, Mannila (2020, p. 24) affirms that Finnish Swedes have reported experiences of discrimination in Finland. All these “groups” of people, (Russians, and Finnish Swedes) are considered “white” if judging by the human physical appearance. Thus, this proves that racism goes beyond Blackness.

DuBois and Miley (2014) argue that racism refers to the discriminatory attitudes which are targeted against specific groups which society has identified as somehow “lesser”; “less capable, less productive, and less normal” (p. 137). On the other hand, some researchers (e.g., Hochschild & Powell, 2008; White, 2005) reason that “race” is not biologically constructed but it is rather a social construct that apprehends classification and categories served to validate, for example, white supremacy, slavery,

and other forms of discriminative behaviours. In addition, Hervik (2019, p. 139) agrees and justifies that the notion of race emerged first from a biological approach, until it was proven that there are no biological racial categories that could support ideas about superiority or inferiority of races. These coincide with the notions of Jena Declaration since both believe that racism exists because we make it exist socially. Within these frameworks, race is

“...a concept of society that insists there is a genetic significance in behind human variations in skin color that transcends outward appearance. However, race has no scientific merit outside of sociological classifications. There are no significant genetic variations within the human species to justify the division of ‘race’.” (King, 1981, p. 118, cited in Rodgers, 2015, pp. 2-3).

2.6.1 Race as a social construct

Balibar and Wallerstein (1991, p. 17) agree that racism is a socially constructed phenomenon and calls it “a true ‘social total phenomenon’”. They continue to say that racism

“...inscribes itself in practices (forms of violence, contempt, intolerance, humiliation and exploitation), in discourses and representations which... are articulated around stigmata of otherness (name, skin colour, religious practices).” (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991, pp. 17-18).

The present study explores race from multiple sources and that is why the reader should be aware that some theories, concepts, views, and ideas listed here are extremely old-fashioned and can be considered racist. For example, Banton (1998) has examined different racial theories in their piece of work and some (if not all) of the theories and notions compiled are problematic and racist from a contemporary perspective. Banton (1998) has listed some racial theories which are; 1) race as a designation (i.e., to designate specific human groups or sections of the population), 2) race as lineage (i.e., ancestry and natural history, an ethnological approach), 3) race as type (i.e., the anatomical and biological differences of a man, an anthropological approach), 4) race as subspecies (i.e., a geographical approach), 5) race as status, 6) race as class, and, lastly, 7) race as social construct. Some of these theories and ideas of race are truly racist because they claim that a person’s skin colour determines their value as a human being. Thus, any person who is not white is considered to be less of a person or lesser in other ways.

There is not much research conducted within the frameworks of customer interaction and racism. Some researchers (e.g., Kern & Grandey, 2002; Sliter & Jones, 2016) discuss biases which might have an influence on service situations. Kern and Grandey (2002) use a biased division of people by categorising them into minorities and nonminorities. In addition, Sliter and Jones (2016) categorize people into groups, such as, gender, race, or age.

Kern and Grandey (2002, p. 46) study how employee's race may make a difference in a service situation. Even though they believed that race would influence service interactions, the authors did not find any difference between racial minority and nonminority employees. In addition, Sliter and Jones (2016) examine the antecedents of customer incivility and their results suggest that personal biases and prejudices may have an effect on customers' behaviour towards employees. The biases listed in the study (Sliter & Jones, 2016, p. 211) were ageism, sexism, racism, prejudices, classism, attractiveness bias, and weight bias. In these two studies, race is, indeed, seen as a surface characteristic. There is a clear discrepancy between these two studies as the other claims that belonging to a racial minority influences the way one is treated, and the other claims that there are no differences between minorities and nonminorities.

McCord et al. (2018, p. 138) reason that from a practical point of view, having this kind of knowledge could be beneficial for the development of measures against mistreatment in the context of group-based mistreatment such as measures against race-based bullying. In addition to this, the development of organizational interventions could be improved. McCord et al. (2018) add that from a research point of view "knowledge of the magnitude of subgroup differences informs future theory building by improving our understanding of the forms of workplace mistreatment to which minorities and/or women may be more or less susceptible" (McCord et al., 2018, p. 138). Thus, it is significant to study group-based mistreatment, so that people become more aware of the extent of problems such as race-based bullying and aggression.

The next chapter focuses on racism, especially, in Finland since the present study is conducted within the Finnish context. Furthermore, the study was limited to customer service employees in Finland. In addition, I believe that racism in Finland is something that people do not acknowledge or, perhaps, do not want to acknowledge. Supporting my belief, Danbolt (2017, p. 108 cited in Hervik, 2019, p. 18) suggests that the Nordic countries often share a racial exceptionalist view of themselves where racism is seen as a problem that exists far away. In addition, the Nordic countries advertise themselves with a positive self-image where they brand themselves as tolerant and equal countries (Danbolt, 2017, p. 108 cited in Hervik, 2019, p.18). Yet, nowadays it appears that racism is a somewhat prevalent topic of discussion in the news and on social media platforms in Finland.

2.6.2 Racism in Finland

The increase in immigration to Finland (Immigration Statistics for the year 2015 was 27,3% higher than in 2010, in total of 315,881.00 immigrations, Statistics Finland, 2019) continues to be a burning topic almost everywhere; in the news or at the family dinner

table, or at least in our family dinner table. YLE (29.11.2018) argues that according to a study (Being Black in EU by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019) Finland is one of the most racist countries in EU, while Alemanji and Mafi (2018) claim that Finland has always been a diverse country within the context of culture. Along with Alemanji and Mafi (2018), Ashkanasy et al. (2002) argue that the workforce of today is becoming more and more racially diverse. This might be one reason why people working in the service industry experience incivility.

Alemanji and Mafi (2018, p. 188) claim that racism is thought of as an exception in the Finnish society. This makes it more difficult for people who experience racism to truly see that something is racism. They argue that cultural differences are seen as a threat in Finland rather than a positive enriching matter. The notion of Nordic exceptionalism is an important concept due to the reason that there is some denial of race in Finland (Alemanji & Mafi, 2018, p. 188). Exceptionalism refers to a belief that a society, country, or a culture is somehow exceptional.

Hervik (2019, p. 4) mentions that researchers in the Nordic nations acknowledge that the discrimination of minorities who are visibly somehow different has developed into a more profound issue which leads to these minorities experiencing more serious consequences. In addition, it contributes to a more polarized society (Hervik, 2019, p. 4). A polarized society refers to a society that is split into two, for example, black people and white people, or rich and poor. I would also suggest that there is some polarization in Finland due to multiple reasons. One reason could be that some people have created a specific sense of "Finnishness" and this does not consist of, for example, immigrants.

According to Ogola (1998, p. 23), there was a sharp increase in racist incidents and crimes in the late 20th century in Finland. The author claims that there are laws against racism and discrimination, yet the authorities fail to take these matters seriously. This might explain the increased number of racist incidents and crimes in Finland. Racism in Finland (or anywhere in the world for that matter) will always exist as long as we continue to make races exist.

The next chapter discusses discrimination since it is also a common problem at work. Whether it is about someone's age, skin colour or accent, discrimination is not acceptable in any situation. Discrimination is also extremely rude and aggressive behaviour which can be experienced everywhere, and not just at work.

2.7 Discrimination

Discrimination, according to Dipboye and Johnson (2004, p. 131), refers to unfair treatment of people who belong to certain groups, for example, people in a social

category, people with a group identity, or people with specific ascribed characteristics. Dipboye and Johnson (2004, p. 132) point out that discrimination at work is a continuing problem that should be taken into consideration. Even though it continues to be a problem, discrimination has decreased in some areas. These studies on discrimination at the workplace use the same definitions of race as mentioned in the chapter above; that is, old-fashioned and racist ones. They all suggest that people can be put into categories according to race or ethnicity which may inevitably contribute to racism. People seem to think that everything can be generalized, and, in fact, it is natural for us to categorize people. However, we belong to various groups and collectives simultaneously. These are socially constructed and can be considered intersectional. Intersectionality refers to the interconnectedness of concepts such as race, gender, citizenship, class, or sexuality.

Parliman and Shoeman (1994, p. 551) introduce two primary areas of discrimination against one's national origin in the US context. These two areas are English-only work rules (i.e., the role of English ought to be preserved and enhanced) and foreign accent discrimination. The latter (foreign accent discrimination) is the focus of the present study. The article discusses language rights in workplaces in the US. Thus, the research is not fully applicable to this thesis because the perspectives and contexts are different. However, the concept of foreign accent discrimination is important because in Finland there may be cases where customers behave uncivilly towards a customer service employee because of the employee's accent when speaking Finnish. In addition, language discrimination is a concept which is similar to foreign accent discrimination. Thus, it is important to point out that a person's use of language can unfortunately trigger mistreatment.

In contrast, Wheeler et al. (2013) examined discrimination against nurses in the US. The study reports that in addition to discrimination from patients, nurses experienced discrimination from supervisors and fellow nurses as well. Moreover, the study introduces a different perspective to group-based discrimination research; they utilize terms such as "internationally educated nurses" and "USA-educated nurses". The aim of the study was to document experiences of these two groups of nurses. They found that both nurses experienced discrimination, yet the internationally-educated nurses experienced discrimination explicitly. The study also looked at the coping strategies utilized by the nurses, and these two groups shared similar strategies. The study also suggested that health institutions should strengthen their policies to address these issues effectively. I agree with this because it seems that some organizations do not take discrimination seriously. By not taking these incidents seriously, it seems that organizations allow the mistreatment to continue. I argue that all organizations should strengthen their racism and discrimination policies at the

workplace because it appears (by looking at, e.g., all the previous research discussed in the present study) that there is a need for stricter interventions.

McCord et al. (2018, p. 140) discuss the visible nature of sex and race. It is said that when, for example, women and minorities are the minority in any group, the visibility of sex and race intensifies. This is called the tokenism hypothesis (Kanter, 1993). Tokenism hypothesis means that women or minorities (or generally people who may be interpreted as socially different) can be seen as tokens due to their proportional rarity. The tokens receive attention because they are the minority of the specific group (Kanter, 1993, p. 210). McCord et al. (2018, p. 140) also introduce another hypothesis called the visibility-discrimination hypothesis (Blalock, 1956) which means that visibility increases when the minority group, for example, competes with the majority group. Consequently, McCord et al. (2018) reason that the so-called easy categorization of individuals into racial and sex groups based on the externally visible biological differences together with increased visibility of sex and race are likely to translate into “heightened stereotype activation, exaggerated perceptions of differences between in-groups and out-groups, and greater motivation to maintain existing hierarchies” (McCord et al., 2018, p. 140). Thus, the division into in-groups and out-groups may promote increased out-group discrimination. Interestingly, McCord et al. (2018) point out that minorities and women are more likely to recognize cues from the environment as signs of mistreatment because there is a specific stigma associated with their groups and they are aware of it.

In conclusion, many types of discriminative behaviour exist, for example, sexism, ageism, disability discrimination, status as a parent, sexual orientation, sexual harassment, religious discrimination, national origin, race and colour (see Foote & Goodman-Delahunty, 2011). The present study will take into consideration all kinds of discriminative behaviour experienced by employees.

To conclude my literature review, I will briefly explain the main concepts and connect them with each other. Engaging in emotional labour is an important act in customer service employees’ working life due to the nature of their work. Emotional labour becomes significant, especially in stressful customer-employee interactions. Stressful situations can include daily hassles and other stressors at work. Workplace mistreatment is a social stressor and covers an extensive number of different severe and subtle forms of behaviours. One of these forms is customer incivility. Customer incivility is a complicated concept in terms of how one perceives, interprets, experiences, understands, and studies it. In addition, racism and discrimination are the focus of the present study in the subject of customer incivility. All these uncivil behaviours can be associated with impoliteness since it is impolite to, for example, behave in a discriminatory manner.

3 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I introduce the methodological framework of the present study and present the research aims. I also explain the motivations for this piece of research and why and to whom this topic is important. In addition, I present the research questions of the study. There are three questions in total. After the research questions, I discuss the data collection method and some of its limitations. The research is qualitative in nature since I conducted a survey that has more open-ended questions than closed-ended questions. Lastly, I present the data analysis method and what analysis method used in data evaluation.

3.1 Research aims and research questions

The aim of the study is to evaluate and analyse service employees' accounts of customer incivility in terms of racism or discrimination at the workplace in Finland. One of the aims is also to bring these small yet highly meaningful situations to the reader's attention. Since customer incivility has not been studied extensively, there is a need for these types of studies. I believe that practitioners, researchers, employees, executives, and customers can benefit from a better understanding of incivility at the workplace. There is an extensive list of different concepts, ideas, and theories taking place at the same time in the background which can offer new insights and knowledge to this phenomenon. Moreover, researchers, executives, and employees can start to develop different strategies when it comes to customer incivility.

The present study was motivated by personal experiences. People who I know have experienced discrimination and racism at work and I wanted to further research the topic. The present study works toward enhancing researchers', employees', employers' and executives' knowledge by researching the perceptions of the usual targets of customer incivility at the workplace, that is, customer service employees.

There are three specific research questions in the present study. I am interested in uncivil and aggressive customer behaviours and actions that customer service employees experience. Hence, the first research question:

1) What kind of interactions with customers do the employees in the sample bring up as experiences of incivility?

I expect that there will be many kinds of uncivil behaviours experienced at work, for example, calling names, bullying, and verbal aggression (in the frameworks of racism and discrimination) towards the customer service employees. Grandey et al. (2007) report verbal abuse and overt verbal aggression from customers. These included being yelled at, threatened, or rude and impolite treatment (Grandey et al., 2007, p. 63). Moreover, Cortina et al. (2002) found sexual harassment and sexism at work. The latter included, for example, excluding the female employees from conversations. In addition, I expect the participants to mention issues that the present study has not considered at this point.

Many researchers (e.g., Cortina et al., 2001) have claimed that customer incivility is a daily struggle for many since it can be seen as a *daily* hassle at work. Thus, I wanted to gather information about the frequency of customer incivility and based on this information I want to ponder how much of an issue customer incivility is. Hence, the second research question deals with the frequency:

2) How much of an issue is perceived customer incivility according to the accounts of the employees in the sample?

The participants were asked about the frequency of customer incivility that they have experienced. Interestingly, Torres et al. (2017, p. 48) argue that treating others courteously is a virtue, yet there are multiple accounts where customer service employees are treated in a less desirable manner. In addition, Wilson and Holmwall (2013) found that employees experienced customer incivility frequently at work. A six-item subscale was employed in the study by Wilson and Holmwall (2013) which assessed psychological aggression (including name-calling, cursing/swearing, and verbal attacks) from customers. The scale evaluated the frequency of psychological aggression behaviours experienced by participants in the past six months. A seven-point scale was used which ranged from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *frequently* (Wilson & Holmwall, 2013, p. 316). The means of all the items were around 3, thus customer incivility and aggression were experienced somewhat frequently in the sample.

Mugford (2018) and Ben-Zur and Yagil (2005) confirm that customer service employees frequently use some type of coping strategy to survive at work. I am interested in whether employees in the sample utilize any coping strategies, and if yes, what kinds of coping strategies:

3) What kind of coping strategies do employees report to draw on in problematic interactions with customers?

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1980, cited in Lazarus, 1999, p. 199), people tend to use all coping strategies or styles accessible to them in a stressful situation. Thus, I expect that various coping strategies are utilized in this sample. For example, escape-avoidance, positive reappraisal, or distancing.

3.2 Data collection method

The data came from a web-based survey (see Appendix) conducted in a qualitative manner. In a qualitative study, the aim of the analysis is to construct information clearly and coherently out of disorganized material. The survey was pilot tested. The data was collected through different questions concerning customer incivility. The survey assessed several open-ended questions and demographics. The questions concentrated on customer incivility: how the participants would define customer incivility, how often would they experience incivility from customers, what kind of incivility have they experienced themselves, what kind of incivility towards language use have they experienced, in what kinds of situations have they experienced incivility, how did they react when encountering a rude customer, and what kinds of coping strategies do they have. In addition, there were few questions about workplace policies and about the manager's actions if an employee was treated unfairly by a customer.

Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2015, p. 223) clarify the essential purpose of a survey by stating that it is meant for measuring an individual's own perceptions of their values, attitudes, and so on. For example, one can measure an individual's personal opinions with a survey. In addition, the authors (2015) describe that open-ended questions let the respondents tell and explain their experiences, perceptions, and feelings in a more complementary way, and thus are helpful for many researchers (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2015, p. 227). This was the reason why the survey in the present study mainly utilized open-ended questions. Yet, it is good to keep in mind that the aim was not to measure anything quantitatively in the present study.

A survey was utilized as the data collection method because it was the most convenient way of collecting data in the time frame that I had during the Covid-19 situation. In addition, a survey was utilized because, as Denscombe (2014, p. 167) explains, it is convenient from the participants' side since it allows one to work independently in their own time and at their own pace. By conducting a survey, the researcher saves time, money, and materials (Denscombe, 2014, p. 181). According to Denscombe (2014, p. 182), questionnaires or surveys are relatively simple to make, all participants answer the exact same questions, and especially web-based surveys are highly accessible.

There are also many disadvantages to a survey or questionnaire as a data collection method. Consequently, the chosen approach to data collection has limitations since it focuses solely on the accounts of employees and not, for example, organizational records or observational data. When focusing on perceptions, experiences, or accounts of people, one needs to acknowledge that some might remember their bad experiences differently and our memories might become exaggerated. In addition, Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2015, p. 224) introduce multiple researchers who confirm that by using self-reports one needs to take into account that respondents might under- or over-estimate their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. A self-report is a method which uses, for example, polls or questionnaires to ask respondents about their attitudes, behaviours, or perceptions, thus one could use the terms “survey study” and “self-report study” interchangeably in this case. Moreover, Tuomi and Sarajarvi (2009, p. 72) report criticism of surveys and interviews as data collection methods. It is a common acknowledgement that by doing a survey, one needs to take into consideration that it might not attract many respondents, and if it does, the responses might be sententious. In addition to this, surveys typically require a vast number of participants for it to be reliable (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2015, p. 235). The present study had only 13 participants which means that it is not statistically reliable or easily generalizable.

3.2.1 Participants

The participants were randomly selected. The survey was published on my Facebook page where people were able to share it with others. Thirteen participants in total answered the survey. The participants’ age ranged from 19 to 40. All participants identified themselves as females. There were multiple different occupations in the sample: shop assistant, telemarketer, junior manager, fast-food employee, social counsellor, shift manager, social worker, and online marketing specialist (see Table 1.).

Table 1. Research participants

Participants	Occupation	Gender	Age
P1	Shop assistant	Female	23
P2	Shop assistant	Female	40
P3	Shop assistant	Female	25
P4	Telemarketer	Female	24
P5	Junior manager	Female	20
P6	Fast-food employee	Female	19
P7	Social counsellor	Female	28

P8	Shift manager in a restaurant	Female	23
P9	Shop assistant in a cafe	Female	22
P10	Shop assistant	Female	21
P11	Social worker, former fast-food employee	Female	24
P12	Online marketing specialist	Female	27
P13	Shop assistant	Female	21

3.2.2 Participants' language competencies

From 13 participants 12 reported that Finnish was their first language. One participant reported using German as their first language. When asked about the languages used with customers at work, nine participants reported Finnish and English as their work languages and some specified that the main language used was Finnish, yet every now and then English was utilized. One participant reported Finnish, English and Swedish. One participant used only English with customers. One participant used only Swedish in summer 2020. The participants were asked to evaluate their competencies in the languages they used at work. The competence in different languages varied from fair to excellent (on a scale 1 poor – 2 fair – 3 good – 4 very good – 5 excellent) and the mean was 4,1. The first languages and the working languages are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Participants' language competencies

Participants	First language	Working language(s)
P1	Finnish	Finnish, English
P2	Finnish	Finnish, English
P3	Finnish	Finnish, Swedish, English
P4	Finnish	Finnish
P5	Finnish	Finnish, English
P6	Finnish	Finnish, English
P7	Finnish	Finnish, English
P8	Finnish	Finnish, English
P9	Finnish	Swedish (summer job in 2020)
P10	Finnish	Finnish, English
P11	Finnish	Finnish, English
P12	German	English
P13	Finnish	Finnish, English

3.3 Data analysis method

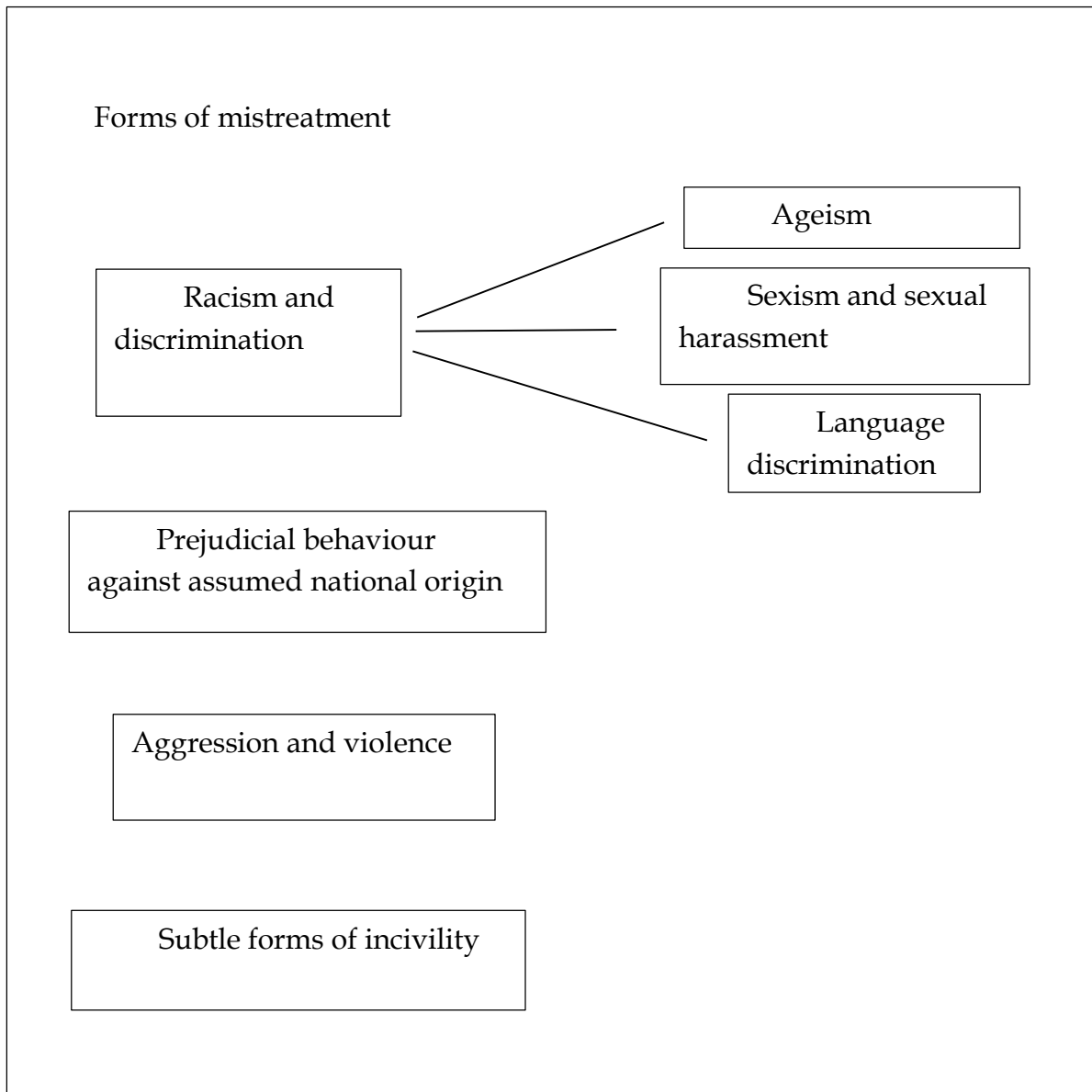
The data analysis method employed in the present study was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method with which researchers can identify implicit and explicit themes within the data (Guest et al., 2012, p. 10). According to Braun and Clarke (2006, cited in Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2), it has been used widely in qualitative research. Thematic analysis can be used for analysing, identifying, organizing, and reporting themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, cited in Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2). Content can be put into groups when coding the data with this method (Guest et al., 2012, p. 66). When identifying themes, researchers can look for certain thematic cues, for example, repetition, indigenous typologies/categories, metaphors or analogies, transitions, linguistic connectors, or silence/missing data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, cited in Guest et al., 2012, p. 66). Thematic analysis was used in the present study because of the flexible nature of the method. It can be adapted to the needs of the researcher and the study (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2). Even though thematic analysis has many advantages, it also has some disadvantages. For example, in this case it is important to mention that the analysis is usually solely data-driven. It does not apply any theories or theoretical concepts as, for example, content analysis does. Because of its flexibility, it can also become a challenge for novice researchers. Nevertheless, as it is a method that can be modified for the needs of a study, I developed a theory-guided thematic analysis approach for this research.

Content analysis uses different varieties of analysing content, thus it is significant to mention these varieties since one of them was utilized in the process of analysis. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, p. 95) explain that there are three different varieties of content analysis. These are *theory-driven* content analysis, *theory-guided* content analysis, and *data-driven* content analysis. Since the present study did not employ any specific theories but utilized theoretical concepts, the analysis method used was *a theory-guided thematic analysis*. Thus, the information comes mainly from the data in which the theory and concepts are attached. This form of analysis is usually utilized to resolve any issues which might appear while using data-driven content analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, p. 96).

Firstly, I got acquainted with the data, I documented thoughts about it, and I started to think the initial codes and themes. After this, I analysed my data by segmenting the responses, discovering and identifying similar themes, straining some themes, and then turned the themes into codes. I separated the content into groups within the questions. As mentioned earlier, there are different ways to search for thematic cues from data in thematic analysis, and the one that I used was *repetition*. Hence, I looked for similar, repetitive responses and created general themes based on those similarities and repetitions. An example that I identified in the data was sexism

and sexual harassment because many participants reported having experienced sexual remarks at work, demeaning behaviour because of the employee's sex, or a customer calling an employee "a whore". Shown in the table below (Table 3.), there are few different forms of mistreatment that the participants reported having experienced. The forms of mistreatment are racism and discrimination, prejudicial behaviour against assumed national origin, aggression and violence, and ambiguous forms of incivility. The chapter "Racism and discrimination" was the only one of these which had three subchapters called ageism, sexism and sexual harassment, and language discrimination. In addition, I took extracts from the survey and presented them in the chapters anonymously.

Table 3. Forms of mistreatment reported in the sample



4 FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the outcome of the analysis. The findings are constructed categorically in relation to theoretical concepts. In addition, I illustrate several extracts from the data. The chapter discusses the different themes and topics present in the survey. First, I try to uncover and understand the participants' accounts of customer incivility and how they define and describe what customer incivility is in their opinions. Second, I discuss the frequency of perceived customer incivility in the sample; how often these specific employees in the service industry experience incivility or aggression from customers and according to these responses, how much of an issue incivility appears to be. Third, I discuss the kind of mistreatment by customers the employees in the sample have experienced at work. Next, I assess if the employees have experienced any mistreatment directed at their language use or language proficiency. After this, I examine the situations in which customer incivility occurs within the sample. Then, the employees' accounts of their reactions to customer incivility are described and analysed. Next, I present the different coping strategies that these employees reported having used when experiencing customer incivility. Lastly, I compare the different policies that their workplaces have against customer incivility and customer aggression.

4.1 Participants' concepts of customer incivility

Participants in the sample were asked to describe and define what customer incivility is according to them. The question in the survey was as follows: "*How would you define uncivil customer behaviour (that is, rude, mean, impolite, mistreating behaviour)?*" The responses were similar in some parts, yet they differed in others. The participants described similar aspects of customer incivility. As shown in the following extracts,

participants approach customer incivility as giving negative feedback to a customer service employee:

Participants	Original response	English translation of the original response ¹
P2	"Kun mennään henkilökohtaisuuksiin."	"When someone goes into personal stuff."
P3	"Jos kommentoidaan jotain työntekijään liittyvää ilkeästi."	"If someone comments maliciously something relating to an employee."
P4	"asiakas - - menee henkilökohtaisuuksiin."	"a customer - - goes into personal stuff."
P10	"ylipätään henkilökohtaisiin asioihin liittyvä negatiivisen palautteen antaminen"	"in general, any negative feedback given related to personal things"

The participants consider it to be rude and impolite if someone (an *unknown* someone) comments on their physical appearance, asks where they live, how old they are, what their whole name is, call them or their family member(s) names, or asks them sexually uncomfortable questions. All of these can be regarded as attacks against an employee's personal life. Along these lines, participants seem to believe that there are some conversation norms when it comes to privacy. I suggest that these participants see negative feedback and personal questions as an intrusion of privacy because the relationship between a customer and an employee is usually professional. Additionally, the feeling of anonymity to some extent (not necessarily knowing each other but seeing each other in a service situation) might lower the threshold of attacking from customers' side since they seem to be the ones in control of the situation. For example, if a customer does not want to see the same customer service employee again, they can simply buy their groceries elsewhere.

Participants described shouting and yelling to be one feature of customer incivility. For example, a loud tone of voice and loudly blaming the customer service

¹ All English translations are my own interpretations of the original responses, thus, someone else might interpret and translate them differently.

employee were aspects of incivility. Speaking in a loud tone of voice is presented in the extracts below:

P1	“Huutaminen”	“Shouting”
P8	“yleinen huono käytös (huutaminen)”	“general bad behaviour (shouting)”
P10	“liiallinen äänenkäyttö”	“excessive use of voice”
P11	“huutaminen”	“shouting”
P12	“For me, uncivil cust. behaviour means shouting”	
P13	“kova ääninen syyttely”	“loud blaming”

As one can see from these extracts, the participants list shouting and a loud tone of voice as characteristics of customer incivility. The reason for this might be that they are assessing their interactions against a certain norm or standard of respectful interaction. From the extracts we can indicate that the participants believe it to be unnecessary to use excessive tone of voice or shout in a service interaction. Speaking in a calm and neutral voice is usually the standard practice, especially, at work where the employees are trying to maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect. When mutual respect is violated, the relationship might change from a professional relationship to a personal relationship.

Participants reported hateful criticising (berating or bashing), criticising in general, and commenting/criticising on looks as features of customer incivility. Moreover, one participant emphasized negative comments or verbal harassment. The extracts below show that berating, criticising in general and criticising the customer employee’s looks are features of customer incivility that these participants in the sample drew on:

P1	“haukkuminen”	“berating”
P5	“Asiakaspalvelijan haukkumista”	“Berating a customer servant about their

	asiakaspalvelutaidoista, työn tekemisestä, nopeudesta yms.”	customer service skills, doing the work, speed etc.
P8	”Haukkuminen, arvostelu”	”Berating, criticising”
P9	”Kun asiakaspalvelijaa haukutaan tai hänen ulkonäköään tms. Kommentoidaan negatiiviseen tai ahdistelemaan sävyyn.”	”When a customer servant is being berated or their looks etc. is commented on in a negative or a harassing way.”
P10	”kaikenlainen haukkuminen”	”any kind of berating”
P11	”Haukkuminen”	”Berating”
P13	”kommentointi ulkonäköön”	”commenting on looks”

Commenting negatively on one’s looks, making irrelevant personal remarks, berating, and criticising are listed by several participants because they seem to believe that this is not courteous or respectful behaviour. There seems to be an issue with power distance since customers might feel that they become superior in customer service interactions because the employee is expected to accept everything. The employees are often expected to accept all kinds of behaviours because of statements such as “the customer is the king” and “the customer is always right”. It almost feels as if a customer service employee is seen as a “safe” punching bag or an easy target for incivility because the customer and employee do not know each other (berating someone that one knows might have a negative effect on their relationship), the employee is often trained to engage in emotional labour (thus, a response back to the customer might be omitted), and the customer can usually disengage quickly from the interaction and situation.

One common feature found among participants was inappropriate use of language towards the customer service employees. This can include, for example, cursing, other inappropriate words and phrases, or even referring to women condescendingly as girls (“tytöttely”). Inappropriate use of language as a feature of customer incivility is illustrated through participants responses:

P4	"Rumasti puhumisen, joka sisältää epäasiallisia sanoja"	"rudely talking which includes inappropriate words"
P5	"jos naisen sanomiin argumentteihin ei uskota ja ruvetaan tytöttelemään."	"if arguments said by women are not believed and one starts calling you a girl"
P7	"Epäasiallinen kielenkäyttö"	"Inappropriate use of language"
P11	"kiroilu"	"cursing"

Inappropriate use of language is reported among a few participants because it seems that they believe this to be disrespectful and demeaning in interactions.

Participants reported belittling as a feature of customer incivility. Either belittling in general or belittling one's competence and expertise. As can be seen from the extracts, belittling one's competence or expertise is considered a feature of customer incivility:

P1	"osaamisen vähättely"	"belittling expertise"
P5	"saan aika ajoin kuulla kommenttia 'Haes tyttö joku osaava paikalle'; vaikka satavarmasti osaan asiani yhtä hyvin kuin mieskollegani."	"I get to hear every now and then the comment 'girl, bring someone competent here' even though I 100% know my job as well as my male colleagues."
P7	"vähättely esim. Osaamisen suhteen"	"belittling e.g. about expertise"
P8	"vähättely"	"belittling"

A customer belittling the employee's competence or expertise is reported by participants because it seems that they see this as a violation of norms of respectful interaction at work. It might be seen as a rude remark to question the employee's expertise.

Violence and threats were features of customer incivility which were reported by the participants. These include several different violent acts, and, for example, the violation of one's personal space in a harmful way. Moreover, aggression and hate were mentioned by one participant. The extracts below show that the participants described violent behaviours as features of customer incivility:

P4	"Tietysti myös oman fyysisen tilan rikkominen esim. tulemalla liian lähelle, ei hyvää tarkoittaen."	"Of course also violating one's own physical space e.g. by coming too close, not with good intentions"
P8	"väkivalta"	"violence"
P9	"asiakaspalvelijaan kohdistetaan vihaa ja aggressiota."	"customer servant is targeted with hate and aggression."
P10	"mikä tahansa väkivalta"	"any kind of violence"
P12	"threatening that is in no way respectful towards the other person and should not be accepted."	

Violence and threatening can be regarded as extremely aggressive behaviours. According to Andersson and Pearson (1999), violent behaviour is not a feature of customer incivility because there is a clear intent to harm the employee. Yet, the participants still recognized it to be a feature of customer incivility.

The participants mentioned similar features of customer incivility as some researchers (e.g., Sliter & Morgan, 2016; Walker et al., 2017; and Sliter et al., 2010). For example, an omission of "thank you", grumbling about slow service, a customer talking on a phone, complaining about a service or a product. As shown in the extracts below, common uncivil behaviours were reported among participants:

P6	"Tiuskiminen, ei kuunnella, puhelimen käyttö, tuhahtelu, turhautuminen"	"Huffing, not listening, using a cell phone, bridleing, getting frustrated"
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P10	"Ei tervehditä, ei kiitetä"	"Not saying hi, not saying thank you"
P13	"väärään 'kohteeseen' purkautuminen/avautuminen jos palvelussa tai tuotteessa on ollut virhe."	"to vent/open up to a 'wrong' target, if there has been an error in the service or product."

According to Andersson and Pearson (1999), customer incivility violates workplace norms. Thus, even though these uncivil behaviours seem small or irrelevant, they can be highly stressful for employees, especially in the long run. Customers might not even consider their behaviours as uncivil because the intent to harm is usually ambiguous. For example, a customer in a hurry might not even realize that they did not greet the cashier.

Bullying, rude and arrogant behaviour, being mean, a judging spirit (in a customer), and a rude tone of voice were also identified as characteristics of customer incivility by several participants. One participant described that the inability to cooperate would also be a feature of customer incivility. In addition, two participants discussed prejudices and ageism. Participants' responses of these specific behaviours are illustrated in the extracts below:

P4	"asiakas - - on ennakkoluuloinen"	"a customer - - is prejudiced"
P7	"ikärasistiset kommentit"	"age racist comments"
P8	"kyvyttömyys yhteistyöstä(ongelma=jatkuu ongelmana, valittaa ns. valittamisen ilosta). 'Asiakas on aina oikeassa' - asenne."	"the inability to cooperate (the problem=continues to be a problem, complains just to complain). 'The customer is always right' - attitude"
P10	"kiusaaminen"	"bullying"
P11	"ilkeily"	"being mean"

P13	“Arvosteleva, ylimielinen olemus (asiakkaassa), t6yke6 puheen s6avy”	“A judging, arrogant spirit (in a customer), rude tone of voice”
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These behaviours might also relate to the power imbalance or power distance between customers and employees. Due to the power imbalance or power distance, customers might think that they are superior to employees. Moreover, for example, ageist comments could be interpreted as demeaning behaviour since young people are expected to know little.

Altogether, the participants responses correspond with research that has been previously done on the topic. Accordingly, based on the participants responses, customer incivility could be defined as inappropriate, demeaning, violent, belittling, and discriminative behaviour. Some of these behaviours do not actually coincide with the “original” understanding of the concept, yet Andersson and Pearson (1999) believe that there is overlap with other forms of mistreatment. I believe there are no wrong answers when it comes to the definitions of customer incivility since it is something that people perceive differently. In addition, it is likely that these participants have experienced similar behaviours when asked to describe and define customer incivility. It is also highly probable that the next chapters that involve the participants’ own experiences will reflect their definitions of customer incivility.

4.2 Frequency of customer incivility

The responses when asked about the frequency of customer incivility were to some extent quite similar among all the participants in the sample. Two participants reported rarely having experienced incivility from customers. Three participants reported having experienced customer incivility monthly, yet not necessarily every week. Two participants responded, “very often” or “quite often”. On the contrary, five participants reported having experienced customer incivility and customer verbal aggression at least every week, randomly a few times per week, weekly and several times a week, almost every week – less or more. One participant did not answer the question about frequency in a way that would give the present study enough information. Thus, 12 out of 13 responses were evaluated. Nonetheless, some of the responses can be interpreted differently. For example, when P3 says “rarely”, does the participant mean once a week, month, or year because, on the contrary, P4 says “a few times a week. *Not so often.*”. I would argue that a few times a week *is* very often already. We cannot really tell what is meant by “rarely”, “occasionally”, or “quite often” because we understand and interpret the concepts of time differently. As shown in the

extracts, the responses do not differ drastically when it comes to the frequency of customer incivility:

P1	"Kuukausittain"	"Monthly"
P2	"Vähintään kerta/viikko"	"At least once/week"
P3	"Harvoin"	"Rarely"
P4	"Satunnaisesti, muutaman kerran viikossa. En kovin usein."	"Randomly, a few times a week. Not so often."
P5	"Viikoittain. Useita kertoja viikossa."	"Weekly. Several times a week."
P6	"N. 1/kk"	"C. 1/mth"
P7	"Toisinaan. Harvemmin nykyisin"	"Occasionally. Rarely nowadays"
P8	"Kaikkia ei voi miellyttää. Lähes joka viikko enemmän tai vähemmän."	"You cannot please everyone. Almost every week more or less."
P9	(Unclear data)	(Unclear data)
P10	"Viikottain"	"Weekly"
P11	"Melko usein"	"Quite often"
P12	"very often"	
P13	"Joitain kertoja kuukaudessa. Ei välttämättä kuitenkaan joka viikko."	"Every now and then in a month. Not necessarily every week."

According to Grandey et al. (2007, p. 63) customer incivility and customer verbal aggression is not a rare experience at work. For example, Harris and Reynold's (2003) study found that 82% of employees at hotels, bars, or restaurants had experienced or witnessed customer incivility or aggression in the past year. Grandey et al. (2004) also found that employees in call-centres informed an average of 7 hateful or rude phone calls from customers in a day. Ringstad (2005) in their interview study found that 40% of the employees in social work had experienced customer verbal abuse in the past year. In addition, Boyd (2002) found that employees in airline and railway work experienced customer verbal abuse at a minimum of once per month. Thus, the reported experiences of the present study seem to support the earlier findings in terms of frequency.

While the present study does not concentrate on quantifiable measurements, it is nonetheless interesting to ponder how much of an issue customer incivility appears to be in the sample. Customer incivility does appear to be a serious issue not only for these specific participants in this sample, but for many other employees who work with customers, patients, or clients. Even one experience can be mentally upsetting and can lead to employee withdrawal. Additionally, customer incivility is not experienced solely in specific contexts or geographic locations since there are studies from the UK, US, Asia, and Europe. Moreover, customer incivility is not limited to specific occupations since one can work at a bank, airport, restaurant, call-centre, shop, or hospital and experience rude behaviour from customers.

4.3 Different forms of mistreatment from customers

There were somewhat different responses regarding the kinds of uncivil behaviours and actions experienced by the participants. Due to this fact, I identified these specific themes and concepts and created categories and subcategories (see Table 2. in the methodological framework). I divided the themes into four main categories; racism and discrimination, prejudicial behaviour against assumed national origin, aggression and violence, and ambiguous forms of incivility. After this, I divided racism and discrimination into smaller units, into subcategories such as ageism, sexism and sexual harassment, and language discrimination. These different themes were found among the 12 participants since one participant responded to have never experienced customer incivility or customer verbal aggression at work.

4.3.1 Racism and discrimination

There were two participant who reported racism in their responses, yet it was not these particular participants who had experienced racism. It is significant to mention

the fact that these experiences of racism might only be these participants' interpretations of the situations. One participant reported that their colleagues had experienced it because of their immigrant background, even though these colleagues speak perfect Finnish. The same participant also reported that these colleagues must experience prejudices constantly and have their expertise underestimated because of their immigrant backgrounds. The other participant generally explained about prejudices against immigrants. Racism was identified as an issue in the sample, yet these extracts below show that the participants had not experienced it themselves:

P4	"Myös ennakkoluuloinen ja lähtökohtaisesti syrjivä asenne esim. maahanmuuttajia kohtaan, muukalaisvihamielisyys (en itse edusta maahanmuuttajaa)."	"Also a prejudicial and per se a discriminative attitude e.g. towards immigrants, xenophobia (I myself don't represent an immigrant)."
P8	"Pääpiirteittäin rasismi on osunut työkavereilleni, joilla on ulkomaalaista taustaa mutta puhuvat täydellistä suomea. Nämä työntekijät saavat olla jatkuvasti ennakkoluulojen alla, ja vähätellään osaamista ammatissaan."	"Mainly racism has hit my coworkers who have foreign background but speak perfect Finnish. These workers might constantly experience prejudice and their expertise is belittled."

The participants see an issue regarding racism from customers at work. Interestingly, even though these participants had not experienced racism themselves, they bring it up in their responses. It seems that employees who are immigrants and employees who have foreign backgrounds might experience racism because of their physical appearance. Although, the participants (P4 and P8) tell us about racism, we cannot truly be sure if these experiences are racist because we do not know the full facts of the situation. They could have misinterpreted the situations as racist because it is oftentimes an easy explanation for people's behaviour.

Race is dealt differently in the studies that discussed customer incivility and racism. Yet, it is worth mentioning that some studies view race as a surface characteristic. For example, Mugford's (2018) study found that there were verbal attacks against Mexican call-centre agents from US citizens, and they discovered many stereotypes and generalizations. On the contrary, Kern and Grandey (2009) did not find any differences between racial minorities or white people in terms of incivility, yet, both groups reported similar (low) levels of incivility. Wheeler et al. (2013) found in a study that focused on nurses' experiences of incivility, there were some responses

where participants reported that patients had rejected the nurse’s care because of the skin colour or accent that the nurse had. Yet, in the study nurses had seen white patients rejecting African American nurses, African American patients rejecting white nurses, and both white and African American patients rejecting internationally educated nurses. Thus, all these studies considered together, one can see that there are some discrepancies.

Discrimination was a commonly experienced form of incivility in the sample whether it was against, for example, one’s age, sex, or language use. Thus, discrimination was the most significant category in the present study since half of the participants reported having experienced discrimination or discriminatory behaviour. The next subcategories discussed that stand out from the responses are ageism, sexism and sexual harassment, and language discrimination.

4.3.1.1 Ageism

Ageism refers to discrimination (some use “racism” interchangeably with discrimination in this case) against someone’s age. There were three participants who reported having experienced ageism because of their young age. Usually, ageism is considered to affect older people, for instance, at work (e.g., Brownell & Kelly, 2013; Nelson, 2002; Gullette, 2017; Walsh et al., 2011; Ward, 2000). Yet, ageism goes both ways since it can also be experienced by younger people (e.g., Westman, 1991). As are shown in the extracts from the data, reverse ageism has been experienced by the participants:

P1	<p>”Osaamistani on kyseenalaistettu. Pyydetty ’vanhempaa’ myyjää paikalle ja puhuttu vieressä seisovalle myyjälle vaikka minä olen palvellut asiakasta.”</p>	<p>”My expertise has been questioned. Asked for an ’older’ sales person to come and talked to a sales person standing next to me even though I have been serving the customer.”</p>
P6	<p>”Ikään kohdistuvaa ’et voi tietää koska oot niin nuori’ -- ’ette te nuoret osaa mitään”</p>	<p>”Age directed ’ you cannot know because you are so young’ -- ’you young people cannot do anything”</p>

P7	"Ikärasismia nuoren ikäni takia"	"Age racism because of my young age"
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When looking at these responses, there seems to be an assumption that older employees are somehow better than young employees. It might be because younger employees may lack experience due to their age. Yet, I would argue that these roles would be different if an older employee were to work in a technology-oriented workplace. In this case, I would argue that a younger employee would be more "appreciated" than an older employee. In addition, a customer talking to another customer service employee while the participant (P1) was serving the customer in question seemed to not have any respect for the younger employee. The customer might assume that this specific employee is inferior to the other employee and there can be multiple reasons for this, for example, the employee's age.

Raymer et al. (2017) found in their study that nearly 30% of young employees had experienced reverse age discrimination. According to Raymer et al. (2017, p. 149), reverse ageism refers to discrimination against younger employees because of their age. Snape and Redman (2003) also found that young employees (under the age of 30) from the UK reported the highest levels of discrimination against one's age. Marchiondo et al.'s (2016) recent study in the US context also found support for these findings. Thus, reverse ageism or ageism against younger employees is not an exceptional or a unique phenomenon today.

4.3.1.2 Sexism and sexual harassment

Sexism refers to discrimination against someone's sex. There were some participants who reported having experienced sexism or criticism because of their pregnant body or criticism against their looks or appearance. Two participants reported the latter (criticism against their looks or appearance). The extracts below show that sexism and criticism of the female body or looks have been experienced by multiple participants within the sample:

P2	"Olen raskaana ja töissä ollessani minun mahaani arvosteltiin ihan surutta..."	"I am pregnant and while at work my stomach was criticised without any remorse..."
P5	"Nuorena naisena koen erittäin epäystävälliseksi sen, jos naisen sanomiin argumentteihin ei uskota ja ruvetaan tytöttelemään. - -	"As a young woman I feel very unfriendly if arguments said by women are not believed and one starts calling you a girl. - - I

	saan aika ajoin kuulla kommenttia 'haes tyttö joku osaava paikalle', vaikka satavarmasti osaan asiani yhtä hyvin kuin mieskollegani"	get to hear every now and then the comment 'girl, bring someone competent here' even though I 100% know my job as well as my male colleagues"
P6	"- - 'miksi täällä on vaan tollasia tietämättömiä tyttöjä' - -"	"- - 'why are there only those kinds of clueless girls here' - -"
P10	"ulkonäön arvostelua"	"criticising looks"
P13	"Olen kokenut arvostelua ulkonäöstä (niin hyvässä kuin pahassa), jopa hyvin yksityiskohtaisestikin esim. ripsienpidennyksistä ja kulmakarvoista on kuulunut hyvinkin ilkeää kommenttia."	"I have experienced criticism about looks (in good and in bad), even very detailed ones e.g. my lash extensions and eyebrows have gotten very mean comments."

Participant P2 reported negative comments on her pregnant female body, participant P10 reported having experienced comments on her looks, and participant P13 reported having been criticised for her looks explicitly. Unwanted comments can be damaging to employees. Sexism was also reported from participants P5 and P6 as they both imply that being a woman refers to being inferior when it comes to men. Women are also called girls in a condescending manner. Customers who do not believe arguments made by women shows that society might still see women as inferior. Belittling one's competence due to their age or sex (as P5 reported) means that the customer might believe that there is a correlation between age and competence, and sex and competence. Even though experience probably makes an employee seem more competent, this might not always be true. Additionally, trivializing is a phenomenon that can be seen in the extract (P5) since the customer seems to think that the employee is incompetent, perhaps due to the employee's age or sex, or both. Hence, the intersectional nature of discrimination is present.

Cortina et al. (2002) had similar results in their study that focused on experiences of interpersonal mistreatment among practising attorneys. Almost 75% of the female attorneys reported experiences of discrimination because of their sex. They found

disrespectful and dishonest behaviours directed at women and women felt more ignored or excluded at work than men. Moreover, Cortina et al. confirm that the participants also reported having been professionally discredited. This includes, for example, implicit or explicit challenges to competence, credibility, or integrity (p. 247) as in the extract from P6 above. Kanter (1993, pp. 238-239) confirms that even though little or no discrimination was reported by successful women, they still felt that they needed to prove themselves and work twice as much as men to succeed. Thus, it is unfortunate that even though women might not experience discrimination at the workplace, they still might feel the need to validate their skills.

Three participants had experienced some type of sexual harassment from customers while at work. Sexual harassment includes different kinds of humiliating or offensive behaviours that relate to someone's sex. For example, suggestions to the employee to have sex with the customer, inappropriate touching, inappropriate (sexual) comments on looks, or sexually offensive gestures. As can be seen in the extracts below, three participants in the sample reported experiences of sexual harassment from customers:

P4	"Myös henkilökohtaisuuksiin meneminen esim kysely omasta osoitteesta tms."	"Also going into personal things e.g. asking about my home address etc."
P9	"ulkonäköäni kommentointiin ahdistelemaan sävyyn."	"my looks were commented in a harassing way."
P11	"Huorittelua, ehdottelua seksiin"	"Calling one a whore, suggesting to have sex"

Sexual harassment at work violates norms. It is highly inappropriate to sexually harass another person, for example, questions about home address (P4), comments on looks (P9), or suggestions to have sex with the customer (P11). These experiences can be shocking (and sometimes even unsafe) to female employees because these sexual remarks usually come out of nowhere and the employee does not expect to be sexually harassed at work. These behaviours are offensive, intimidating, and unlawful.

Aslan and Kozak's (2012, p. 692) study on Turkish hotel employees' experiences of customer deviance (refers to intentional acts from customers that violate norms) found that one of the most experienced and reported behaviours (in terms of customer deviance) was verbal sexual harassment. In addition, Yassour-Borochowitz (2020, p. 2) confirms that many studies (e.g., Good & Cooper, 2014, 2016; Lu-Ming, 2013; Handy,

2006; and Poulston, 2008) validate the fact that sexual harassment from customers is pervasive and female employees experience it frequently at work.

4.3.1.3 Language discrimination

Language discrimination refers to discrimination against one's language use. Ten participants reported that they had not experienced customer incivility directed at the customer service employee's use of language or language proficiency. On the other hand, three participants reported having experienced incivility directed at their use of language or language proficiency. When asked to give at least one concrete example of such a situation, only two participants answered the question. One participant's response was irrelevant to the question and it was not evaluated. As extracts show, language discrimination was also reported in the sample:

P3	<p>"Palvelin ruotsinkielellä, ja en osannut selittää tuotteen toimintaa sujuvasti ruotsiksi. Asiakas ihmetteli, miten olen päässyt töihin asiakaspalveluun kun en ole kaksikielinen"</p>	<p>"I served in Swedish, and I didn't know how to explain a product's functions fluently in Swedish. A customer wondered how have I gotten a job from customer service since I am not bilingual"</p>
P9	<p>"Koska työskentelin ruotsin kielellä, mutta äidinkieleni on suomi, sain välillä kuulla asiakkailta vähättelevää puhetta minua kohtaan. (esim. Jos en heti ymmärtänyt ruotsia ja kysyin kohteliaasti, että voisitteko vielä toistaa tilauksen, sain takaisin huutoa, kuinka huono asiakaspalvelija olen.)"</p> <p>"Sain myös kommenttia ruotsalaisilta siitä, että käytin suomenruotsia."</p>	<p>"Because I worked in Swedish but my mother tongue is Finnish, I sometimes got to hear belittling talk about me (e.g. if I did not at first understand Swedish and I politely asked if you could once again repeat the order, I was shouted back how bad of a customer servant I am)."</p> <p>"I also got comments from Swedes about my use of Finnish Swedish."</p>

Language discrimination was experienced by only two participants (P3 and P9) in the sample. The working languages were Swedish and both participants identified Finnish as their first language. The participant P3 experienced impolite behaviour directed at her use of language since she was not able to fully explain how a product worked and was questioned immediately about why she had gotten a service job when she is not bilingual. Here we can see some type of power distancing in the

situation since the assumed Finnish Swede seems to expect every customer service employee to be bilingual as assumably the customer was, too. In addition, the participant P9 experienced similar behaviours to P3. P9 experienced belittling because of her use of Swedish. Moreover, Swedish customers thought negatively about the fact that the employee used Finnish Swedish. These behaviours seem to relate to the concepts of in-group and out-group, where the out-group person (P3 and P9) is regarded as inferior.

4.3.2 Prejudicial behaviour against assumed national origin

One participant reported having experienced categorization into different assumed nationalities by customers. I would argue that this is prejudiced behaviour because the customer service employee was stigmatized to specific nationalities. As shown in the extract, the participant in the sample reported having experienced stigmatizing:

P13	“Minut on myös leimattu ulkomaalaiseksi ainoastaan nimeni perusteella.”	“I have been stigmatized as a foreigner according to my name.”
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Participant P13 reported different kind of behaviour from customers than any other participant in the sample. The behaviour of stigmatizing someone as a foreigner merely because of their name can be interpreted as prejudiced behaviour. The behaviour can come across as demeaning since the customer might try to make themselves (as a Finnish person) look superior to the employee. It seems as if some people might think that other nationalities or countries are inferior to Finland. Mistreatment can also be intersectional as, in this case, a young woman with a foreign sounding name was deemed a foreigner.

4.3.3 Aggression and violence

Five participants reported experiences of violence, violent threats, or violent behaviour from customers at work. These include, for example, death threats, threatening to come and find the employee (a voice-to-voice interaction), attacking the employee, or even throwing objects at the employee. Violence and violent threats reported from the participants in the sample are illustrated in the extracts below:

P7	“tappouhkauksia”	“death threats”
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P8	"Itse olen saanut mm. Viinilasista päin näköä"	I myself have gotten among other things a hit from a wine glass"
P10	"kassalla ollessa rahojen heittäilyä"	"while at the cash register, money throwing"
P11	"Tappouhkauksia, uhkailua, päällekyymistä"	"death threats, threatening, attacking"
P12	"I experienced actual threats that they will look for me and god knows what they tried to tell with that."	

Physical violence is abusive and harmful behaviour. Several of the participants in the sample have experienced either violence or death threats. Participants P7 and P11 (similar response to P12) reported death threats in the sample. The participant P10 reported having experienced customers throwing money at them while working at the cash register.

Edwards and Buckley (2016) found that in the UK context, 22% of violent crimes perpetrated by customers were experienced at work. Interestingly, they argued that, for example, the employee's gender and age may influence the incidents of work-related violence. Thus, my sample supports the findings that violence and violent threats are not unusual at work in the Finnish context either.

Nine participants in total reported experiences of aggression or aggressive behaviour from customers at work. This includes, for example, verbal insults, cursing, shouting, raging, berating, or other mean behaviours. As shown in the extracts below, quite many of the participants in the sample had experienced aggression and aggressive behaviour from customers:

P3	"Kerran asiakas haukkui minua tuotteen laadusta, mutta aika harvoin on kohdeltu huonosti."	"Once a customer berated me about the quality of a product but very seldomly I have been treated poorly"
P4	"Rumasti sanomista, esim ilkeiden sanojen sanominen, kiroilu."	"Talking rudely, e.g. saying mean words, cursing"

P5	"Asiakkaat huutavat, raivoavat ja haukkuvat asiakaspalvelijaa hyvin usein."	"Customers shout, rage and berate the customer servant very often."
P7	"epäasiallista kielenkäyttöä - - pahan puhuminen"	"inappropriate use of language - - talking bad things"
P8	"Itse olen saanut - - kuulla kuinka p*ska asiakaspalvelija olen (en myynyt alkoholia alaikäiselle pojalle joka oli isänsä seurassa), työni ei ole oikea, en anna ruokaa ilmaiseksi tai puoleen hintaan jollekin jolla ei ole varaa sitä ostaa=olen empatiakyvytön."	"I myself have heard how sh*tty customer servant I am (I didn't sell alcohol for an under-aged boy who was with his father) my job isn't real, I won't give food for free or half price to someone who cannot afford to buy it=I lack empathy"
P10	"Huutamista, tyhmäksi haukkumista"	"Shouting, calling me stupid"
P11	"haukkumista, kiroilua (pikaruoka-ala) - - haukkumista, ilkeilyä (sosiaaliala)"	"berating, cursing (fast food work) - - berating, being mean (social work)"
P12	"verbal insults"	
P13	"Inhimilliset virheet mitkä tapahtuvat esimerkiksi minun kohdallani isommassa järjestelmässä, niin tästä virheestä syyttely, arvostelu ja haukkuminen."	"Humane mistakes which happen for example in my case in the bigger system, so blaming, judging and berating me about this mistake."

Still, I would argue that the most important factor in the responses is the power distance or the power imbalance between the customers and employees.

Participant P3 above gives an example of a situation where incivility is not targeted directly at the customer service employee. As mentioned earlier, Walker et al. (2017, p. 165) found that incivility can be distinguished between non-targeted and targeted incivility. Non-targeted incivility does not have a target, thus a customer can act uncivilly without targeting the employee (Walker et al., 2017, p. 165). For example,

“this product is garbage” is non-targeted incivility. Thus, extract from P3 is also non-targeted incivility since the employee was not the target of the incivility.

4.3.4 Ambiguous forms of incivility

One participant reported having experienced behaviours that can be categorized as uncivil since the customer’s intent to harm the customer service employee is highly ambiguous. Thus, one cannot truly recognize whether this small, yet rude behaviour is intentional or unintentional. These kinds of behaviours can be, for example, omission of “thank you” or “hi” or talking on a phone. As shown in the extract from the data, one participant in the sample reported ambiguous uncivil behaviour:

P10	“puuttuneet kiitokset ja tervehdykset”	“the missing thanks and hellos”
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These small uncivil acts violate social norms since the customer is expected to greet and thank the customer service employee who serves them. Employees might not take these personally, yet research shows that continually receiving these kinds of small uncivil behaviours can actually build up and be stressful for employees. It can be rather frustrating to the employee because they expect the same polite behaviour back from customers.

According to Sliter et al. (2010) these are highly common uncivil behaviours by customers and might happen daily without employees even noticing. The intent to harm is ambiguous, thus the customer might not mean to be evil or disrespectful, yet they are perceived rude.

4.4 Situations where participants experience incivility

The responses varied among the participants in the sample regarding the question where and in what situations they experience incivility. Nine participants out of 13 responded to the question. Some answered in a more general manner and some gave more detailed examples of the situations. A few participants reported having experienced customer incivility mostly in customer service situations. I assume that every single one of these situations has happened in a customer service context because the participants are customer service employees. Some reported specific examples of the situations and some participants reported to understand the customer’s perspective (both discussed further below).

Two participants reported having experienced incivility while working in call-centres. This tells us that a voice-to-voice interaction occurred, whereas all the other participants reported incivility in face-to-face situations. There is a slight difference in these interactions since nonverbal behaviours (e.g., visual cues or body language) are not present in voice-to-voice interactions.

Interestingly, three participants brought up customers' points of view when they explained the situations where customer incivility occurred. The participants responded in a way that seemed as if this participant understood the customer's point of view. As one can see in the extracts below, the participants approach customer incivility from the customer's perspective:

P5	<p>"Jokainen asiakaspalvelija tekee työssään virheitä. Usein huonoa kohtelua saa juuri tekemistään virheistä. Tottakai ymmärrän turhautumisen jos asiakaspalvelija on mokannut, mutta usein asiakkailla tällaisessa tilanteessa käytös menee aivan liian radikaaliksi. Huonekalualalla kaikki myöhästymiset, virheet yms. eivät ole meidän virheitämme, mutta aina me saamme ne lokat niskaamme."</p>	<p>"Every customer servant makes mistakes in their job. Usually you get bad treatment for the mistakes you make. Of course I understand the frustration if a customer servant has screwed up but often the behaviour from customers becomes too radical. In the furniture industry every delay, mistake etc. are not our mistakes but it is always us who get the dirt on our necks."</p>
P10	<p>"Kun en ole osannut vastata asiakkaan kysymykseen, kun olen ollut asiakkaan mielestä liian hidas, kun olen ollut huomaamattani asiakkaan tiellä."</p>	<p>"When I haven't been able to answer the customer's question, when I have been too slow according to the customer, when I have been on the customer's way without even noticing."</p>
P11	<p>"Lähinnä silloin, kun asiakas kokee, että häntä kohdeltu väärin. (Sekä pikaruoka-ala että sosiaaliala)."</p>	<p>"Mostly when a customer feels that they have been treated wrongly. (Also fast food work and social work)."</p>

These extracts from participants (P5, P10, and P11) show that they understand where the customer is coming from to an extent. They acknowledge that the customer's bad behaviour can stem from frustration if the employee has made a mistake, or the employee is somehow treating the customer wrongly.

Two participants responded that sometimes customers are rude because of no particular reason. One participant also responded that sometimes customers have bad days, and they pour everything onto customer service employees. As shown in the extracts below, participants in the sample reported that sometimes customers have no reason to behave uncivilly, or customers are having a bad day hence the uncivil behaviour:

P7	"Ihmisten kanssa työskennellessä toisinaan tulee vastaan tilanteita, kun jollain on esim. Huono päivä"	"Working with people from time to time situations arise when someone has e.g. a bad day"
P10	"Joskus asiakas tulee purkamaan omaa harmistusta ja pahaa oloa muuten vaan, vaikka teen omia töitäni, eikä asia kuulu minulle."	"Sometimes a customer comes and vents their own annoyance and bad feelings for no reason, even though I am doing my own tasks and it isn't my business."
P11	"Myös joskus ihan muuten vain."	"Also sometimes for no reason."

These show that occasionally the customer has their own issues and acts or behaves uncivilly towards others. Usually, the target is one who is the easiest, that is, a customer service employee since they cannot fight back. The employee also needs to interact with customers and cannot simply ignore them. These situations can be frustrating for the employees because they usually have not caused the uncivil behaviour.

4.5 Coping strategies against customer incivility

The coping strategies against customer incivility varied highly among the participants in the specific sample. Ten of the participants had a coping strategy and three of the participants did not to have any specific strategies for coping from incivility. Thus, ten participants in total reported their coping strategies which are examined further below. Some participants shared similar strategies, and some had developed their own and unique strategies for uncivil customers.

Three participants responded that one of their coping strategies was to discuss with their colleagues about what happened. In addition, discussing in a team was also

brought up by one participant. As shown in the extracts below, three participants in the sample reported discussing these situations with their colleagues:

P1	"Puhun tapahtuneesta työkavereiden kanssa."	"I talk about what happened with coworkers"
P5	"Jos tapahtuu jotain mielestäni todella töykeää, keskustelen aiheesta kollegoideni kanssa."	"If something happens, that is in my opinion very rude, I discuss it with my colleagues."
P11	"Tiimin kanssa asian purkaminen"	"Unraveling it with our team"

From these extracts one can see that other employees' support matters. For example, Lazarus (1999, p. 111) explains that one way of coping is seeking social support. It seems to be easier to deal with uncivil customers when you can discuss the situations with a person who understands where you are coming from. Thus, support from colleagues gives employees strength to cope at work.

Two participants responded that calling a third party (or threatening to call a third party), for example, a security guard, is sometimes inevitable. In a such case, the employee does not have to deal with the uncivil customer alone. As is illustrated in the extracts below, two participants reported that their coping strategies include calling for a third party to break up the situation:

P2	"Sanon, että jos ei käyttäytyminen muutu niin pyydän vartijan paikalle."	"I say that if the behaviour does not change I will ask a security guard to come over."
P8	"Jos asiakas ei ole halukas sopimaan, tilanne näyttää aggressiiviselta, kutsumme paikalle kauppakeskuksen vartijat, jotka poistavat asiakkaan tiloistamme, mahdollisesti vielä pyytävät maksamaan laskunkin."	"If a customer is not willing to make amends, the situation looks aggressive, we call the shopping mall guards who remove the customer from our property, also possibly ask them to pay the bill."

This kind of coping strategy can be referred to as "planful problem solving" (Lazarus, 1999, p. 115). It means that the employee has a plan (in this case, to call a

guard) and follows it. This would also suggest a positive outcome since the employee is not alone in the situation and does not have to handle it anymore.

Several participants reported that staying positive and calm up to a certain point and smiling are their coping strategies against customer incivility. One participant also mentioned that one should not be provoked by uncivil customers. On the other hand, one participant rationalizes the actions and behaviour by uncivil customers. They reported that their coping strategy was to understand that this customer was not actually trying to attack their personal matters. In the sample, the participants reported to display positive emotions and to rationalize the situation. These coping strategies are demonstrated in the extracts below:

P5	"Usein ajattelen, ettei asiakas kaikkea sanomaansa kohdistanut minuun mitenkään henkilökohtaisesti, sillä ei asiakas minua tunne."	"Usually I think that the customer is not directing everything they say at me in a personal way because the customer doesn't know me."
P6	"Aspahymy"	"Customer service smile"
P7	"On tärkeää pysyä rauhallisena eikä provosoitua"	"It is important to stay calm and not be provoked"
P9	"Hymyilen vain"	"I just smile"
P10	"Yritän olla vielä ystävällisempi kuin normaalisti"	"I try to be even friendlier than normal"
P12	"Positive language, stay calm, and use the trick mentioned above" (the trick)="first i [sic] listen and say nothing for a few seconds so the customer notices what he just said. Then I [sic] answer in a calm voice and try to fix his problems [sic]. If the customer does not listen nor tries to find a solution with me I give 3 warnings before I	

	tell him that this is the end of this conversation.”	
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From these extracts one can notice that all the participants in the sample seem to use emotional labour as a coping strategy. In the work of Lazarus (1999, p. 115) there were two plausible coping strategies which would reflect these behaviours from employees in the sample; distancing with P5 (trying not to take the situation too seriously), self-controlling with P6, P7, P9, P10, and P12 (trying to keep their feelings to themselves). Thus, these employees understand that this type of suppression of real feelings is often required from them when they are at work.

One participant responded that they have a coping strategy where they pinch themselves so that they will not start crying. Thus, this participant has a rather physical strategy to distract their mind with a small pain. In addition, one participant reported to bite their tooth which can be taken either literally as in squeezing your teeth together to suppress emotions or idiomatically as in bite the bullet. Both are presented in the extracts:

P9	”Puristan rystysiä yhteen tai nipistän itseäni, jos tuntuu että purskahdan itkuun.”	”I squeeze my knuckles together or pinch myself if I feel like I am about to burst into tears.”
P10	”Yleensä puren hammasta”	Literal translation: “Usually I bite my tooth” Idiomatic translation: “Usually I bite the bullet”

These extracts also show that the participants engage in emotional labour. Yet, there seems to be a physical aspect to emotional labour. The suppression of negative feelings or emotions (usually anger) turned physical pain can mean that the employee does not have any other way of dealing with the emotions in such a situation. This can be described as a release and doing something physical usually helps, thus, when the employee cannot, for example, go for a run, they might pinch themselves, squeeze their knuckles together, or bite their teeth together. Thus, distracting oneself from the actual emotion (anger) by turning it into another emotion or feeling (pain) is a coping strategy used in these extracts above.

Two participants in the sample reported listening to the customer up to a certain point and if the customer’s behaviour becomes extreme, then these participants

reported to “give back”. Employees are not punching bags; the customer cannot just say whatever they feel or want to customer service employees. As is shown in the extracts below, the participants in the sample reported to listen up to a certain point:

P11	<p>”Nollatoleranssi</p> <p>Kuuntelu tiettyyn pisteeseen asti”</p>	<p>”Zero tolerance</p> <p>Listening up to a certain point”</p>
P13	<p>”Olen ajatellut, että jos ja kun eteeni tulee hyökkävää ja ilkeää asiakaskohtaamista sanon asiat suoraan, mutta pyrin pitämään asiallisen ja ammattimaisen linjan. Toisinaan taas jos asiakas on todella törkeä/ilkeä/rasistinen, niin siihen voi vastata kyllä kaunistelematta.”</p>	<p>”I have thought that if and when I experience hostile and mean customer encounters I say things directly but I try to maintain an appropriate and professional line. On the other hand if a customer is extremely rude/nasty/racist then you can answer without sugar coating it.”</p>

In these extracts we can notice that the coping strategy is confrontive coping (Lazarus, 1999, p. 115). This means that the person is standing their ground and fighting back. It seems that these actions by employees may happen when customer incivility becomes extreme. In addition, expressing anger right back at the customer is also considered a feature in confrontational coping strategy. In the study by Wheeler et al. (2013), confrontation was also reported by the nurses when they experienced uncivil patients.

4.6 Workplace policies against customer incivility

The participants in the sample were asked about their workplace policies against customer incivility and how their workplace (e.g., the manager) deals with customers who are uncivil towards the customer service employees. 11 participants in total answered these questions. The responses were to some extent similar with each other.

Four participants answered in a similar way. They brought up that there is a zero-tolerance policy up to a certain point towards uncivil customers. As is also shown in the extracts below, the participants in the sample reported that customer incivility is not accepted nor tolerated at their workplaces:

P2	"Nollatoleranssi. Ei tarvitse, eikä pidä hyväksyä"	"Zero tolerance. You don't need to or have to accept it."
P4	"Työpaikka ei suvaitse sitä, se on kirjattu yrityksen strategian arvoihin tms."	"Workplace does not tolerate it, it has been written to the strategy's values of the company"
P8	"Nollatoleranssi."	"Zero tolerance"
P11	"Nollatoleranssi tiettyyn pisteeseen asti"	"Zero tolerance up to a certain point"

Customer incivility should not be accepted in any form. It seems that there is an understanding in these workplaces that employees are not the customers' punching bags. In addition, zero tolerance can be seen as a positive workplace policy towards customer incivility since this way the customers might not continue their behaviour in other places either or in the specific place where their behaviour was stopped or intervened.

One participant in the sample reported that customer incivility is something that is not taken seriously at the workplace since the workplace does not want to necessarily comment on these incidents or experiences of incivility. Yet, this might also be solely one incident where incivility was not taken seriously. As seen in the extract below, the participant in the sample reported that incivility is not intervened at work:

P9	"Siihen ei otettu kantaa, vaikka kerroin esim ahdistelevista asiakkaista."	"It was not commented on even though I told about e.g. harassing customers."
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This is usually not how customer incivility should be handled at work. There could be consequences if incivility is not taken seriously since some researchers discuss that, for example, absenteeism (Sliter & Jones, 2017), emotional exhaustion (Grandey et al., 2007), and burnouts (Sliter & Jones, 2017) are positively related to customer incivility. Thus, if customer incivility is not considered an issue when an employee reports an incident, it might lower the employee's work motivation or worse, it can make the employee feel that customer incivility is normal and accepted.

Two participants had similar responses in the sample. One of the participants reported that there is a common statement which is employed (“the customer is always right”) and this is the rule they ought to obey until the customer attacks their personalities or personal characteristics. The other participant reported that they try to maintain a professional line, yet everything is not accepted or tolerated from customers. As can be seen from the extracts below, participants in the sample reported that their policies in the workplaces rely on the typical statements in customer industry (“the customer is always right”) up to a certain point:

P10	”Asiakas on aina oikeassa’ siihen asti kun mennään henkilökohtaisuuksiin, sitä ei tarvitse sietää.”	””The customer is always right’ until they go into personal things, that we don’t have to tolerate.”
P13	”Pyritään pitämään asialinja, mutta kaikkea roskaa ei meilläkään tarvitse kestää. Eli jos asiat menee täysin hävyttömiksi voi ’antaa samalla mitalla’ ja sanoa/vastata täysin suoraan.”	”We try to maintain a specific line of professionalism but even we don’t have to tolerate every rubbish. So if things go completely obscene you can ‘return the same favour’ and say/respond completely straight.”

Statements such as “the customer is always right” give customers the impression that they can do and say whatever they want to a customer service employee. Yet, this is not the case and employees can defend themselves if they need to.

There were few participants in the sample with somewhat varying responses. Participant P5 reported that peer support is their way of dealing with uncivil customers. Participant P6, on the other hand, reported that their executive might say something to the customer if they are present in the situation. Participant P7 then reported that everything is written down and they go through these situations with the customer. These rather varying extracts from the sample are shown below:

P5	”Vertaistuki. Etämyynti (tässä tapauksessa verkkokauppa) toimii asiakaspalvelutilanteissa hieman erilailla. Me emme voi keskustella asiakkaan kanssa asiasta vaan käymme sen keskenämme läpi.”	”Peer support. E-commerce (in this case a webstore) works slightly differently in customer service situations. We cannot discuss it with the customer but we discuss it ourselves.”
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P6	"Päällikkö saattaa huomauttaa asiasta mikäli näkee."	"Executive might point out the thing if they see it."
P7	"Kaikki kirjataan ylös. Asiat käydään aina läpi asiakkaan kanssa"	"Everything is written down. The situations are talked through with the customer"

From these extracts one can see that there are different ways for dealing with customer incivility. Participant P5 does not discuss the situations with customers because they sell products online, thus there is no face-to-face interaction between the customer and the employee. Yet, it is a good policy to discuss these incidents at work with your colleagues and/or manager. Participant P6 reports that their executive might point it out to the customer if they are witnessing the situation. Thus, the incidents are not fully discussed. Participant P7 reported that every incident is written down and discussed with the customer. This seems like a working solution since the workplace and the customer both engage in the situation.

Participants' responses in the data varied when asked about the management of customer incivility. Some said that every incident is examined one by one, manager intervenes, one needs to learn how to tolerate it, manager gives support and listens, and manager also reminds the employees that it is not their fault. One participant did not answer the question as it should have been answered (they answered how they themselves deal with incivility, not the workplace), thus this participant's response was not included in the extracts. As shown in these extracts, there were many ways in which the workplace (e.g., the manager) intervened in the situations where employees experienced customer incivility:

P2	"Käsitellään jokainen tapaus yksitellen."	"Every incident is handled one by one."
P4	"Se on sen verran yleistä, että sitä pitää oppia sietämään ja ei saa ottaa henkilökohtaisesti. Kuitenkin liiallisuuksiin mennessä puhelun voi lopettaa, mutta mukaan ei saa mennä eli tulee aina olla ystävällinen. Jos huutaa asiakkaalle takaisin, voi tulla potkut."	"It is very common that you need to learn to tolerate it and you cannot take it personally. Yet, if it is too much you can hang up the phone, but you cannot join it so you always need to be friendly. If you yell back at a customer, you might get fired."

P5	"Antamalla tukea ja keskusteluapua."	"By giving support and discussing if needed."
P6	"Muistuttaa ettei vika ole minussa"	"Reminds that the fault is not in me"
P7	"Puuttuu tarvittavilla tavoilla. Osallistuu myös tarvittaessa tilanteen läpikäyntiin"	"Intervenes in any way. Takes also part if needed with the review of the situation"
P9	"Sama vastaus kuin ylempänä." "Siihen ei otettu kantaa, vaikka kerroin esim ahdistelevista asiakkaista."	"The same answer as above" "It was not commented on even though I told about e.g. harassing customers."
P10	"Tsemppaa työntekijöitä, asiakkaalle ei usein sanota mitään."	"Encourages employees, often don't say anything to the customer"
P11	"Hyvin"	"Well"
P13	"Esimiehenikin on paljon kokenut ja nähnyt, joten yhdessä voidaan tilanteista keskustella ja käydä läpi."	"My manager has also experienced and seen a lot, so together we can talk about the situations and go through them."

Management should make sure that the employees feel safe and well at work. From these extracts one can say that most of these managers are trying to intervene when it comes to incivility from customers at the workplace. Koczyński and Evans (2013, p. 779) found in their research that the actions coming from management worked in a way that gave legitimacy to customer incivility. This seems to be the case in the workplace of participant P9. When customer incivility is not prevented in any way in the workplace, one allows it to happen and implicitly accepts it. Thus, there should be, for example, training programs (provided by managers) which would help employees to handle these uncivil customers and would help them find different ways to resolve their emotions and feelings.

5 DISCUSSION

In this chapter I return to my three research questions, reflect on the main findings in previous research, and indicate how they relate to the literature review. In addition, I discuss some significant notions of customer incivility in the data. I evaluate the importance and relevance of my findings. I will also evaluate whether my expectations were correct or supported.

The purpose of the present study was to examine customer service employees' perceptions of customer incivility, especially from the viewpoint of racism and discrimination. The approach was qualitative, and a web-based survey was conducted. There were three research questions in the study which were the following: 1) What kind of interactions with customers do the employees in the sample bring up as experiences of incivility?, 2) How much of an issue is perceived customer incivility according to the accounts of the employees in the sample?, and 3) What kind of coping strategies do the employees report to draw on in problematic interactions with customers? The responses varied in some of the questions and some responses were similar with each other, yet the responses supported previous research.

The forms of customer incivility that the participants had experienced were grouped into four different categories. These were racism and discrimination, prejudicial behaviour against assumed national origin, aggression and violence, and ambiguous forms of incivility. Several participants reported to have experienced discrimination at work. More precisely, ageism, sexism and sexual harassment, and language discrimination were found in the present study. All of these were found in previous research as well. For example, sexism and sexual harassment were found by Cortina et al. (2002) in their study on practising attorneys, and reverse ageism was found by Raymer et al. (2017) in their study where they examined Millennials, Xers and Boomers who worked in non-profit and human service sectors. Aggression and aggressive behaviours were discussed and found in multiple studies, for example, Glomb (2002), Grandey et al. (2004), and LeBlanc and Kelloway (2002). Violence was

found by Edwards and Buckley (2016) in the UK context. Moreover, there were some original and perhaps even unique findings in the present study. These were language discrimination by customers at work and prejudicial behaviours against national origin due to a customer service employee's name. These were not found in any studies examined in the present study.

I expected to find many forms of incivility, for example, bullying, name-calling, and verbal aggression. This expectation was correct and supported since the participants experienced many forms of incivility, for example, objects thrown at the employee, calling names, questioning expertise, verbal insults, omissions of "hi" and "thank you", and so on. In addition, I anticipated to find many different forms of discrimination, for example, discrimination against age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, race and colour, and national origin. The expectation was somewhat correct since I did find three different forms of discrimination. In addition, I expected to find foreign accent discrimination among some of the participants in the sample but the participants did not report anything related to this. Yet, as already mentioned, I did find language discrimination and I would argue that there were similar features in the extracts which could have been perhaps categorized as foreign accent discrimination as well. Additionally, there was one participant who used English as their only working language but, interestingly, this participant did not draw on any experiences where their language use had played a significant role in terms of customer incivility.

An interesting finding in the present study was that racism was not experienced by any participants in the sample. The present study focused on, especially racism and it was expected to be voiced more. Yet, it is significant to point out that two participants reported that their colleagues had experienced racism, thus it would appear to be an issue. Hence, there was a null finding regarding racism in customer incivility at work in this specific sample.

The frequency of customer incivility in the specific sample varied to some extent. Many participants in this sample reported having experienced customer incivility monthly. Some reported experiencing it weekly. Only a few reported having experienced customer incivility rarely or occasionally. The findings support that customer incivility is not a rare experience, for example, Korczynski and Evan (2013) reported a high frequency of customer incivility in the service industry. I imagined the responses to vary because there were some discrepancies between what is the expected behaviour and what the actual behaviour is. Thus, my expectation was somewhat incorrect since the participants in the sample reported experiencing incivility quite often. Additionally, I pondered whether customer incivility would be an issue, and how much of an issue it would appear to be. From the responses I argued that it is a major problem for customer service employees since the participants had

experienced severe forms of incivility at work. It was also experienced rather often among the participants in the sample and in previous studies which strengthened my conclusion.

Ten out of thirteen participants reported drawing on specific coping strategies. The participants in the sample utilized multiple coping strategies: seeking social support, planful problem solving, distancing, self-controlling, distracting oneself from the actual emotion, and confronting. In the study by Wheeler et al. (2013), the nurses reported different kinds of coping strategies and one of them was also used in the sample of the present study. This coping strategy was confronting. I expected that the coping strategies from the study by Wheeler et al. (2013) would also be used in the sample of this study, yet it appears that only one strategy was the same in both studies. In addition, I assumed that there would be multiple different coping strategies among the participants. The findings support this assumption since there were six coping strategies employed by the participants in the sample.

Even though the sample size was small, the findings of the present study are important and relevant. The findings shed light on customer incivility in the customer service industry. According to the results of the study, customer incivility can be seen as an issue, and therefore should be addressed and researched further. The present study brings important findings to the field of communication that is customer incivility in the context of Finland. In addition, research becomes relevant and important if the reader learns something from it. This can include, for example, acknowledging that customer incivility is a problem that many employees experience daily and that it can be highly stressful, annoying, emotionally and physically exhausting, and even sometimes unsafe for customer service employees. In addition, if someone who reads this piece of research realizes that they, as a customer, need to change or improve their behaviour towards customer service employees, I would say that the present study is a success.

6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I introduce the limitations of the present study. I also criticize the research; what could have been done differently or better. I also discuss where I succeeded in while doing the research. In addition to limitations and criticism, I discuss the contributions; where do the findings contribute and what do they mean, to whom is this present study significant and to whom will it be beneficial to in the future. Moreover, I present the bigger picture of the present study and reflect on some notions for future research.

There were multiple limitations in the present study. Since the sample size was small, one cannot make any generalizations from it beyond this sample. A broader range of different customer service employees could have given the study more validity and reliability. Moreover, a broader range of participants in general could have also given me more data to work with. Furthermore, as was mentioned already in the chapter “Methodological framework”, the data collection method (a questionnaire) had its limitations. Interviews, observations, or organizational records would have been more useful and reliable in this case since they would have given me more to work with. It also needs to be recognized that the present study employed self-reports (i.e., the participants reported their responses by themselves). Self-reports can sometimes be exaggerated, and participants might not reveal everything about the subject, for example, if they have experienced something embarrassing, it might not be reported. The recruitment method of the participants (posting the questionnaire on Facebook) may have resulted in biased responses. For example, the age range of the sample in the present study may have been biased since many young people use social media more frequently compared to older generations (Sliter & Jones, 2016, p. 217). Thus, I would remind the reader that the findings in the present study ought to be interpreted with caution.

There is also something that could have been done differently in the present study. For example, the questions in the questionnaire could have been formed

differently since some participants did not answer in an assumed way (e.g., when asked how *often* they experience customer incivility, one participant answered what *kind of* customer incivility they had experienced). In addition, the questions were created in a rush which means that they were not fully thought through. Other criticism of the present study could be the fact that customer incivility as a concept was highly new to me, thus I quickly needed to get acquainted with the concept. Furthermore, it was difficult to translate the concept into Finnish since there was not an already existing translation for it. Thus, I feel that this is the reason participants' responses were a surprise to me. I did not expect the responses that I got.

Nevertheless, I feel that I succeeded in gathering rather rewarding responses from the questionnaire to some extent. In addition, the literature review provided quite an extensive list of previous research conducted in the context of customer incivility. Thus, I would argue these to be considered the advantages of the present study.

The present study contributes valuable information to the field of organizational communication. Even though the sample size was small, it can be considered a starting point for something substantial for the future. I would argue that practitioners, researchers, managers, employees, and customers (which refers to everyone actually) would benefit from my research. Researchers could develop future research based on this study. Practitioners, managers, and employees could develop training programs together since some employees might feel that they do not have any support from their managers or workplaces when it comes to uncivil customers. For example, training customer service skills through a training program could positively influence the employee and this way they could be prepared to face customer incivility.

There is limited research, according to Kern and Grandey (2009), when it comes to race in organizational settings. Thus, this could be an interesting topic to research much further. For example, it would be fascinating to analyse interactions where race is made relevant by the customer with the method of conversation analysis. Moreover, future research could investigate customer incivility in different cultural contexts. I, personally, do not believe that culture (the way that these researchers define it) would be an important factor when it comes to incivility since everyone, in fact, is an individual. Yet, Walker et al. (2017, p. 176) argue that their study of customer verbal aggression and employee incivility should be replicated in different cultural contexts. Furthermore, text-based interactions could be investigated further since there is already existing research on face-to-face interaction and voice-to-voice interaction from the viewpoint of customer incivility. I suggest that in a text-based interaction, customer might be even more aggressive due to full anonymity. To support this view, Walker et al. (2017, p. 176) argue that previous research would suggest that face-to-face interactions might be more courteous and civil than, for example, the

aforementioned voice-to-voice interaction or text-based interaction. Yet, another curious topic to research would be the comparison of different service contexts, and whether some service fields experience stronger or more intense forms of customer incivility. Thus, one can truly see that there is an extensive list of options to examine in the light of customer incivility in the future research.

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APPENDIX

1. What is your first language? / Mikä on äidinkielesi?
 2. What other languages do you speak? / Mitä muita kieliä puhut?
 3. What are the most common languages you use when working with customers? / Millä kielellä (tai kielillä) työskentelet asiakkaiden kanssa?
 4. How would you rate your language proficiency in the work language(s)? Please evaluate each language separately.
1 Poor 2 Fair 3 Good 4 Very Good 5 Excellent
/ Millaiseksi luokittelisit oman kielellisen pätevyytesi kielessä (tai kielissä), joilla työskentelet? Arvioi jokainen kieli erikseen.
1 Heikko 2 Kohtalainen 3 Hyvä 4 Erittäin hyvä 5 Erinomainen
 5. Occupation (or the last occupation in the service industry) / Ammattisi (tai viimeisin ammatti asiakaspalvelualalla)
-
6. How would you define uncivil customer behaviour (that is, rude, mean, impolite, mistreating behaviour)? / Millaisen asiakaskäyttäytymisen määrittelisit itse epäkohteliaaksi, ilkeäksi, tönkeäksi tai kaltoinkohtelevaksi?
 7. What kind of mistreatment (for example, racist, discriminative, impolite, or rude behaviour) by customers have you experienced at work? / Millaista huonoa (rasistista, syrjivää, epäkohteliasta, ilkeää, tönkeää, kaltoinkohtelevaa) käytöstä tai kohtelua asiakkailta olet kokenut työpaikalla?
 8. How often have you experienced racist, discriminative, rude or uncivil behaviour from customers? / Kuinka usein olet kokenut rasistista, syrjivää, tönkeää, epäkohteliasta tai kaltoinkohtelevaa käyttäytymistä asiakkailta?
 9. Have you experienced incivility directed at your language use or language proficiency? / Oletko kokenut epäkohteliasta käytöstä, joka kohdistui kielen käyttöösi tai kielelliseen pätevyyteesi?
Yes/no Kyllä/ei (If answered yes, question 10. appears / Jos tähän vastaa kyllä, näkyviin tulee kohta 10)
 10. Please give at least one concrete example of a situation, where you have experienced incivility directed at your language use or language proficiency. / Kerro ainakin yksi konkreettinen esimerkki tilanteesta, jossa olet kokenut epäasiallista käytöstä, joka kohdistui kielen käyttöösi tai kielelliseen pätevyyteesi.

11. In what kinds of situations have you encountered customer incivility at work? / Millaisissa tilanteissa olet kohdannut epäkohteliaista, tönkeää, ilkeää tai kaltoinkohtelevaa asiakaskäyttäytymistä työpaikalla?

12. How do you react when a customer acts in an uncivil and rude fashion? / Millä tavalla reagoit, kun asiakas käyttäytyy epäkohteliaasta, tönkeästi tai kaltoinkohtelevasti?

13. Do you have any specific coping strategie(s) for situations where you experience incivility? / Onko sinulla jokin tietty selviytymisstrategia (tai useampia selviytymisstrategioita) tilanteisiin, joissa koet epäkohteliaista/tönkeää/kaltoinkohtelevaa asiakaskäyttäytymistä? Yes/no Kyllä/ei (If answered yes, the question 14. appears / Jos tähän vastaa kyllä, näkyviin tulee kohta 14)

14. What kinds of strategies? / Millaisia strategioita?

15. What is your workplace's policy regarding customer incivility? / Mikä on työpaikkasi käytäntö epäkohteliaaseen, ilkeään, tönkeään tai kaltoinkohtelevaan asiakaskäyttäytymiseen?

16. How does your workplace (e.g. manager) deal with uncivil customer behaviour? / Miten työpaikkasi (esimerkiksi esimies) käsittelee epäkohteliaista, tönkeää, kaltoinkohtelevaa asiakaskäytöstä?

17. Your age / Minkä ikäinen olet?

18. Your gender / Sukupuoli

19. Your educational background? / Millainen on koulutustaustasi?