TOWARDS A THEORY OF
CUSTOMER AGGRESSION

Catherine Louise Bachleda
B.App.Sc., M.B.A.

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ABSTRACT

Drawing heavily from the Berkowitz (1993) theory of emotional aggression and the quality perspective of the service encounter (services marketing literature), a theoretical framework is developed to explore the nature of customer aggression. The theoretical framework describes the relationship between a number of proposed influences on customer aggression and feelings of anger during the service encounter. The model suggests that customers become aggressively aroused (angry) as a reaction to aversive service stimuli. Mood and associated cognitions may decrease or increase this aggressive arousal. Organisational restraints influence whether or not this aggressive arousal leads to aggressive behaviour.

An empirical study involving 180 respondents who had experienced, within the previous six months, a poor face-to-face service experience and admitted to feelings of anger as a result of that encounter, was conducted to validate the framework. Findings suggest that people factors (discourtesy and incompetence) tend to occur frequently and contribute significantly to anger, process factors (waiting and complex service operations) occur less frequently, but contribute significantly to anger, and physical factors (difficult access and uncomfortable facilities) occur least frequently and when they do, contribute least significantly to anger.

In response to the poor service incidents, respondents experienced impulses ranging from non-aggression (such as talking the incident over with the service person without showing anger) to direct physical aggression (such as physically causing injury to the service person). Most non-aggressive desires were acted upon. Verbally aggressive desires were also frequently acted upon, however other aggressive desires were frequently inhibited. Factors which influenced whether a response was inhibited included the presence of other people (friends, family, other customers or other staff) and the respondent’s own morals or self-discipline.

The results indicate that a significant proportion of customer aggression is directly linked with customer service delivery. As such, efforts to improve the quality of customer services are likely to contribute to the reduction or prevention of customer aggression and have the potential to improve the well being of both staff and customers.
Ethics Clearance

This research received ethics clearance from the Human Rights Committee of the University of Western Australia.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Service industries continue to grow in importance to Western economies (Allred and Addams 1999; Bateson 1995; Moynagh and Worsley 2002). This growth has been accompanied by more affluent and sophisticated customers who are better informed by the media and consumer bodies about services and quality. As a result consumers' expectations of service quality are increasing (De Feo 2001; Leonard and Sasser 1988; Moynagh and Worsley 2002). Consumers are becoming more critical of the quality of service they experience (Lewis and Entwistle 1990). There is a general perception by many consumers that service quality is declining (Koepp 1987; Pendersen 1997; Tyler 2002). Indeed, several writers (e.g., Bluestone 1981; Hollander 1985; Pendersen 1997, have commented on the way retailing has become more 'industrial' and 'factory-like', with services becoming more standardised and more impersonal.

Concurrent with this perceived decline in service quality has been an increase in customer aggression. It has been estimated that verbal and physical abuse affects about 40% of all workers (Wakefield 1993). Not unexpectedly, those who are most at risk are front-line workers who deal with the public (Dean 1998). One American study for example, found that one out of four full-time workers was harassed, threatened or attacked on the job, and that customers, clients and patients accounted for the largest segment of workplace attackers. The study also reported that a significant number of workers cited the customer's dissatisfaction with service as the reason they were victimised (Lawless 1993). There is a feeling amongst some employees and their representatives that "People don't seem to handle their anger any more". These words were spoken by an official of an industry staff association whose members are widely subjected to customer abuse (Swanton and Webber 1990, p.vii). There is also a view that anger has become so common in Western culture that it is now an expected response to stressful situations (Joinson 1998).

There is little Australian data on customer aggression. Comcare (1993) investigated the incidence, cost and causes of occupational stress in six selected Commonwealth Government organisations during 1990 and 1991. They found that 43% of their sample reported at least one incident of customer aggression, defined as physical assault, harassment or abuse from a member of the public.
Anecdotal evidence suggests that customer aggression is increasing in Australia. The Bulletin Morgan Poll reported that one in two Australians has been verbally abused by a member of the public while carrying out work duties, and one in ten has been physically abused by being hit, slapped or kicked by a customer (Dean 1998). These claims correlate with absenteeism and diagnosis of stress-related medical conditions, all of which culminate in personal and organisational losses. Research indicates that victims of violence experience twice the rate of stress related conditions, are many times more likely to report decreased productivity (Braverman 1993), and are more likely to have lost work time than other employees (Kedjidjian 1993; Toohey 1993a). In addition, exposure to violence has been shown to decrease worker job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Leather et al. 1997).

1.2 REASON FOR RESEARCH

Despite the magnitude of potential costs to organisations, customer aggression has received limited attention by researchers in the fields of management and services marketing. Much of the research to date in services marketing has focussed on service quality (Fisk et al. 1993; Zeithaml et al. 1990), customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction (see for example, Bitner and Hubbert 1994; Oliva et al. 1992; Spreng et al. 1996; Yi 1990), and consumer complaining behaviours (see for example, Bearden and Teel 1983; Singh 1988).

However, this body of research has not focussed on, and indeed seems inadequate for explaining, the more extreme customer behaviours of verbal abuse and physical attack that are often displayed in the consumption experience. Folkes (1984) for example, suggests that dissatisfaction seems too tepid to encompass the problem of the irate consumer, and Bell and Zemke (1987) suggest that some customers who have experienced service failures are likely to feel ‘victimised’ and have much deeper emotions than dissatisfaction.

Despite calls for increased understanding of the service encounter (Czepiel 1990; Fisk et al. 1993), little is known about the antecedents of aggression in service encounters. In fact, most of the information currently available on this topic is found in trade journals and newspapers. What research has been done has been largely restricted to descriptions of problem incidence.
The purpose of this study is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of customer aggression. Specifically this research focuses on the following question: What prompts customer aggression during the service encounter? To address this question a model of customer aggression is presented which synthesises emotional aggression and services marketing theories to provide a framework for research on customer aggression during the service encounter. The model suggests that customers become aggressively aroused (angry) as a reaction to aversive service stimuli, and organisational restraints influence whether or not this aggressive arousal leads to aggressive behaviour. Thus the overall aims of this thesis are to:

1) Develop a theoretical framework for structuring research on what angers customers during a face-to-face service experience and how customers respond as a result of this anger.

2) Provide information to assist managers design a customer service environment that minimises the incidence of customer anger and aggression, develop strategies to reduce customer anger and aggression during service encounters, and hence reduce the stress that service persons are subjected to as a result of customer anger and aggression.

1.3 DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

1.3.1 Aggression

In attempting to define aggression, a number of contrasting formulations have been offered over the years. One definition offered by Buss (1961) suggests that aggression is simply any behaviour that harms or injures others.

A second view, offered by several noted researchers (e.g., Berkowitz 1981, 1993; Baron and Richardson 1994), contends that in order to be classified as aggression, actions must involve the intention of harm or injury to others and not simply the delivery of such consequences.

A third view, proposed by Zillmann (1979; 1983), restricts use of the term aggression to attempts to produce bodily or physical injury to others. According to this definition, any psychological pain or injury would be excluded (Baron and Richardson 1994).
While there has been considerable controversy concerning these differing definitions of aggression, many social scientists have now moved toward acceptance of a definition similar to the second mentioned above, that is, one involving intention as well as the actual delivery of harm or injury to others (Baron and Richardson 1994). In line with this trend, this thesis uses Berkowitz’s (1993) definition of aggression:

*Aggression:* “any form of behaviour that is intended to injure someone physically or psychologically” (Berkowitz 1993, p.3).

An important point is that this definition states that aggression is a form of behaviour, not an emotion, a motive or an attitude.

Another distinction, first made by Feshbach (1964) and now widely accepted by many social psychologists (e.g., Bandura 1983; Baron and Richardson 1994; Berkowitz 1993; Dodge et al. 1990; Hartup 1974; Rule and Nesdale 1976b; Strube et al. 1984), is that of instrumental and hostile aggression. In hostile aggression, the primary goal is to hurt or to cause the victim to suffer. Instrumental aggression is orientated chiefly towards the attainment of some other objective such as money, social status, or territory (Baron and Richardson 1994; Berkowitz 1988).

Perspectives that view human aggression as an attempt at coercion (see Patterson 1979; Tedeschi and Felson 1995), or an effort to preserve one’s dominance (see Gelles 1989) or social status (see Felson 1978), view most aggressive actions as instrumental aggression. In this view, most acts of aggression follow a more or less deliberate calculation of possible costs and benefits. This approach is consistent with rational-choice approaches to criminal behaviour (e.g., Cornish and Clarke 1986).

In contrast, perspectives that view aggression as the kind which occurs when people are ‘emotional’, ‘affective’, ‘angry’ or unpleasantly aroused, view aggression as hostile aggression (see Berkowitz 1993; Baron 1977). This view holds that there is at times, a short circuiting of the normal evaluation process. Emotionally aroused aggressors, whether because of the intense emotional agitation within them or because of the nature of their personalities, do not stop to think of what might happen if they physically or verbally attack their victims. Their attention is focussed primarily upon what they want to do at the time without consideration of alternative courses of action and possible long-
term negative consequences (Berkowitz 1993). This perspective reflects those times when aggressive actions are displayed in ‘the heat of the moment’. Compared to instrumental aggression, which is viewed as relatively rational, hostile aggression is viewed as much less guided by conscious thought (Berkowitz 1993).

Research by Dodge and Coie (1987) provides empirical support for the distinction between the two types of aggression. In a series of studies they found that reactive (hostile) aggressive elementary school boys were likely to over-interpret peers’ behaviours as being hostile and respond to that perceived hostility with aggression. Pro-active (instrumentally) aggressive boys were viewed by their peers as being intrusive in both positive ways (e.g., leadership) and negative ways (e.g., starting fights). The pro-active aggressive boys, however, did not make the errors in interpreting others’ behaviour in the way reactive aggressive boys did. Although debate continues about the most appropriate labels for these two types of aggression (reactive versus pro-active, hostile versus instrumental, affective versus predatory, angry versus goal directed), there is general agreement that a distinction exists (Baron and Richardson 1994; Dodge et al. 1990).

In line with Berkowitz (1993) this thesis will use the terms hostile or emotional aggression to refer to the kind of aggression that occurs when people are “unpleasantly aroused and try to hurt someone” (Berkowitz 1993, p.11).

Having established a broad definition of the term aggression, it is important to consider this construct within the workplace or organisational context. At the most general level, organisational aggression could be inclusive of all aggressive situations that have consequences for the organisation (Mullen 1996; O'Leary-Kelly et al. 1996).

However, this broad definition would include aggressive actions as diverse as a customer who verbally abuses a service person and a supervisor who sexually harasses a worker. Yet it seems probable, that the antecedents and theoretical explanations of these two actions may be quite different. In the first situation, factors that affect the service encounter (Zeithaml and Bitner 1996), such as the quality of service, may be most important; whereas factors in the organisation’s culture may be most important in examining the second situation.
As it seems unlikely that one theoretical framework will be useful for explaining all actions and outcomes encompassed by a broad definition of organisational aggression, more restricted definitions are necessary (O'Leary-Kelly et al. 1996). This research focuses on the subset of harming behaviours that are prompted by the customer's service encounter with the organisation. This area of research is likely to be of interest to managers because it implies some degree of organisational control. That is, if some factor in a customer service encounter triggers aggressive behaviour, this aggressive behaviour should be open to some degree of organisational influence.

1.3.2 Service Encounter

As this research focuses on harming behaviours that are prompted by the customer's service encounter with the organisation, it would be useful to define what is meant by the term 'service encounter'.

The service encounter has been defined by Surprenant and Solomon (1987) as "the dyadic interaction between a customer and service person". This definition draws on their earlier work suggesting that service encounters are "role performances" (Solomon et al. 1985) where both customers and service persons have roles to enact. This use of the term 'service encounter' focuses on the interpersonal elements between customer and service employees of service firm performance (Bitner et al. 1990).

By contrast, Shostack's (1985) definition of the service encounter as "a period of time during which a consumer directly interacts with a service" encompasses all aspects of the service firm with which the consumer may interact, including its personnel, its physical facilities, and other tangible/visible elements. Shostack's definition is broader; it does not limit the service encounter to the interpersonal interactions between the customer and the firm (Bitner et al. 1990). This thesis uses Shostack's broader definition of the service encounter:

\[ Service \text{ encounter: } \text{"a period of time during which a consumer (customer) directly interacts with a service"} (\text{Shostack 1985}). \]

An important point is that this definition suggests that the customer is present and directly involved in all the service production process. As such, 'remote' or 'phone' encounters (Shostack 1985) that occur without any direct human contact, such as when a
customer interacts with a bank through the ATM system, a firm communicates
information to customers by mail or a customer and organisation interact over the
telephone, are necessarily excluded. This definition is in line with other authors such as
Eiglier and Langeard (1977) and Bateson and Hui (1990) who suggest that service
encounters are both a form of human interaction between customer and service employees
(interpersonal interaction) and an ecological interaction between customer and service
setting (human-environment interactions).

1.3.3 Customer
Given the above definition of service encounter, it is important to define the term
customer. The Oxford dictionary defines a customer as a person obtaining goods or
services from a business. Whilst this definition is a good starting point, it does not
differentiate those customers who are not on legitimate business. For example, a person
robbing a bank, whilst he or she may be seen to be obtaining the services of the
organisation, could not be seen to be doing so legitimately. In addition, the dictionary
definition does not differentiate between internal and external customers. External
customers refer to those individuals who buy goods or services from the organisation, but
are not employed by the organisation (Zeithaml and Bitner 1996). Internal customers
refer to those employees within the firm who, in their jobs, depend on others in the
organisation for internally provided goods and services (Zeithaml and Bitner 1996). As
indicated earlier, the explanations for interactions between employees (internal customer)
are likely to be different to those between an employee and a member of the public
(external customer). Thus, for the purpose of this thesis a customer is defined as:

Customer: a person, external to the organisation, who is legitimately using the
services of the organisation.

1.3.4 Customer Aggression
Having defined the terms aggression, service encounter and customer, customer
aggression can be defined as:

Customer aggression: any form of behaviour, displayed by a customer, that is
intended to injure a service person physically or psychologically and is triggered
by some factor during the customer’s direct service encounter.
1.3.5 Anger

A term frequently used in connection with aggression is anger. In distinguishing between the two constructs, Berkowitz (1993, p.20) suggests that aggression has to do with behaviour that deliberately attempts to achieve a goal. Thus aggression is goal-directed. By contrast, anger does not necessarily have a particular goal and refers only to a particular set of feelings. Expanding on this theme Spielberger (1983, p.162) suggests that anger refers to an emotional state that consists of feelings that vary in intensity, from mild irritation or annoyance to fury and rage, whereas aggression implies destructive or punitive behaviour directed towards other persons or objects.

Thus anger is an emotion. However, emotions are extremely difficult to define. This difficulty is reflected in the often cited comment of Fehr and Russell's (1984, p.464): "Everyone knows what an emotion is until asked to give a definition. Then, it seems, no-one knows".

Numerous investigators have embraced the concept of basic emotions; the idea that some emotions are more primary or basic than others (see Kemper, 1987 for a review). Although there have been different conceptions of just which emotions are primary and which secondary, with proposals ranging from lists of three to nine emotions, certain emotions such as fear and anger are almost universally classified as basic emotions (Leidelmeijer 1991; Lemerise and Dodge 1993; Plutchik 1994; Smith and Ellsworth 1985).

Anger has also been categorised as either a transitory emotional state or a relatively stable individual personality trait. Spielberger et al. (1983) for example, define state anger as an "emotional state or condition that consists of subjective feelings of tension, annoyance, irritation, fury and rage, with concomitant activation of the autonomic nervous system" (p.168). This category of anger can vary in intensity and fluctuate over time as a function of perceived affronts or injustice, or frustration resulting from the blocking of goal-directed behaviour. Trait anger is defined in terms of "individual differences in the frequency that state anger is experienced over time" (Spielberger et al. 1983, p.169). Trait anger refers to a relatively stable personality dimension of anger proneness (i.e., individual differences in the tendency to experience state anger more frequently or more intensely) (Spielberger et al. 1983; Spielberger et al. 1985; Deffenbacher 1992).
Megargee (1985) distinguishes anger from other similar affective reactions by intensity and duration. He suggests annoyance is an affective reaction of short duration and low intensity, anger an affective reaction of short duration and medium intensity, and rage an affective reaction of short duration and high intensity.

For the purposes of this research and in line with authors such as Berkowitz (1993) and Spielberger et al. (1983), anger is simply defined as:

*Anger:* an emotional state that consists of a subjective set of feelings.

1.3.6 Aggressive Arousal
As outlined above, aggression is a purposive activity or behaviour whereas anger is an emotional state or feeling. Gilmore (1987) suggests that aggression is expressed anger involving contact with another person, whereas anger is unexpressed aggression. Rule and Nesdale (1976a) suggest that arousal of angry emotions is a major precipitator of aggressive behaviour and, while anger is not necessary for occurrence of aggression, anger and aggression interact with one another such that the level of anger influences the level of aggression and visa-versa. Berkowitz (1962) in his major reformulation of the frustration-aggression hypothesis used anger in lieu of instigation to aggression and argued it would be profitable to consider this emotional state as the mediating condition (p. 46).

The theories of Berkowitz, Feshbach, and Bandura respectively assign anger arousal to response energising, response motivating, and response activating functions. In each case, anger is viewed as an emotional state that facilitates aggression (Novaco 1979).

In line with these authors, the dependent variable in this thesis, ‘aggressive arousal’, refers to the emotionally aroused state which precedes the actual act or behaviour termed customer aggression. It refers to the feelings experienced by a customer. As these aggressive feelings are most apt to be associated with anger (Berkowitz 1983, 1993), aggressive arousal is operationalised as:

*Aggressive arousal:* a feeling of anger experienced by a customer.
1.4 KEY ASSUMPTION

Emotional-aggression theory suggests that aversive stimuli result in aggressive tendencies only to the degree that they are interpreted by the individual as unpleasant. For example, interruption of an ongoing goal activity such as waiting in a queue may be associated with either positive or negative responses depending on the individual. Some individuals may experience such a frustration as challenging, others may change goals as a way of circumventing the frustration, and for others, the interruption of goal activity may be aversive. Indeed, research by Roseman (1991) found that different interpretations by individuals of the same event resulted in significantly different emotions and responses.

This research focuses on those individuals who have interpreted a service encounter as unpleasant, whilst acknowledging that the same stimuli these individuals found aversive may have no effect on other individuals.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research studies an important issue for service firms: the relationship between perceived poor customer service and customer aggression.

The importance of customer service can be gauged by the fact that two-thirds of customers stop doing business with a particular organisation because they have received poor service (LeBoeuf 1990). Furthermore, it is claimed that customers need to have as many as 12 positive experiences with a service person to overcome the negative effects of one bad experience (Bateson 1995; Zemke and Schaaf 1989).

The importance of customer aggression can be gauged by the costs to management incurred as a result of employee absenteeism and lost productivity outlined earlier. Until now service firms have had no empirical findings on which to base decisions regarding the reduction of customer aggression. This research will inform the development of effective preventative programs.
1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY
This chapter outlined the need for research that focuses on customer aggression in the service encounter and in particular its antecedents. Terms were defined and the study's research aims presented.

The literature relating to aggression generally and customer aggression in particular is reviewed in the next chapter, together with the literature on service encounters and service quality.

Chapter three outlines a model of customer aggression. Chapter four presents the results of preliminary qualitative research undertaken as a tentative evaluation of the model and to refine and revise the model. Chapter five outlines the main research design and discusses methodological issues. An analysis of the data is reported in chapter six. Finally, chapter seven presents a discussion of the findings, the limitations of the present study, and implications for researchers and practitioners.
CHAPTER 2: THE SERVICE ENCOUNTER, SERVICE QUALITY AND AGGRESSION

2.1 INTRODUCTION
The previous chapter outlined the need for research that focuses on customer aggression in the service encounter. Before reviewing the literature relating to aggression, and in particular customer aggression, this chapter briefly reviews the literature relating to service encounters and service quality.

2.2 THE SERVICE ENCOUNTER
As indicated earlier, the service encounter is "a period of time during which a consumer directly interacts with a service". It encompasses all aspects of the service firm with which the consumer may interact, including its personnel, its physical facilities, and other tangible/visible elements (Shostack 1985).

Service encounters have been analysed from a number of perspectives. These include exchange theory (Blau 1964; Goffman 1983), agency theory (Jensen and Meckling 1976; Mills 1990), interdependence theory (McCallum and Harrison 1985) and role theory (Solomon et al. 1985).

Exchange theory sees the service encounter as an economic transaction in which participants solicit cooperation by engaging in tacit bargaining processes. Agency theory sees the service encounter as a contract under which one or more persons (principals) engage another person (the agent) to perform some service on their behalf, which involves delegating some decision-making authority to the agent (Jensen and Meckling 1976). Interdependence theory views the service encounter as a social encounter, where service persons and consumers are interdependent to the extent that the behaviours chosen by each party have an effect upon the outcomes received by the other. The role theory perspective explores how the parties learn to act and behave in service encounters. From this perspective, satisfaction and service effectiveness are a function of role clarity, the extent to which a party understands the nature of role expectations, and role congruence, the degree of agreement between both parties regarding the appropriate roles to be played. Generally more satisfying consumer
experiences occur when the role played by the service worker is congruent with the role expected by the customer (Tansik 1985).

Despite the degree of interest in the service encounter, there has been little research that has explored the consumer's emotional response to services (Price et al. 1995), and, in particular, the more intense customer reaction of anger during the service encounter. Most research on consumer service encounter response has been viewed in terms of satisfaction (Fisk et al. 1993). However, the service encounter has the potential to evoke a variety of emotional responses including regret, pleasure and anger (Price et al. 1995). As arousal of angry emotions is seen as a major precipitator of aggressive behaviour (Rule and Nesdale 1976a), by looking at service encounters that generate emotions such as anger, improved insights may be obtained into the dynamics of consumer behaviour such as customer aggression.

### 2.2.1 Satisfaction and Emotional Responses to Services

Most research on consumer encounter responses has used satisfaction as a basis upon which to build assumptions (Fisk et al. 1993). Typically satisfaction is assumed to vary along a continuum from dissatisfied to satisfied. It is generally assumed to arise from an evaluative comparison of a level of service performance or quality as perceived by the consumer. Typically, the evaluative comparison is linked to the consumer's pre-purchase expectations, which, when compared to the actual level of service performance or quality, produces disconfirmation beliefs. These disconfirmation beliefs produce the satisfaction judgement (Bearden and Teel 1983; Oliver 1980; Westbrook 1980; Westbrook and Oliver 1991).

By contrast, emotion refers to distinctive categories of emotional experience and expression (for example fear, joy, and anger) that may or may not accompany a judgement of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Arnould and Price 1993; Westbrook and Oliver 1991). Folkes (1984) for example, notes that dissatisfaction seems inadequate for explaining the problem of the irate consumer. In a similar vein, Bell and Zemke (1987) suggest that consumers who have experienced a service failure fall into two different categories: annoyed and victimised. They define 'annoyance' as minor irritation associated with a promise not fully realised, whereas 'victimisation' is characterised by major feelings of ire, frustration or pain. They suggest that feeling victimised is a more intense emotion than irritation and might lead to outrage. Hunt (1988) goes further by
suggesting that the expected-minus-actual definition of consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction is simplistic and that emotion is the critical research area in consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Authors such as Westbrook (1987) and Cohen and Areni (1991) have supported the distinction between judgements of consumption satisfaction and consumption emotion. Others such as Oliver (1989), have argued that specific types of emotional responses may be causally antecedent to, and coexist with, the satisfaction judgement. For dissatisfaction, Oliver (1989) proposes five qualitatively different emotional states, which in order of decreasing favourableness are tolerance, sadness, regret, agitation, and outrage. In contrast, other researchers have argued that satisfaction is itself an emotional response to the judgement disparity between service performance and a perceived standard (see for example, Cadotte, Woodruff et al. 1987; Woodruff, Cadotte et al. 1983).

Whilst there is still disagreement between researchers as to whether consumption satisfaction and consumption emotion are distinct theoretical constructs, it is generally agreed that consumer responses such as delight or anger are more intense than responses of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. As such, it would seem reasonable to suggest that research that broadens the focus of customer response from the satisfaction/dissatisfaction paradigm to one that focuses on responses such as anger, may provide new insights into consumer behaviour and the dynamics of the service encounter. As an example, Schneider and Bowen (1999) draw on the insights provided by Bell and Zemke (1987) to develop a needs-based model as a framework for understanding the more 'emotionally charged' customer reactions of 'delight and outrage', within the context of customer loyalty. This model moves away from the more conventional customer expectations approach and is based upon three basic customer needs: security (the need to feel unthreatened by physical or economic harm); self-esteem (the need to maintain and enhance one's self image); and justice (the need to be fairly treated). Schneider and Bowen (1999) suggest that violation of these three customer needs will lead to outrage and gratification of these three customer needs will lead to delight and that an outraged customer will defect whereas a delighted customer will remain loyal to the organisation. Though Schneider and Bowen (1990) do not discuss customer aggression, it might also be expected that outraged customers would engage in aggressive behaviour.
2.2.2 Behavioural Responses during a Negative Service Encounter

As discussed above, consumer satisfaction has been used throughout the services marketing literature as a basis for understanding the consumer's emotional reaction to a failed service. It has also been used as a basis for understanding key post purchase activities such as complaining behaviour (Howard 1989). Indeed, the most studied consequence of a negative service encounter is complaint behaviour (see for example, Bearden and Oliver 1985; Best and Andreasen 1977; Blodgett et al. 1995; Day 1984; Day and Ash 1979; Gronhaug and Zaltman, 1980; Kowalski 1996; Landon 1977; Morel et al. 1997; Prakash 1991; Resnik and Harmon 1983; Richins 1983; Singh 1988; Singh and Wilkes 1996). There is little if any research on the more extreme consequence of behaviours associated with a failed service such as verbal and physical abuse.

The roots of research into consumers’ behavioural responses to a negative service encounter reside in early studies by Mason and Himes (1973) and Warland et al. (1975). Based on data for consumer dissatisfaction, both of these studies proposed a similar typology of consumer complaint behaviour: ‘Upset-No action’ (dissatisfied consumers who did not take any action); and ‘Upset-Action’ (dissatisfied consumers who took some action). Most subsequent studies have tended to utilise the typology developed by these researchers, although researchers have used different labels such as: activists and non-activists (e.g., Gronhaug and Zaltman 1980; Pfaff and Blivice 1977); private and public actions (Day and Landon 1977); and complainers and non-complainers (e.g., Bearden 1983; Morganosky and Buckley 1986).

Consumers can and often do use different response styles to communicate their dissatisfaction with products and services (Singh 1990). Warland et al. (1975) for example, in a study of dissatisfied consumers, found the most frequent (32%) action of respondents who recalled a negative experience in the marketplace was to complain personally to store managers, salesmen, clerks or company presidents (‘the complainers’). The remainder included a diverse array of actions ranging from writing letters to boycotting the product or store, with 25% taking no action (the ‘non-complainers’). Similarly Morganosky and Buckley (1986) defined two styles, based upon agreement or disagreement with the statement: ‘if I buy clothes I am not satisfied with, I take them back to the store and complain’. Singh (1990) in a later study found four distinct response styles consumers use to communicate their dissatisfaction with products and services; passives, voicers, irates and activists. Similar to the non-complainer in previous
research, passives are unlikely to take action in the face of dissatisfaction. Voicers are those that actively complain to the service person to obtain redress. Activists are those that utilise all channels of complaining, especially complaining to third parties such as the newspaper. Irates are those angry consumers who not only complain directly to the service person, but also switch patronage and/or engage in negative word of mouth. However irates are less likely to take third party action.

Whilst Singh (1990) does not discuss the nature of irates’ direct complaining behaviour to the service person, it would seem reasonable to assume that such behaviour might include aggressive behaviours such as verbal abuse from some of these consumers.

2.3 SERVICE QUALITY
The single most researched area in services marketing to date is service quality (Fisk et al. 1993; Goffin and New 2001; Oliva 2001). The roots of service quality research reside in early conceptual work (e.g., Gronroos 1983; Sasser et al. 1979) and customer satisfaction theory (e.g., Oliver 1980).

Goods quality can be measured objectively by indicators such as durability and number of defects (Garvin 1983). However, this is not the case with service quality because of three features unique to services: intangibility; heterogeneity; and inseparability of production and consumption (Parasuraman et al. 1985, 1988). Researchers argue that environmental and interpersonal influences seem to be more critical in evaluation of services than in the evaluation of goods (e.g., Bearden et al. 1998; Berry 1981; Bitner 1990; Bitner et al. 1990; Bitner 1992; Lovelock 1992; Shostack 1977; Surprenant and Solomon 1987; Booms and Bitner 1981; Zeithaml and Bitner 1996).

One focus of service quality research, and the area of interest for this study, concerns the identification of the determinants of service quality. The next section provides an overview of the literature on service quality determinants.

2.3.1 Service Quality Determinants
In the early 1980’s, three researchers, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) explored the dimensions of service quality. As a result of their focus group studies with service persons and customers, they identified ten determinants of service quality which they
believed would be applicable in most, if not all, consumer service industries (Berry et al. 1985): access, competence, communication, courtesy, credibility, responsiveness, reliability, security, understanding and tangibles.

During the next phase of their research, Berry et al. (1985) found a high degree of correlation between several dimensions. They consolidated communication, courtesy, credibility, competence and security into a broad dimension of assurance; and access and understanding into a broad dimension of empathy. They then used the five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, as the basis for development of a service quality measurement instrument, SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al. 1988; Zeithaml et al. 1990). The researchers reported that, regardless of the service being studied, reliability was the most important quality dimension, followed by responsiveness, assurance and empathy. They suggested that tangibles were of least concern to service customers.

The five dimensions have since formed the basis for a considerable amount of research and application in the field of service management. Further, the SERVQUAL instrument has been found to be a concise multiple-item scale with good reliability (Lewis and Mitchell 1990) and has been widely accepted as a valid instrument (Carman 1990; Clark et al. 1992; Finn and Lamb 1991; Fisk et al. 1993) in the measurement of service quality.

The dimensions (and the SERVQUAL instrument) have also been the subject of some criticism. For example, Cronin and Taylor (1992) in their research into service quality in banks, pest control, dry cleaning and fast food found little support for the five dimensions, and Finn and Lamb (1991) in a study of retailing, found that the model’s five dimensions were insufficient to cover quality in a retail setting.

In response to criticisms of the original instrument, Parasuraman et al (1994), published a refined three dimensional SERVQUAL measure where responsiveness, assurance and empathy were combined into a single factor. This refined measure included a new method for assessing expectations based on desired and minimum expectations and a so-called ‘zone of tolerance’. This refined instrument was subsequently found by Caruana et al. (2000) to be methodologically flawed.
Other authors have suggested different determinants of service quality, although in some cases they appear to have been based on Berry et al’s (1985) work (Johnston 1995). Albrecht and Zemke (1985) suggested spontaneity, care and concern, problem solving and recovery. Walker (1990) postulated product reliability, a quality environment and delivery systems that work together with good personal service, staff attitude, knowledge and skills. Gronroos (1990b) suggested professionalism and skills, attitudes and behaviour, accessibility and flexibility, reliability and trustworthiness, recovery, reputation and credibility as key determinants of service quality.

Other research has sought to distinguish between the effect of service quality determinants in terms of creation of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. For example, Smith et al. (1992) using data from a single industry retail services suggested that the determinants of satisfaction and dissatisfaction might be different. They found that satisfaction was usually generated by service going beyond expectations and dissatisfaction resulted from failure, slowness, disinterest and rudeness of staff. Price et al. (1995), in a study which analysed consumers’ emotional responses to service person performance, found that factors that made consumers happy were different from factors that made them unhappy.

Mersha and Adlakha (1992) asked MBA students to identify the factors that satisfied and dissatisfied them. The 12 resulting attributes were found to be similar to those proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985). Following a further study covering retail banking; colleges; physician; car maintenance; and fast-food restaurant services, the attributes of good quality were found to be knowledge of the service, reliability, thoroughness, accuracy, consistency, reasonable cost, willingness to correct errors, and timely and prompt service. The attributes of poor quality included employees’ indifference, lack of knowledge about the service, service inconsistency, reluctance to correct errors, sloppiness and high cost. The study seemed to suggest that at a detailed level, there might be some differences between the causes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Johnston 1995).

More recent work by Brady and Cronin (2001) suggests that customers make service quality judgements on the basis of their evaluations of three primary dimensions: outcome, interaction, and environmental quality. Further, customers’ base their evaluation of the primary dimensions on their assessment of three corresponding subfactors.
From this study’s perspective, the factors influencing dissatisfaction are of most interest. Julian and Ramaseshan (1994) for example, found the most important five factors, in descending order of importance, were: inconvenience of branch location; poor counter service; disrespectful staff attitudes; excessive questioning and hassles by staff; niggling penalties; and charges.

2.3.2 Service Quality and Satisfaction
One of the debates in the service quality area concerns the similarities and differences between the constructs of service quality and service satisfaction (see e.g., Anderson and Sullivan 1993; Bolton and Drew 1991b; Cronin and Taylor 1992; Oliver 1993; Parasuraman et al. 1988; Spreng and Mackoy 1996; Zeithaml et al. 1993).

Parasuraman et al. (1988, p.16) define perceived service quality as “a global judgement, or attitude, relating to the superiority of the service”. Many researchers in the quality service literature concur with this definition (Boulding et al. 1993; Bolton and Drew 1991a; Cronin and Taylor 1992). While there is no clear consensus regarding the definition of satisfaction (see Yi 1990 for a review), most definitions would involve “an evaluative, affective or emotional response” (Oliver 1989, p.1).

Whilst there has been considerable controversy concerning these two constructs, there appears to be a consensus emerging that satisfaction refers to the outcome of individual service transactions and the overall service encounter, whereas service quality is the customer’s overall impression of the inferiority/superiority of the organisation and its services (Bitner and Hubbert 1994; Johnston 1995). There also appears to be agreement that perceptions of service quality affect feelings of satisfaction, which, in turn, influence future purchase behaviour (Anderson and Sullivan 1993; Cronin and Taylor 1992; Narayandas 1998; Spreng and Mackoy 1996; Taylor and Baker 1994).

Regardless of whether satisfaction and service quality are different constructs, the two are at the most general level, evaluation or appraisal variables that relate to consumers’ judgements about a product or service (Hurley and Estelami 1998; Iacobucci et al. 1994; Oliver 1997). From the point of view of this thesis, the literature on both constructs is used to identify antecedents to customer aggression.
2.4 THE NATURE OF AGGRESSION

Views concerning the nature of aggression appear to be polarised: aggression is seen as innate or it is seen as learned. These opposing theoretical perspectives are apparent in the following four theories.

Biological-instinct theory, based primarily upon ethological studies, is advocated most notably by Lorenz (1966). This view holds that aggression comes from a genetic disposition; an instinct that has been developed hereditarily through natural selection. Thus people act aggressively because they are spontaneously following an instinctual command.

Psychoanalytic drive theory, postulated by Freud (1933), also holds that disposition to aggression is inherited as a consequence of man’s animal heritage. However, for Freud aggression is a drive rather than an instinct. Both Freud (1933) and Lorenz (1966) view aggression as a disposition, an internal excitement stemming from a bodily stimulus.

Social learning theory favoured by cultural determinists, holds that all aggressive behaviour in humans is acquired through experience or imitation. This theory explicitly denies the existence of prior aggressive disposition. Rather, it treats aggression as a social behaviour involving activities that “entail intricate skills that require extensive learning” (Bandura 1983, p.4). In this view, humans are not born with aggressive knowledge; rather they have to learn how to behave aggressively.

Frustration-aggression theory, an experimental psychologist approach, holds that aggressive behaviour is a result of frustration. Originally proposed by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer and Sears (1939), the theory held that “the occurrence of aggression always presupposes the existence of frustration” and contra-wise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression (Dollard et al. 1939, p.1). Frustration is defined as interference with some purposive act or goal-directed gratification (Berkowitz 1969). However, research has shown that frustration does not always lead to aggression (Baron and Richardson 1994).

In an attempt to address some of the criticisms of the frustration-aggression hypotheses, Berkowitz (1989) reformulated the original theory. For Berkowitz, aggression is part drive-based, part learned behaviour. In his view, frustration and other events generate
aggressive tendencies only to the degree that they are unpleasant (aversive). He also redefined frustration as the non-fulfilment of an expected gratification (Berkowitz 1988).

The literature on the nature and roots of aggression (e.g., Baron and Richardson 1994; Huesmann 1994) suggests that aggression stems from five basic categories of factors and conditions. The first category includes biological causes of aggression such as sex hormones, drugs and nervous system structures. The second category includes cognitive causes of aggression, such as the interpretation of a given situation, memories, associations and strongly held attitudes. The third category includes individual causes of aggression, the stable characteristics of an individual’s specific personality traits. The fourth category includes situational and environmental causes of aggression or increased arousal, such as temperature, noise or crowding. Finally, the fifth category includes social causes of aggression, such as the words or deeds of other people, the norms and expectations of a given society or group (Folger and Baron 1996).

2.5 AN EMOTIONAL-AGGRESSION THEORY OF HUMAN AGGRESSION

As outlined above, human aggression has been described in a number of ways by social psychologists. It has been perceived as a drive that results from frustration (Dollard et al. 1939), as an instinct that results from internal excitation (Lorenz 1966), as a learned social behaviour (Bandura 1973), and as part drive-based, part learned behaviour (Berkowitz 1993).

The part drive-based, part learned behaviour perspective, suggests that basic to all aggression is a rudimentary emotional response system. Aversive stimuli activate this system and create in the individual a desire to hurt others. Aggressive behaviour that hurts others serves to satisfy this desire. This rudimentary system is modified by learning and affected by cognitive-associative processes (Berkowitz 1993).

This view allows for both emotional (hostile) and instrumental aggression. Emotional aggression occurs as an impulsive reaction to aversive stimulation. In other words, it is not entirely premeditated and the emotionally aroused attacker does not think of the long-term consequences. The goal of emotional aggression is to hurt the target. Instrumental aggression, the doing of harm to obtain other goals, is linked to the system of emotional aggression but represents learned behaviour. It has the purpose of achieving incentives.
while avoiding punishments. While most acts of aggression probably involve both instrumental and emotional aggression, impulsive or emotional aggression is seen to be more important in understanding the aggressive behaviour of individuals (Berkowitz 1993).

A summary of the theory of emotional-aggression is shown in Figure 2.1 (Tedeschi and Felson 1995). The figure suggests that aversive stimuli arouse negative affect (unpleasant feelings) which, in turn, results in instigation to aggression in the form of an 'urge to hurt'. Negative affect may prime associated cognitions that may contribute directly to instigation to aggression. Associated cognitions also produce negative affect, further increasing the instigation to aggression. Unless inhibitors intervene the instigation to aggression results in aggressive behaviour (Tedeschi and Felson 1995).

Figure 2.1: Theory of Emotional Aggression

![Diagram of Theory of Emotional Aggression]


An important feature of the emotional-aggressive perspective is that it describes aggression as reactive, impulsive and not mediated by the prior plans or goals of the individual. The emotional-aggression perspective also highlights situational, environmental and social factors as key contributors to aggressive arousal and as moderators of behaviour. This view is in sharp contrast to those who explain aggression primarily in terms of the individual's personal characteristics (see for example, Blass 1991; Geen 1991; Russell 1989). However, many social psychologists emphasise the role of social, situational, and environmental factors in aggression, arguing that only when
such factors are absent or exert minimal effects do personality variables play a significant role in the occurrence of aggression (Baron and Richardson 1994; Larson et al. 1972).

The emotional-aggressive perspective does however acknowledge that individual interpretation of a given situation influences aggressive behaviour. As such, the emotional-aggression theory is a potentially valuable theoretical model for studying customer aggression.

The next section briefly discusses the situational and environmental factors, as well as the moderating factors that form the basis of the emotional-aggression perspective.

2.5.1 Environmental Contributions to Aggressive Arousal: Aversive Stimuli
According to the emotional-aggressive perspective, aversive stimuli are the key antecedents to feelings of aggression (instigation). Service organisations are well situated to introduce individuals to stimuli that might be perceived as aversive. Many customers enter a relationship with an organisation with the goal of acquiring something of value such as a service or a product. If goals are blocked, for example, by a long wait or the incompetence of a service person, frustration may occur. In addition, most service industry customers experience the organisation's product while in the organisation's facility. This provides the opportunity for physical environmental stimuli such as temperature, level of lightening, noise and design of furniture to impact on consumer emotions.

However, the emotional-aggression perspective acknowledges that aversive stimuli result in aggressive tendencies only to the degree that they are interpreted by the individual as unpleasant. As noted earlier, interruption of ongoing goal activity, for example waiting in a queue, may be associated with either positive or negative responses depending on the individual. Some individuals may see this time as an opportunity to relax or read; others may see it as unnecessary and an indication of lack of concern for customers by the organisation.

2.5.2 Moderators between Aversive Stimuli and Arousal: Cognitive Associative Processes
Emotional-aggression theory suggests that aggression comprises both emotional and goal-directed or instrumental components (Berkowitz 1989; Zillmann 1988). Thus, the
instigation of aggressive arousal by aversive stimuli (the emotional component) can be modified by learning and affected by cognitive-associative processes (the instrumental component) (Berkowitz 1993).

In Berkowitz’s (1988; 1989) view, unpleasant, aversive stimulus evoke negative affect by automatically eliciting cognitions that are associated with aggressive tendencies. It is important to note, however, that this initial process is automatic; requires little cognitive capacity; and alone is sufficient to produce aggression-related thoughts and motor impulses. However, Berkowitz’ model also proposes that higher order cognitive processing (if and when such processing occurs) can lead the individual to attribute a cause to the unpleasant stimulus or to some other individual. These cognitions can produce adjustments to the initial reactions; either suppressing or enhancing further aggressive reactions (Dill and Anderson 1995).

According to this perspective, at the start of the aggression process the first automatic and involuntary reactions to aversive stimuli can be modified quickly as the aroused person thinks about their feelings, the instigating events, their conceptions of what emotions they might be experiencing, and the social rules regarding the emotions and actions that may be appropriate under the circumstances. The initial anger experience may be intensified, enriched and differentiated, suppressed or eliminated altogether by these cognitions (Berkowitz 1993).

2.5.3 Moderators between Arousal and Aggression: Environmental Inhibitors
The emotional-aggression perspective suggests that aggression, like other behaviour, is regulated by external cues. That is, once aroused, a person will engage in aggressive behaviour unless there are inhibitors against aggression present in the environment (Berkowitz 1993). Inhibitors or restraints consist of factors that decrease the likelihood or intensity of aggression and might include negative outcomes or consequences for the aggressor if he/she acts aggressively (Berkowitz 1993).

Research has shown that an individual will express less aggression immediately following an aggressive response when the aggressive behaviour is followed by changes in the environment that increase the expectation of costs for further behaviour of the same kind (Berkowitz 1964). This is important for service organisations in the prevention of customer aggression as it implies that aggressive behaviour may be controlled or
modified by factors that are likely to be under the control of the organisation. For example, a customer may be aggressively aroused and raise his or her voice, but the sight of a security guard may inhibit escalation of the aggressive behaviour.

2.6 CUSTOMER AGGRESSION RESEARCH

There has been little research focusing on customer aggression. To the author’s knowledge no formal research has been undertaken on customer aggression from the customer’s perspective within the context of the consumption experience. Yet it would seem likely that understanding the view from a customer perspective is essential to identifying ways of reducing customer aggression. For example, Schneider et al. (1980), in research that focussed on diagnosing effectiveness in retail service organisations, suggested that data should be collected both from employees and customers. And, Evardsson (1992), in a study which investigated the causes of negative critical incidents in an airline, found a difference in the perception of incidents between customers and staff. He suggested that collecting information from frontline staff will not necessarily help in understanding customers’ perceptions of quality failures.

What research has been conducted in the area of customer aggression has been restricted mainly to descriptions of problem incidence or has focussed on violence towards health care workers (see Gordon et al. 1996; Haller and DeLuty 1988; Lee 2001; Lipscomb and Love 1992 for reviews). Of those studies conducted in health care settings (mainly psychiatric settings) a number have studied the relationship of violence and patients’ demographic characteristics, diagnosis, and history of violent behaviour (e.g., Binder and McNiel 1988; Kurlowicz 1990; McNiel and Binder 1988). Other studies describe antecedents, but from the perspective of staff only (e.g., Carmel and Hunter 1989; Grainger 1993; Hatti et al. 1982; Murry and Snyder 1991). Although, Sheridan et al. (1990) is one of the few studies that used information collected from patients as well as staff to examine events preceding restraint of patients with threatening behaviour.

Outside of the health care setting, most research appears to have been undertaken by private consultants and addressed particular facets of the problem such as counter design or procedures (Swanton 1989).
The major studies of note are summarised in Table 2.1 and discussed below. Previous research can be categorised as either focusing on measuring the prevalence and types of customer aggression, or on identifying predictors of aggression or aggressors.

2.6.1 Descriptive Studies

Of the studies focusing on descriptions of problem incidence, the most often quoted is that undertaken by a private agency: the 1993 Northwestern National Life Survey (Lawless 1993). The study was an attempt at a comprehensive assessment of the prevalence of workplace violence throughout the United States population of working adults. A sample of 600 full-time U.S. workers responded to a 15-minute telephone interview in July 1993. Self-employed workers and the military were excluded from the sample.

This survey is not without its limitations. Methodological details and actual frequencies are poorly reported. In addition, managers and professionals appear over represented (39% of the sample, but only 27% in the US Labor force), and service workers under-represented (7% of the sample, versus 14% in the labour force) (Bulatao and VadenBos 1996).

Despite these shortcomings the survey is the most quoted in the workplace violence literature. The survey suggests that one out of four full-time American workers was harassed, threatened or attacked on the job, including an estimated two million or more victims of physical attack and six million victims of threats at the workplace between July 1992 and July 1993 (Lawless 1993). Of particular interest was the finding that harassers are usually co-workers or bosses, while attackers are likely to be customers. Customers, clients and patients accounted for 44% (the largest segment) of attackers. Furthermore, 23% of workplace threat victims and 19% of workers who had been attacked on the job cited customers’ dissatisfaction with service as the reason they were attacked.

Another study by Bulatao and VadenBos (1996) provides an overview of the incidence of American workplace violence, defined as actual crimes of violence in the workplace: homicide, rape, robbery and assault, attributable to co-workers, former co-workers and customers. The authors found that between 1980 and 1992 the greatest number of homicides occurred in the retail trade (38% of total) and service industries as a whole.
In reviewing non-fatal workplace violence the authors found that the industries having the highest number of assaulted workers were service (64%) and retail trade (21%). It should be noted that the authors’ definition of workplace violence included incidents perpetrated by any individual including co-workers and customers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Respondent</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bitner et al. (1994) (employee reports)</td>
<td>Sources of dis/satisfaction in service encounters from employee view.</td>
<td>22% of dissatisfaction incidents related to problem customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulatao and VadenBos (1996) (employee reports)</td>
<td>Incidence, importance &amp; costs of workplace violence: rape, homicide, robbery &amp; assault.</td>
<td>US industries with highest homicides and non-fatal assaults were service (64%) and retail trade (21%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guterman et al. (1996) (employee reports)</td>
<td>Incidence of workplace violence and victimisation for US &amp; Israeli social workers.</td>
<td>Verbal abuse experienced by over 44%, physical threats by over 19%. Worker experience and gender significant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbs (1991) (employee reports)</td>
<td>Extent and type of abuse &amp; violence directed towards UK General Practitioners during the course of their professional duties.</td>
<td>65% experienced abuse or violence during previous 12 months. Verbal abuse comprised 91% of all incidents. Relatives of patients were aggressors in 38% of cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon et al. (1996) (employee reports)</td>
<td>Assaultive/aggressive behaviour on staff by patients/customers in four NSW psychiatric facilities.</td>
<td>68% of respondents had been physically or verbally assaulted during their career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawless (1993) (employee reports)</td>
<td>Incidence of workplace stress, harassment and violence amongst 600 US civilian workers, and conditions that create them.</td>
<td>Harassers are usually co-workers or bosses; attackers are usually customers, with service dissatisfaction a major factor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillips et al. (1989) (employee reports)</td>
<td>Nature of people's work, the risks they encounter and the incidence of sexual harassment, physical attack and threatening behaviour of 1000 UK workers in the occupational groups of professional workers, carers, retail and office workers.</td>
<td>Most frequently reported incident was threatening behaviour, with 20% of the sample reporting at least one incident. Physical attack was reported by 8% of the sample.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richins (1983)* (customer reports)</td>
<td>How consumers interact with representatives of marketing institutions (investigated individual consumer assertiveness and aggression and developed scales to measure these variables).</td>
<td>Four interaction styles identified: non-assertive; assertive; aggressive; resort-to-aggressive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheridan et al. (1990) (patient &amp; staff reports)</td>
<td>Events preceding restraint of psychiatric patients due to threatening or aggressive behaviour.</td>
<td>Major precipitating external event was patient-staff conflict and major internal event was delusions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toohey (1993b) (employee reports)</td>
<td>Incidence, cost and causes of occupational stress claims in 6 Australian Commonwealth Departments.</td>
<td>Physical assault, abuse or harassment from /customers linked to 43% of claims.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A number of other studies reporting incidence rates focus on workers in the health services. For example, Gordon et al. (1996) surveyed, by self-administered questionnaire, New South Wales public health system health care workers who provide treatment and other services for the mentally ill. The survey had a 90% response rate. Of the respondents, 68% had experienced assault of some kind in their career. In addition, 93% suggested changes in procedures and practices including changes to the working environment, staffing patterns and security procedures to reduce the likelihood of aggression.

There are a number of studies which, whilst not directly focused on customer aggression, do identify it as a significant issue. For example, in a survey by Bitner et al. (1994) which explored the sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in service encounters reported by employees of the hotel, restaurant and airline industries, the second largest number of dissatisfaction incidents (22% of the total) were classified as problem customers. Problem customer behaviours comprised four categories: drunkenness; breaking company polices; verbal or physical abuse and being rude; and being uncooperative or unreasonably demanding. The researchers suggested that the problem customer group will surface in any service industry and its existence represents a strategic challenge for organisations. They call for further research to relate problem customer types to service industry conditions and circumstances.

A study conducted by the London School of Economics (Phillips et al. 1989) into the nature of risks encountered by 1000 workers in the occupational groups of professional workers, carers, retail and office workers, found 8% of respondents reported physical attacks, 14% reported incidences of sexual harassment, and 20% reported at least one incidence of threatening behaviour. The majority of physical attacks were initiated by clients or customers (65%). These attacks involved being punched, hit or attacked with a weapon or object. The incidents of threatening behaviour included physical threats, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, being followed and being bullied by other work colleagues. The majority of reported incidents of threatening behaviour were initiated by clients or customers (74%).

An Australian study conducted by Comcare on the quality of working life in six selected Commonwealth Government organisations during 1990/1 investigated the incidence, cost and causes of occupational stress (Toohey 1993b). The study analysed
workers' compensation claims for stress related illness and found that the two most significant precipitating events were conflict with supervisors (47%) and harassment or abuse from the general public or customers (43%). The subsequent report based on the research (Comcare 1993) broadly identifies customer service delivery as a significant antecedent of customer aggression. It also provides some direction in terms of factors which may contribute to customer aggression (for example physical layout of the workplace, work organisation and practice, and training and experience of staff). However, specific antecedents during the service encounter were not identified nor evaluated. The report was also based on employee reports rather than customer reports.

2.6.2 Studies Identifying Predictive Variables
Hobbs (1991) measured the rate, type and scale of violence towards general practitioners and determined the context in which it occurred. He reported that 63% of respondents had experienced abuse or violence during the previous 12 months and that aggression from patients affected over 25% of all general practitioners in the West Midlands of England. A total of 93% of all incidents comprised verbal abuse or threats with no direct physical act. Patients accounted for 57% of cases and relatives of patients (indirect users of the service) were aggressors in 38% of cases. Anxiety was a precipitant in 26% of cases and a long wait in 10%.

In another study within the health-care setting, Sheridan et al. (1990) used data gathered from medical records and interviews with staff and patients, in a psychiatric centre, to examine events preceding episodes in which patients were placed in restraints. The behaviours leading to restraint included physical aggression, verbal threats and threats with an object as a weapon. The study found that the major precipitating external event, defined as an event outside the patient and involving another person, was patient-staff conflict. Included in the category of patient-staff conflict were enforcement of rules by staff, staff denying the patient's privileges and staff denying the patient's discharge. The major internal event, defined as an event directly related to the patient's mental illness, was delusions.

Guterman et al. (1996) reported on a cross-national survey of United States and Israeli social worker reports of workplace violence and victimisation during the previous year. Violence and victimisation were defined as physical threats of a lawsuit, actually being sued, verbal abuse and sexual harassment. Verbal abuse was the most frequently
reported form of victimisation from clients for both Americans and Israelis (45% and 46% respectively). Physical threats from clients were the next most frequently reported form of victimisation with 18% of Americans and 23% of Israelis reporting experiences over the previous year. The report identified that worker experience (as measured by the number of years since workers had received their highest professional degree) and gender significantly predicted physical threats, physical assaults and verbal abuse among workers in the US. Less experienced workers reported a higher likelihood of receiving physical threats and assaults than more experienced workers. Similarly, American male workers were more likely to report threats and assault from clients than female workers were.

Brondolo et al. (1996) sought to identify predictors or correlates of interpersonal conflict between New York City traffic enforcement agents and the public. Interpersonal conflict was defined as verbal abuse consisting of insults, cursing, threats or racial epithets, and physical abuse such as spitting, hitting and grabbing ticket books. Whilst not a typical service environment, these encounters occurred in public and between people who are strangers, which is typical of many service encounters. The employee variables considered as potential correlates of conflict rate included demographic, organisational (years of experience, number of tickets issued the previous day, job title, shift and work-site location), personality and coping variables. No demographic variable was significantly associated with conflict rate. Variables assessing personality and coping contributed to about 11% of the variance. However, opportunity for conflict was a major predictor of frequency of conflict: the more tickets issued the more likely the traffic enforcement agents were to face an angry motorist.

One of the few studies within the services marketing arena, which whilst not directly focused on customer aggression did identify it as a significant issue, was the study by Richins (1983). This study examined different consumer interaction styles and reported the development of scales measuring these styles. Four consumer interaction styles were identified: the non-assertive; the assertive; the resort to aggression; and the aggressive. These interaction styles were studied together with three interaction situations (requesting information, resisting requests for compliance and seeking remedy for dissatisfaction) within the context of dealing with representatives of marketing institutions. Of note was that resort-to-aggression consumers were found to use both assertive and aggressive strategies in dealing with representatives of marketing
institutions. When rights were not granted by firm requests, these individuals turned to such aggressive behaviours as rudeness or making threats. This group was found to complain more often than any of the other groups and were most likely to report that they enjoyed doing so. Aggressive consumers were found to possess the most negative perceptions of business and business responsiveness.

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed the literature relating to aggression, and in particular customer aggression. It also reviewed the literature on service encounters and service quality.

The review found little research in general on customer aggression and almost none that focused on customer aggression in the service encounter. Further, what research has been undertaken on the topic has used employee or worker reports of the factors related to customer aggression rather than customer reports.

In an attempt to redress the current gap in knowledge about customer aggression, this research will explore the phenomenon in the service encounter, from the customer's perspective. A proposed model of customer aggression is developed in the next chapter.
3.1 INTRODUCTION
The previous chapter reviewed the literature relating to customer aggression. In general little research was found on customer aggression and almost none which focuses on customer aggression in the service encounter. In this chapter a proposed model of customer aggression is developed. The proposed model synthesises emotional aggression and services marketing theories and provides a framework for research on customer aggression during the service encounter.

3.2 MODEL OVERVIEW AND BASIC PROPOSITIONS
Figure 3.1 depicts the model of customer aggression underlying this study. In this model, based upon the literature previously reviewed, aversive service stimuli produce aggressive arousal in the form of anger. Mood and associated cognitions (expectations, cognitive re-appraisals and attribution) may decrease or increase this aggressive arousal. Organisational restraints influence whether or not this aggressive arousal leads to aggressive behaviour.

Service stimuli are those stimuli experienced by a customer during a direct service encounter. They are likely to vary along a number of dimensions. However, drawing on the services marketing literature, they can be classified into three major categories: physical, process and people stimuli (Bitner 1993). Physical stimuli are those attributed to the physical environment in which the service is delivered; they include for example, car parking facilities or seating in public areas. Process stimuli are those attributed to
the actual steps in the customer experience or the operational flow of service, for example, waiting in line. People stimuli refer to those experienced during the interaction with the organisation’s employees, for example, the courteousness of the receptionist.

For a customer to react aggressively, service stimuli need to be interpreted as aversive. The degree to which this occurs will depend, to a large extent, on the individual customer. However, once a customer interprets the service stimuli as aversive, human aggression theory would suggest that aggressive arousal is the outcome. Thus it is proposed that customers who experience aversive service stimuli within the direct service encounter are likely to become aggressively aroused.

Organisational restraints refer to those under the control of the organisation and include any mechanism that might influence or mitigate a display of aggressive behaviour. They will most likely involve security or other control mechanisms, and the interpersonal or defusing skills of the service person. Writers such as Franklin (1991); Kedjidjian (1993); (Overman 1993); Swanton and Webber (1990) have highlighted the importance of securing the work environment in order to prevent aggressive behaviour. Swanton and Webber (1990) for example, suggest a customer may be prevented from striking a service person by a physical barrier, such as a wide service counter. However, staff interpersonal skills are also important restraining mechanisms. For example, a customer’s instigation to verbally abuse a service person may be dissipated because of the sensitive, considerate manner of the service person. It is likely, that the type of aggressive behaviour displayed will be influenced by the nature and degree of organisational restraints present. Thus it is proposed that in situations where customers are aggressively aroused, the severity of customer aggression will be inversely related to organisational restraints.

The proposed model of customer aggression is developed in more detail in the following sections.
3.3 AVERSIVE SERVICE STIMULI

Few studies have examined the relationship between aversive service stimuli and aggressive arousal. However, three related streams of research are useful in identifying relevant aversive service stimuli. The first of these is the literature on human aggression. A number of researchers have explored the effects of noxious stimuli such as uncomfortable temperatures (e.g., Berkowitz and Thorne 1987; Anderson 1989), noise (Hitchcock and Waterhouse 1979), crowding (Griffitt and Veitch 1971) and irritating cigarette smoke (Jones and Bogat 1978; Zillmann et al. 1981). All of these stimuli have been shown to produce increased hostility and aggression.

The second is the research outlined earlier on dimensions of service quality (Parasuraman et al. 1988; Julian and Ramaseshan 1994). Service attributes considered by the customer in the evaluation of a service are logical candidates for variables that create an emotional response. If a variable is important enough to be weighed in the service evaluation process, it would also be a likely source for an emotion-based response (Johnson and Zinkhan 1991).

Finally, work undertaken by Comcare Australia (1993) into occupational stress in Commonwealth Government organisations identified a number of factors that might contribute to customer aggression. Based on this work and the above literature, Figure 3.2 lists six service attributes which are considered potential correlates of aversive service stimuli: incompetence and lack of courtesy (people stimuli); extensive waiting times and complex processes (process stimuli); difficult access and uncomfortable facilities (physical stimuli).

![Figure 3.2: Elaborated Model of Aversive Service Stimuli](image-url)
3.3.1 People Service Stimuli: Courtesy and Competence

Lewis and Entwistle (1990) suggests that procedural, technical and interpersonal or people skills are necessary for employees to perform effectively in the service encounter. Indeed, courtesy and competence were two of the ten key dimensions of service quality identified by Parasuraman et al. (1985). However, when the original ten dimensions were submitted to factor analysis, competence as a distinct dimension was subsumed under assurance (competence plus courtesy fosters consumer confidence and trust) (Parasuraman et al. 1988). This suggests that consumers do not recognise personal competence as a distinct factor of service quality (Kingman-Brundage 1991). However, in developing the aggregated five quality dimensions, data were based on a bank, a credit-card company, a firm offering appliance repair and maintenance services, and a long distance telephone company (Parasuraman et al. 1988). As indicated earlier, a service encounter may take varying forms ranging from a remote interaction such as by letter or via an automatic teller machine, a phone interaction with an employee or, a direct (face to face) interaction. Of the four firms used by Parasuraman et al. (1988) to collect data for the service dimensions, three (the bank, the credit card company and the phone company), are likely to have a high incidence of indirect interaction rather than direct (face to face) interaction with customers.

Goffman (1983, p.9) views the term courtesy as meaning that the “server will give quick attention to the client’s request and execute it with words, gestures, and manner that somehow display approval of the asker and pleasure with the contact”. Seen in this context it would seem reasonable to suggest that during direct (face-to-face) service encounters, which is the focus of the present study, it would be more fruitful to view the two dimensions of courtesy and competence as separate variables.

3.3.1.1 Courtesy

Courtesy refers to the manner with which the service person treats the customer. It includes factors such as consideration of the customer as a person (Johnson and Zinkhan 1991), and has been shown to play an important role in customer perceptions of service quality. For example, in a study assessing legal services, researchers found that courtesy accounted for at least 60% of the variation in how happy or angry a respondent was with an attorney, regardless of the actual outcome of that service (Johnson and Zinkhan 1991).
Courteous behaviours are intended to help the service person form a quick ‘bond’ with the customer and create the necessary rapport for a positive service encounter (Ford and Etienne 1994). Any behaviour that conveys friendliness (McCormick and Kinloch 1986), positive emotion (Rafaeli and Sutton 1990) or sociability (Hester et al. 1985) may be classified as courteous.

Several studies have shown that the friendliness, enthusiasm and attentiveness of contact employees positively affect customers’ perceptions of service quality (e.g., Ford 1995; Keaveney 1995). Ford (1995) found that as grocery store cashiers displayed more courtesy, customers provided more positive evaluations of service and were more likely to recommend the store to friends and shop at the store even though other stores were closer.

Keaveney’s (1995) study into the reasons why customers switch services found that service encounter failures were mentioned by 34% of respondents. Service encounter failures were all attributed to some aspect of the employee’s behaviour or attitude such as being uncaring, impolite, unresponsive or unknowledgeable. Uncaring service contact personnel were described by respondents as those that did not listen to customers, ignored customers or paid attention to people other than customers, were rushed or not helpful, unfriendly or not interested in customers. Impolite employees were described as rude, condescending and impatient or ill-tempered. Unresponsive contact personnel were categorised as inflexible or uncommunicative. Inflexible service persons refused to accommodate customer requests. Uncommunicative service persons failed to be pro-actively informative, refused to return phone calls, or neglected to answer questions (Keaveney 1995).

Keaveney’s research is significant within the context of this present study. It implies that the consequences of poor personal interactions between customers and employees of service firms extend beyond cognitive and affective evaluations of satisfaction and service quality to actual behaviour (Keaveney 1995). Whilst Keaveney focused on switching behaviour, it would seem reasonable to suggest that other behaviours (such as verbal abuse and aggressive actions) may also be consequences of such service encounter failures.
Other research (e.g., Howe et al. 1993; Whitely 1991) found that almost 70% of customers who change providers do so because they perceive an attitude of indifference from one or more individuals in the service organisation. Bitner et al. (1990) found that 43% of dissatisfactory service encounters were related to perceived attitude of the service person and Price et al. (1995) found that the most important predictor of negative feelings in a service encounter was the service person failing to meet minimum standards of civility.

Other research shows that individuals who have been insulted often counter-attack (Richardson et al. 1985; Geen et al. 1968). Lack of courtesy in a service encounter may be perceived as an insult by a customer. Thus it is proposed that:

*Proposition 1*: Perceived lack of courtesy during the service encounter will be positively related to aggressive arousal.

### 3.3.1.2 Competence

Competence refers to the technical ability of the employee (Johnson and Zinkhan 1991; Johnston 1995). In the context of this research, it reflects the service person's knowledge of the services offered by the organisation and the "possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service" (Zeithaml et al. 1990, p.21). In Keaveney's (1995) study, unknowledgable service employees were described as inexperienced, inept, or not versed in state-of-the-art techniques. Others simply did not instil confidence in the customer (Keaveney 1995).

Zeithaml et al. (1990) draw attention to the importance of competence by implying that other service dimensions such as extra attention and mutual understanding will not necessarily substitute for organised, efficient, capable and thorough service.

In a field study of consumer dissatisfaction patterns over 73 categories of services, Day and Bodur (1978) found that the most frequently mentioned reason for dissatisfaction was "the service was rendered in a careless and unprofessional manner", followed by "the services were rendered in an incompetent manner" (p.265). In line with this finding, Bitner (1990) and Bitner et al. (1994) found that customers are more satisfied with the service encounter when employees possess the ability, willingness and competence to solve their problems.
In a study of consumers’ emotional response to service encounters, Price et al. (1995) found that competence was a significant predictor of negative feelings across service persons as widely variant as a gas station attendant or movie theatre ticket taker, a psychiatrist or massage therapist. Guterman et al. (1996) identified that worker experience (presumably related to competence) significantly predicted physical threats, physical assaults and verbal abuse from customers among American social workers.

The above studies suggest that provider incompetence is likely to be a key aversive service stimulant. Thus it is proposed that:

Proposition 2: Perceived lack of competence on the part of the service person during a service encounter will be positively related to aggressive arousal.

3.3.2 Process Service Stimuli: Waiting Time and Process Complexity

3.3.2.1. Waiting Time

Waiting time refers to the time from which a customer is ready to receive the service until the time the service commences (Taylor 1994).

Because services cannot be inventoried and demand may be hard to predict (Zeithaml and Bitner 1996), waiting before receiving a service is a common experience. However, studies indicate a negative relationship between a long waiting time and consumer satisfaction (Chebat et al. 1993; Katz et al. 1991; Scotland 1991; Hui and Tse 1996). Even an efficient, courteous, and comprehensive service transaction can be overshadowed by the frustration of a long wait (Maister 1985). In fact, some people dislike waiting so much they are willing to hire other people to wait for them (Geist 1984). Delays are associated with negative affective reactions and have been described variously as disagreeable, uncertain, annoying, demoralising, agonising, aggravating, stressful, and anxiety producing (Dube-Riouxf et al. 1988; Gardner 1985; Katz et al. 1991; Maister 1985; Osuna 1985).

Anger and its associated feelings of irritation, annoyance and frustration have also been linked to delays (Baker and Cameron 1996; Bitner et al. 1990; Sawrey and Telford 1971; Taylor 1994). Delays are obstacles to service, and when an obstacle blocks satisfaction of a need frustration and anger can be the result (Berkowitz 1988). Taylor (1994) for
example, in a study into the relationship between delays and evaluations of service delays in airline travel, found that reboarding delays significantly affected feelings of anger.

Maister (1985) asserts that much of the anger evoked by a delay can be attributed to the uncertainty involved in waiting and its associated perceived loss of power, particularly if the length of the delay is unknown. Maister (1985) also suggests that customers may experience anger because there are financial costs or inconvenience associated with the delay, or because the service person has failed to deliver on an implicit promise of delivering service at a specified time. Taylor (1994) in her study of delayed airline passengers, found that the longer the delay, the more anger and uncertainty was experienced by passengers. Further, as the uncertainty of passengers increased, so did their anger.

Research on waiting time indicates that most customers hold a range of acceptable times for any given service encounter. The longer the wait is outside this acceptable range, the more frustrated the individual will become (Zeithaml and Bitner 1996, p. 80). Individual customer perceptions will influence what constitutes an acceptable or non-acceptable time period. Furthermore, customer perceptions of time may differ from the objective, measured time (Hornik 1984; Barnett and Saponaro 1985). Numerous factors are associated with how long or short a consumer perceives a wait to be including their expectation for the length of the wait (Davis and Vollmann 1990; Hayes 1990; Hornik 1993). Moreover, perceived time, rather than objective time, seems to form the basis of the reality for consumer experience and behaviour (Barnett and Saponaro 1985; Tom and Lucey 1995). Thus it is proposed that:

*Proposition 3:* A waiting time during a service encounter that is perceived by the customer to be excessive will be positively related to aggressive arousal.

### 3.3.2.2 Process Complexity

Process service stimuli are those attributed to the actual steps in the customer experience or the operational flow of service. Because services are processes, the actual steps involved in delivering and receiving the service assume substantial importance. Unlike manufacturing, service processes because of the human element, are typically less controllable (Fisk et al. 1993 p. 81).
Most research to date in the area of service design has been in service blueprinting and service mapping, an area pioneered by Shostack (1984, 1987, 1992) and Kingman-Brundage (1989, 1991). A service blueprint is a work flow design and control process. Executed in the tradition of industrial engineering, service blueprints enable work processes to be analysed and process elements to be arranged systematically to achieve both desired productivity goals and consumer outcomes (Kingman-Brundage 1991). It enables a company to explore all the issues inherent in creating or managing a service at arms length, enabling a company to evaluate assumptions on paper and refine any foreseeable problems. Shostack (1984) suggests that the use of a blueprint can help a service developer identify problems before they happen.

A service map (Kingman-Brundage 1991) is a management tool for depicting the chronology of tasks and activities undertaken by the consumer, front-line and support staff in the performance of service work. Because they can depict patterns and connections inherent in work steps and sequences, service maps also facilitate the discovery and demonstration of how the service system works and why; a concept termed 'service logic' by the authors. The authors argue that service maps can aid in supporting employee efforts to render service dependably, accurately and consistently.

Other researchers also have given attention to appropriate systems and processes for service delivery. Lewis and Entwistle (1990) for example, suggest that poor service may be more the fault of the system than the service employee who may be trying to do his or her best. From their perspective, many organisations leave much of the process of encounters to chance, resulting in a service system design that works against good service provision.

Czepiel et al. (1985) refer to the physical complexity or number of actions required to attain the service as a component of evaluating a satisfactory service encounter. They note that some service operations, such as highly bureaucratic services, are very complex, requiring the customer to follow a complicated, seemingly illogical, and extensive series of actions to complete the process. In as much as consumer behaviour is goal-directed, frustration develops when the goal sought requires more resources (money, time, and energy) than the consumer is able, willing or expecting to spend in order to achieve the goal (Fornell and Westbook 1979). Thus, highly complex
operations, particularly if perceived by the customer to be illogical, are likely to be frustrating. Therefore, it is proposed that:

**Proposition 4:** Service operations that are perceived by the customer to be complex will be positively related to aggressive arousal.

3.3.3 Physical Service Stimuli: Difficult Access and Uncomfortable Facilities

Whilst it is generally acknowledged that human behaviour is influenced by the physical setting in which it occurs, it was not until the 1960s that psychologists began to link this with predictions of behaviour. Since that time a large and growing body of literature within the field of environmental psychology has addressed the relationships between human beings and their built environments (for reviews of environmental psychology see Darley and Gilbert 1985; Russell and Ward 1982; Stokols 1978).

The physical environment is particularly important in service industries where the consumer experiences the organisation’s product while in the organisation’s facility (Bitner 1986). Booms and Bitner (1981) for example, highlight the power of the physical environment to reinforce or establish an image and to influence specific consumer behaviours and suggest that it should be included as a marketing mix element for service firms. Grove and Fisk (1983) argue that the design of the physical environment plays a key part in the success of a service encounter. Shostack (1977) and Zeithaml (1981) both emphasise the importance of ‘tangible cues’; including physical design features, in consumers’ evaluation of service.

Other researchers such as Mehrabian and Russell (1974) theorise that attitudes and behaviours are influenced through the emotion-eliciting qualities of the environment. They state that any environment can be described along three dimensions (pleasant-unpleasant, arousing-non arousing, dominant-submissive) based on people’s emotional responses to the particular environment. Based on this model, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) found that pleasurable emotions brought about by a store’s environment are a powerful determinant of the extent to which consumers report they may spend beyond their original expectation. The positive affective states may also prolong the time consumers spend in a store. An extension of this original study (Donovan et al. 1994) used a broader sample of shoppers, measured emotions during the shopping experience rather than before or after, and recorded the effects of actual shopping behaviour. The
effects of the emotional factors of pleasure and arousal were shown to be additional to
cognitive factors such as variety and quality of merchandise, price specialising and value
for money. The practical significance of this for retailers is that emotional responses
induced by the store environment can affect the time and money that consumers spend in
the store (Donovan et al. 1994).

A number of other empirical studies support the concept that the environment influences
consumer behaviour. For example, in a survey of satisfaction with retail outlets,
Westbrook (1981) found that satisfaction with the store environment was significantly
related to overall satisfaction with the retail shopping experience.

Further discussions of how the physical environment can affect consumers and their
evaluation of the service encounter can be found in the services literature across a wide
range of service businesses (e.g., Baker 1987; Baker et al. 2002; Berry et al. 1988;

One focus in the area of environmental research is the effects of difficult access and
uncomfortable facilities. Environmental psychologists suggest that once a person has
entered a place, the ‘servicescape’ (Bitner 1992) can actually influence the degree of
success the consumer experiences in executing their plans (Darley and Gilbert 1985).
Each individual comes to a particular service organisation with a goal or purpose that
may be aided or hindered by the setting. For example, if a shopper enters a large retail
store and due to poor store layout or lack of signage, he or she cannot find the product
they are looking for, then they are unable to carry out their purpose for entering the
environment, at least not easily. The role of physical design is highlighted by several
writers (e.g., Kingman-Brundage 1991; Shostack 1985; Wener 1985). Consumers
usually enter service encounters with a specific task focus or goal, and often under time
constraints. Environmental impediments, such as looking for people or facilities and
standing when they could be sitting, can be frustrating or stressful (Lewis and Entwistle
1990; Spies et al. 1997).

3.3.3.1. Difficult Access
In this thesis, difficulty in accessing an organisation refers to the ease with which a
customer can physically access the services in a direct service encounter. It includes
factors such as: the location of the service and its accessibility by public transport;
parking facilities; facilities for those with disabilities such as wheelchair ramps; and adequacy of organisation signage. All of these factors are likely to affect a customer's perceptions of the quality of a service encounter and their emotional response to the service encounter.

A number of researchers have noted that being disorientated or totally lost is not uncommon in large-scale public settings such as airports (Seidel 1983), subways (Bronzaft and Dubrow 1984) and buildings on university campuses (Dixon 1968). One of the potential outcomes of disorientation, particularly if a customer has difficulty understanding where facilities are or how they are to be used, is frustration (Wener 1985). This may result in a customer avoiding use of the service in the future. Alternatively, as frustration can lead to anger, consumers may look to blame employees for the poor conditions and display their anger in the form of customer aggression. Thus it is proposed that:

_Proposition 5:_ Perceived difficulty with accessing a service will be positively related to aggressive arousal.

### 3.3.3.2 Uncomfortable Facilities

In the context of a service encounter, uncomfortable conditions may include insufficient or uncomfortable seating arrangements, insufficient space or crowding, inadequate temperature control, or loud background music in the public waiting area. All of these stimuli are likely to act as triggers to customer aggression if perceived to be aversive.

Features of a service's setting such as the atmospherics (Kotler 1973), the ambient conditions (Bitner 1992), the scenery or decor (Booms and Bitner 1982) or the spatial layout (Bitner 1992; Wener 1985) can affect participants' cognitive or emotional responses and behaviours toward a service (Baker and Cameron 1996; Bitner 1990, 1992; Donovan et al. 1994; Wakefield and Blodgett 1996). For example, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) found that the pleasantness of the environment within a retail store was a significant predictor of consumer willingness to spend time in the store and intention to spend more money than originally planned.

A number of studies have shown that music affects moods and behaviour (see Bruner 1990 and Oakes 2000 for reviews). Smith and Curnow (1966), for example, found that
significantly less time was spent in two large supermarkets when background music was loud compared to when it was soft, although there was no significant difference in sales or in the customer’s reported level of satisfaction. Baker et al. (1992) found consumer moods states were influenced by music valence, and reported how subsequent emotional evaluation of the retail environment was a determinant of approach behaviour.

With respect to uncomfortable seating arrangements, Lieberman (2002) makes the point, within the context of successful restaurants, that no food, service or setting is good enough to overcome the frustration felt by a customer who has to endure an uncomfortable chair.

A number of research studies have shown that factors such as uncomfortable temperatures, crowding and poor air quality can play a role in aggressive behaviour (Anderson et al. 1995; Bandura 1973; Berkowitz 1993; Griffitt and Veitch 1971; Zillmann et al. 1981). For example, Anderson and his colleagues (e.g., Anderson 1989; Anderson et al. 1995) have found consistent evidence that aggression and the likelihood of riots increases as air temperature increases. A positive association between high ambient temperatures and antisocial behaviour has also been demonstrated in laboratory experiments (e.g., Griffitt and Veitch 1971). Bell and Baron (1977) argue that low temperatures (around 62F) are also associated with negative affective states. This view was supported by Anderson et al. (1996) who found hot and cold temperatures increased state hostility and hostile attitudes. Baker and Cameron (1996) suggested that there is a ‘range of comfort’ in service setting temperatures. Temperatures outside this range (too high or too low) are likely to result in negative affect.

With respect to crowding, the physical presence of another person increases arousal and the closer another person is the more arousing he or she is (Evans and Howard 1973; Evans 1978; Patterson 1976; Russell and Snodgrass 1987). However, variables such as presence of, number of, or physical distance to other persons cannot determine how pleasant an encounter with those other persons will be. This depends on who the other persons are (Russell and Snodgrass 1987, p.266). Whether a person finds a crowded environment pleasant or unpleasant also depends on the plan with which he or she entered the environment. Where the environment hinders the person’s plan (goal blocking), a good deal of emotional excitation or arousal is likely (Mandler 1984). Other people may for example, obstruct activities, compete for resources, produce distracting noises or
inhibit conversations. Such goal blocking may produce frustration. Sundstrom (1975) for example, found that goal blocking in the form of inattention and interruptions as subjects talked, produced irritation that increased with time for subjects who were placed in a small crowded room.

There are, however, a number of studies that have demonstrated that the negative effects of crowding can be reduced by increasing customers' cognitive control through increased choice (Bateson and Hui 1990), provision of information (Langer and Saegart 1977) or by careful interior design of service premises (Desor 1972). Langer and Saegart (1977) for example, forewarned some of their subjects that the supermarket they were going to visit might be very crowded and explained to them some possible psychological effects of crowding. Results of the study showed that warned individuals were less affected, psychologically and behaviourally, by high-density shopping environments than their unwarned counterparts. Desor (1972) found that people feel less crowded when barriers are used to partition high-density premises and the premises are square rather than rectangular or circular. Thus it is proposed that:

\textit{Proposition 6}: Facilities that are perceived by the customer to be uncomfortable will be positively related to aggressive arousal.

3.3.4 Importance of People Stimuli

Purchasers of services are more likely to interact with service producers than are purchasers of products. As service customers frequently provide the specifications of the service to the provider (Zeithaml et al. 1985), the frequency of customer/producer interaction makes contact people very important to service customers' perceptions of service quality (Surprenant and Solomon 1987; Zeithaml et al 1988).

Several studies have documented the influence of customer contact personnel on customers' evaluation of service quality and satisfaction with the service (e.g., Bitner et al. 1990; Brown and Swartz 1989; Gronroos 1990a; Parasuraman et al. 1988). For example, Crosby and Stephens (1987) studied relationship marketing in the life insurance industry and found customers' satisfaction with their agent (contact person) to be a significant predictor of overall satisfaction with the service. Similarly, studies of service satisfaction have uncovered the importance of particular contact employee characteristics such as the service personnel's manner (Berry et al. 1985), dress (Solomon et al. 1985),
technical skills (Gronroos 1990b; Davidow and Uttal 1989), and commitment (Bitner et al. 1990), as significant factors in determining service excellence. In essence, service personnel are often largely responsible for the consumer’s perception of service performance (Berry and Parasuraman 1991; Davidow and Uttal 1989; Kandampully, 1998; Lovelock 1994; Shostack 1977).

Service personnel also influence consumer behaviour. For example, Berry and Parasuraman (1991) found that how service personnel “conduct themselves in the customer’s presence, how they act, what they say, what they don’t say and their appearance influences whether customers purchase from the firm again” (p.8). The role of the service person is particularly important in high contact services (Grove and Fisk 1983; Lovelock 1983). Indeed, Hartline and Ferrell (1996) suggested that the employee-customer interface is the most important determinant of customers’ perceptions of service quality.

Research in the domain of human emotion also suggests that the greater the human interaction in the service encounter, the more likely the customer’s evaluation of the service will be influenced by moods and emotion (Johnson and Zinkhan 1991).

Therefore, it seems likely that the people dimensions of aversive service stimuli (courtesy and competence) will be more influential in generating an aggressive emotional response than the physical or process dimensions. Thus, it is proposed to evaluate the following proposition:

**Proposition 7:** Of the three types of aversive service variables, people variables (lack of courtesy and in-competence), will be most strongly related to aggressive arousal.

### 3.4 MODERATORS BETWEEN AVERSIVE SERVICE STIMULI AND AROUSAL

All of the above aversive service stimuli (people, process and physical) have the potential to trigger aggressive arousal. However, Eron (1994) highlights how the way in which the individual perceives and interprets environmental events determines whether they will respond with aggression or some other behaviour. And, as indicated earlier, the theory of
emotional-aggression (Berkowitz 1989, 1993) suggests that aversive service stimuli result in aggressive arousal only to the degree that they are interpreted by the individual as unpleasant.

Whilst there are many factors which may affect an individual’s interpretation of an event, four well-researched factors include attribution, expectations, cognitive re-appraisals and mood.

3.4.1 Attribution

Attributions are perceptions about why other persons have acted in certain ways. Whenever people observe or are confronted with unexpected or unwanted behaviour by others, they search for an explanation for such conduct (Wong and Weiner 1981). This search may lead them to attribute blame (or responsibility) to another.

Researchers such as Folkes et al. (1987), Jorgensen 1993, Meyer and Mulherin (1980), Reisenzein (1986), Weiner (1980) and Weiner (1986) have found that when a negative event is attributable to a controllable cause, then anger is the dominant emotional reaction. Weiner (1986), on the basis of his “attribution-affect model of helping behaviour”, argues that anger “is not merely the result of non-attainment of a desired goal, but rather follows when a barrier imposed by others is ‘arbitrary’ rather than ‘nonarbitrary’ (p.303).

Rule and Nesdale (1976b) describe the attribution process as a decision tree. In this process, the perceiver makes a judgement as to whether another’s action was intended or unintended. If the other person’s action is perceived as intended, the perceiver makes a judgement as to whether it was justified or unjustified. If the decision was that the person’s action was intentional and unjustified, they are seen as responsible and blameworthy. If the initial decision was that the person’s behaviour was unintentional, the perceiver then makes a judgement as to whether the consequences of the action were foreseeable. If the consequences are viewed as foreseeable, then they are avoidable, and the person may be judged to be responsible and blameworthy for not avoiding the consequences. It should be noted that some individuals are prone to assign blame without considering extenuating circumstances or attributing intentionality or motivation to the other person. But typically the attribution process occurs in assigning
responsibility and blame for anti-normative actions (Kohlberg 1981; Tedeschi and Nesler 1993).

Averill (1982), as part of a large scale survey of the characteristics of situations which made people angry, concluded that “The major issue for the person in the street is not the specific nature of the instigating event; it is the perceived justification for the instigator’s behaviour” (Averill 1983, p.1150). Averill found that over 85% of the incidents described by respondents to his survey involved either an act that they considered voluntary and unjustified (59%), or a potentially avoidable accident, for example due to lack of foresight or negligence (28%). Averill concluded “More than anything else, anger is an attribution of blame” (Averill 1983, p.1150). Thus it is proposed that:

*Proposition 8:* Service encounters that arouse anger will be predominantly described as unjust or avoidable.

### 3.4.2 Service Expectations

The consumer does not approach even novel or new service encounters as a ‘blank slate’. Instead each consumer has a more or less articulated expectation. This expectation includes anticipation of the service provider’s role and of the probable behaviour sequence. It further includes a comparison level against which outcomes in the encounter will be judged (Dion, et al. 1998; McCallum and Harrison 1985; Zeithaml et al. 1993).

In the service quality literature, expectations are viewed as the wants or desires of consumers; what the consumer feels the service provider should offer (see for example, Brown and Swartz 1989; Sasser et al. 1979; Parasuraman et al. 1985, 1988). Consumers then compare these wants (expectations) with their perceptions of the service firm’s actual performance to make judgements about service quality. Thus, perceived service quality is viewed as the degree and direction of discrepancy (the gap) between consumers’ perceptions and expectations (Parasuraman et al. 1988).

Expectations are influenced by a set of factors including personal needs, past experience and service provider promises (Zeithaml et al. 1993). For example, when a consumer purchases a service from a provider that promises ‘service second to none’, relatively high expectation levels have been set. If the promises are not met, the consumer is
likely to be more dissatisfied than in a situation where the service provider has set lower expectations (Parasuraman et al. 1991).

Research has also shown that the greater the disparity between what a person expects as an outcome and what actually occurs, the stronger their feelings of anger or hostility (Worchel 1974; Berkowitz 1993). Thus it is proposed that:

**Proposition 9:** The greater the gap in expectations between the anticipated service quality and the perceived actual service quality the stronger the anger arousal.

### 3.4.3 Cognitive Re-appraisals

A number of authors have emphasised the role of cognitive re-appraisals in the reduction of anger or other emotions (see for example, Averill 1973; Bandura 1973; Isen 1987, Lararus 1967; Novaco 1979 and Zillmann 1988).

Bandura (1973) for example, notes that anger can be aroused by thinking about provoking incidents and can be diminished by cognitive reinterpretation of perceived insults. Larzarus (1967) views re-appraisal of an event as the principle means of coping with threat when direct action is not possible.

A number of studies support the concept that provocation experiences are moderated by the appraisal of their meaning. For example, Averill (1983) in his study on anger found that respondents who made some re-appraisal of the instigating event generally rated themselves as less intensely angry and angry for a shorter duration than those who made no re-appraisal. Thus it is proposed that:

**Proposition 10:** The use of cognitive re-appraisals will be associated with less anger intensity.

### 3.4.4 Mood

Definitions of mood have ranged from mild affective states that are easily induced (Srull 1983) to general responses to the world at large (Gardner 1985, 1987). Moods are generally seen to be transient and pervasive feeling states that occur in specific
situations or at specific times, rather than attributable to a particular or specific source (Gardner, 1985, 1987; Westbrook 1980).

The effects of mood on consumer behaviour have been widely studied in recent years (Gardner 1985, 1987; Gardner and Hill 1988; Knowles et al. 1993). Research areas have included the effects of mood states on consumers’ satisfaction (Westbrook 1980) reactions to advertising (Goldberg and Gorn 1987), information processing (Gardner 1987), decision-making (Isen and Means 1983) and the service encounter (Gardner 1985; Knowles et al. 1993).

It has been suggested that consumers’ mood may both directly and indirectly influence behaviour during their service interaction (Gardner, 1985). However, the relationship between mood and behaviour is quite complex. On the one hand, positive moods may enhance the likelihood of behaviours with perceived positive outcomes or reduce the likelihood of behaviours with perceived negative outcomes (Forest et al. 1979). On the other hand, the equivocal research results concerning negative mood states and behaviour make it difficult to predict with confidence the role that a negative mood may play in affecting a consumer’s actions toward service encounters (Knowles et al. 1993). Negative mood states may lead to a variety of behaviours, positive or negative (Fried and Berkowitz 1979).

Findings concerning mood in general, however, suggest that the mood a consumer brings to a service encounter may affect the quantity and nature of the information retrieved concerning stimuli encountered there, the evaluation of the service encounter, and the behaviour demonstrated by service consumers (Cunningham 1979). Bitner (1990) for example, suggests that a consumer’s ‘pre-attitude’ might shape their expectations brought to the service interaction. Thus it is proposed that:

*Proposition 11*: Customers in a negative mood state prior to entering the service encounter will have stronger anger arousal.

### 3.5 MODERATORS OF AGGRESSIVE AROUSAL AND AGGRESSION

As suggested by the proposed Model of Customer Aggression, once aggressively aroused, a customer will engage in aggressive behaviour unless organisational restraints intervene.
It has been proposed that in situations where customers are aggressively aroused, the severity of customer aggression will be inversely related to organisational restraints.

As depicted in Figure 3.3 organisational restraints refer to any mechanism under the control of the organisation that might influence or mitigate a display of aggressive behaviour. These include security mechanisms, the presence of others and the skills of the service person in defusing the customer’s anger.

Figure 3.3: Elaborated Model of Relationship between Aggressive Arousal and Customer Aggression

3.5.1 Security Mechanisms

Whilst there is little existing literature directly on organisational restraints, a number of authors have identified the benefits of improving security in the workplace as a means of reducing workplace violence (e.g., Franklin 1991; Kedjidjian 1993; Overman 1993). Security mechanisms can range from simple measures such as wider service counters, to more sophisticated control measures such as those employing security personnel and video surveillance equipment. It seems likely that security controls will moderate customer aggression. For example, a wide counter may prevent a customer striking a service provider. Similarly security personnel or visible video surveillance equipment, may reduce the likelihood of other forms of customer aggression.

A number of studies have shown that the probability of retaliation can play a role in aggressive behaviour. Anticipated retaliation has been found to reduce subsequent aggression, especially overt forms of aggression (Baron 1973; Baron and Newman 1998; Geddes and Baron 1997; Rogers 1980). Geddes and Baron (1997) for example,
found that employee aggression following negative performance feedback from managers (who were seen to be able to influence rewards), was verbal passive or indirect in nature rather than overt. Thus it is proposed that:

*Proposition 12*: The presence of security mechanisms will inhibit the expression of aggressive tendencies.

### 3.5.2 Presence of Others

The presence of others is unlikely to impact upon a consumer’s feelings of dissatisfaction or anger about the service (Grove et al. 1998). However, whilst an audience may have little impact upon feelings of anger, it is likely that an audience will impact upon displayed behaviour (Bjorkqvist et al. 1994; Robinson and Bennett 1995; Geddes and Baron 1997). A number of studies have shown that aggression is often reduced by the presence of an audience, especially when the audience can be expected to disapprove of such behaviour (Baron and Newman 1998; Cottrell et al. 1968; Richardson et al. 1979; Robinson and Bennett 1995).

Within the context of the service encounter, the presence of others may increase the likelihood that aggressively aroused customers will engage in verbal forms of aggression rather than physical forms. Thus it is proposed that:

*Proposition 13*: The presence of other people (friends, family, other customers or other staff) during the service encounter will moderate the expression of aggressive behaviour.

### 3.5.3 Staff Defusing Skills

A number of authors have identified the importance of providing staff training in how to defuse volatile situations, as a way of reducing incidents of customer aggression (see for example, Comcare 1993; Byrnes 1997; Leadbetter and Trewartha 1996).

Bitner et al. (1990), in a study which explored the causes of both satisfactory and unsatisfactory service encounters, found that a large proportion of unsatisfactory encounters (43%) were related to employees’ inability or unwillingness to respond in service failure situations. They concluded that it is not the initial failure to deliver the core service alone that causes dissatisfaction, but rather the employee’s response to the
failure and in particular the attitude of the service employee as inferred by the customer from both verbal and nonverbal behaviours. The survey results suggested that offering sincere apologies, compensatory actions and explanations can dissipate anger and dissatisfaction.

In a related stream of research Tax et al. (1998) found that managers or employees who acted in a polite and empathetic manner, coupled with a strong effort to resolve the problem, contributed to diffusing customers’ anger in complaint incidents. By comparison, rude, uncaring behaviour exacerbated the anger. Thus it is proposed that:

**Proposition 14:** A service person’s attempt to defuse the situation will lessen the intensity of anger arousal and will moderate the expression of aggressive behaviour.

### 3.6 Behavioural Response: Customer Aggression

In this research, customer aggression is defined as any form of behaviour displayed by a customer that is intended to injure a service person and is triggered by some factor during the face to face (direct) service encounter.

Very few studies have attempted to operationalise customer aggression. Richins (1997) suggested that rudeness, raising one’s voice, or abusive language are aggressive behaviours in which a consumer may engage. Swanton and Webber (1990) suggested that swearing, insulting, making offensive noises, intimidating by word or deed (including threatening, gesturing), assaulting either by hand, foot or weapon, including pulling hair, touching, pushing, prodding, spitting, stabbing, cutting, shooting, complaining, and exposing portions of human body normally clothed in an office environment are aggressive behaviours exhibited by customers.

In a more systematic approach, Hobbs (1991) categorised aggression into five categories of increasing severity:

- **I** verbal abuse;
- **II** verbal abuse with specific threats (e.g., shaking fists) or with physical action against inanimate objects (e.g., banging table, throwing object, forcing door);
- **III** physical action against the person without injury (e.g., pushing or obstructing);
IV physical violence with minor injury (e.g., cuts, bruises);
V physical violence with severe injury (e.g., knocked unconscious, needing hospital care).

Hobbs' operationalisation of customer aggression is consistent with Berkowitz's (1993) suggestion that aggressive actions can be classified in terms of their physical nature.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Based on the literature review, chapter three outlined a proposed model of customer aggression. According to this model aversive service stimuli are expected to affect aggressive arousal. Attribution for the aversive service stimuli influences the affective consequences for the aversive service stimuli. The Customer Aggression Model emphasises the importance of organisational restraints in moderating expression of aggressive behaviour. Fourteen propositions were developed to evaluate the model:

Proposition 1: Perceived lack of courtesy during the service encounter will be positively related to aggressive arousal.

Proposition 2: Perceived lack of competence on the part of the service person during a service encounter will be positively related to aggressive arousal.

Proposition 3: A waiting time during a service encounter that is perceived by the customer to be excessive will be positively related to aggressive arousal.

Proposition 4: Service operations that are perceived by the customer to be complex will be positively related to aggressive arousal.

Proposition 5: Perceived difficulty with accessing a service will be positively related to aggressive arousal.

Proposition 6: Facilities that are perceived by the customer to be uncomfortable will be positively related to aggressive arousal.

Proposition 7: Of the three types of aversive service variables, people variables (lack of courtesy and in-competence), will be most strongly related to aggressive arousal.

Proposition 8: Service encounters that arouse anger will be predominantly described as unjust or avoidable.

Proposition 9: The greater the gap in expectations between the anticipated service quality and the perceived actual service quality the stronger the anger arousal.
Proposition 10: The use of cognitive re-appraisals will be associated with less anger intensity.

Proposition 11: Customers in a negative mood state prior to entering the service encounter will have stronger anger arousal.

Proposition 12: The presence of security mechanisms will inhibit the expression of aggressive tendencies.

Proposition 13: The presence of other people (friends, family, other customers or other staff) during the service encounter will moderate the expression of aggressive behaviour.

Proposition 14: A service person’s attempt to defuse the situation will lessen the intensity of anger arousal and will moderate the expression of aggressive behaviour.

This model, if validated, will provide useful theoretical and managerial insights into customer aggression.

Chapter four describes the design and results of preliminary qualitative research undertaken as a tentative evaluation of the Model of Customer Aggression.
CHAPTER 4: PRELIMINARY QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined a proposed model of customer aggression. In evaluating the propositions developed in the previous chapter this study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative research was used to confirm and refine the parameters of the model. Quantitative research was used to further evaluate the model. This dual approach is consistent with procedures recommended for social science, business and marketing research (Baker 1991; Brewer and Hunter 1989; Zikmund 1997).

This chapter presents the qualitative research phase of the study. Because of the lack of prior research in the area of customer aggression, the main objectives of this phase were to ensure that the main study would begin with an adequate understanding of the nature of the problem, and to refine the model suggested by the literature search. The chapter begins with an overview of the nature of and rationale for utilising a qualitative approach during the initial phase of the study. This is followed by a summary of the findings from fifteen individual depth interviews, each of which was conducted with people who had experienced extremely poor service during a recent face-to-face service encounter. Finally, some recommendations for the main study arising from this qualitative phase are presented.

4.2 NATURE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Although qualitative research has limitations, particularly in relation to the representativeness of the sample, its use was appropriate in this early stage to assist in the process of discovery and theory development (Patton 1990). Qualitative methods are particularly useful for clarifying and defining a concept or nature of a problem (Zikmund 1997) and are recommended for investigating the factors that influence behaviour and the reasons why individuals exhibit particular patterns of behaviour (Baker 1991; Sampson 1986; Zikmund 1997).

In qualitative research, respondents are either interviewed individually or in small groups (Worcester and Downham 1986). After considering both approaches, individual in-depth
interviews were selected as most appropriate for exploring the underlying sources of anger in service encounters and subsequent behaviour.

In-depth interviews are unstructured extensive interviews that encourage a respondent to talk freely and in depth about an undisguised topic (Zikmund 1997). They have been recommended for use in qualitative research to gain insights and understanding (Malhotra 1993), and are particularly appropriate where a highly detailed step-by-step understanding of decision-making patterns is required (Tull and Hawkins 1993). The detailed probing of the individual’s behaviour or attitudes may generate research hypotheses and concepts relating to behaviour that would not arise from deductive methods (Weiers 1988; Palmer 1998).

A major reason for choosing individual in-depth interviews for this study over other qualitative methods such as focus groups, was that they may facilitate respondents’ revealing of attitudes or motives that they would be reluctant to discuss in a group setting (Weiers 1988). This is particularly relevant if the subject matter is confidential or emotionally charged (Mitchell 1993; Tull and Hawkins 1993), as is likely to be the case with discussions about one’s own aggressive behaviour (Baron and Richardson 1994).

Individual in-depth interviews also have been found to generate more and higher quality ideas than focus groups (Mitchell 1993; Palmerino 1999; Tull and Hawkins 1993). With one-on-one interviews, both majority and minority opinions can be tapped irrespective of the dominance of personalities or problems associated with group processes. With one-on-one interviews, ideas from one respondent do not influence the thoughts of any other respondent, which is particularly relevant if strong socially acceptable norms exist (Tull and Hawkins 1993). This is likely in the case of aggressive behaviour. In addition, every word the respondent speaks in a one-on-one interview can be more accurately taped and transcribed than is usually the case with group interviews, thus providing greater depth of information (Malhotra 1993; Palmerino 1999). Furthermore, the thesis topic requires a detailed step-by-step narrative by each interviewee, and hence would not be appropriate for group discussion techniques.

Calder (1977) described three approaches to qualitative research: clinical, phenomenological and exploratory. The exploratory approach is used to obtain
prescientific explanations; the clinical approach to obtain quasi-scientific explanations based on clinical interpretation; and the phenomenological approach to obtain everyday explanations based on personal contact. The qualitative research component of this present study was primarily exploratory seeking to compare scientific constructs generated from the literature review with everyday explanations.

4.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
The overall objectives of the individual depth interviews were to gain a broader understanding of:

➤ The nature of aggressive arousal and its instigation;
➤ Respondent behaviour during a poor service encounter;
➤ Moderators of respondent behaviour.

The study was designed to meet the following specific outcomes:

➤ To act as a tentative evaluation of the model;
➤ To refine and revise the model and its variables.

4.4 METHODOLOGY
4.4.1 Participants
Fifteen persons were recruited from a Perth Training Company’s customer or employee database and screened for a relevant service encounter experience, defined as perceived extremely poor service by an organisation during a face-to-face service encounter. The screening questionnaire is attached in Appendix 4.1. Respondents who admitted to feeling angry during poor service or treatment by an organisation during a recent service encounter were invited to participate in a one-on-one discussion about their experience.

To ensure a broad range of service encounters and experiences, an attempt was made to obtain respondents varying in age, gender and socioeconomic status. The sample consisted of four female respondents (three white collar and one blue collar; one aged 16-29, two aged 30-39 and one aged over 40 years) and eleven male respondents (six blue collar and five white collar; two aged 16-29, four aged 30-39 and five aged over 40 years).
Respondents were classified by socioeconomic level, primarily in terms of their occupation. However, for the one student respondent, classification was by the occupation of another member of the household and residential address. A total of seven respondents could be classified as blue-collar workers (builders, policemen and factory workers). The remaining eight of the sample were classified as white-collar workers (clerical workers, office workers, professionals and managers).

4.4.2 Procedure
The fifteen individual depth interviews were conducted in the Training Company’s seminar rooms or in the individual’s home.

The interviews were conducted using a modified critical incident approach which utilised a semi-structured format. Each interview began with a brief description of the project. This emphasised that the purpose of the study was to discover ways of improving service quality. Respondents were asked to think about a recent (within 6 to 12 months) extremely poor face-to-face service encounter and asked to describe the incident, their feelings and exactly what had happened ‘in sufficient detail to enable the incident to be visualised by the researcher’.

After asking the initial question, the subsequent direction of the interview was determined by the respondent’s reply, with the researcher probing for elaboration where necessary. The researcher used an interview guide, which is shown in Appendix 4.2. However, the specific wording of the questions and the order in which they were asked was influenced by the respondent’s replies. This approach is consistent with that recommended for conducting in-depth interviews (Minichiello et al. 1995; Malhotra 1993; Tull and Hawkins 1993). It also reflected the criteria established by Ericsson and Simon (1980) for providing valuable, reliable information about cognitive processes, in that respondents were asked about a specific event rather than generalities.

The critical incident technique is a classification technique that employs content analysis of stories or ‘critical incidents’ as data (Bitner et al. 1990). The technique gathers first-hand, ‘customer perspective’ information. This kind of self-report data offers a richness of detail and the authenticity of personal experience of those closest to the activity being studied. Another strength of the technique is its focus on explicit behaviours in specific situations.
As a research method the critical incident technique shares the advantages and disadvantages generally attributed to content analysis (Viney 1983) and qualitative methods in general (Patton 1990). Criticisms typically focus on issues of reliability and the validity of categories established during analysis of data (Bitner et al. 1985; Bitner et al. 1990). However, work conducted by Ronan and Latham (1974); White and Locke (1981) and Wilson-Pessano (1988) on the general reliability and validity aspects of the critical incident technique led them to conclude that information collected using this technique is both reliable and valid. The critical incident method has been applied successfully to the study of customer perceptions of service encounters (e.g., Bitner et al. 1990; Keaveney 1995; Kelley et al. 1993). As a technique it is particularly appropriate when the goals of the research include theory development (Keaveney 1995).

An extensive written transcript of the first five in-depth interviews was taken. The remaining 10 interviews were audiotaped with the permission of the interviewees. With respect to criticisms that the presence of a tape recorder inhibits respondents from answering freely, Mitchell (1993) suggests that with a reasonably sensitive subject area, the use of a tape recorder could have some small biasing effect. However, on balance it is the preferable way of ensuring error-free data capture during one-on-one interviews. Mitchell (1993) describes research conducted by Butcher, Fritz & Quarantelli in 1956 where the written reports of 300 interviews were compared against the reports of 700 tape recorded interviews. The research found no adverse influences on interview data through the use of recorders.

As recommended by Minichiello et al. (1995) and Mitchell (1993) the interviews were recorded using a small discreet portable machine. This was placed on a table with the transparent workings facing the researcher so as to minimise distraction for the interviewee from the turning tape.

4.5 ANALYSIS OF EXPLORATORY INTERVIEWS

The data from the in-depth interviews were analysed using an inductive, interpretative approach (Greenbaum 1987; Patton 1990). This approach has been used extensively in services marketing research (see for example, Bitner et al. 1994; Bitner et al. 1990; Parasuraman et al. 1985; Zeithaml et al. 1993). It involves searching for themes and
categorising them in such a way as to make them useful in addressing practical problems (Bitner et al. 1990; Bolton and Bronkhorst 1991). However, in this case, the data analysis focussed on the extent to which the study’s model of customer aggression could account for the data.

The results are therefore presented in the context of the model of customer aggression: nature of the instigation; any moderating factors on instigation; respondent feelings and behaviour during the encounter; and any moderating factors on respondent behaviour.

4.5.1 Aversive Stimuli (Nature of the Instigation)

The aversive service stimuli reported by the fifteen respondents as being a contributing factor to their feelings of aggressive arousal were categorised as follows:

- People Aversive Stimuli: 20 mentions (15 courtesy and 5 competence related)
- Process Aversive Stimuli: 14 mentions (9 waiting time and 5 process related)
- Physical Aversive Stimuli: 5 mentions (3 access and 2 uncomfortable facility related)

The main people factor identified was lack of courtesy and this applied in all 15 service encounters. All respondents perceived that the service person had been either rude, insulting, arrogant or disrespectful. For example, one respondent felt that her Bank Manager had not treated her “as a person”, and had used a condescending, arrogant tone of voice and manner when responding to her request for a bank loan. Five respondents mentioned factors relating to the service person’s competence. These ranged from being given insufficient or incorrect information, to a perception that the service person did not know their job.

The process factors ranged from perceived unfair or inappropriate policies (such as not providing a full refund for a newly purchased faulty printer because it was not in its original box), to the number of forms required to complete a transaction. However, the main factor identified was perceived excessive wait time. This ranged from 10 minutes to 35 minutes.

The main physical factor reported was difficulty with parking. Two respondents mentioned uncomfortable facilities, one respondent found the lack of privacy afforded in
a government building when he was discussing personal matters irritating; and another respondent was irritated by the crowded, noisy, hot and stuffy atmosphere of a bar.

4.5.2 Respondent Feelings (Aggressive Arousal)

As a result of the experienced aversive service stimuli, four respondents admitted to feelings of annoyance; eight admitted to initial feelings of annoyance followed by feelings of anger; and three respondents admitted to feelings of anger as an immediate result of the aversive service stimuli.

The four cases of annoyance-only were the result of a perceived lack of courtesy by the service person or a combination of lack of courtesy and competence. For example, in one case the service person had incorrectly completed a form resulting in the respondent losing money. This perceived incompetence was compounded by the service person’s attempt to “bluff her way out of the mistake” by becoming “arrogant and verbally aggressive” with the respondent. The respondent saw this discourteous interaction as a lack of service person skill rather than a personal insult.

The initial annoyance of the eight annoyance-followed-by-anger cases resulted mainly from difficulty with parking or excessive waiting. This annoyance escalated to anger as a result of subsequent perceived rudeness or lack of courtesy by the service person. This lack of courtesy was seen by five respondents as a personal insult. For example, in one case the respondent who was in a hurry to fill a prescription was kept waiting by a pharmacist who appeared to be chatting to a family friend. The respondent’s initial annoyance escalated to anger when the pharmacist appeared to verbally insult him when he complained about the wait.

The three cases of anger-only resulted mainly from lack of courtesy. In all cases respondents perceived a personal insult by the service person. For example, one respondent felt that the service person had implied that he was lying. Another respondent felt that the service person had implied that she was trying to “rip them off”.

4.5.3 Moderators of Aggressive Arousal

With respect to the pre-incident mood of the fifteen respondents, ten participants could be categorised as having been in a good mood. Typically respondents reported that they felt “relaxed”, “cheerful” or “happy”. The remaining five respondents could be categorised
as having been in a bad mood prior to the incident. Typically respondents reported that they felt “anxious”, “irritated” or “rushed”.

In describing the incident, eight participants described incidents that could be categorised as avoidable. Seven participants described incidents that could be categorised as unjust.

With respect to expectations, only two respondents were asked specifically about their pre-service expectations. One had high expectations based on previous experience and when these expectations were not met he became very angry. The other respondent had low expectations based on previous experience with the organisation. When these expectations of service quality were realised he only became annoyed.

In describing their response to the incident, eight of the fifteen respondents used strategies that could be categorised as cognitive re-appraisals, to reduce their anger or annoyance. Three respondents described strategies that could be categorised as minimising the importance of the person who angered them. Two described strategies that could be categorised as reinterpreting the motives or guilt of the person who angered them. Three described strategies that could be categorised as minimising the importance of the incident.

4.5.4 Respondent Behaviour
Annoyance was either not expressed or expressed using mild verbal aggression. For example, one respondent used a sarcastic remark and another reported “having an edge” to his voice during his interaction with the service person.

Anger was expressed either verbally or verbally and physically. Verbal expression generally comprised a raised or forceful voice, or swearing. In the five cases where physical aggression accompanied a verbal expression of anger, the physical aggression took the form of slamming doors, using intimidating body gestures or movements, or thumping a desk. All respondents who used physical expression perceived they had been personally insulted by the service person.
4.5.5 Moderators of Respondent Behaviour

Eleven subjects were asked to describe what they felt like doing as a result of their annoyance or anger, and then to describe what they actually did during the incident. Their responses are summarised in Table 4.1. All eleven reported that they restrained their behaviour. For example, one respondent felt like physically assaulting the service person but shouted at the person instead. Another felt like swearing at the service person but instead swore under his breath.

Reasons for the difference between what a respondent felt like doing and what they actually did were related mainly to other people being present, or negative consequences such as removal of a benefit or a punishment. This is consistent with research by Averill (1982). For example, one respondent who felt like “yelling” at the service person asked a sarcastic question instead, because, he was surrounded by other customers.

The data seemed to indicate a variation in people’s ability to handle their anger or annoyance. Some people expressed that they controlled their anger well and were able to maintain control of the situation. Others seemed to be more unrestrained in their responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Respondents Felt Like Doing</th>
<th>What Respondents Actually Did</th>
<th>Respondent’s Rationale for Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Swearing and shouting at him”</td>
<td>“I cut him off mid sentence got up and left slamming the door behind me”</td>
<td>“His position (Bank Manager) stopped me verbalising and I wasn’t going to be as rude as him”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Swearing at her and punching her in the gob”</td>
<td>“Raised my voice: was very forthright and definite in making my point”</td>
<td>“I was standing there in full police uniform ... and my professionalism”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I felt like killing someone”</td>
<td>“Used controlled anger in my voice”</td>
<td>“I was in the middle of a restaurant full of people”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Getting the girl’s supervisor involved”</td>
<td>“Controlled the anger in my voice; used a no nonsense tone”</td>
<td>“Patrick (my young son) was present”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Swearing at him (the teacher)”</td>
<td>“Swore under my breath”</td>
<td>“Not worth being put on detention for”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Saying something – retorting to the guard”</td>
<td>“Did nothing – just ignored him”</td>
<td>“I evaluated the situation and decided it was not worth it (the hassle with the guard)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Showing my annoyance in my voice”</td>
<td>“I kept my voice controlled”</td>
<td>“I needed to calm the waters and move things along”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I felt like killing this bloke”</td>
<td>“I glared at the bloke”</td>
<td>“He was bigger, there were lots of them – I was a stranger there”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Kicking over his display – really having a go at him”</td>
<td>“Raised my voice...I used hand gestures to make my point .. I may have sworn at him”</td>
<td>“Others (customers) were present”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Saying something to the cashier”</td>
<td>“Did nothing – just left very annoyed”</td>
<td>“Didnt have the time – I was running late”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yelling at him from the queue”</td>
<td>“I sarcastically asked if he was talking to me or whether there was a dog in the room”</td>
<td>“Other people were present – it was not appropriate”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

4.6.1 General Conclusions

Findings from the qualitative research appeared to support Berkowitz’s (1962) operationalisation of aggressive arousal as anger, particularly when associated with more intense displays of aggressive behaviour such as physical aggression (e.g., slamming doors). However, in line with Megargee’s (1985) distinction between duration and intensity of instigation, less intense displays of aggressive behaviour (e.g., use of sarcasm) appeared to be associated with annoyance.

The propositions that aversive stimuli can be classified into people, process and physical factors and that each of these are positively related to aggressive arousal (Propositions 1 to 6), appeared to be supported by findings from the preliminary qualitative research. All fifteen respondents reported that one or more of these categories of aversive stimuli had contributed to their feelings of annoyance or anger.

Proposition 7, that the people aversive stimuli (lack of courtesy and incompetence) would be most strongly related to aggressive arousal, was also supported by this preliminary study. All fifteen participants mentioned the courtesy of the service person as a contributing factor to their annoyance or anger, with thirteen reporting that it was the single most important factor. Five participants mentioned the perceived incompetence of the service person as a contributing factor to their anger or annoyance, with two reporting that it was the single most important factor.

Proposition 8, that service encounters that arouse anger would be predominantly described as unjust or avoidable, was supported by this preliminary study. Eight participants described incidents that could be categorised as avoidable, and seven described incidents that could be categorised as unjust.

With respect to expectations moderating between aversive stimuli and arousal (Proposition 9), the sample was too small to draw any conclusions. However, of the two respondents who were asked specifically about their pre-service expectations, one had high expectations based on previous experience and when these expectations were not met he became very angry. The other respondent had low expectations, also based on previous experience with the organisation. When these expectations of service quality were realised he only became annoyed.
Proposition 10, that the use of cognitive re-appraisals would be associated with less anger intensity appeared to be supported by this preliminary study. During the incident eight respondents described strategies that could be categorised as cognitive re-appraisals to reduce the intensity of their feelings.

Proposition 11, that respondents in a negative mood state prior to entering the service encounter would have stronger anger arousal, appeared to be supported by this preliminary study. Of the five respondents who were categorised as having been in a bad mood prior to the service incident, one indicated that they had become angry and four that they had become very angry (versus just annoyed) during the service incident.

Proposition 13, that the presence of other customers or friends during the service encounter would moderate the expression of aggressive behaviour was also supported by this preliminary study. Of the eleven respondents asked about the difference between what they felt like doing and what they actually did during the encounter, eight identified the presence of other people (for example friends or colleagues) as a reason for their restraint of behaviour.

Specific moderating factors such as security systems or employee defusing skills (Proposition 12 and 14) were less common in this small sample. Only one respondent reported the use of defusing skills by a service person and only one respondent reported being aware of security mechanisms. However, in both cases the factor did appear to moderate the intensity of aggressive behaviour.

4.6.2 Nature of Instigation

The findings from the preliminary study appear to suggest that physical and process aversive stimuli are more strongly associated with feelings of annoyance than people stimuli, whereas people aversive stimuli, and in particular discourtesy, are more strongly associated with feelings of anger. This is consistent with previous research which suggests that anger is primarily an interpersonal emotion (Averill 1982; Baron and Richardson 1994), and whilst people may at times become angry at inanimate objects or impersonal circumstances, this is not normative (Averill 1982).

The interpersonal nature of anger is highlighted by the finding that in five of the eight cases where the respondent’s initial annoyance escalated to anger, this escalation was
the result of a perceived personal insult by the service person. This is also consistent with research by Felson (1982), Richardson et al. (1985), and Wilson and Rogers (1975) which suggests that anger is often a defensive reaction to persons provoked by threats to self-esteem or attempts at domination by others. The data suggest that staff interpersonal skills are very important in that aversive physical or process stimuli may not lead to anger if the service person is courteous.

4.6.3 Respondent Behaviour
The findings from the preliminary study appear to suggest that verbal aggression is commonly used by people to express their annoyance or anger with poor service with ten of the fifteen respondents admitting to using an intimidating tone, shouting, or swearing at the service person.

Further highlighting the importance of the interpersonal interaction between the service person and customer is the finding that, in all five cases where respondents resorted to mild physical aggression, a perceived verbal insult from the service person preceded both the respondent’s anger and subsequent physical action. It has been demonstrated in many laboratory studies that verbal provocation, such as personal insults or sarcastic remarks often serve to elicit strong counter-aggression (e.g., Geen 1968; Richardson et al. 1985; Wilson and Rogers 1975). After receiving taunts or insults from another person, participants in such studies have been willing to direct strong electric shocks or other kinds of aversive physical treatment to the sources of verbal provocation.

4.6.4 Moderators of Respondent Behaviour
Table 4.1 indicates that among the sample of subjects who were asked about what they felt like doing versus what they actually did, all types of response were inhibited. Aggressive impulses were clearly felt more often than they were expressed.

The reasons given for the restraint of behaviour seem to suggest that the aggressive response is typically suppressed for social reasons or because of a negative consequence for the respondent. In six of the eleven cases who were asked this question, the presence of other people appeared to be the key moderator of aggressive behaviour. In the remaining five cases a negative consequence (punishment or outcome important to the respondent) was the prime moderator of behaviour. This is consistent with research by
Bandura (1973) and Berkowitz (1993) and with the model developed from the literature review.

4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the qualitative research phase of the study. The objectives of this phase were to tentatively evaluate the Model of Customer Aggression developed in chapter three and to refine and revise the model variables.

Overall, the preliminary study supports the basic model. In addition, the results suggest a possible link between the intensity of aggressive arousal (anger and annoyance) and intensity of aggressive behaviour. As such whilst the focus of this thesis continued to be service incidents evoking feelings of anger, a small number of respondents who had experienced feelings of annoyance as a result of a poor service experience were sampled with a view to future research.

Building on the preliminary results chapter five describes the design of the main study. Chapter six details the results.
CHAPTER 5: MAIN STUDY METHOD

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As previously outlined, in evaluating the propositions developed in chapter three, this thesis used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Chapter four presented the qualitative research phase of the study. The findings of which appeared to support the basic model of customer aggression.

This chapter presents the quantitative research phase of the study. The chapter begins with a review of a number of alternative methodologies for evaluating the proposed model of customer aggression and the rationale for using a modified critical incident survey approach. This is followed by an overview of the questionnaire used in the survey, its design and subsequent pre-evaluate. Finally, details of the sampling procedures used to obtain the 180 respondents who participated in the study are described.

5.2 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES INVOLVED IN INVESTIGATING ANGER AND AGGRESSION

Aggression is a difficult phenomenon to study because the behaviour of interest is dangerous. It would be inappropriate to use any research method that would encourage people to do real harm to one another. The difficulty associated with studying aggressive behaviour is further compounded in this study by the context in which the phenomenon occurs, namely the service encounter. The service experience can be a highly complex one even for the simplest of services (Kotler 1973; Bateson 1985).

Much research on aggression employs relatively ‘safe’ techniques such as observation in the field, questionnaires or laboratory experiments. These techniques allow researchers to study harm without actually doing harm or being harmed (Baron and Richardson 1994). In choosing an appropriate methodology to evaluate the proposed model three alternatives were considered.

The first method considered was a laboratory experiment. This would have involved the systematic variation of components of a given service and the measurement of the effect of these variations on customer affect (anger) and behaviour. Experimental designs allow
more confident causal inferences. If well designed they are internally valid and result in clear conclusions (Bitner et al. 1985). Researchers such as Berkowitz and Buss have utilised laboratory experiments extensively in their research on aggression and anger (Baron and Richardson 1994). Most of these studies have yielded information difficult to obtain in other ways (Averill 1982).

However, there are a number of disadvantages to the use of laboratory methods. One is that the results from laboratory experiments cannot legitimately be generalised beyond the laboratory setting. Further, laboratory settings are often artificial in comparison with the environments that they are intended to represent (Bitner et al. 1985). For example, the finding from laboratory experiments conducted by Barker et al. (1941), that children were easily frustrated and, when frustrated, frequently responded aggressively, was not supported by later field research conducted by Faul (1963), a student of Barker. Faul’s research found fewer instances of frustration than would be expected on the basis of laboratory studies. When frustration did occur, the consequences were generally different to those observed in the laboratory. Aggression, in particular, was an infrequent response to frustration (Averill 1982).

Another disadvantage of the use of laboratory methods is that participants may try to ‘second guess’ the experimenter. They may seek to determine the major hypotheses under investigation, and thus may try to meet the expectations of the researcher by behaving as they think he or she wishes them to (Orne 1962; Baron and Richardson 1994).

The main reason, however, that a laboratory experiment was not used in this particular study was a practical one. Only a small number of service components can be varied in an experiment (Bitner et al. 1985). Because the links among the service environment, customer/employee interactions, affect and aggression are complex and relatively unexplored, it was felt that the sheer number of experimental conditions required to adequately evaluate the model of customer aggression would be unmanageable.

The second approach considered for evaluating the proposed model of customer aggression was to observe its occurrence in natural settings. This would have involved the researcher going into a public establishment such as a restaurant, bank or government department, and keeping a record of who behaved aggressively and the kinds of aggressive acts they performed. The major benefit of direct observation is that it is a
relatively safe way of studying behaviours such as aggression. The problem with direct observation is that it is frequently impractical because it is time consuming and expensive. The researcher may have to spend a great deal of time watching ‘irrelevant behaviours’ before a ‘relevant behaviour’ occurs.

Another problem with direct observation relates to ethics. Ethical considerations limit the extent to which people can be observed without their knowledge or consent. Furthermore, in many services, customer privacy constraints would preclude observation of many key customer/employee interactions (Bitner et al. 1985). For these reasons this approach was not adopted.

The final approach considered, and the one chosen for this study, was the methodology of critical incidents. This approach results in a richness of detail approaching that obtained by direct observation without the impractical disadvantages. A substitute for direct observation, it allows the use of self-reports to evaluate the model of customer aggression. In this study it involved the use of a detailed written questionnaire which focused on all aspects of a specific poor service experience, including customer reports of thoughts, feelings and responses. Respondents were asked to recall a specific event, something most people do very easily (Bitner et al. 1985), and to respond to both open and closed-ended questions about the incident.

The approach has advantages over the experimental approach described above in that it does not necessitate artificial control of the environment and it avoids the problem of external generalisability suffered by all laboratory experiments (Bateson 1985). The approach is more comprehensive in that it allows analysis of a much larger number of pre-determined service components than the experimental method, and, because it is a non-manipulative approach, it can be adopted safely and ethically (Bateson 1985).

There have been a number of self-report survey studies based on questionnaires that ask people about their anger or aggressiveness. Most of these questionnaires are designed to assess angry or aggressive experiences in specific situations. For example, Steinmetz (1977) and Straus (1979) used self-report questionnaires in a research program designed to examine the causes and effects of violence in the family. Their questionnaire, the Conflict Tactics Scale, consists of a list of increasingly violent behaviours. Respondents indicate the extent to which they and their family members have engaged in such
behaviours with one another within a specified period of time. This allows the researcher to determine both the aggressiveness of the respondent and the extent to which he or she has been exposed or subjected to acts of aggression from others (Baron and Richardson 1994).

Weiner, Graham et al. 1982 using a critical incident technique, to explore links between affect and causal dimensions, asked subjects to describe, in writing, two situations when the emotions of pity, anger and guilt were experienced. Martin and Watson (1997) asked subjects to record information regarding their current mood, as well as anger-eliciting events in their study of style of anger expression and its relation to daily experience. McKellar (1949, 1950) asked a group of several hundred members of adult education classes in the London area to complete a questionnaire describing two recent episodes of anger or annoyance. Similarly, Averill (1982) asked subjects to complete detailed written questionnaires on their most intense episode of anger experienced during the preceding week and their most intense episode of annoyance during the preceding week.

Self-report questionnaires have also been used extensively in the services marketing literature (see for example, Bearden and Teel 1980; Bitner et al. 1994; Blodgett et al. 1995; Folkes 1984; Singh 1990; Westbrook 1983).

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF SELF REPORT DATA

One of the major limitations of self-reports of emotional states has to do with accuracy. Subjects cannot always assess accurately the determinants of their behaviour. Even when they can assess those determinants, they may not report them accurately on a questionnaire because of a desire to present a favourable social image (Averill 1982).

Anger and aggression in particular, are emotions and behaviours which are often seen to be inappropriate and may be culturally discouraged (Averill 1982). As such, respondents may be reluctant to admit to these feelings or behaviours. Therefore an effort was made during the exploratory phase of the present study to gauge the likely response effects related to ‘question threat’ (Bradburn et al. 1979); that is questions about which respondents may be reluctant to talk fully and honestly.
Bradburn et al. (1979) conducted a series of empirical studies designed to investigate response effects related to threatening questions. He found that asking respondents to rate question topics as to how uneasy they thought most people would be in talking about the particular topic, was a useful method for determining the relative threat of questions. His topics included sports and leisure activities, drinking, gambling and income, illicit drug use and sex. He also found that, as a rule of thumb, researchers should be alert to the threatening nature of questions when more than 20 percent of respondents feel that most people would be made very uneasy by talking about a topic.

In examining the joint effects of question threat and method of administration on response distortion, Bradburn et al. (1979) compared four interview techniques: face-to-face (involving personal interaction between interviewer and respondents); telephone; self-administered forms or questionnaires; and random response interview (allowing the respondent to answer questions without the interviewer knowing what question is being answered). The researchers found that no data collection method was superior to other methods for all types of threatening questions. However, in a related study they found that the construction of questions is important. This study found that particular approaches to question construction can increase the amount behaviour is reported by two or three times over the amount reported using a standard form of questions. One approach was to use a long introduction to a sensitive or threatening question topic rather than asking short, terse questions. Another approach was to leave the answer format open rather than giving the respondent a pre-coded set of alternatives from which to choose an answer (Bradburn et al. 1979).

In this study, ten of the fifteen subjects who participated in the qualitative phase of the study were asked to rate how uneasy they thought most people would be in talking about poor service topics. Each respondent, at the end of the interview, was asked to rate how uneasy (on a scale of very uneasy, moderately uneasy, slightly uneasy or not at all uneasy), they thought most people would be in talking about: a) a poor service experience generally; b) their reactions as a result of a poor service (e.g., getting angry); and c) their behaviour as a result of getting angry (e.g., shouting, swearing, striking the service person). This approach is consistent with that recommended by Bradburn et al. (1979) for determining the relative threat of questions.
Table 5.1: Question Threat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all uneasy</th>
<th>Slightly Uneasy</th>
<th>Moderately uneasy</th>
<th>Very uneasy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A poor service experience generally</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactions as a result of the poor service experience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour as a result of getting angry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[n = 10\]

As can be seen from the results in Table 5.1, half of the ten respondents indicated that they believed most people would be ‘very uneasy’ talking about their behaviour as a result of getting angry. Therefore, an attempt was made in the quantitative phase of the study to overcome distortions due to social desirability by assuring anonymity, by providing a detailed introduction to any sensitive question topics (including the section covering respondent behaviour), and by providing an open answer format after each set of items where the respondent was able to explain the reasons for his or her responses. Further, the questionnaire began with an open-ended question asking respondents to describe the incident, followed by a series of questions not related to anger. The sensitive questions followed afterwards. This provided a kind of systematic desensitisation of the most sensitive questions, by beginning with the least ‘uneasy’ topic and leading to the ‘most uneasy’ topic.

Another bias associated with retrospective self-reports by respondents involves memory distortions and false recollections (Bradburn et al. 1979). To help assure accuracy of recall no incident included in the final analysis occurred more than six months earlier. This time frame is consistent with that recommended by Bradburn et al. (1979) for minimising such bias.

5.4 QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT

The main study consisted of 180 people who had experienced, during the previous six months, a poor face-to-face service experience. Each of the 180 participants completed a detailed questionnaire on their poor service experience. Two separate questionnaires were developed, one for respondents reporting feelings of anger and one for respondents reporting feelings of annoyance during the service incident. The two questionnaires were identical except the term annoyance was substituted for the term anger wherever relevant (as noted earlier, the focus of this thesis is on respondents who completed the anger questionnaire).
The questionnaire consisted of 13 sections with a total of 117 items focusing on all aspects of a poor service experience including: the nature of the instigation; the target of the anger; background conditions; mood and expectations of the service prior to the incident; the intensity and nature of the response, both desired and actually expressed; moderators of behaviour; actions following the incident; and anger tendencies.

The questionnaire contained a mix of closed and open-ended items. The closed items specified in an explicit fashion many of the proposed characteristics of the model, along with logically possible alternatives. The open-ended questions provided the opportunity for further elaboration and explanation.

To remain consistent with previous research, many of the items for the present study were adapted from two of the questionnaires used by Averill (1982) in his series of studies. Because Averill's questionnaires were originally designed to report on everyday experiences of anger or annoyance, many of which occurred between family and friends rather than an incident within a service context, the items were reworded to reflect anger or annoyance felt as a result of a poor service experience.

The first question asked respondents to briefly describe the negative service incident during which they had become angry. The question stipulated that the incident should be a face-to-face encounter that had occurred during the previous six months.

In line with the proposed model of customer aggression the remaining questions focussed on the nature of the instigation to respondent anger, respondent feelings and behaviour during the service encounter, moderating factors on respondent behaviour, and individual dimensions of anger. The items covering each of these areas are discussed in the sections that follow.

5.4.1 Aversive Service Stimuli (Nature of the Instigation)

Seventeen items covering specific characteristics of the instigating incident including the proposed physical, people and process aversive stimuli were included in the questionnaire. Five of these items were adapted from Averill's questionnaire. The remaining 12 items were adapted from previous service quality studies (e.g., Taylor 1994; Parasuraman et al. 1988; Zeithaml et al. 1990). Respondents were asked to indicate whether each of the 17 factors actually occurred during the service encounter, and, for
those items which did occur, to rate each on a 4 point scale depending upon whether it (1)
'not at all', (2) 'a little bit', (3) 'somewhat' or (4) 'very much' contributed to what made
them angry.

5.4.2 Moderators of Aggressive Arousal

Ten items were included in the questionnaire to assess the nature of any anger arousal
moderators. Four covered cognitive mediators of anger relating to re-appraisal of the
instigating conditions and were adapted from Averill's questionnaire (e.g., 'minimise the
importance of the person who angered you'). For each of the four items, respondents were
asked to indicate with a 'Yes' or 'No' whether they used the response to reduce their
anger during the incident.

Four covered the event attribution and were also adapted from Averill's (1982)
questionnaire. The remaining two were adapted from previous service quality studies
(e.g., Bearden and Teel 1983; Ford 1995; Johnson and Zinkhan 1991; Webster 1991);
Zeithaml et al. 1990). One item asked respondents to describe their mood just before the
incident. Another item asked respondents to rate on a 5-point scale their pre-service
expectations of the organisation (1 = excellent, 2 = very good, 3 = average, 4 = poor, 5 =
very poor).

5.4.3 Behavioural Response

Thirteen items were included in the questionnaire to assess the respondent's behavioural
response to the instigation (e.g., physical expression of anger such as hitting the service
person; verbal expression of anger such as swearing at the service person; non aggressive
responses such as talking to the service person or using calming activities). Eight were
adapted from Averill's (1982) questionnaire. The remaining five items, were adapted
from a scale used by Hobbs (1991) in his study of the extent of violence directed toward
general practitioners during the course of their professional duties. These items
categorised aggression into five degrees of increasing severity.

Respondents were first asked to rate each of the 13 items on a 3 point scale as to how
much they felt like making the response: (0) 'not at all'; (1) 'somewhat'; or (2) 'very
much', during the service incident. Respondents were then asked, for each item, to
indicate with a 'Yes' or 'No' whether they actually did what they felt like doing.
The questionnaire also contained a number of items relating to complaint behaviour. These were adapted from scales containing responses to the personal and direct complaint alternatives identified and investigated in prior studies of consumer reactions to service dissatisfaction (see for example, Bearden and Teel 1983; Day and Landon 1977; Day and Bodur 1978). These actions ranged from ‘warned family and friends’ to ‘contacted lawyer about possible legal action’. Respondents were asked first to indicate whether or not they intended at the time to make each of the responses following the incident. Respondents were then asked to indicate whether they actually did make the response, regardless of whether they said they would do it.

5.4.4 Moderators of Respondent Behaviour

Ten items were included in the questionnaire to assess the nature of any behavioural moderators. Six items covered environmental moderators (such as the presence of security guards; the presence of physical barriers; the presence of other staff). Their construction was based on previous workplace violence studies (e.g., Gordon et al. 1996; Hobbs 1991; Lawless 1993; Lipscomb and Love 1992) and results from the qualitative phase of the present study.

For each of these items respondents were first asked to indicate (‘Yes’, ‘No’ or ‘Don’t know’) whether the feature had been present during the incident. Respondents were then asked to indicate whether these and an additional four other factors (own morals or self discipline; gender of service person; service person’s age or size; and service person’s attempts to defuse the situation) had influenced whether or not they did what they felt like doing.

5.4.5 Individual Traits of Anger

This section of the questionnaire contained 14 items taken from the Multidimensional Anger Inventory (MAI) (Siegel 1985). This self-report inventory was designed to measure the multiple dimensions of anger (frequency, duration, magnitude), the range of situations to which an individual responds with anger, the mode of anger expression, and the extent of hostility in the individual’s outlook.

The number of items included in the questionnaire to assess each of the dimensions of anger were as follows: frequency, two (e.g., It is easy to make me angry); magnitude, two (e.g., I often feel angrier than I think I should); range of anger-eliciting situations, seven
(e.g., I get angry when something blocks my plans); and mode of expression, three. The mode of expression dimension was divided into two dimensions: anger-in, two (e.g., I try to talk over problems with people without letting them know I’m angry); and anger-out, one (I try to get even when I’m angry with someone). Respondents were required to rate each of the 14 items in terms of how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement, from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

5.5 QUESTIONNAIRE PILOT

Once the questionnaire had been drafted it was reviewed by a senior academic in the services marketing area. A pilot was then conducted to determine whether the questionnaire flowed naturally, whether the questions were clear and easy to understand, and to establish a completion time.

5.5.1 Pilot Participants

Fourteen respondents participated in the pilot. In line with the method used in the qualitative phase of the study, eleven respondents were recruited from a Perth Training Company’s customer or employee database and screened for a relevant service encounter experience, defined as perceived poor service by an organisation during a face-to-face service encounter. The screening questionnaire is attached in Appendix 5.1. Respondents who admitted experiencing feelings of anger during a recent service encounter were invited to complete a questionnaire about their experience.

The remaining three respondents were recruited from the earlier qualitative sample and asked to complete the questionnaire using the same service incident they had described during their in-depth interview. These three respondents were included so that the data obtained from the questionnaire could be compared with that obtained from the in-depth interview. This served as an additional check on whether the questionnaire covered all aspects of a poor service experience (i.e., richness of data) and respondent question interpretation. Questionnaires can appear to work quite well in that respondents give what appear to be reasonable answers while in fact there are wide variations in interpretation or even complete misunderstandings (Worcester and Downham 1986).

To ensure a broad range of service encounters and experiences, an attempt was made to obtain respondents varying in age, gender and socioeconomic status. The sample
consisted of eight female respondents (six white collar and two blue collar; one aged 16-24, two aged 25-34, two aged 35-44 and three aged over 45 years) and 6 male respondents (four white collar and two blue collar; two aged 25-34, one aged 35-44 and three aged over 45 years).

In line with the approach taken in the qualitative phase of the study respondents were classified by socioeconomic level primarily in terms of their occupation. For the one retired respondent classification was by their occupation prior to retirement. Four respondents were classified as blue-collar workers (builders, policemen and factory workers); the remaining ten were classified as white-collar workers (clerical workers, office workers, professionals and managers).

5.5.2 Procedure and Outcomes

The pilot was conducted over a one-month period. The researcher was present during the completion of six questionnaires. Respondents were informed that this was a pilot of the questionnaire and asked to complete the questionnaire as per the instructions, but to feel free to ask about any question that was not clear. During this process the researcher recorded any spontaneous comments or explanations that respondents gave while writing out their answers. The researcher also recorded any additional explanations required in order to assist the respondent understand the meaning of a question. Upon completion of the questionnaire the researcher probed for any hidden ambiguities and misunderstandings by returning to a number of key questions and asking the respondent to explain what they understood by the question (or statement).

In line with the intended methodology for the main survey, the remaining eight pilot questionnaires were mailed to respondents with a covering letter and a return addressed envelope. A response sheet requesting feedback on the time taken to complete the questionnaire and any difficult or ambiguous questions was included. On return of a completed questionnaire the researcher telephoned these respondents to probe for any hidden question ambiguities and misunderstandings. This approach is consistent with that recommended for conducting questionnaire pilots in business and marketing research (Pope 1993; Worcester and Downham 1986; Zikmund 1997).
A number of modifications to question wording and structure were made as a result of the pilot. In addition two questions were removed and two questions added to the final draft. A copy of the 'angry' questionnaire is contained in Appendix 5.2.

Responses on the self-completion questionnaire from the three respondents who had previously been part of the in-depth interview phase of the study provided similar data to that obtained in the qualitative phase. However the questionnaire behavioural response was not as intense as that expressed in the in-depth interviews.

5.6 SAMPLING METHOD

A professional research bureau was used to recruit the sample for the main study. In the first phase of a two phase process, published National telephone directories were used to randomly select people who were contacted by telephone and asked if they had experienced within the previous six months, a poor service experience during a face-to-face encounter. In an attempt to obtain an even distribution of men and women, half of the professional recruiters asked to speak to a male member of the household and half asked to speak to a female member of the household. The screening questionnaire is attached in Appendix 5.3.

Respondents who were over eighteen years of age, had experienced a relevant service encounter, and who admitted experiencing feelings of anger or annoyance during the service incident were invited to participate in the study (as noted earlier, the opportunity was taken to obtain data from 'annoyed persons' for future research purposes). Eligible respondents were informed of the aims of the study and the nature of the research methods used to collect data, including information about confidentiality of data collected. If the individual agreed to participate in the study, the second phase of the process comprised sending a questionnaire to them. Attached to the questionnaire was an information sheet about the study, a consent form (a copy of which is contained in Appendix 5.4), and a stamped addressed envelope for return of the questionnaire.

Respondents were requested to return the questionnaire within two weeks. If the questionnaire was not received within three weeks, a follow-up telephone call was made, and, if necessary, a second follow-up call was made two or three weeks later.
The original goal was to have a quota of 200 subjects who reported feelings of anger (and 100 who reported feelings of annoyance) during a poor service encounter. As a result of time and sampling constraints however, data were obtained from only 180 ‘angry’ (and 68 ‘annoyed’) subjects.

A total of 5508 random telephone calls were made. As a result of these calls, 3189 people were screened out because they had not experienced a recent poor service encounter. A further 807 people refused to answer the screener and 787 were either business numbers, did not answer or were engaged, and were subsequently discarded by the system after five attempts.

A total of 725 eligible participants were identified. However, 251 (35%) of these persons refused to accept the survey and/or give their contact details. The remaining 474 eligible participants (349 angry and 125 annoyed) agreed to participate in the study and were sent a questionnaire. Of these, 180 ‘angry’ (52%) and 68 ‘annoyed’ (54%) persons returned useable questionnaires. This is a high rate of return for a questionnaire of such complexity and is in keeping with the response rate of 54% obtained by Averill (1982) who used a questionnaire of similar complexity during his study on everyday experiences of anger.

5.6.1 Follow-up of Non-Respondents
Erdos (1970) suggests that a mail survey requires a minimum of 50% response to be considered reliable unless it demonstrates, with some form of verification, that non-respondents are similar to the respondents. One approach to reduction of non-response bias is to sample non-respondents (Armstrong and Overton 1977).

In order to assess reasons for not responding, a sample of 20 was randomly selected from the 169 subjects who had admitted to feelings of anger and either returned the questionnaire unanswered or did not return it at all. Each person was contacted by telephone and asked if they would spend a few minutes answering some questions related to the reason for their non-response. The telephone interviews were conducted by an experienced interviewer. The short non-response questionnaire is attached in Appendix 5.5.

The telephone interviews were conducted using a structured format. Each interview began with a brief introduction to the purpose of the call. This emphasised that the respondent
would not be asked to complete the questionnaire but rather to answer a few questions as to why they did not complete it.

Respondents were first asked to describe the main reason why they did not complete the survey. The main factor cited by respondents was classified as a lack of time or being too busy (40%), followed by forgetting or not getting around to it (30%). The survey appearing too hard was mentioned by 10% of respondents (Table 5.2.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was the main reason why you did not complete the questionnaire?</th>
<th>n = 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t have time/too busy</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgot/didn’t get around to it</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looked too hard</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After asking the initial open-ended question, a further six items were included to assess the nature of any other influences on non-response behaviour. Participants were asked to rate each of the six items on a 4-point scale as to how much it influenced their decision not to complete the survey (1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = a lot, 4 = can’t recall). The order in which each of the six items was asked was varied with each respondent.

As can be seen in Table 5.3, the main factors mentioned by respondents as influencing their decision not to complete the survey ‘a lot’ were the time required to complete the questionnaire (65%) and the number of questions requiring a written response (45%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence on decision not to complete the questionnaire</th>
<th>Influence on decision not to complete the questionnaire: (n = 20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time required to complete the questionnaire</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of questions requiring written responses</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of the questionnaire</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to sign a consent form</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout of the questionnaire</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal nature of the questions</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This suggests that the study may be biased towards respondents who have more time or who are more literate.
This chapter began with a brief overview of the rationale for using a modified critical incident survey approach in the main quantitative study. It then provided an overview of the questionnaire used in the survey, its design and subsequent pre-evaluate. The final segment of this chapter outlined the sampling procedure used in the main study. The sampling procedure involved the use of National telephone directories to randomly select people who were contacted by telephone and asked if they had experienced, during the previous six months, a poor face-to-face service experience. Those respondents who admitted experiencing feelings of anger during such a service encounter were invited to participate in the study. Those agreeing to participate were mailed a questionnaire.

Chapter six presents the results of the main study which consisted of 180 people who self-completed a detailed questionnaire on a recent poor service experience.
CHAPTER 6: MAIN STUDY AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

6.1 INTRODUCTION
The previous chapter outlined the main research design, discussed methodological issues associated with investigating anger and aggression and issues associated with the use of self-report questionnaires. The previous chapter also provided an overview of the questionnaire used in the survey, its design and subsequent pre-evaluate, together with details of the sampling procedure used to obtain the 180 respondents to the main study. This chapter presents the results of the main study.

The primary purposes of the main study were to gather data on customer aggression from the perspective of the aggressor, and to evaluate the model developed from the literature search and qualitative phase of the study.

The chapter begins with a description of the respondents, the general characteristics of the service incidents, respondents’ emotional response to the incidents they reported followed by respondents’ behavioural response to the incident. The model presented in chapter three is used to guide exploration of the factors influencing intensity of anger and behavioural responses in the service encounter.

Because this thesis can be considered as the first stage in the development and evaluation of the model of customer aggression, the analysis is mainly descriptive. Where cell sizes were sufficient, chi-square has been employed to evaluate the difference in proportions between categories and \( p \) values have been reported where significant. Correlations have also been used. More sophisticated statistical analysis would be appropriate to the next phase of this model development.

It should be noted that the assumptions of a statistical evaluate were not met in all cases. For example, the 3-point scales used for some of the variables often resulted in skewed distributions. However, for samples of the size used, even parametric evaluates can be applied with little distortion to dichotomous data that are moderately skewed (Glass et al. 1972; Lunney 1970). Similarly, the chi-square evaluate has been shown to be reasonably accurate even when marginal probability distributions are as disproportionate as 0.9 versus 0.1 (Bradley et al. 1979).
6.2 RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

6.2.1 Demographics

The 180 respondents who admitted to feeling angry during a poor face-to-face service encounter comprised 72 men and 108 women. The sample demographics are shown in Tables 6.1 to 6.6.

Post-code was used to classify respondents according to the State in which they lived (Table 6.1). Due to time and sampling constraints the distribution of respondents across Australia was skewed towards Western Australia (48%). Tasmania was not included in the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Australia</th>
<th>Queensland</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>South Australia</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
<th>Northern Territory</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 180)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 years to 74 years, with 34% aged between 18 and 34 years old, 50% aged between 35 and 54 years old, and the remaining 16% aged between 55 and 74 years old (Table 6.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Age</th>
<th>Respondent Gender</th>
<th>Total (n=180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female (n=108)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male (n=72)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflecting the age of the sample, most respondents (77%) were married or in a de facto relationship and 14% were single (Table 6.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Martial Status</th>
<th>% of respondents (n = 180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married or live in partner</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced or separated</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With respect to educational background, the sample appears upwardly skewed: 28% were university graduates and 14% had completed TAFE vocational education studies (Table 6.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>% of respondents n = 180</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed Year 9</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Year 10</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Year 11</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Year 12</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed some TAFE</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed some University</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently enrolled in TAFE</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently enrolled in University</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed TAFE</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed University</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly three quarters of the sample (130) indicated that they were currently in paid employment: 81% of males and 67% of females (Table 6.5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you in paid employment?</th>
<th>Yes responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female (n =108)</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (n =72)</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 130 respondents who indicated that they were in paid employment, over one third (35%) were classified as blue-collar workers (e.g., construction workers, electricians, mechanics, policemen, firemen, and factory workers), 43% were classified as white-collar workers (e.g., computer programmers, salesmen, clerical workers, school teachers), and the remaining 22% were classified as professional (e.g., lawyers, doctors, accountants) (Table 6.6). Furthermore, 95% of those in paid employment indicated that their job involved dealing with customers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Work</th>
<th>% of Respondents (n= 130)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Collar</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Collar</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.2 Individual Tendency to Anger

The questionnaire contained 14 items taken from the Multi-dimensional Anger Inventory (MAI) (Siegel 1985), a self-report inventory designed to measure an individual's tendency to respond to situations with anger.

After reverse-scoring relevant items, the ratings had the potential to range from a minimum of 14 to a maximum of 70, with a high score indicating a greater tendency to respond to situations with anger and a low score indicating a tendency not to respond to situations with anger. The scores were approximately normally distributed with a mean rating on the MAI-anger index of 40.6 (Figure 6.1). Hence the sample does not appear to be biased towards people with a tendency to anger.

![Figure 6.1: MAI-Anger Index](chart.png)

6.2.3 Pre-Incident Mood

In an attempt to ascertain whether the response described by respondents to the service incident could have resulted from or been influenced by the person's mood prior to the incident, respondents were asked to describe their mood just before the incident.

The majority of respondents (85%) reported that they were in a good mood just prior to the incident. For example one respondent commented that they were in a very good mood because "we don't go out very often - I was looking forward to a nice meal/movie with my boyfriend". Another felt "great, I had just picked out what was to be my
birthday present". Only 13% reported that they were in a bad mood, for example "worried", "stressed", "sombre" or "frustrated" just prior to the incident (Table 6.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent mood just before the incident</th>
<th>% of respondents (n = 180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.4 Section Summary

The main study sample consisted of 180 people who admitted to feelings of anger during a poor face-to-face service encounter. Demographically the sample was skewed towards university or TAFE graduates, white-collar workers, female respondents, and people aged between 25 and 54 years. Individual tendency to respond to situations with anger was approximately normally distributed with a mean similar to that expected in the general population, and the vast majority of respondents indicated that they were in a good mood just prior to the service incident.

6.3 INCIDENT CHARACTERISTICS

6.3.1 General Characteristics

Over half (59%) of the angry incidents involved service industries (banks, airlines, restaurants, hairdressers and the like). The remaining 41% of incidents involved retail industries (clothing, food, hardware, jewellery stores, etc).

All 180 respondents indicated that the reported incident had occurred within the previous six months with almost half (43%) indicating that the incident had occurred during the previous two months (Table 6.8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of respondents (n = 180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 weeks ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 weeks to 1 month ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 months ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3 months ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4 months ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 6 months ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On a 10-point scale ranging from 'own choice – I elected to use the service' (1) to 'necessity – I had no choice but to use the service' (10), almost two-thirds (64%) of the ...
responses fell below the midpoint of the scale, indicating that a large proportion of the sample voluntarily chose to use that particular service.

Two thirds (67%) of respondents reported that they had used the service previously (Table 6.9), and almost three in four (73%) had ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ prior expectations of the organisation’s service. Only 6% had ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’ service expectations (Table 6.10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Times used service before</th>
<th>% of respondents (n = 180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many times</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of respondents (n = 180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.2 Respondent Attributions of the Incident

Four attribution categories were presented in the questionnaire and respondents were asked to select the category they considered best described the service incident that made them angry. The categories and results are presented in Table 6.11.

Over two thirds of the respondents believed that the incident was best described as potentially avoidable (67%). For example, one respondent felt that “a competent person would not have made so many errors”. Other typical comments were: “the incident could have been avoided if the service person had been well mannered”; “if the manager had taken ownership of the issue it wouldn’t have happened”; “if they had been well organised, as any restaurant should be, it wouldn’t have happened”.

Almost one third (32%) of respondents felt that the incident could be best described as unjust. In describing why they felt the incident was unjust, one respondent believed that the service person had been rude to them when they entered a restaurant because she
had "judged them on their age", and another felt that the way the car salesman directed all questions regarding the purchase of a new car to her husband, when the car was for her, was unjust. Another felt that a bank was unjust for penalising him for “withdrawing my own money over the counter” when the ATM was not working.

Only one person (1%) reported anger for an incident they considered justified and no respondent reported anger for an incident considered unavoidable. These data support proposition 8 that service encounters that arouse anger would predominantly be described as unjust or avoidable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of incidents</th>
<th>(n = 180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was a potentially avoidable incident or event: the result of negligence, carelessness, lack of foresight.</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was an unjust incident or event</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was a justified incident or event</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was an unavoidable accident or event: it could not have been foreseen, it was beyond the service person’s control</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.3.3 Target of Anger

Respondents were asked to nominate from a list (see Table 6.12), who or what was the main object of their anger. If there was more than one object, respondents were asked to indicate the most important by writing the number ‘1’ in the box above the object and to indicate the next most important by writing the number ‘2’ and so on. An open-ended question also provided an opportunity for respondents to describe the object of their anger. The results are presented in Table 6.12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total % marking object involved in their anger (n=180)</th>
<th>Total % marking object involved in their anger (n=180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The service person</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society in general</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things in general</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An inanimate object or thing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Virtually all respondents (98%) indicated that the target of their anger involved the service person, with (80%) indicating that the service person was the primary object of their anger. Typical examples of responses were: “the apathetic customer service girl”;
"the arrogant, non-apologetic, extremely rude, accusing and unprofessional service person"; and "the man who spoke to me as though I was an idiot...".

Just over half (54%) indicated that the target of their anger involved the service organisation with 19% indicating that the service organisation was the primary object of their anger. Typical written responses included: "advertises itself as customer friendly... and isn't"; "for discontinuing the line of glasses I wanted and just trying to get $240 out of me anyway"; "...advertised a good sale, but made no provision for additional staff to cope with the extra demand"; and "its policy was unreasonable".

Very few respondents indicated that the target of their anger involved objects other than the service person or organisation.

In the four instances that did not involve the service person as part of the target, the anger was expressed to a service person associated with the incident. For example, one respondent became angry because a bank ATM machine was out of order and as a result she had go into the bank and wait in a queue to be served. The respondent expressed her anger/dissatisfaction with the organisation to the teller. Another respondent became angry at a department store because there were insufficient service personnel available. The respondent believed this was a result of "cost-cutting" measures enforced by management to increase profits. The respondent expressed her "feelings of frustration" with the organisation management to the service staff.

For the 176 incidents that involved the service person, the target was a female in 53% of cases and a male in 45% of cases. The remaining cases involved both a male and a female service person (Table 6.13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of service person(s)</th>
<th>Respondent Gender</th>
<th>Total (n=176) *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female (n=105)</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (n=71)</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male &amp; female</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 4 respondents failed to answer this question

Table 6.13 suggests that people may be more likely to be aggressive to their own gender ($\chi^2 = 7.83; p<.01$). On the other hand, it may simply indicate that women are more likely to interact with women during service encounters, for example females buying
female clothes, and men are more likely to interact with men during service encounters. However, the diversity of encounters reported in this sample (from food-stores to banks) would suggest no such inherent bias.

### 6.3.4 Occurrence of Aversive Service Stimuli

Seventeen potentially aversive service stimuli were described in the questionnaire. In the first instance, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not each occurred during the service incident. The results are presented in Table 6.14, grouped into the three main types of service stimuli described in earlier chapters, namely physical, process and people stimuli.

Consistent with the finding that the service person was the primary object of anger for most respondents, and consistent with proposition 7, people aversive service stimuli were the most frequently occurring aversive stimuli. Discourtesy was the single factor most frequently nominated (78%), followed by the failure of the service person to acknowledge the respondent’s point of view (71%). Other factors which occurred frequently were an incompetent service person (65%), a personal insult (59%), longer than expected wait time (54%), and breaking of rules governing accepted ways of behaving (54%). These data support propositions 1 to 4 (the positive relation of people and process factors to aggressive arousal), but provide only little support for propositions 5 and 6 (the positive relation of physical factors to aggressive arousal).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aversive Service Stimuli</th>
<th>Did it Occur % YES responses (n = 180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>People Aversive Stimuli</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A discourteous service person</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A service person who failed to acknowledge your point of view</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An incompetent service person</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A personal insult, loss of personal pride, self esteem, or sense of personal worth</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal socially accepted ways of behaving/widely shared rules of conduct broken</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dishonest service person</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A poorly groomed service person</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A service person with an ethnic background</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process Aversive stimuli</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer than expected waiting time</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An ongoing or planned activity was frustrated or interrupted</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An actual or possible loss of money to you</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An unfair process or procedure</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A previous poor service experience</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A complex process or procedure</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Aversive stimuli</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncomfortable facilities</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Access</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation’s physical environment</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3.5 Representativeness of Incident

Respondents were asked to rate how typical the incident was with respect to 'what generally makes them angry with respect to poor service', and how typical the incident was in terms of 'what makes other people in general angry with respect to poor service'.

A large majority of respondents believed that the incident described was typical of what generates anger in a service encounter. With regard to themselves, 39% thought the incident 'very' typical and 46% thought the incident 'somewhat' typical. With respect to people in general, 56% thought the incident was ‘very’ typical, 39% thought the incident was ‘somewhat’ typical and only 5% thought the incident ‘not at all’ typical of what makes people in general angry with respect to poor service (Table 6.15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Respondents believing that incident was typical of what made them angry</th>
<th>Respondents believing that incident was typical of what made other people angry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Typical</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Typical</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Typical</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence, within the constraints of the sampling procedure and response rate, the incidents described appear typical of poor service encounters, thus providing greater confidence in the model’s development.

6.3.6 Staff Defusing Attempts

Respondents were asked to indicate whether the service person had attempted to defuse the situation, by for example, providing an acceptable explanation for the incident. If the service person had tried to defuse the situation, an open-ended question asked respondents to describe what the service person did, and then to rate, on a ten-point scale, how effective the action was in defusing the situation. With respect to how well they believed the service person defused the situation on a 10-point scale ranging from ‘Not at all well’ (1) to ‘Extremely well’ (10), the mean rating was 2.2. This suggests that in the main, service persons were unable to effectively defuse the situation. For the purposes of analysis, responses were grouped into those reporting no attempt, those reporting a poor attempt (rating 1-4) and those reporting a good attempt to defuse the situation (rating 5-10) (Table 6.16).
Table 6.16: Attempt by the service person to defuse the situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intensity</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No attempt</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor attempt (rating 1-4)</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good attempt (rating 5-10)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over two-thirds (70%) of the respondents claimed that the service person made no attempt to defuse the situation, 27% claimed a poor attempt had been made and only 3% claimed that the service person made a good attempt to defuse the situation (Table 6.16).

For the 54 incidents where the service person did attempt to defuse the situation, in the majority of cases (55%) the responses could be categorised as an explanation or an offer to take some remedial action (Table 6.17). For example one service person offered to deliver the correct tiles to the respondent’s home and another explained the reason for the refusal of a no-claim request. Three cases could be categorised as providing an apology. The remaining cases could be categorised as the service person (from the respondent’s perspective) either trying to blame the respondent, blame others, cover up or make excuses. Typical example responses included:

"She tried to blame me for the mistake"
"Tried to make out that I was the problem. Angered me further"
"When I complained that the food was off the owner said I was being too fussy"
"He tried to blame someone else"
"Tried to explain why the service was not done by making excuses for his staff"
"He bagged the company he worked for"

Table 6.17: Description of attempts by service person to defuse the situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did the service person do to try and defuse the situation?</th>
<th>% incidents where service person attempted to defuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide an explanation</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer/take action to resolve issue</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame others</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover up/make excuses</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame me (respondent)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologise</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3.7 Section Summary
In this study a slight majority of the poor service incidents involved service industries. The remainder involved retail stores. All incidents occurred within the previous six months and the majority occurred within the previous three months.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, arousal of anger involved some perceived wrong. This wrong was an action regarded as unjustified or an act while not necessarily intentional, one that could have been avoided with sufficient care and forethought.

The data also suggest that anger results primarily from interpersonal interactions: the most common target of anger being the service person and the most frequently mentioned aversive stimuli being related to people stimuli (e.g., discourtesy, incompetence, personal insult).

In only one third of cases did staff attempt to defuse the situation. In the majority of those cases they did not succeed. In general, the incidents were described as typical of poor service encounters that instigate anger.

6.4 ANGER AND OTHER EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO THE INCIDENT
6.4.1 Intensity and Duration of Anger
Respondents were asked to rate how angry they felt during the incident, on a 10-point

![Figure 6.2: Intensity of Anger](chart.png)

- Std. Dev = 2.12
- Mean = 6.5
- N = 180.00

Very mild Very Intense
scale ranging from 'very mild' (1) to 'very intense-as angry as I ever become' (10). Figure 6.2 shows that scores were approximately normally distributed, with a slight negative skew. The mean rating of the responses was 6.5 and 76% of the responses fell above the midpoint of the 10-point scale. For later analyses, responses were grouped into those reporting low intensity (rating 1-5), those reporting medium intensity (rating 6-7), and those reporting high intensity (rating 8-10) (Table 6.18).

Table 6.18: Intensity of anger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intensity</th>
<th>% of respondents (n=180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High intensity: 8-10</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium intensity: 6-7</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low intensity: 1-5</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were also asked to rate their anger in terms of whether it was 'less than it should have been, more than it should have been or about right for this sort of incident'. The majority (70%) of respondents believed that their level of anger was appropriate for the incident, 27% felt that their level of anger was less than it should have been and 3% believed it was more than it should have been for the incident.

With respect to duration of anger, respondents were asked to indicate how long their anger lasted after it first occurred. The distribution of response tended to be bimodal; that is there were more incidents of relatively short duration (less than \( \frac{1}{2} \) hour) and relatively long duration (more than one day) than there were of intermediate time periods. Thus for the purpose of analysis, responses were grouped into the three categories shown in Table 6.19.

Table 6.19: Length of time the anger lasted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>(n = 179)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long duration: more than 1 day</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium duration (up to 1 day)</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short duration (Less than ( \frac{1}{2} ) hour)</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One respondent did not answer this question

Duration of anger was significantly related to respondent intensity of anger (r= .32: p<.00; \( \chi^2 = 13.10: p<.01 \)). Anger that lasted more than one-day duration was most associated with strong feelings of anger (Table 6.20).
Table 6.20: Respondent duration & intensity of anger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger Intensity</th>
<th>Short duration: less than ½ hr (n=66)</th>
<th>Medium: upto 1 day (n=52)</th>
<th>Long: more than 1 day (n=61)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High 8-10</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium 6-7</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low 1-5</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked whether or not they still had feelings of anger when they thought about the incident, the majority (71%) of respondents indicated that they did. Of the 126 respondents that still got angry, almost half (42%) indicated that their anger had lasted for more than one day when the incident actually occurred.

### 6.4.2 Other Emotions Felt During or After the Incident

Besides their feelings of anger, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had felt the emotions listed in Table 6.21 during or after the incident. Almost all respondents reported feelings of irritation (90%) and frustration (88%) during or after the service incident. Just over half had feelings of disgust (54%) and outrage (52%).

Table 6.21: Other emotions felt during or after the incident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Respondents (n=180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irritation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outrage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.4.3 Reported Control of Anger

Respondents were asked how able they were to control the outward expression of their anger (what they said and did), on a 10-point scale ranging from ‘I was in complete control of my actions’ (1) to ‘I was completely overcome: I couldn't help acting the way I did’ (10). Respondents were also asked how able they were to control their inward expression of anger (what they thought and felt), on a 10-point scale ranging from ‘I was in complete control of my thoughts and feelings’ (1) to ‘I was completely overcome: I couldn’t help thinking and feeling the way I did’ (10).

The mean rating for external control was 3.0, and the mean rating for internal control was 4.9. In Table 6.22, responses are grouped into those reporting high control (rating
of 1 to 3), those reporting medium control (rating of 4 to 6), and those reporting low control (rating of 7 to 10).

Not unexpectedly, respondents generally reported being significantly more in control of their behaviour (outward expression of anger) than of their thoughts and feelings (inward expression of anger) ($\chi^2 = 48.62; p<.001$) (Table 6.21).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Category</th>
<th>% Outward expression of anger $n=180$</th>
<th>% Inward expression of anger $n=180$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'High' Control: 1-2</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Medium' Control: 3-5</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Low' Control: 6-10</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.4 Respondent Cognitive Strategies to Reduce Their Anger

Respondents were asked whether, during the incident, they used four common re-appraisals (listed in Table 6.23) to reduce their anger.

The most frequently reported reappraisal involved diminishing the importance of the instigator (41%). Other common re-appraisals involved a more benign interpretation of the motives or guilt of the instigator (23%), and to decide the incident was less important than originally thought (21%) (Table 6.23). The re-evaluation of the respondent’s ‘own role in the incident’ was less common (only 8%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reappraisal</th>
<th>% Responding 'Yes' $n=180$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimise the importance of the person who angered you</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinterpret the motives or guilt of the person who angered you</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide the incident was less important than you originally thought</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinterpret your own motives, guilt, or role in the incident</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the four re-appraisals, respondents were asked to indicate whether they walked away from the situation and whether they did anything else to reduce their anger in the situation.

Walking away from the situation was common with 54% of respondents indicating that they did this. For example, one participant stated that “I walked away as I was getting upset” and another decided to “go for a walk and have a smoke”.

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Of the 23% of respondents who indicated that they used other strategies to reduce their anger in the situation, about half reported actions that could be classified as calming activities (Table 6.24). For example one respondent “breathed slowly and deeply”, another tried to “remain focussed on the issue”. Others responded with what could be classified as assertive behaviour. For example one respondent remarked that he “Totally refused to be intimidated by the arrogant s***... and kept repeating my request for him to look at the work”. Another respondent who had ordered a particular colour and style of sunglasses, refused to be “fobbed off” with a similar looking pair and “got them (the sales staff) to ring the sales rep and find the ones actually ordered”.

Table 6.24: Other individual moderators of responses during the incident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What else did you do to reduce your anger while in the situation?</th>
<th>% of total respondents (n = 180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used calming activities</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asserted self</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to other people (eg friends, family, other customers)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calmly talked incident over with service person</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.5 Section Summary

In this study, the intensity of anger felt during the service incident received a mean rating of 6.5 on a ten-point scale, suggesting that respondents did not report incidents that they considered trivial or inconsequential. Further the majority of respondents also indicated that they experienced feelings of irritation, frustration, disgust or outrage during the incident.

With respect to duration, the distribution of responses tended to be bimodal with more incidents of relatively short anger duration (less than ½ hour) and relatively long anger duration (more than one day). Overall, the more intense the anger aroused, the greater the duration. Respondents largely reported being in control of their behaviour, but being less in control of their thoughts and feelings. Most respondents used one or more cognitive strategies to reduce their anger.
6.5 FACTORS RELATED TO INTENSITY AND DURATION OF ANGER

6.5.1 Respondent’s Attribution of Incident

With respect to respondents’ attribution of the incident there was no difference in intensity of anger between those who believed that the incident was unjust versus those who believed the incident was avoidable (Table 6.25). Although not significant, those who believed that the incident was unjust remained angry for longer (43%) compared to those who believed the incident was avoidable (30%) (Table 6.26).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.25: Respondent attributions of incident &amp; intensity of anger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger Intensity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.26: Respondent attributions of incident &amp; duration of anger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long: longer than 1 day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium: up to 1 day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short: 5-29mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*1 respondent did not answer this question

6.5.2 Other Emotions Felt During or After the Incident

When related to respondent intensity of anger, the emotion most strongly associated with high intensity feelings of anger was outrage: 50% of those who felt outrage experienced high intensity of anger (versus 30% of those who felt irritated) (Table 6.27).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.27: Other emotions felt during or after the incident &amp; intensity of anger during incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger Intensity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High: 8-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium: 6-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low: 1-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outrage and disgust were significantly associated with high intensity of anger. Thirty-nine percent of those who felt disgust got very angry, compared to only 21% of those who did not feel disgust, almost twice as many ($\chi^2 = 14.89; p=.001$). Fifty percent of those who felt outrage got very angry compared to only 9% of those who did not feel outrage ($\chi^2 = 10.99; p=<.01$).

Although not statistically significant almost half of the respondents who felt outrage and disgust remained angry for a day or longer, compared to less than one quarter of those
respondents who did not feel this emotion (Table 6.28). There were no differences for the other emotions experienced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger Duration</th>
<th>Outrage</th>
<th>Disgust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=94)</td>
<td>(n=85)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long: longer than 1 day</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium: up to 1 day</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short: 5-29mins</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1 respondent did not answer duration question

### 6.5.3 Mood Prior to Incident

With respect to pre-incident mood and respondent intensity of anger, there was no difference between those who entered the service incident in a bad mood and those who entered in a good mood (Table 6.29). Whilst this result does not support Proposition 11, namely that customers in a negative mood state prior to entering the service encounter would have stronger anger arousal, it does suggest that respondent intensity of anger was a direct result of stimuli encountered during the service incident.

### 6.5.4 Aversive Service Stimuli Contributing to Anger

As outlined earlier (6.3.4), respondents were asked to indicate whether or not 17 potentially aversive service stimuli occurred during the incident. They were also asked,
for those items which did occur, how much each contributed to what made them angry on a four-point scale: (1) ‘not at all’, (2) ‘a little bit’, (3) ‘somewhat’, or (4) ‘very much’. The results are presented in Table 6.31, grouped into the three main types of service stimuli, namely physical, process and people stimuli. The table shows the percent of respondents for whom the factor occurred who stated that the factor contributed ‘somewhat’ (3) or ‘very much’ (4) to their anger.

Table 6.31 shows that other than poor grooming and ethnicity, people stimuli where they occur are very strongly associated with feelings of anger, with a higher percentage of respondents indicating that this group of factors had contributed to their anger either ‘somewhat’ or ‘very much’, than for other types of stimuli. However, an unfair process (89%), where it occurred, was a major contributing factor, along with a potential loss of money (87%).

The data of Table 6.31 need to be considered in the context of Table 6.14 showing the relative occurrence of these stimuli. Figure 6.3 plots the frequency of occurrence and contribution to anger where they occur. In general, people factors tend to occur frequently and contribute significantly to anger (Cell 2). Process factors occur less frequently, but contribute significantly to anger (Cell 1). Physical factors occur least frequently, and when they do, contribute least significantly to anger (Cell 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aversive Service Stimuli</th>
<th>% stating ‘Somewhat’ or ‘Very much’*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A discourteous service person</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A service person who failed to acknowledge your point of view</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially accepted ways of behaving/widely shared rules of conduct broken</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An incompetent service person</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A personal insult or loss of personal pride, self esteem, or sense of personal worth</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dishonest service person</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A poorly groomed service person</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A service person with an ethnic background</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An unfair process or procedure</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An actual or possible loss of money to you</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A complex process or procedure</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An ongoing or planned activity was frustrated or interrupted</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer than expected waiting time</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A previous poor service experience</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncomfortable facilities</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Access</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation’s physical environment</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* % of those stating the factor occurred
In addition to identifying whether each of the 17 factors actually occurred during the service incident and, if it did occur, how much it contributed to their anger, respondents were asked to describe in their own words the factor that made them ‘most’ angry. This open-ended question provided an opportunity for respondents to clarify their responses to the 17 instigating factors. People factors accounted for the majority (85%) of these open-ended responses, with 61% nominating that the service person had been either discourteous, failed to acknowledge their point of view or had been personally insulting (Table 6.32). Common adjectives used by the respondents to describe the service person were “arrogant”, “condescending”, “rude”, “disrespectful”, “apathetic”, “abrupt” and “ignorant”.

Whilst 15% of respondents indicated that a process factor such as an unfair process, excessive wait time, loss of money, or interruption of a planned/ongoing activity had been the most important factor which contributed to their anger, no respondents mentioned physical factors such as difficult access or uncomfortable facilities.
Table 6.32: Instigation to anger described in terms of factor which most contributed to anger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People Aversive Service Stimuli</th>
<th>Factor which contributed most to the instigation to anger</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents (n = 180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A discourteous service person</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A service person who failed to acknowledge your point of view</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A personal insult or loss of personal pride, self esteem, or sense of personal worth</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An incompetent service person</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normally socially accepted ways of behaving or widely shared rules of conduct were broken</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dishonest service person</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>84.5%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Aversive Service Stimuli</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents (n = 180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An unfair process or procedure</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer than expected waiting time</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An actual or possible loss of money to you</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An ongoing or planned activity was frustrated or interrupted</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Grand Total | 100% |

In general, it is clear that the service person’s attitude to the customer was perceived to be the most common and the greatest contributor to people’s anger in service incidents. Further, it is a lack of courtesy or failure to acknowledge one’s point of view rather than competence that is most important.

Overall, these data provide relatively strong support for propositions 1-7 (people, process and physical factors are positively related to aggressive arousal; and people aversive stimuli are most strongly related).

6.5.5 Staff Defusing Skills

In incidents where the service person did attempt to defuse the situation, 22% of respondents reported that they felt ‘very’ angry, compared to 35% of respondents in incidents where the service person did not attempt to defuse the situation (Table 6.33). However the chi-square was not significant ($\chi^2 = 4.1; p > .1$). Staff defusing skills did not appear to affect how long the anger lasted (Table 6.34).

Table 6.33: Service person attempts to defuse the situation & intensity of anger during incident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger Intensity</th>
<th>Did service person attempt to defuse situation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.34: Service person attempts to defuse the situation & duration of anger during incident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger Duration</th>
<th>Did service person attempt to defuse situation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long: longer than 1 day</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium: upto 1 day</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short: 5-29mins</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.35 relates intensity of anger to how well respondents claimed that the service person defused the situation. Compared to those who claimed no attempt had been made to defuse the situation even a poor attempt at defusing by the service person appeared to reduce intense feelings of anger. However, this was not the case with duration of anger (Table 6.36).

Table 6.35: How well service person defused the situation & intensity of anger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger Intensity</th>
<th>No attempt to defuse the situation (n=126)</th>
<th>Poor attempt to defuse the situation (n=48)</th>
<th>Good attempt to defuse the situation (n=6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.36: How well service person defused the situation & duration of anger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger Duration</th>
<th>No attempt to defuse the situation (n=125)*</th>
<th>Poor attempt to defuse the situation (n=48)</th>
<th>Good attempt to defuse the situation (n=6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long: longer than 1 day</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 1 day</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-29 minutes</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 1 respondent failed to answer this question

These data provide some support for Proposition 14, that a service person’s attempts to defuse the situation will lessen the intensity of anger.

6.5.6 Situation Re-Appraisal and Respondent Anger

Minimising the importance of the person who angered them was the most frequently used cognitive strategy (Table 6.23), but it appears the least effective in reducing intensity of anger (Table 6.37). On the other hand, 16% of those respondents who decided that the incident was less important than originally thought felt very angry, compared to 34% of those who did not use this re-appraisal ($\chi^2 = 5.45$: $p=.07$), and reinterpreting the person’s motives ($\chi^2 = 4.18$: $p=.12$) also approached significance.
Table 6.37 Re-appraisals of the service incident & intensity of anger during incident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger Intensity</th>
<th>Minimise importance of person who angered</th>
<th>Reinterpret motives of person who angered</th>
<th>Decide incident was less important than originally thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=73)</td>
<td>No (n=107)</td>
<td>Yes (n=42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data provide some support for Proposition 10, that the use of cognitive re-appraisals will be associated with less anger intensity.

The effect of re-appraising the incident on duration of anger was significant where the respondent decided the incident was less important than originally thought ($\chi^2 = 11.18; p<.01$) and where the respondent reinterpreted the motives of the service person ($\chi^2 = 8.15; p=.02$) (Table 6.38).

6.5.7 Section Summary

With respect to factors influencing intensity and duration of anger, there was no difference in intensity of anger between those who believed that the service incident was best described as unjust and those who believed that the incident was best described as avoidable. However those who believed the incident was unjust remained angry for longer.

There was also no difference between those who entered the service incident in a bad mood and those who entered in a good mood. However, the emotions of outrage and disgust were related to both anger intensity and anger duration.

With respect to aversive service stimuli, in general, people factors tend to occur frequently and contribute significantly to anger, process factors occur less frequently,
but contribute significantly to anger, and physical factors occur least frequently and when they do, contribute least significantly to anger.

Attempts by the service person to defuse the situation did appear to reduce the intensity of anger, however they did not appear to affect how long the anger lasted.

Finally, reinterpreting the motives of the service person and deciding the incident was less important were both related to less anger intensity and anger duration.

6.6 BEHAVIOURAL RESPONSES TO INCIDENT

6.6.1 What Respondents Felt Like Doing and What They Actually Did

Thirteen possible behavioural responses (with examples) were listed in the questionnaire (see Table 6.39). These ranged from physically expressing anger and causing severe injury to the service person (e.g., knocking the service person unconscious), to doing things opposite to the expression of anger (e.g., being extra friendly to the service person). Broadly, these responses can be classified into four categories (Averill 1982):

1) Direct aggression: responses that involved a direct confrontation with the target/service person (e.g., physical, verbal or symbolic aggression such as hitting, swearing, making obscene gestures);

2) Indirect aggression: responses that did not involve a direct confrontation with the target/service person (e.g., getting back at the service person by complaining to their supervisor);

3) Displaced aggression: responses that involved another person or non-human object or thing (e.g., thumping the counter, slamming a door or snapping at a family member or friend not directly involved in the incident); and

4) Non aggressive responses (e.g., calmly talking to the service person, using calming activities on self).

Respondents were first asked to rate each item on a 3-point scale (0 = not at all, 1 = somewhat, 2 = very much) as to how much they felt like making each during the poor service incident. They were then asked, for each item, whether they actually did what they felt like doing. The results are shown in Table 6.39.
Almost three-quarters (73%) of respondents indicated that they felt like verbally expressing their anger (without physical threats), in the form of yelling, swearing, using sarcasm or making a nasty remark to the service person (direct aggression). Fifty-four percent of respondents felt like talking to the person's supervisor in order to get back at the service person (indirect aggression). Non-aggressive impulses were also common with 58% who felt like talking to the service person's supervisor to resolve the issue, 57% who felt like talking the incident over with the service person without showing anger, and 49% who felt like using calming activities on themselves (Table 6.39).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% felt like doing (n = 180)</th>
<th>% of those who did what they felt like doing</th>
<th>% of total sample who did what they felt like doing (n = 180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Aggression</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbally expressing anger without physical threats to service person</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolically expressing anger to service person</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbally expressing anger &amp; making specific threats to service person</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically expressing anger &amp; causing no injury to service person</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically expressing anger &amp; causing minor injury to service person</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically expressing anger &amp; causing severe injury to service person</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Displaced aggression</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking anger out on some person not involved in the incident</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacking some non-human object or thing</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect Aggression</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to person's supervisor to get back at them or have them punished</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non aggressive responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to service person's supervisor to resolve the issue</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking incident over with service person without showing anger</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using calming activities on self</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing things opposite to expression of anger</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 6.39 it is clear that people experience a range of impulses during service encounters.

Table 6.39 also shows that in most cases only half or less of respondents' aggressive impulses were actually expressed. The most commonly acted on feelings were doing things opposite to the expression of anger (such as being extra friendly to the service person), and using calming activities on self. Almost all respondents who felt these
desires, expressed these desires. Other commonly acted upon feelings included: taking
anger out on someone else (81% of those who had this desire); talking the incident over
with the service person (71% of those who had this desire); symbolically expressing
anger to the service person (64% of those who had this desire); and verbally expressing
anger without physical threats (57% of those who had this desire).

Figure 6.4 plots the frequency of felt desires and actual expression of anger. In general,
non-aggressive and verbally aggressive desires occur frequently and are frequently
expressed (Cell 2). Indirect aggressive desires occur frequently but are less frequently
expressed (Cell 1). Displaced aggressive desires occur less frequently but when they do
are frequently expressed (Cell 4). Physically aggressive desires occur the least
frequently and are the least likely to be expressed (Cell 3).

In addition to identifying how much they felt like doing each of the 13 presented
behavioural responses during the service incident and whether they actually did what they
felt like doing, respondents were asked to describe in their own words, what they most
felt like doing and what they actually did. These two open-ended questions provided an
opportunity for respondents to clarify their responses to the 13 behavioural items.
With respect to what respondents most felt like doing, the majority of responses (80%) to this open-ended question were all variations on the 13 behavioural items, with the two most frequently mentioned being: verbally expressing anger without physical threats (31%) and talking to the service person’s supervisor in order to get back at them (16%). With respect to responses not reflecting those previously listed, 14% indicated that they most felt like walking out without completing their transaction, 4% could be categorised as complaining behaviour (reporting the organisation to a public body, media or taking the complaint to a lawyer), 1% felt like crying (1%) and 1% felt like screaming (Table 6.40).

Table 6.40: Behavioural responses to anger described in terms of what respondent most felt like doing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did you most feel like doing?</th>
<th>% Respondents (n=180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Aggression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbally expressing anger without physical threats to service person</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically expressing anger &amp; causing severe injury to service person</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically expressing anger &amp; causing minor injury to service person</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbally expressing anger &amp; making specific threats to service person</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically expressing anger &amp; causing no injury to service person</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolically expressing to service person</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displaced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking anger out on some person not involved in the incident</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking anger out on non-human object or thing</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to person’s supervisor to get back at them have them punished</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting organisation to public body, media or going to a lawyer</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-aggressive responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking out without completing transaction</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to service person’s supervisor just to resolve the issue</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking incident over with service person without showing anger</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Screaming or crying</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.41 lists typical examples of respondents’ own words. It is clear that some people had very violent feelings towards the object of their anger.

Table 6.41: Typical examples of what respondents most felt like doing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Aggression</th>
<th>“Kicking him in the shins”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Smacking her in the face”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Shaking him to make him listen to me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Yelling loudly at the person”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Calling the person a stuck up judgemental ***”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Making sarcastic remarks”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Asking why she had such a chip on her shoulder”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Belittling her”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Displaced Aggression</th>
<th>“Smashing up their shop”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Walking out and punching husband”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Indirect Aggression                                                             | “Complaining to higher levels of management until the person lost their job” |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-aggressive Responses</th>
<th>“Talking to his supervisor”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Resolving the issue immediately with the person concerned”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Calmly resolving the issue”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Catherine Bachleda: Towards a Theory of Customer Aggression
With respect to what respondents actually did, the majority of responses to this open-ended question, matched the 13 behavioural responses provided in the questionnaire (Table 6.42). The three most frequently mentioned were: used calming activities on self (43%); verbally expressed anger without physical threats (42%); and talked incident over with service person without showing anger (42%). Of the added responses, 13% could be classified as taking no action and 4% could be classified as walking out without completing their transaction.

Table 6.42: Behavioural responses to anger described in terms of what respondent actually did

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe what you actually did?</th>
<th>% of Respondents (n=180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Aggression</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbally expressed anger without physical threats to service person</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolically expressed anger to service person</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbally expressed anger &amp; making specific threats to service person</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically expressed anger &amp; causing no injury to service person</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically expressed anger &amp; causing severe injury to service person</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically expressed anger &amp; causing minor injury to service person</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Displaced</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took anger out on some person not involved in the incident</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took anger out on non-human object or thing</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to person’s supervisor to get back at them or have them punished</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-aggressive responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used calming activities on self</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked incident over with service person without showing anger</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to service person’s supervisor just to resolve the issue</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did things opposite to expression of anger</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took no action</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walked out without completing transaction</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.43 lists typical examples of respondents’ own words.

Table 6.43: Typical examples of what respondents actually did

| Direct Aggression:                         | “Verbally demolished and dismembered the person” |
|                                          | “Stood there mouthing off at the manager”        |
|                                          | “Glared at him and snarled for the keys to unlock the gas platform” |
|                                          | “Was rude and sarcastic when I eventually got served” |
|                                          | “Glared at him”                                  |
|                                          | “Suggested the lady should try oranges for breakfast instead of lemons” |

| Displaced Aggression:                     | “Left the store in a hurry, slamming the cart in the car-park” |
|                                          | “Slammed the sliding door closed much harder than normal” |
|                                          | “Told my impatient husband to shut up and reminded him that it was me who had to do this waiting thing regularly” |

| Indirect Aggression:                      | “Spoke to the boss about how unhappy I was with the salesman” |

| Non-aggressive Responses                  | “Calmly explained my disappointment to the service person” |
|                                          | “Went to the supervisor and explained the problem” |
|                                          | “Acted normal as if nothing occurred, maybe she may have felt guilty afterwards” |
|                                          | “Took deep breaths to calm myself” |
6.6.2 Representativeness of Behavioural Responses

Respondents were asked to rate how typical what they felt like doing during the incident was ‘of what you generally feel when angry’ and ‘of what other people generally feel when angry’. A large majority of respondents believed that what they felt like doing as a result of the incident was typical of what they felt like doing when angry: 39% thought that what they felt was ‘very’ typical, 52% thought that what they felt was ‘somewhat’ typical. With respect to people in general, respondents generally believed that what they felt like doing was typical of people in general (Table 6.44).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Respondents believing what they felt like doing was typical of what they generally feel when angry</th>
<th>% Respondents believing what they felt like doing was typical of what other people generally feel when angry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(n=180)</td>
<td>(n=178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Typical</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Typical</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Typical</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.44: Representativeness of what felt like doing during incident

# 2 respondents failed to answer this question

Respondents were also asked to rate how typical what they actually did during the incident was, in terms of what they generally do when angry and of what other people generally do when angry.

With regard to themselves, 36% thought that what they actually did was ‘very’ typical and 53% thought that what they did was ‘somewhat’ typical. Only 11% believed that their behavioural response to the incident was ‘not at all’ typical of what they generally did when angry (Table 6.45). With respect to people in general, 21% thought their reaction was ‘very’ typical and 56% thought their reaction was ‘somewhat’ typical of what people in general do when angry.

The slightly higher number of respondents who believed that their responses were only ‘somewhat typical’ or ‘not at all typical’ of what other people generally do when angry may be related to the intensity of behavioural responses. Whilst a specific question was not asked in the questionnaire, general comments throughout these respondents’ questionnaires indicated that they believed other people would have responded far more forcefully in such a situation (e.g., one respondent stated that “most people would have abused the service person in a similar situation”).
Table 6.45: Representativeness of behavioural response during incident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Respondents believing that what they did during the incident was typical of what they generally do when angry (n = 180)</th>
<th>% Respondents believing that what they did during the incident was typical of what other people generally do when angry (n = 176)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Typical</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Typical</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Typical</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*4 respondents failed to answer this question

Overall then, people’s behavioural response to these incidents appear typical, and hence can be considered appropriate for the model’s development.

6.6.3 Section Summary

In terms of responses to poor service incidents, respondents experienced impulses ranging from non-aggression (such as talking the incident over with the service person without showing anger) to direct physical aggression (such as physically causing injury to the service person). Most non-aggressive desires were acted upon. Verbally aggressive desires were also frequently acted upon, however all other aggressive desires were frequently inhibited. Overall only half or less of aggressive desires were actually expressed.

6.7 FACTORS INFLUENCING RESPONSE TO THE INCIDENT

6.7.1 Environmental and Other Moderators of Respondent Behaviour

Respondents were asked to think back to what they actually did versus what they felt like doing when they were angry. They were then asked to indicate whether there was, ‘anything or any persons in the environment that stopped them doing what they felt like doing’, and if so, what.

Of the 55 respondents who indicated that something or someone had influenced their response during the incident, 51% reported being restrained because other people (friends, family, other customers or other staff) were present (Table 6.46). For example one respondent commented “my son was with me – I really worked on my control because of this”. Another controlled her urge to “storm out yelling and shouting” because she lived in a small town and “everyone would have heard about it very quickly”.

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A further 13% of responses were constrained by time. For example, two of the respondents were shopping in their lunch break and had to get back to work and another had “a pressing appointment”. Nine percent restrained themselves because the appropriate person to express their anger to (such as a manager) was not available, and 4% were categorised as having been restrained by the service person’s age or size; in both cases the respondent indicated that they felt intimidated by the service person. Only 6% restrained themselves as a result of the service person’s attempts to defuse the situation.

Individual moderators were also mentioned: the respondent’s belief that the actions would not achieve the required outcome (24%) and the respondent’s own morals or discipline (18%).

Table 6.46: Individual & environmental moderators of behaviour during the incident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Moderators</th>
<th>% of responses (n= 55)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ belief that action would not achieve required outcome</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The respondent’s own morals or discipline</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presence of family or friends</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presence of other customers</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time constraints</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presence of other staff</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The manager/appropriate person to express anger was not available</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service person’s attempt to defuse the situation</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service person’s age or size</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the open-ended question about whether there was any person or thing which influenced their behavioural response during the incident, respondents were provided with a list of six environmental features and asked to indicate whether each had been present during the incident (Table 6.47).

Nearly three quarters of the sample (72%) indicated that other staff were present during the incident, 58% indicated that other customers were present, 42% that physical barriers between them and the service person were present, and 33% that other family members or friends were present. Formal security measures were reported infrequently: video surveillance cameras 13% and security guards 5%.
Respondents were then asked whether these and an additional four factors had influenced whether or not they did what they felt like doing. Respondents were asked to indicate for each item whether it (1) ‘stopped me doing some things I wanted to do’, (2) ‘had no influence on what I did’ (or was ‘not applicable’), (3) ‘made it easier to do what I did’.

Table 6.48 shows that almost two-thirds (60%) of respondents believed that their own morals or self-discipline moderated their behaviour. The presence of other customers was indicated by 14% of respondents and 13% indicated that the presence of family or friends influenced what they did. In this sample, environmental moderators such as the presence of a physical barrier or security guards had limited influence with only 2% of respondents indicating the former and no respondents indicating the latter. Similarly only 2% of respondents believed that the service person’s attempts to defuse the situation influenced what they did.

These results provide very little support for propositions 12 and 14, namely that the presence of security mechanisms and staff attempts to defuse the situation will moderate the expression of aggressive behaviour. However, the results do appear to support
Proposition 13 that the presence of other people (friends, family, other customers or other staff) will moderate the expression of aggressive behaviour.

### 6.7.2 Influence of Intensity of Anger on What Respondents Actually did

Table 6.49 relates what respondents actually did to intensity of anger. In general, and not unexpectedly, reports of aggression, whether direct, indirect or displaced were more likely to be associated with high intensity of anger than reports of non-aggressive behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Aggression</th>
<th>Anger Intensity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbally expressed anger without physical threats to service person</td>
<td>(n=75)</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolically expressed anger to service person</td>
<td>(n=47)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Displaced aggression</th>
<th>Anger Intensity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Took anger out on some person not involved in the incident</td>
<td>(n=25)</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacked some non-human object or thing</td>
<td>(n=11)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indirect Aggression</th>
<th>Anger Intensity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talked to person’s supervisor to get back at them or have them punished</td>
<td>(n=38)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non aggressive responses</th>
<th>Anger Intensity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talked to service person's supervisor to resolve the issue</td>
<td>(n=56)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked incident over with service person without showing anger</td>
<td>(n=73)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used calming activities on self</td>
<td>(n=90)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did things opposite to expression of anger</td>
<td>(n=35)</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Variables with cell sizes less than 10 are not shown

Table 6.50 relates what respondents actually did and duration of anger. In general, those who responded with indirect or displaced aggression felt angry for longer compared to those who responded with direct aggression.
Table 6.50: What respondents did & duration of anger after incident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Anger Duration</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Over 1 day</td>
<td>Up to 1 day</td>
<td>5-29 mins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Aggression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbally expressed anger without physical threats to service person</td>
<td>(n=74)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolically expressed anger to service person</td>
<td>(n=47)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displaced aggression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took anger out on some person not involved in the incident</td>
<td>(n=25)</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Aggression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to person’s supervisor to get back at them or have them punished</td>
<td>(n=38)</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non aggressive responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to service person’s supervisor to resolve the issue</td>
<td>(n=56)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked incident over with service person without showing anger</td>
<td>(n=72)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used calming activities on self</td>
<td>(n=90)</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did things opposite to expression of anger</td>
<td>(n=35)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variables with cell sizes less than 10 are not shown

6.8 POST INCIDENT RESPONSES

6.8.1 What Respondents Said They Would Do and What They Actually Did

Respondents were first asked to indicate whether or not they intended at the time to make each of seven listed responses following the incident (Table 6.51). Respondents were then asked to indicate whether they actually did make the response – regardless of whether they said they would do it.

Using another service next time and telling family and friends about the experience were each indicated by 72% of the sample as intended behaviours. In the case of telling family and friends about the incident and urging them not to use that service, 72% indicated that they actually did this. In the case of using another service next time, 62% indicated that they actually did this.

Almost half (49%) of respondents said they would complain to the organisation by letter or phone, and 31% indicated that they actually did this. A further 14% said they would contact a public agency (such as the Ombudsman) to complain, with 7% indicating they actually did this. Of the remaining complaining behaviours, 9% said they would write a letter of complaint to a magazine or newspaper, with 2% indicating they did this, and 6% said they would contact a lawyer about possible legal action, with 4% indicating they actually did this.

Catherine Bachleda: Towards a Theory of Customer Aggression
Table 6.51: Post incident behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you say you would do any of the following after the incident, and if so, did you actually do it?</th>
<th>% Said Would Do: (n = 180)</th>
<th>% Actually Did: (n=180)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will use another service organisation next time</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will tell your family and friends about the experience and urge them not to use the service</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will complain to the organisation by letter or phone</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will forget the whole thing</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will contact a public agency to complain eg: Consumer Affairs, Ombudsman</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will write a letter of complaint to a magazine or newspaper</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will contact a lawyer about possible legal action</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were also asked to describe, in their own words, anything else they may have done after the incident. The responses contained in the open-ended question were all variations on the seven above themes, for example:

“Called and advised the manager of the unacceptable delay, costs and inconvenience.”

“Phoned customer service line and received a pitiful card from service manager.”

“Vowed never to use this lending institution again”

“Transferred my accounts to another bank”

“Told everyone I knew not to use the same Company”

“Went to another business straight away”

“Complained to my husband all the way home”

“Advised the health department”

“Wrote to the head office of the Building Registration Board”

6.8.2 Post Incident Responses and Intensity and Duration of Anger

Table 6.52 compares what respondents said they would do after the incident and intensity of anger. The stated responses that were most associated with strong feelings of anger were complain to a public agency ($\chi^2 = 16.68; p<.01$), use another service ($\chi^2 = 7.42; p<.05$), and tell family and friends ($\chi^2 = 6.22; p<.05$). For example, 64% of those who said they would complain to a public agency got very angry compared to only 25% of those who did not say they would complain. On the other hand, those who said they would ‘forget the whole thing’, were less likely to be highly angry (though not significantly so).
Similarly, in terms of what respondents actually did do after the incident and intensity of anger (Table 6.53), the responses that were most associated with strong feelings of anger were complaining to a public agency ($\chi^2 = 5.92: p<.05$) and using another service ($\chi^2 = 6.48: p<.05$). For example, 54% of those who did complain to a public agency got very angry compared to only 29% of those who did not complain. Those who actually did forget the whole thing were less likely to be highly angry.

### Table 6.52: What respondents said they would do post incident & intensity of anger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger Intensity</th>
<th>Use another service*</th>
<th>Tell family &amp; friends**</th>
<th>Complain to firm by letter/phone</th>
<th>Complain to public agency*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=129)</td>
<td>Yes (n=129)</td>
<td>Yes (n=89)</td>
<td>Yes (n=25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No (n=51) 16% 20% 30% 25%

|                 | Yes (n=129)         | Yes (n=89)              | Yes (n=25) |
| High            | 20%                  | 31%                      | 64%          |
| Medium          | 45%                  | 44%                      | 32%          |
| Low             | 29%                  | 24%                      | 4%           |

*p<.01  **p<.05

**Variables with cell sizes less than 10 are not shown

### Table 6.53: What respondents did post incident & intensity of anger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger Intensity</th>
<th>Use another service**</th>
<th>Tell family &amp; friends</th>
<th>Complain to firm by letter/phone</th>
<th>Forget the whole thing*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=110)</td>
<td>Yes (n=129)</td>
<td>Yes (n=55)</td>
<td>Yes (n=36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No (n=70) 20% 22% 32% 36%

*p<.01  **p<.05

Similar results were obtained for duration of anger and respondents’ intention to take action after the incident and actually taking action (Tables 6.54 and 6.55).
Table 6.54: What respondents said they would do post incident & duration of anger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger Duration</th>
<th>Use another service</th>
<th>Tell family &amp; friends*</th>
<th>Complain to firm by letter/phone</th>
<th>Complain to public agency*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=128)#</td>
<td>No (n=51)</td>
<td>Yes (n=129)</td>
<td>No (n=50)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=89)</td>
<td>No (n=90)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=25)</td>
<td>No (n=154)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer than 1 day</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=128)</td>
<td>(n=51)</td>
<td>(n=129)</td>
<td>(n=50)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(n=89)</td>
<td>(n=90)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=25)</td>
<td>No (n=154)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 1 day</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=51)</td>
<td>(n=50)</td>
<td>(n=128)</td>
<td>(n=129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-29mins</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=51)</td>
<td>(n=70)</td>
<td>(n=128)</td>
<td>(n=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(n=89)</td>
<td>(n=124)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=129)</td>
<td>No (n=124)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No (n=163)#</td>
<td>(n=163)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 1 respondent failed to answer question

Table 6.55: What respondents did post incident & duration of anger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger Duration</th>
<th>Use another service</th>
<th>Tell family &amp; friends**</th>
<th>Complain to firm by letter/phone*</th>
<th>Forget the whole thing*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=109)</td>
<td>No (n=70)</td>
<td>Yes (n=128)</td>
<td>No (n=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=55)</td>
<td>No (n=124)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=36)</td>
<td>No (n=143)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer than 1 day</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=109)</td>
<td>(n=70)</td>
<td>(n=128)</td>
<td>(n=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(n=55)</td>
<td>(n=124)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=36)</td>
<td>No (n=143)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 1 day</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=51)</td>
<td>(n=50)</td>
<td>(n=128)</td>
<td>(n=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-29mins</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=51)</td>
<td>(n=50)</td>
<td>(n=128)</td>
<td>(n=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(n=89)</td>
<td>(n=124)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=89)</td>
<td>No (n=124)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(n=55)</td>
<td>(n=124)#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n=36)</td>
<td>No (n=143)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 1 respondent failed to answer question

6.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined the results from the main study. In summary, the model of customer aggression is supported by the results. The results suggest that aversive service stimuli, in particular people stimuli, are strongly related to anger arousal. The intensity and duration of this anger appears moderated somewhat by re-appraising the situation and staff defusing skills.

Felt actions expressed as a result of this anger ranged from non-aggressive (such as talking the incident over with the service person) to direct physical aggression (wanting to physically harm the service person).

Whilst most non-aggressive desires were acted upon, aggressive desires were frequently inhibited. Factors which influenced whether a response was inhibited included the
presence of other people (friends, family, other customers or other staff) and the respondent’s own morals or self-discipline.

Chapter seven discusses these findings and their implications for managers. The limitations of the study are noted and suggestions made for future research.
CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the major results reported in chapter six, concerning the model of customer aggression are summarised. The results are then discussed further with reference to the literature reviewed in chapter two and to research in other relevant areas. Possible explanations are offered for the findings and the implications for managers are presented. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed and suggestions are made for further research.

7.2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Overall the results show strong support for the Model of Customer Aggression. Of the fourteen propositions, ten are upheld (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P13). Of the remaining four, two are partly supported (P10, P14) and two are not upheld (P11, P12).

Propositions 1 to 6, that people (courtesy and competence), process (wait time and complex service operations) and physical (uncomfortable facilities and difficult access) aversive stimuli are positively related to aggressive arousal, were supported by findings from the main study. All 180 respondents reported that one or more of these categories of aversive stimuli had contributed to their feelings of anger.

Proposition 7, that people aversive stimuli would be most strongly related to aggressive arousal, was also supported by this study. Ninety-five percent reported that the discourtesy of the service person had contributed either 'somewhat' or 'very much' to their anger with 28% reporting that it was the single most important factor. Eighty-five percent of respondents reported that the perceived incompetence of the service person had contributed either 'somewhat' or 'very much' to their anger, with 11% reporting that it was the single most important factor.

The results also lend support to Proposition 8, that service encounters that arouse anger would be predominantly described as unjust or avoidable. In this study, 67% of respondents believed the incident was potentially avoidable and 32% that it was unjust.
The results support Proposition 9, that the greater the gap in expectations between anticipated service quality and the perceived actual quality, the stronger the anger arousal. Fifty-three percent of those who had expected excellent service indicated that they felt intense feelings of anger as a result of the poor service received compared to only 30% of those who entered the service encounter with poor expectations of service quality.

Proposition 10, that the use of cognitive re-appraisals will be associated with less anger intensity, was partly supported by the results. Minimising the importance of the person who angered them was the most frequently used cognitive strategy with 41% reporting use of this strategy. However, this strategy appeared the least effective in reducing intensity of anger. On the other hand, deciding that the incident was less important than originally thought was significant in reducing intensity of anger and reinterpreting the person's motives also approached significance.

Proposition 11, that respondents in a negative mood state prior to entering the service encounter would have stronger anger arousal, was not supported by this study. In this sample, there was very little difference in reported intensity of anger between those who entered the service incident in a bad mood and those who entered in a good mood.

Proposition 13, that the presence of other people (friends, family, other customers or other staff) during the service encounter would moderate the expression of aggressive behaviour was also supported by this study. Of the respondents who indicated a difference between what they felt like doing and what they actually did during the encounter, 51% reported that they had restrained their response because other people were present.

The effect of organisational moderating factors such as security mechanisms (Proposition 12) was less evident in this sample. Whilst 42% of respondents reported physical barriers were present between them and the service person, only 2% believed that they stopped them doing what they felt like doing. Further, whilst the presence of video surveillance cameras and security guards was reported by 13% and 5% of respondents respectively, only 2% believed that surveillance cameras and none that security guards had stopped them doing what they felt like doing.
Proposition 14, that attempts by the service person to defuse the situation would lessen the intensity of anger arousal and moderate the expression of aggressive behaviour, was partly supported by this study. In the majority (70%) of cases where the respondent became angry, the service person made no attempt to defuse the situation. In the third of incidents where the service person did attempt to defuse the situation, only 22% of respondents reported that they felt ‘very’ angry, compared to 35% of respondents in incidents where the service person did not attempt to defuse the situation. However, of those respondents who indicated a difference between what they felt like doing and what they actually did during the encounter, only 6% believed that they had restrained their response because of attempts by the service person to defuse the situation. It should be noted however that, on average, respondents felt that attempts by the service person to defuse the situation were poorly executed.

7.3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS
The intent of this research was to develop a better understanding of the nature of customer aggression. Specifically, the study focussed on the following question: What prompts customer aggression during the service encounter? An empirical investigation of this question was conducted within the framework of a conceptual model of customer aggression. The model suggested that customers become aggressively aroused as a reaction to aversive service stimuli and unless organisational restraints intervene, the aggressive arousal will result in aggressive behaviour.

As outlined in the summary of results above, many of the proposed relationships found support in this study. Anger was triggered by aversive service stimuli (in particular people stimuli), and aggressive responses were affected directly by some organisational restraints such as the presence of other people.

These findings are discussed below. This is followed by a discussion about the implications for managers, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

7.3.1 Aversive Service Stimuli
The importance of interpersonal and technical skills of service personnel (customer-contact employees) is highlighted by the results of this study. Specifically, the most
frequently mentioned sources of anger during a service encounter were service person
discourtesy, failure by the service person to acknowledge the respondent’s point of
view, service person incompetence, and a perceived insult from the service person. All
of these people factors concern the intangible nature of a given service and correspond
to Parasuraman et al.’s (1988) empathy and assurance dimensions. Their importance as
a source of anger however, seems somewhat at odds with Parasuraman et al.’s (1988)
contention that, other than tangibles, empathy was the least important of the five service
quality dimensions. On the other hand, it does reinforce arguments by Bitner et al.
(1990) and Price et al. (1995) that failing to meet minimum standards of civility is likely
to contribute to negative feelings about a service. It also supports Zeithaml et al.’s
(1990) and Price et al.’s (1995) contention that incompetence is a significant predictor
of consumers’ negative feelings during service encounters.

In this study respondents’ comments seemed to indicate a clear distinction between
courtesy (terms such as “rude”, “disrespectful”) and competence (terms such as “didn’t
know their job”, “didn’t know what they were doing”). This conflicts with Parasuraman
et al.’s (1988) finding that competence and courtesy could be subsumed under
assurance. One possible explanation for this and the finding that empathy is an
important factor in customer anger is that most of the firms studied by Parasuraman et
al. (1988) had a relatively low incidence of face-to-face interaction with customers. It is
likely that during a face-to-face service encounter, provider dimensions such as
courtesy, empathy and competence are more readily observed and evaluated.

Although both courtesy and competence are important in this study, courtesy was the
factor that contributed most to anger and subsequent aggressive behaviour. This finding
supports Price et al.’s (1995) argument that negative emotional responses are influenced
more by failing to meet minimum standards of civility than any other service person
performance factor. Further the majority of respondents reported this discourtesy as a
personal insult. In describing the incident, many respondents used terms corresponding
to Bell and Zemke’s (1987) ‘victimised’ category of consumers. They reported that they
felt outraged by their perceived treatment and responded accordingly. These findings
lend some support to Berkowitz’s (1993) and Geen’s (1995) contention that individuals
who have been insulted often counter-attack.
With respect to other aversive service stimuli, the study found that process factors such as longer than expected wait time and unfair or complex processes occurred less frequently than people factors. However, when they did occur they contributed significantly to feelings of anger. This finding supports Taylor’s (1994) findings that delays significantly affect feelings of anger, and Fornell and Westbrook’s (1979) that complex service processes result in feelings of frustration.

The finding that physical factors such as difficult access and uncomfortable facilities occur least frequently and contribute least significantly to anger in the service encounter lend support to Parasuraman et al.’s (1988) contention that tangibles are the least important service quality dimension. This does not mean that such factors are unimportant. However, in the context of aversants linked to customer aggression, they occur relatively infrequently, whereas people factors are quite common and contribute significantly to anger.

The physical factors used in the study included: poor signage; inadequate parking; insufficient public transport; uncomfortable or insufficient seating; crowding; uncomfortable temperatures; background music; and poor décor. Thus one alternative explanation for the finding is that there are other more important physical factors which contribute to anger in the service encounter. On the other hand, the findings may simply reflect that most service organisations have adequate physical facilities.

7.3.2 Moderators between Aversive Service Stimuli and Arousal
The data support the assertion that attribution is an important moderator of service encounter anger. This is consistent with Weiner’s (1985) theory of attribution and emotion. Further, the finding that almost one third of respondents believed the incident to be ‘unjust’ suggests that moral fault or blame is commonly involved in aggressive arousal related to poor service incidents. This finding lends some support to Averill’s (1983) claim that anger is mainly an attribution of blame.

However, in contrast to Averill’s (1983) findings, but consistent with Folkes’ (1984) study of attributions and product failure, the majority of respondents (67%) in this survey became angry at a potentially avoidable incident rather than an incident believed to be unjust.
The finding that the greater the gap between anticipated service quality and actual service the greater the intensity of anger felt, is consistent with the gap model of service quality developed by Zeithaml et al. (1990); Zeithaml et al. (1993). For example, respondents’ comments such as “advertises itself as customer friendly and isn’t”, “their services did not match their promises”, “the bank said it treats people as individuals but doesn’t”, reflect a gap between service delivery and service promises. The finding also lends support to Bell and Zemke’s (1987) notion that service experiences which fall only slightly short of what was expected result in feelings of irritation, whereas experiences that fall well below expectations are likely to result in feelings of ire and frustration for the customer.

With respect to respondent mood, it should be noted that only 13% of the sample reported being in a negative mood prior to the service incident compared to 85% who reported being in a positive mood. We have no comparison data for the percentage of the general population that are usually in a negative mood prior to a service encounter. Nevertheless, the finding that mood did not affect intensity of anger seems at odds with much mood research. This research suggests that mood biases evaluations in mood-congruent directions and that people in positive moods should demonstrate a more positive evaluation of a service encounter than those in neutral or negative moods (see for example, Clark et al. 1992; Knowles et al. 1993). A possible explanation for the finding that mood did not affect intensity of anger, in this study, is Gardner’s (1985) argument that moods are transient feeling states whereas emotions are more intense, attention-getting states. Thus emotions such as anger are likely to override any initial general feelings of mood or mild affective states.

The study found that people use a variety of strategies to reduce their feelings of anger. The strategy used most frequently was to simply walk away from the situation, followed by re-appraisals involving minimising the importance of, and reinterpreting the motives or guilt of, the service person. The data are consistent with results obtained by Averill (1983). Further, cognitive strategies such as the last two are central to anger management strategies proposed by writers such as Novaco (1979) and Schneider (1991).
7.3.3 Behavioural Responses
This research found that the consequences of poor service encounters extend beyond cognitive and affective evaluations of satisfaction and service quality to actual aggressive behaviour. The majority (88%) of respondents in this study indicated they felt like engaging in some form of direct, indirect or displaced aggression. Over two-thirds (69%) indicated that they actually made one of more of these responses. The data are consistent with results obtained by Averill (1982).

The most frequently reported aggressive response in this study was verbal aggression in the form of yelling, swearing, use of sarcasm or making a nasty remark. In 91% of the incidents where a respondent admitted using this form of aggression, the perceived discourtesy of the service person had contributed either ‘somewhat’ or ‘very much’ to their anger (with 78% reporting it had contributed ‘very’ much).

The intensity of anger was also important in terms of actual behaviour. In this study, more of those who responded with direct, indirect or displaced aggression felt ‘very’ angry, compared to those who did not respond with aggression.

In addition to aggressive behaviour during the incident, this study supports the findings of numerous studies into post-incident complaining behaviour (see for example, Bearden and Oliver 1985; Blodgett et al. 1995; Michelsen 1999; Singh 1984; Stewart 1998). The majority of respondents in this study reported that as a result of their negative service experience they used another service next time (62%) and urged family and friends to use another service (72%).

7.3.4 Moderators of Aggressive Arousal and Aggression
All types of aggressive desires were inhibited during the service encounter, and in the case of direct and indirect aggression, less than half were expressed. These results are consistent with Averill’s (1982) findings.

The results of this study highlight the importance of environmental factors such as the presence of other people (friends, family, other customers or other staff) in moderating the expression of aggressive impulses during a negative service encounter. This finding is consistent with Bjorkqvist et al.’s (1994) and Robinson and Bennett’s (1995) findings that potential witnesses reduce the likelihood of overt acts of aggression.
With respect to staff defusing skills, on the surface the results seem to indicate only partial support for Proposition 14. However upon closer examination it could be argued that the results actually emphasise the importance of staff defusing skills in moderating the expression of aggressive impulses during a negative service encounter, a suggestion supported by authors such as Byrnes (1997); Comcare (1993); Leadbetter and Trewartha (1996). Firstly, in the majority (70%) of incidents where the respondent became angry, the service person made no attempt to defuse the situation. Secondly, in the incidents where the service person did attempt to defuse the situation by providing an explanation, offering to take action, blaming others, making excuses or apologising, the vast majority (90%) of service respondents believed that the service person did not defuse the situation very well at all. This may explain why 78% of respondents still reported feeling either moderately or very angry despite attempts by the service person to defuse the situation. Research by Bies (1990) and Sarel and Marmorstein (1999) suggests that in situations where an insincere apology or unconvincing explanation are offered, a person is likely to remain angry and may become even angrier.

Finally, for the small number of incidents where the respondent indicated that a defusing attempt by the service person had been successful, the service person either offered to, or took action to resolve the issue, or provided an explanation. This finding is consistent with Bitner et al.'s (1990) argument that offering sincere apologies, compensatory actions and explanations can dissipate anger and dissatisfaction. It is also consistent with research by McDougall and Levesque (1999) which found the recovery strategy of assistance plus compensation, following a broken service promise, had a greater positive effect than simply an apology. It may also explain why only 22% of respondents reported that they felt ‘very’ angry following attempts to defuse the situation compared to 35% where the service person made no such attempt.

The lack of a significant moderating effect by factors such as security systems was surprising. A possible explanation for this could be that security mechanisms such as physical barriers, video surveillance cameras and security guards are more likely to reduce physical aggression, whereas the vast majority of felt aggression in this sample was either verbal or symbolic. Alternatively the presence of security systems could have been noted by respondents and resulted in the use of other less aggressive responses, but was not reported as a moderating factor by these same respondents.
In this study, one of the most significant factors moderating behaviour was the respondent's own morals or self-discipline, with over 60% of respondents indicating that this influenced expression of a felt desire. As such, this factor should be included in future models of Customer Aggression, even though it is a factor that is not under the control of the organisation. Thus, the revised model of Customer Aggression is shown in Figure 7.1. The model should be seen as a model for further research. As such the moderating variables of mood and security systems have not been removed at this stage, as further exploration is warranted in respect of the effect of mood on customer anger and the effect of security systems on customer behaviour.

7.3.5 Section Summary
The model makes four major contributions to the services marketing literature. In summary, this study has demonstrated that:

➢ The model of customer aggression is a useful framework for explaining what prompts customer aggression during the service encounter and for structuring future research on the topic.
➢ Some service stimuli (namely people stimuli) predominate over others with respect to eliciting feelings of anger during a negative service experience.
➢ Attribution, service expectations and use of ‘anger management’ strategies (cognitive re-appraisals) are important individual modifiers of aggressive arousal.
➢ The main modifiers of aggressive behaviour are the presence of others in the service environment and individual restraints (own morals or use of self-discipline).
7.4 DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS
Perhaps the most important overall implication for managers is that all aversive service factors which resulted in customer anger and aggressive impulses in this study are to some extent controllable by the service firm.

The results indicate that a significant proportion of customer aggression is directly linked with customer service delivery. As such, efforts to improve the quality of customer services are likely to contribute to the reduction or prevention of customer aggression and have the potential to improve the well being of both staff and customers.

One of the key implications for managers is the finding that people factors tend to occur frequently and contribute significantly to anger, process factors occur less frequently but contribute significantly to anger, and physical factors occur least frequently, and when they do, contribute least significantly to anger. This suggests that in developing strategies to reduce customer aggression, managers in the first instance should concentrate their efforts on reducing aversive people factors which lead to customer anger. Once these have been controlled, efforts could then be directed towards reducing aversive process factors and then towards aversive physical factors.

Whilst individual modifiers of aggressive arousal such as customer use of cognitive re-appraisals are not within the control of the service manager, the study does highlight the importance of minimising service expectation gaps as a means of reducing anger arousal. While front-line staff should be trained in anger defusing skills, if attempts to minimise a customer's anger fail, this study highlights the need for managers to reduce the expression of aggressive impulses through organisational constraints such as ensuring service environments have other people present or at least visible.

Each of the above is discussed in the sections which follow.

7.4.1 Reducing Aversive People Factors in the Service Environment
Decreasing customer aggression is linked to improving the staff-customer interface. Service personnel may be a service organisation's highest cost element but they also represent their biggest asset in terms of the impact they have on service quality and therefore on an organisation's success (Berry et al. 1988; Lewis and Entwistle 1990). This study highlights the importance of having helpful, caring and friendly staff. This
suggests a need to consider the selection, training and performance management of frontline staff. In the words of one respondent “I took my anger out on the service man, when on reflection I should have been angry at the management that not only put him there but also failed to train him properly”.

7.4.1.1 Selection of Staff
Selection of staff includes allocation of people to appropriate positions to ensure employee-job fit. This study highlighted the requirement for frontline to be customer responsive and to have good interpersonal skills. Yet front-line staff are frequently appointed to their positions with little regard to their ability to perform at the required level (Swanton and Webber 1990).

This study found that customers get angry when front-line staff are perceived to be unwilling or unable to perform a service at the level required, a finding in line with other studies (e.g., Mohr and Bitner 1995; Sarel and Marmorstein 1999). Willingness to perform has been described in terms of discretionary effort by Yankelovich and Immerwahr (1983). They suggest that it is the difference “between the maximum amount of effort and care that an individual could bring to his or her job, and the minimum amount of effort required to avoid being fired or penalised” (Yankelovich and Immerwahr 1983, p.1). For example, one respondent in this study complained that a service provider “wasn’t prepared to do that little bit extra (make a phone call to another store) because it wasn’t part of her job”. The reduction in an employee’s discretionary effort over time may be due to factors such as having to deal with too many waiting lines, too many rules and regulations, or too many unreasonable customers (Berry et al. 1988).

Pelz (1926, p.120) makes a point which may still be relevant to many service situations today. He says that every purchase, except for the most minor, is an event of some importance to the customer, while the same transaction is usually routine to the vendor. Respondent comments from this study such as “was treated as though I was just another tiresome customer” and “she (the service provider) just seemed to be going through the motions” seem to support Pelz’s point.

The reduction in an employee’s discretionary effort can also be due to an organisation failing to train personnel adequately, not providing staff the authority they need to provide the required level of service (Parasuraman 1987; Rust, Zahorik et al. 1996),
offering insufficient wages to suitably skilled staff, or promoting a person beyond their skill level (Berry et al. 1988).

On the other hand, the service person may simply have the wrong type of personality for the role. Hurley (1998) undertook a series of studies which explored the relationship between personality and customer service behaviour among front line sales personnel in a fast-food convenience store chain. The results indicated that there were significant differences in personality between good and poor service persons, and that superior service persons tend to be higher in extroversion and agreeableness.

Selecting staff with the ‘right’ attitude is not easy. Historically there have been a number of difficulties in trying to measure a potential service person’s interpersonal skills (Lewis and Entwistle 1990). More recently however, one group of researchers has developed a service orientation index designed to measure the disposition to be helpful, thoughtful, considerate and cooperative. It has shown substantial correlations with overall job performance with a variety of service personnel. The researchers believe it holds promise for assessing aspects of job performance that are unrelated to technical competence, but crucial for maintaining good relations between the organisation and its customers (Lewis and Entwistle 1990).

Other organisations such as the Defence Forces and British Petroleum make use of ‘assessment centres’ for the screening of applicants. Here the use of behaviour simulations or role-plays, and exercises that require the application of desirable attributes for the job, are utilised to screen applicants.

**7.4.1.2 Training**

Companies need to invest time, money and effort in appropriate training activities (Lewis and Gabielsen 1998). A number of writers stress that training, as an element of personnel policy, should be linked to overall company strategy (see for example, Albrecht and Bradford 1990; Schlesinger and Heskett 1991b; Berry and Parasuraman 1991; Davidow and Uttal 1989). The training should involve corporate planners, marketing, and human resource management to ensure that a good fit between corporate service image and goals, marketing promises, and staff performance is achieved. Further, training should involve everyone, not just customer contact staff. In this study a number of respondents became angry because they perceived that a person in authority
(such as a manager) had not taken ownership of a complaint, or, as stated by one respondent “had a worse attitude than his staff”.

In line with researchers who suggest that employees need communication skills (Ballantyne 1990; Boshoff and Allen 2000), as well as product knowledge and expertise (Gronroos 1984; Parasuraman et al. 1991), findings from this study suggest that front line staff require training in two key areas: interpersonal skills (courteous behaviours) and product knowledge.

Sutton and Rafaeli (1988) describe courteous behaviours in service encounters as emotional displays where the service person presents a warm outward demeanour during transactions with customers. Their research has emphasised the importance of displays such as greeting, thanking, smiling, eye contact and being attentive to the customer (Rafaeli 1989; Rafaeli and Sutton 1989, 1990). Other research (e.g., Mehrabian and Ferris 1967) emphasises the importance of correct body language in service interactions. Non-verbal behaviours, if inconsistent with verbal behaviours, may influence service judgements more than verbal behaviours (Haase and Tepper 1972). This was supported by a number of written comments in this study. For example, one respondent described how a young retail assistant provided a “plastic smile” and “begrudging assistance” while “constantly checking her watch”.

A study undertaken for the National Training Council (1986) identified a number of attitudinal criteria relevant to service persons’ performance, including: a basic liking for others (friendliness); outgoing, extrovert manner; positive attitude to serving others (active rather than passive style); and unprejudiced (non-discriminatory) attitudes. The study expressed doubts as to the extent to which these attitudes can be genuinely internalised by training. However, a study by Milne and Mullin (1987) found that customer perceptions of hairdresser helpfulness increased significantly for hairdressers who participated in social support training, compared to hairdressers who did not.

In many service organisations there is a tendency to think of skills and knowledge development in terms of a couple of days training a year, rather than an on-going process that includes regular refresher and practice sessions. However, service personnel risk going stale or losing motivation when they stop growing in knowledge and skills (Berry et al. 1988).
Researchers such as Albrecht and Bradford (1990), Edwards and Clutterbuck (1991) and Coyne (1993) talk about the need for ‘educating’ rather than ‘training’ employees. Their suggestion is that education is more concerned with the total development of an employee, the objectives being to teach initiative, flexibility and motivation in order to maximise service quality. This is in stark contrast to organisations who focus purely on activities such as ‘smile’ campaigns (Johnston 1995) or teaching employees to use prescribed responses to a given situation, without adequately dealing with the more difficult issues of skills and attitude. Such ‘scripting’ of the service encounter can be seen as impersonal or contrived (Nyquist et al. 1985), and may initiate or exacerbate customer feelings of anger.

An alternative is to target development programs towards improving the communication and decision making skills of staff generally. Such an approach involves assisting staff to anticipate the types of exchanges they encounter, to expand their range of possible responses in such exchanges, and to develop decision rules for choosing appropriate responses in given situations (Nyquist et al. 1985).

As service persons become more confident in their ability to service customers, they are likely to become more pro-active and put forward greater effort. They are also more likely to be able to handle the difficulties inherent in their jobs and be able to adapt to a range of interpersonal situations (Hartline and Ferrell 1996). In a study of hotel service and employee empowerment Hartline and Ferrell (1996) found that increased employee self-efficacy (confidence in their ability to service customers) positively influenced customers’ perceived service satisfaction.

With respect to product knowledge, a principle purpose of any training initiative should be to ensure that front line workers are sufficiently well informed about the general service delivery system and that they are able to inform customers about the range of customer services provided by the organisation (and if appropriate, other related organisations). For example, one respondent in this study became annoyed because the sales person allocated to the music section of a retail store “did not know the difference between classical and heavy metal music”. Additional organisation specific knowledge, such as how long a service will take, or why certain requests cannot be satisfied, should also be taught. Uninformed staff will irritate customers, quite apart from the issue of employer liability if incorrect advice is given. In this study, respondents’ comments
suggest that if service personnel had been able to provide even basic information, this
could have mitigated some feelings of anger.

The results of this study suggest that training should include how to defuse potentially
volatile situations. Dealing with an angry customer is challenging. Most untrained people
find it difficult to defuse anger or to assess a potentially threatening situation (Joinson
1998).

Staff should be taught how to problem solve as well as how to handle their own
personal feelings in these situations. For example, acknowledging a customer’s
concerns does not necessarily mean that the service person has to accept a customer’s
concerns as fact. However, as supported by comments from respondents to this study,
listening to a customer’s concerns then offering to do something to resolve them is more
likely to defuse a situation than is arguing about the right or wrong of the issue or the
customer’s opinion.

Service staff need to be able to detect cues of irritation and frustration and to adjust their
strategies accordingly. They also need to be given sufficient discretionary power in order
to take action to solve customer problems. A number of respondents in this study made
comments suggesting that they were initially just irritated or annoyed by factors such as a
long wait or poor signage. However this initial feeling of annoyance or irritation escalated
to anger as a result of the service person’s perceived inability to take any action to resolve
an issue.

Employees can also be taught to anticipate the likely mood of their customers such as
when unexpected peaks in demand or service delays are inevitable. By being prepared,
perhaps even apologising as soon as the customer approaches the service desk, some
potential problem situations may be de-escalated or avoided altogether.

As supported by comments from respondents to this study when dealing with an angry
customer, staff should be encouraged to accept responsibility and apologise for any
perceived service failure rather than give an excuse, blame someone or something else
or cite company policy. Apologies are an act known to reduce hostility (Baron and
Richardson 1994). Yet despite the positive effects of apologising, firms do not seem to
emphasise them (Folkes 1984). In particular, staff should be encouraged to deliver an
apology in the first person. The corporate ‘we’re sorry’ can often lack the sincerity which comes from an individual person taking responsibility for a negative service experience (Bell and Zemke 1987).

The willingness to apologise and express remorse may have the added benefit of conveying to a customer that the service person has benevolent intentions and can be trusted to act fairly (Bies 1987). Some managers may be reluctant to endorse such an approach because saying ‘I’m sorry’ can be perceived as admission of a mistake. However in situations which have the potential to result in customer aggression, the consequences may far outweigh any risks.

7.4.1.3 Performance Management Systems
Selecting the right staff and training them is only part of the solution to reducing aversive service stimuli. The way in which an organisation rewards its employees has a significant effect on the level of service provided (Boshoff and Allen 2000; Parasuraman 1987). Performance management systems provide an opportunity to encourage and support a service quality philosophy (Locke and Latham 1990). By linking behaviour to employee performance management systems, service managers can recognise and reward employees who accomplish specific service goals or display customer-orientated behaviours.

Performance management systems should be used to assess the degree to which staff actually display desirable behaviours for the job. They can also be used to ensure training is appropriate and effective.

Effective performance management also requires managers to be attuned to their staff. There are times when service persons may be irritable and treat a customer impolitely without meaning to, for example when they are unwell, have a particularly heavy workload or have stresses at home (Dean 1998; Swanton 1989). Alternatively, some service persons lack or lose commitment to customer service in the face of continuing public rudeness or apathy. Brondolo et al. (1996) for example, reported that Traffic Enforcement Agents (parking inspectors) found it difficult to remain positively committed to the ideal of customer service in the face of constant verbal harassment (such as insults, cursing, threats or racial epithets) from the public. Managers should ensure such staff are rotated or relieved.
7.4.2 Reducing Aversive Process Factors in the Service Environment

Once managers have controlled the people factors, efforts should be directed towards reducing aversive process factors such as long waiting times and complex or unfair processes.

7.4.2.1 Waiting Time

For many of the respondents in this study, it appeared from written comments that being forced to wait initially caused irritation and frustration. However, this escalated to anger when combined with other aversive stimulus such as the service person’s perceived lack of courtesy.

To reduce the negative effects of waiting, service organisations can either provide faster service (by modifying their service delivery system) (Shostack 1987), or, without changing the actual waiting duration, take actions designed to reduce the negative effects of waiting, such as playing pleasant background music (Katz et al. 1991; Maister 1985). With respect to the former, a number of respondents in this study believed that there were insufficient staff on duty to deal with the volume of customers. Managers could consider rostering extra staff during traditionally busy periods such as lunchtime and sale periods.

If queues or long wait times cannot be controlled in this manner, Katz et al. (1991), Taylor (1994) and Maister (1985) suggest filling the wait time with service related activities such as giving menus to waiting restaurant customers, playing videos providing service option information, or providing useful reading material. Such activities not only fill in time, but in some cases also may benefit the customer by reducing the time needed for the actual service when it occurs (Baker and Cameron 1996; Maister 1985).

Other strategies include providing information to waiting customers about the duration of their wait and providing information about the reasons for the delay. Providing information about the duration of the wait may reduce any anger attributable to the uncertainty involved in waiting (Maister 1985). Providing information about the reasons for the delay, particularly if the delay is not within the organisation’s control, may reduce anger associated with attribution (Weiner 1980). For example, Taylor (1994), in line with Folkes et al. (1987), found that the extent to which delayed airline passengers...
thought the airline had control over the delay significantly affected feelings of anger. Delays caused by bad weather were less likely to cause anger than delays caused by mechanical or employee-related problems.

With respect to music, Hui et al. (1997) found that when music that was liked by consumers was played, negative reactions to waiting for service were reduced. Kellaris and Kent (1992) suggest that pleasant music reduces consumer dissatisfaction with waiting because of its impact on consumers’ emotional feelings. On the other hand, disliked music might exacerbate feelings of anger (Baker and Cameron 1996; Donovan et al. 1994). For example, one respondent in this study, who reported becoming annoyed whilst waiting to be served in a restaurant, also commented on the loud irritating music.

In addition to the above, managers should take care to ensure that any waiting time is equitable. As noted by Sasser et al. (1979), one of the most frequent irritants mentioned by customers at restaurants is the prior seating of those who arrive later. The feeling that somebody has successfully ‘cut in front’ can cause even the most patient customer to become furious (Sasser et al. 1979, p.89). This observation was supported by a number of comments made by respondents in this present study.

In some instances, such as the supermarket express checkout, not following the strict numerical or ‘first come, first served’ approach to service is accepted by customers (Maister 1985). However, in most cases it may be preferable to keep facilities for premium services out of sight of other customers (Baker and Cameron 1996).

7.4.2.2 Process Complexity and Unfairness

Bitner et al. (1994) found that in many incidents of service dissatisfaction, the service person’s desire to provide a good service was hampered by cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, poorly designed systems or procedures, or the lack of authority to make decisions.

In this study a number of respondents commented on such work practices as: forms not being available; forms being confusing; conflicting advice depending upon whom one spoke to; and lack of sensitivity on the part of the service person when asking personal questions or providing adverse decisions. For example, one respondent was asked
personal information by a doctor’s receptionist within hearing of other waiting patients and another was told that her application for a bank loan had been unsuccessful within hearing of other customers.

Managers should review service processes with the objective of reducing or eliminating redundant steps in the process that do not have a direct bearing on improving satisfaction (Bearden et al. 1998). For example, forms could be reviewed for user friendliness and procedures for creating the service could be more flexible in nature such that front-line employees have sufficient decision making latitude, or designated senior staff are immediately available to assist in resolving issues.

When asking for sensitive information an explanation of why the information is necessary could be given to the customer and in an area that affords some privacy. Wherever possible, the reason for adverse decisions should be explained by the staff member responsible for the decision. Ideally the service person would invite comments and show an interest in hearing how the customer feels about such bad news. This can send a signal about empathy and compassion and convey a sense of respect for the customer’s feelings (Folger and Baron 1996). Rights of appeal or other options should also be communicated to the customer.

7.4.3 Reducing Aversive Physical Factors in the Service Environment
The ability of both customers and service persons to achieve their service goals can often be impeded by the location of the service, the layout of the area and the type of equipment used (Baker 1987; Bitner 1992). A number of respondents in this study commented on issues related to accessing the service such as inadequate parking facilities, poor or unclear instructions on signs, distance from public transport of some services, and inconvenient hours of operation (for example services operating only Monday to Friday). Respondents also mentioned service environment factors such as inadequate or unhygienic toilet facilities and poor seating as aversants.

With respect to physically accessing the services, such tangible factors are clearly within the control of a service organisation and should be explored in the planning stage of any new service. For example, information about public transport or parking facilities could routinely be provided to customers who contact an organisation prior to accessing a service. Further, the reception area could contain a clearly visible information board,
identified by the international ‘I’ sign, located away from the entrance to avoid congestion. Signs to direct the customer, to indicate customer flow directions, or to indicate counter area functions should be placed in a prominent position.

In terms of the service environment, comments from respondents in this study suggest that waiting room seating should be comfortable and there should be sufficient space to avoid crowding. Authors such as Swanton and Webber (1990) suggest that seating should be arranged in either blocks of seats or single seats but not in groups of two. Space should also be provided next to seating where prams and wheelchairs can be parked. Service areas should be maintained at a comfortable temperature, adequately ventilated and well lit. In areas where waiting is likely, the availability of a cool water supply, (regularly cleaned) toilet facilities and a public telephone should also be considered (Comcare 1993; Swanton and Webber 1990).

The manager could also consider the appropriateness of designing the service environment so as to facilitate social interaction yet provide privacy as required. In this study, the presence of other people was one of the most frequently mentioned mitigators of aggression expression. However, the lack of privacy whilst actually being served was also mentioned by several respondents as a source of anger. In designing the service area, if enough space is allowed between the queue or wait area and the actual service station, the impression that those waiting are intruding can be reduced (Baker and Cameron 1996). Swanton and Webber (1990) recommend at least two to three metres.

7.4.4 Minimising Service Expectation Gaps
Comments made by respondents in this study highlight the importance of not promising more in communications such as advertising than can be delivered in reality. Not making extravagant service promises may be a difficult course of action in the face of service competitors who try to win customer allegiance with inflated service promises. However, whilst promising more may encourage a customer to use the service (Zeithaml et al. 1993) the potential customer aggression consequences when the promises are not fulfilled make this a risky option.

7.4.5 Other Considerations
When efforts to reduce a customer’s anger are not successful the results of this study suggest that managers should ensure that other people are present in the service area.
Managers should review staffing levels to ensure that at least two staff members are on the front counter or are visible in the service area at all times. This may reduce the likelihood of the customer expressing their felt aggression.

As mentioned earlier, the majority of reported aggression in this sample was either verbal or symbolic rather than physical. This may have been why moderating factors such as security systems were less evident in this sample. However, the benefits of security systems such as physical barriers, video surveillance cameras and security guards, have been identified by a number of authors as a means of reducing workplace violence (e.g., Franklin 1991; Kedjidjian 1993; Overman 1993; Swanton and Webber 1990). Swanton and Webber (1990) for example, recommends that in addition to the characteristics required for effective operation, counters should be of sufficient height to make it difficult for an adult to climb over; should be of sufficient width to make it difficult for a customer to strike a counter service person; should be fitted with a duress alarm button; and should have closed ends which prevent a customer walking around the end of the counter into staff areas.

Another aspect of organisational design systems which managers could consider for reducing customer aggression, concerns the extent to which face-to-face encounters between customers and service staff should be maximised or minimised. Minimising customer contact may, in some circumstances, increase efficiency, improve customer satisfaction (Chase 1978) and reduce customer aggression, (e.g., the use of bank ATMs in locations such as shopping centres or coffee-making facilities in hotel bedrooms). Bitner and Brown (2000) for example, explore how encounters can be improved through effective use of technology. On the other hand, if such services are not maintained effectively, a customer is likely to become angry, particularly if unable to contact a person straight away to resolve an issue.

7.5 LIMITATIONS
It is not appropriate for this study to claim that the findings are applicable to all service industries. However, it is hoped that the study will be replicated in other areas to assess the extent of the generalisability of the findings.

Catherine Bachleda: Towards a Theory of Customer Aggression
A major assumption of the study is that aversive stimuli can be described and captured by the 17 service determinants. This may not be the case. Other determinants may have gone unnoticed in the preliminary research, or these factors may be relevant only to the particular service situations included in this study. However, the broad nature of the service and retail organisations (over 60 different service industries) included in the study reduces the likelihood of the latter.

Another limitation is possible bias inherent in the method used to collect the data. Although interviewer bias is eliminated in a self-completion survey, the researcher still imposes their 'perceptual set' about what is important to customers when deciding what questions to include and in how to phrase those questions. In this study an attempt was made to minimise this limitation by the use of open-ended questions at the end of each section of closed questions, and by developing questions based on the qualitative research phase and other research.

Mail surveys suffer from the absence of more subtle feedback that comes from 'body language', voice intonation and unsolicited comments that may provide valuable information to the researcher (Vichas 1982). Indeed, Blankenship and Breen (1993) have argued that a mail survey cannot really tap into the 'mind-sets' of the respondents in the same way as face-to-face methods such as focus groups or in-depth-interviews. This was evident in the richness of data obtained from those respondents who took part in the qualitative phase of the study. However, three respondents from the qualitative (face-to-face) phase of the study were also invited to participate in the pilot of the questionnaire used for the main study. The questionnaires from these respondents provided similar data to that obtained in the qualitative phase, although the questionnaire behavioural response was not as intense as that expressed in the in-depth interviews.

Kettinger and Lee (1995) suggest that survey-based methods may not produce responses which are genuine, as self-reports by respondents are open to social desirability bias (Bradburn et al. 1979). This would imply that respondents in this study might have been reluctant to admit their aggressive feelings or behaviours. An attempt (as outlined in Chapter 5) was made to overcome distortions due to social desirability by assuring anonymity, by providing a detailed introduction to any sensitive question topics (including the section covering respondent behaviour), and by providing an open-ended
format after each set of items where the respondent was able to explain the reasons for his or her responses.

Another bias associated with retrospective self-reports by respondents (see Bradburn et al. 1979) involves memory distortions and false recollections. This is particularly relevant when dealing with recollections of emotions because emotions are transient. It has been suggested that such responses should be assessed during or as soon as possible after an event (Donovan and Rossiter 1982). Although the time period under consideration was constrained to six months, and most reported an incident within three months, the responses given in this study are potentially subject to such biases.

Finally, the questionnaire used in this survey was fairly time consuming and complex. One possible limitation with a lengthy questionnaire is the potential for respondent fatigue with earlier open-ended questions receiving greater comment or response than later open-ended questions. In this study, no such bias was evident. However, the follow-up of non-respondents suggested that the present study might have been biased towards respondents who had more time and who were more literate. The sample was upwardly skewed in respect of educational background and socioeconomic status.

7.6 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The model presented in Figure 7.1, although representing a good fit to the data of this study, should be looked on as a model for further research. It represents a model fitted to only one set of data. This model should be replicated across different subjects and settings.

Further model development is needed. Other variables such as individual personality dimensions and service person attributes could be investigated further. Exploration is also warranted in respect of the effect of mood on customer anger and the effect of security systems on customer behaviour.

Further evaluation of the model, including experimental evaluation of the proposed causal relationships is also required to compliment this exploratory model. The interaction between different variables should be explored further. For example, what is
the effect on intensity of anger if a long wait time is combined with incompetence versus discourtesy?

The apparent ability of the model to explain both the more intense consumer responses such as some physical aggression and verbal aggression during the service encounter, as well as post incident complaint behaviour such as defecting and warning friends, seems to suggest that emotion, as argued by Hunt (1988) may be a critical consumer response research area. In this study, besides their feelings of anger, a number of respondents indicated that they also experienced feelings of irritation, frustration, disgust, outrage, embarrassment and sadness. Future researchers could explore the role of these emotions in the service encounter.

Building on results from the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study, future research could explore the possible link between the intensity of aggressive arousal (i.e., anger versus annoyance) and various types of aversive stimuli, and intensity of aggressive arousal and intensity of aggressive behaviour. For example, when does annoyance escalate to anger?

Some additional ideas for further research are suggested by the limitations of the study. For example, respondents' self-reported causes might not reflect 'objective' causes of their behaviour. Because people tend to make internal attributions for positive outcomes but external attributions for negative outcomes (Folkes 1988; Folkes and Kotsos 1986), explanations for one's own behaviour may be different from an observer's explanation of the same event (Keaveney 1995). Researchers in the future might conduct a parallel study among service persons to gain perspective from their point of view.

Future researchers may also wish to consider a larger study using in-depth interviews or telephone interviews rather than a survey questionnaire. As evidenced by the richness of data obtained from those respondents who took part in the qualitative phase of this study, this would be an appropriate methodology to use. It may also reduce any bias towards respondents who are more literate.

Finally, researchers may wish to explore the types of services for which discourtesy versus other factors is important. Although this study found that discourtesy is the most important service attribute, in some service contexts, speed of service may be more
important to customers than friendliness (Ketrow 1991). Customers may for instance prefer bureaucratic service practices that enable service persons to 'process' them quickly, such as maintaining a neutral tone rather than showing positive or negative emotions, limiting conversation to the specific business of the encounter, and treating all customers equally (Katz and Danet 1973; Ford 1995).

7.7 SUMMARY

The research presented here represents one of the few empirical attempts to understand customer aggression. Despite its limitations, this study would appear to represent the first attempt to evaluate and validate a model of customer aggression.

Service failure is common, and yet the possible emotional/behavioural effects have been virtually ignored by marketing researchers. The results of this study suggest that aversive service stimuli, people factors in particular, can evoke strong feelings of anger, and that how service personnel deal with customers can have adverse effects on how consumers behave. By understanding how consumers react to a service failure, service organisations can more effectively avoid negative effects.

This research provides a theoretical framework for structuring research on what angers customers during a face to face service encounter, and how customers respond as a result of this anger. It also provides information to assist managers design a customer service environment that will minimise the incidence of customer anger and aggression, develop strategies to reduce customer anger and aggression, and hence reduce the stress that service persons are subjected to as a result of such anger and aggression.
REFERENCES


Catherine Bachleda: Towards a Theory of Customer Aggression


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APPENDIX 4.1

EXPLORATORY STUDY:
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO A POOR SERVICE EXPERIENCE
SCREENING GUIDE

Intro A  Hello I'm Catherine Bachleda from Aragon. I'm also currently a Doctoral student at the University of Western Australia.

Intro B  Hello I'm ...........(state name) from Aragon and I'm calling on behalf of Catherine Bachleda our CEO - who is also currently a Doctoral student at the University of Western Australia.

1. I/Catherine is conducting research on what makes bad service, from a customer's point of view.

2. Have you had an extremely poor service experience in a face to face situation during the last 6 months??

If No, politely terminate call. If Yes:

Was the experience of bad service in a face to face situation enough to make you angry at the time?

If No, politely terminate call. If Yes:

Would you be willing to be interviewed about your experience? It would be an opportunity to tell Catherine/me about the poor service experience and ultimately will help improve services across Australia. It only takes about 30 minutes and can be conducted at a venue convenient to you. Your responses will be anonymous and confidential.

Arrange interview time and place:

FULL NAME: ____________________________

INTERVIEW DATE: _______________________

TIME: ________________________________

CONTACT No: _________________________

VENUE: ______________________________

Thankyou for your participation in this research project.

NOTES

Quota: 15

Demographics: Aim for broad range of age, gender and socioeconomic status

Catherine Bachleda: Towards a Theory of Customer Aggression
APPENDIX 4.2

EXPLORATORY STUDY:
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

➢ As a customer - have you recently (with in last 6 months) experienced what you consider extremely/very poor service or treatment by a company or Government organisation? *Must be a face to face interaction*

➢ Could you describe the incident and exactly what happened - in enough detail so that I can visualise it.

➢ Prompts (if required):

➢ What specific circumstances led up to this situation?
➢ How did you feel prior to the encounter (eg on the way to the organisation)
➢ Did you have any difficulty getting into/finding the organisation eg parking or signage
➢ How were you feeling just prior to entering the organisation
➢ Did you have to wait – if yes - how long
➢ What were the surrounds like eg seating arrangements
➢ What were the atmospherics like eg stuffy, hot/cold?
➢ How complex was the service process/system?
➢ Was the service person competent – ie knowledgeable?
➢ Was the service person courteous – show respect, friendly etc
➢ How was the service area designed eg wide/shallow counter, screens, etc
   Were there other people around eg clients, staff, security guards

➢ Did you experience any of these feelings during the incident: Annoyance, frustration, anger? If yes - were these strong feelings?

➢ If yes – what contributed most to your feelings? (eg specific ASS and/or attribution)

➢ As a result of these feelings what did you feel like doing? Eg shouting, banging table etc. What did you actually do?

➢ Did you do anything to reduce these feelings?

➢ What stopped you (if applicable) from doing what you felt like doing?

➢ How uneasy do you think most people would be in talking about the following topics: ‘very uneasy’, ‘moderately uneasy’, ‘slightly uneasy’, ‘not at all uneasy’?

➢ A poor service experience generally
➢ Their reactions as a result of the poor service eg getting angry
➢ Their behaviour as a result of getting angry eg shouting, swearing, striking the service person?

➢ Thank-you for time and assistance with this research.
APPENDIX 5.1

MAIN STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE PILOT:
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO A POOR SERVICE EXPERIENCE
SCREENING GUIDE

Intro A: Hello I’m Catherine Bachleda from Aragon. I’m also currently a Doctoral student at the University of Western Australia.

Intro B: Hello I’m ………….(state name) from Aragon and I’m calling on behalf of Catherine Bachleda our CEO – who is also currently a Doctoral student at the University of Western Australia.

1. I/Catherine is conducting research on what makes bad service, from a customer’s point of view.

2. Have you had an extremely poor service experience in a face to face situation during the last 6 months?

   If No, politely terminate call. If Yes:

   Was the experience of bad service in a face to face situation enough to make you angry at the time?

   If No, politely terminate call. If Yes:

   Would you be willing to complete a questionnaire on your experience? It would be an opportunity to tell us/me about the poor service experience and ultimately will help improve services across Australia. It only takes about 20 to 30 minutes. Your responses will be anonymous and confidential.

   Arrange to post the questionnaire to address on database (check details) or a time to complete on-site @ Aragon.

FULL NAME: ____________________________________________

POSTAL ADDRESS (if posted):
_____________________________________________________

DATE & TIME: (if @ Aragon)
_____________________________________________________

CONTACT NO: _________________________________________

Thankyou for your participation in this research project.

__________________________

NOTES

Quota: 10 - 15
Demographics: Aim for broad range of age, gender and socioeconomic status
POOR SERVICE EXPERIENCE SURVEY

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. This is your chance to tell us about a poor service experience you have had recently. Your comments are very important as they will help improve services across Australia.

WHO SHOULD ANSWER THE QUESTIONS?

The person to whom the envelope was addressed.

WHAT IF I NEED HELP?

A member of the family or friend can help you in reading or understanding the survey, or you can ring the Translating and Interpretation Service on 131450 if you need an interpreter or the researcher Catherine Bachleda on (08) 9221 9122 if you have any other questions.

ARE MY ANSWERS CONFIDENTIAL?

The survey is being carried out among people across Australia and you have been selected at random. The survey has been approved by the ethics committee of the University of Western Australia and is being supervised by Professor Rob Donovan. Your answers will be kept completely confidential. The results used for the research project will not identify anyone.

HOW DO I ANSWER THE QUESTIONS?

For most questions, all you need to do is tick the box or circle the answer which most applies to you. Please read all questions carefully and follow the instructions after each question.

PLEASE TAKE 25 MINUTES TO FILL THIS OUT!

USE THE REPLY PAID ENVELOPE (IT DOESN'T NEED A STAMP) TO RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO US BY 17th March 2000

THANK YOU VERY MUCH
POOR SERVICE EXPERIENCE SURVEY

A. You indicated on the telephone that during the past 6 months you experienced very poor service during a particular face to face service incident and became angry because of that.

Q1 Please briefly describe this face to face service incident.

Q2 How long ago did the incident occur? (Please tick the most appropriate time interval)

- 1 to 2 weeks ago
- 2 weeks to 1 month ago
- 1 to 2 months ago
- 2 to 3 months ago
- 3 to 4 months ago
- 4 to 6 months ago

Q3 Did you choose to use the service described above or did you have no choice but to use it? (Please circle appropriate number)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own choice (I elected to use the service)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Necessity (I had no choice but to use the service)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q4  How many times had you used this particular service before? (Please tick one)

- Never [ ]
- Once or twice [ ]
- Several times [ ]
- Many times [ ]

Q5  What were your expectations of this organisation's service before the incident? Did you expect that the service would be (please tick one):

- Excellent [ ]
- Very Good [ ]
- Average [ ]
- Poor [ ]
- Very Poor [ ]

Q6  How would you describe your mood just before the incident? (Please tick one)

- Good [ ]
- Bad [ ]
- Other (Please describe in the space below) [ ]

Please note: Before answering the next questions, think carefully about the incident and try to relive it in your mind as it happened at the time.

B. You indicated before that you became angry during the above incident.

Q7  How intense was your anger in the incident described above? (Please circle appropriate number).

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Very Mild  Very Intense
(as angry as I ever become)
Sometimes persons report being “overwhelmed” or “overcome” by anger. In the incident you described above:

Q8a How able were you to control the *outward* expression of your anger; that is, what you did and said? (Please circle appropriate number)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>5</th>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was in complete control of my actions</td>
<td>I was completely overcome: I couldn’t help acting the way I did.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q8b How able were you to control the *inward* experience of your anger; that is, what you thought and felt? (Please circle appropriate number)

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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was in complete control of my thoughts and feelings</td>
<td>I was completely overcome: I couldn’t help thinking and feeling the way I did.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q9 Did you feel any of these other emotions during or after the incident? (please tick Yes or No for each emotion)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frustration</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sadness</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Disgust</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irritation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Outrage</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. **THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CONCERN THE PRIMARY OBJECT OR TARGET OF YOUR ANGER; THAT IS, THE PERSON OR THING AT WHICH YOU BECAME ANGRY DURING THE SERVICE INCIDENT**

Q10 Who or what was the object of your anger? (If there was more than one, indicate the most important by writing number “1” in the box, the next most important with number “2”, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The service person</td>
<td>An inanimate object or thing</td>
<td>The organisation</td>
<td>Society in general eg other customers</td>
<td>Things in general</td>
<td>Other (Please specify in space below)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q11 In your own words, briefly describe the object or target of your anger, adding any further information that might be relevant to the service you experienced.

If one of the objects of your anger was the service person, continue with Question 12. Otherwise please skip to question 16.

Q12 If one of the objects of your anger was the service person, was that person (please tick one):

- [ ] Male 1
- [ ] Female 2

Q13 Did he or she attempt in any way to defuse the situation? (For example, by providing an acceptable explanation for the incident?) (please tick one):

- YES 1 If Yes continue with Questions 14 and 15
- NO 2 If No please skip to Question 16

Q14 What did the service person do to try to defuse the situation? (please describe below.)

Q15 How well did the service person defuse the situation? (please circle the appropriate number)

<table>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not well at all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q16 Which of the following categories (K, L, M or N) best describes the incident that made you angry? As the examples show, a wide variety of incidents fall into each category. (Please read through all the categories and then place a tick in the box of the one that is most appropriate).

K 1 It was a potentially avoidable incident or event: the result of negligence, carelessness, lack of foresight.

(examples: A travel agent lost your tickets; a government official gave you the incorrect information; a cashier over charged you; a waiter tripped and spilled soup all over you; you were required to wait in a queue while the service person chatted to a friend).

L 2 It was an unavoidable accident or event: it could not have been foreseen, it was beyond the service person’s control.

(examples: A computer malfunctioned resulting in a longer than usual wait for service.)

M 3 It was a justified incident or event

(examples: A policeman gave you a ticket when you were going 50 k.m. in a 35 k.m. zone; the tax office fined you for being 3 months late in lodging your annual return; you misread the address and arrived late)

N 4 It was an unjust incident or event

(examples: A policeman gave you a ticket for going through an amber light even though you could not have stopped on time; the ATM machine was out of order and you were charged a fee for an over the counter transaction)

Q17 Please describe in your own words why the incident fits into the category which you ticked. (If it does not fit into any, please explain.)
E. THINK THROUGH THE EVENT ONCE AGAIN - FROM THE TIME YOU ARRIVED AT THE ORGANISATION UNTIL THE TIME YOU LEFT.

The following is a list of things which may have contributed to what made you angry. Firstly, indicate whether or not each thing occurred, and if it did, please indicate how much it contributed to your anger according to the following scale:

1 = did not contribute to what made me angry
2 = contributed a little bit to what made me angry
3 = contributed somewhat to what made me angry
4 = contributed very much to what made me angry

The following example illustrates how you might mark these scales

Example: Loud music was playing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DID IT OCCUR?</th>
<th>HOW MUCH DID IT CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR ANGER?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response example 1
In this example loud music was playing, but it did not contribute to the person's anger at all.

Response example 2
In this example loud music was playing and somewhat contributed to what made the person angry.

Response example 3
In this example loud music was not playing

Q18 Did any of the following occur and if so how much did it contribute to what made you angry during the incident?

For each item, circle a Yes or No in the 'Did it Occur' column and for those items circled Yes please circle the appropriate number in the 'How much did it contribute to your anger' column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DID IT OCCUR?</th>
<th>HOW MUCH DID IT CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR ANGER?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Difficult access?
(Examples: you could not access the service by public transport; parking facilities were poor; there were inadequate facilities for those with disabilities; eg, no wheelchair ramps, the signs and directions were poor).

b) Uncomfortable facilities
(Examples: uncomfortable or insufficient seating arrangements; too many people – crowding; temperature too hot or too cold).
Did any of the following occur and if so how much did it contribute to what made you angry during the incident?

For each item, circle a Yes or No in the 'Did it Occur' column and for those items circled Yes please circle the appropriate number in the 'How much did it contribute to your anger' column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Did it Occur?</th>
<th>How Much Did It Contribute to Your Anger?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Longer than expected waiting time?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) A complex process or procedure?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples: you had to follow a complicated series of actions to obtain the service eg the filling of numerous forms; you had to make numerous decisions or expend a great deal of mental energy.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) An unfair process or procedure?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples: you were charged much more for a service just because you were not a member; other people appeared to receive preferential treatment).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) A discourteous service person?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples: the service person was unpleasant; arrogant; had a bad attitude; was unfriendly or rude).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) An incompetent service person?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples: The service person did not possess the required technical skills and knowledge to do what was required; they were not able to answer questions about the service; they did not appear to know what they were doing)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) A dishonest service person?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples: The service person withheld information from you; deliberately gave you misleading, inaccurate, biased or false information)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) A service person who failed to acknowledge your point of view?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples: The service person would not acknowledge it was poor service; would not accept responsibility; would not apologise; did not treat your complaint as valid)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) An ongoing or planned activity was frustrated or interrupted?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples: interference with work or pleasure; you were late for another appointment)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Did any of the following occur and if so how much did it contribute to what made you angry during the incident?

For each item, circle a Yes or No in the 'Did it Occur' column and for those items circled Yes please circle the appropriate number in the 'How much did it contribute to your anger' column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DID IT OCCUR?</th>
<th></th>
<th>HOW MUCH DID IT CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR ANGER?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k)</td>
<td>An actual or possible loss of money to you?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples: loss of income, reduced value of property)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l)</td>
<td>A personal insult or loss of personal pride, self-esteem, or sense of personal worth?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples: the service person did not consider you as a person; insulted you; corrected, attacked or criticised you, your family, your religion, your political beliefs, etc; rejected you; hurt your feelings; slighted you.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m)</td>
<td>Normal socially accepted ways of behaving or widely shared rules of conduct were broken?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples: used bad language; turned their back on you; ignored you; showed bad manners)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n)</td>
<td>A service person with an ethnic background?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples the service person couldn’t speak English or had a strong accent that made them difficult to understand)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o)</td>
<td>A poorly groomed service person</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples: the service person was untidily or sloppily dressed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p)</td>
<td>The organisation’s physical environment?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(examples: the décor or choice of colour scheme; the choice of background music; the style of furniture)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q)</td>
<td>A previous poor service experience?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(example: you had experienced a previous incident of poor service which was exactly the same or similar to the present incident)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q19 In your own words, briefly describe the most important factor that made you most angry. (Your description should help clarify your responses to the above items).


Q20 Do you think this incident was very typical, somewhat typical or not at all typical, of what generally makes you angry with respect to poor service? (please tick one)

- [ ] Very typical
- [ ] Somewhat typical
- [ ] Not at all typical

Q21 Do you think that this incident was very typical, somewhat typical or not at all typical, of what makes people in general angry with respect to poor service? (please tick one).

- [ ] Very typical
- [ ] Somewhat typical
- [ ] Not at all typical

Q22 Do you think that your anger was less than it should have been, more than it should have been or about right for this sort of incident? (please tick one).

- [ ] Less than it should have been
- [ ] About right
- [ ] More than it should have been

Q23 How long did your anger last after it first occurred? (Please tick the most appropriate time interval).

- [ ] Less than 5 minutes
- [ ] 5 – 10 minutes
- [ ] Less than ½ hour
- [ ] Less than 1 hour
- [ ] 1 – 2 hours
- [ ] ½ day
- [ ] 1 day
- [ ] More than 1 day
Q24  Do you still get feelings of anger when you think about the incident? (please tick one).

YES  1  NO  2

THE FOLLOWING ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS YOU MAY HAVE FELT LIKE DOING OR HAVE ACTUALLY DONE, WHEN YOU BECAME ANGRY.

For each item, first indicate how much you felt like doing it according to the scale below and then indicate whether or not you actually did it.

Felt like doing it: 0 = not at all
1 = somewhat
2 = very much

The following example illustrates how you might mark these scales:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example: A nasty remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response example 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person didn't feel like making a nasty remark and didn't do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt like Doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Response example 2** |
| This person felt very much like making a nasty remark and did it. |
| Felt like Doing? | Actually Did? |
| Not at all | Some what | Very much | Yes | No |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | Y | N |

| **Response example 3** |
| This person felt somewhat like making a nasty remark and did it. |
| Felt like Doing? | Actually Did? |
| Not at all | Some what | Very much | Yes | No |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | Y | N |

Q25  Did you feel like doing any of the following during the incident, and if so, did you actually do it?

For each item, circle the appropriate number in the “Felt like doing” column and a Yes or No in the “Actually did” column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Felt Like Doing?</th>
<th>Actually Did?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Some what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Physically expressing your anger and causing severe injury to the service person.
(examples: knock service the person out)
Did you feel like doing any of the following during the incident, and if so, did you actually do it?

For each item, circle the appropriate number in the “Felt like doing” column and a Yes or No in the “Actually did” column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Felt Like Doing?</th>
<th>Actually Did?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Some what</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b)</th>
<th>Physically expressing your anger and causing minor injury to the service person. (examples: hit, shove or punch the service person)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>c)</th>
<th>Physically expressing your anger but causing no injury to the service person (examples: push, obstruct, bump the service person).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>d)</th>
<th>Verbally expressing your anger and making specific threats to the service person (examples: shake your fist, jab your finger at the service person or threaten physical violence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>e)</th>
<th>Verbally expressing your anger to the service person without physical threats. (examples: yell, make a nasty remark; swear; raise your voice, use a forceful or forthright voice-tone; make a sarcastic remark)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>f)</th>
<th>Symbolically expressing your anger to the service person (examples: make an obscene gesture; glare at the service person).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>g)</th>
<th>Taking your anger out on some person other than the service person: that is expressing your anger (physically, verbally, or otherwise) towards an individual who was not involved in the incident. (examples: snap at a family member or friend when you were really angry at the waitress)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>h)</th>
<th>Taking your anger out on, or attacking, some non-human object or thing (examples: thump the counter, throw an object; kick a piece of equipment; slam or shut the door noisily on your way out)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i)</th>
<th>Talking to or threatening to talk to the service person’s supervisor or boss, in order to get back at the service person or to have the service person punished.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Did you feel like doing any of the following during the incident, and if so, did you actually do it?

For each item, circle the appropriate number in the "Felt like doing" column and a Yes or No in the "Actually did" column.

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>j)</td>
<td>Talking to the service person’s supervisor simply to resolve the issue, with no intent to harm the service person or make him/her look bad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k)</td>
<td>Talking the incident over with the service person without showing any anger</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(examples: calmly explaining the reasons for your anger)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l)</td>
<td>Doing things opposite to the expression of anger</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(examples: being extra friendly to the service person; 'turning the other cheek'; joking with the service person)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m)</td>
<td>Using calming activities on yourself</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(examples: trying to relax; doing deep breathing exercises)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q26 In your own words briefly describe the thing(s) you most felt like doing. (Your description should help clarify your responses to the above items).

Q27 Similarly in your own words briefly describe the thing(s) you actually did. (Your description should help clarify your responses to the above items).
Q28 Everything considered, do you think that what you felt in this incident was very typical, somewhat typical or not at all typical of what you generally feel when angry? (Please tick one)

[ ] 1 Very typical  [ ] 2 Somewhat typical  [ ] 3 Not at all typical

Q29 Everything considered, do you think that what you did in this incident was very typical, somewhat typical or not at all typical of what you generally do when angry? (Please tick one)

[ ] 1 Very typical  [ ] 2 Somewhat typical  [ ] 3 Not at all typical

Q30 Everything considered, do you think that what you felt in this incident was very typical, somewhat typical or not at all typical of what other people generally feel when angry? (Please tick one).

[ ] 1 Very typical  [ ] 2 Somewhat typical  [ ] 3 Not at all typical

Q31 Everything considered, do you think that what you did in this incident was very typical, somewhat typical or not at all typical of what other people generally do when angry? (Please tick one).

[ ] 1 Very typical  [ ] 2 Somewhat typical  [ ] 3 Not at all typical
Q32 While you were angry in the situation did you do any of the following to reduce your anger?

*For each item, circle the appropriate number in 'Yes' or 'No' column.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Decide the incident was less important than you originally thought?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(example: thinking ‘it really doesn’t matter much’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Minimise the importance of the person who angered you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(example: thinking ‘I don’t care what he/she says anyway’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Reinterpret the motives or guilt of the person who angered you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(examples: thinking ‘it wasn’t really his/her fault’, or ‘he/she was trying to do their best for me’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Reinterpret your own motives, guilt, or role in the incident?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(example: thinking., ‘it was partly my fault’ or ‘I deserved it’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Walk away from the situation?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q33 While in the situation, did you do anything else to reduce your anger?

- [ ] YES   1
- [ ] NO   2

If yes please describe in the space below:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________

Catherine Bachleda: Towards a Theory of Customer Aggression
H. THE GENERAL CONTEXT OF YOUR ANGER

Q34 Thinking back to what you actually did versus what you felt like doing when you were angry, was there any thing or any persons in the environment that stopped you doing what you felt like doing? (Please tick one)

YES 1  NO 2

If yes please describe in the space below.

I. THE SERVICE ENVIRONMENT

Q35 Were any of the following present during the incident?

For each item, circle the appropriate number in ‘Yes’, ‘No’ or ‘Don’t Know’ column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>Video surveillance cameras?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Security guards?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>Physical barriers between you and the service person? (Examples: wide counter; glass screens)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>Other customers?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e)</td>
<td>Other staff?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f)</td>
<td>Other family members or friends?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
J. HOW MUCH DID THE FOLLOWING INFLUENCE WHETHER OR NOT YOU DID WHAT YOU FELT LIKE DOING?

Please read the entire list. Then for each item, circle the number 1, 2 or 3 in the right hand column according to the following scale.

1 = STOPPED me doing some things I wanted to do  
2 = had NO INFLUENCE on what I did (or was not applicable)  
3 = made it EASIER to do what I did

Q36 Did any of these influence what you did?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a)</th>
<th>b)</th>
<th>c)</th>
<th>d)</th>
<th>e)</th>
<th>f)</th>
<th>g)</th>
<th>h)</th>
<th>i)</th>
<th>j)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The gender of the service person?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service person’s age or size</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service person’s attempts to defuse the situation?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your own morals or self discipline?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video surveillance cameras?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presence of security guards?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical barriers between you and the service person? (Examples: wide counter; glass screens)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presence of other customers?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presence of other staff?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family members or friends being with you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
K. PEOPLE OFTEN SAY TO THEMSELVES THAT THEY WILL DO CERTAIN THINGS AFTER A POOR SERVICE EXPERIENCE. THE FOLLOWING ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS THAT YOU MAY HAVE SAID YOU WOULD DO AFTER THE INCIDENT.

Q37 Did you say you would do any of the following after the incident, and if so, did you actually do it?

For each statement circle either Yes or No under the ‘Said Would Do’ column and then circle Yes or No under the ‘Actually Did’ column for those things you actually did do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Said Would Do?</th>
<th>Actually Did?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>Will use another service organisation next time</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Will tell your family and/or friends about the experience and urge them not to use the service</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>Will complain to the organisation by letter or phone</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>Will write a letter of complaint to a magazine or newspaper</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e)</td>
<td>Will contact a public agency to complain eg; Consumer Affairs, Ombudsman</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f)</td>
<td>Will contact a lawyer about possible legal action</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g)</td>
<td>Will forget the whole thing</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q38 Did you do anything else after the incident?

| 1 | YES |
| 2 | NO |

If yes please describe in the space below:
L. NOW WE WANT TO TALK ABOUT GETTING ANGRY IN GENERAL.

Q39 Everybody gets angry from time to time. Below are a number of statements about when people get angry, how they deal with it and so on. For each statement circle the appropriate number 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 in the right-hand column according to whether you:

1 = Strongly agree  
2 = Agree  
3 = Neither agree nor disagree  
4 = Disagree  
5 = Strongly disagree

Please answer every item and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) I get angry when someone lets me down</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I get angry when people are unfair</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I tend to get angry more frequently than most people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) It is easy to make me angry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) I get angry when I am not given credit for something I have done</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) I try to talk over problems with people without letting them know I’m angry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) I get angry when something blocks my plans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) I get angry when I am delayed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) It’s difficult for me to let people know I’m angry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) I try to get even when I’m angry with someone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) I get angry when I have to take orders from someone less capable than I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l) I get angry when I have to work with incompetent people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m) Other people seem to get angrier than I do in similar circumstances</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n) I often feel angrier than I think I should</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q40 Are you? (please tick one)

[ ] 1 Female
[ ] 2 Male

Q41 What is your age? (Please tick one)

[ ] 1 16-24 years
[ ] 2 25-34 years
[ ] 3 35-44 years
[ ] 4 45-54 years
[ ] 5 55-64 years
[ ] 6 65-74 years
[ ] 7 75+ years

Q42 What is your marital status? (please tick one)

[ ] 1 Single
[ ] 2 Married or live in partner
[ ] 3 Divorced or separated
[ ] 4 Widowed

Q43 What is your highest level of education? (please tick one)

[ ] 1 Completed Year 9
[ ] 2 Completed Year 10
[ ] 3 Completed Year 11
[ ] 4 Completed Year 12
[ ] 5 Some TAFE
[ ] 6 Some University
[ ] 7 Currently enrolled TAFE
[ ] 8 Currently enrolled University
[ ] 9 Completed TAFE
[ ] 10 Completed University

Q44 Your current postcode:
Q45 Are you in paid employment?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes, what sort of work do you do? (please describe in the space below)

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE. YOU HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO AN IMPORTANT STUDY ON SERVICE.

OPTIONAL

We may want to contact you at a later time for a brief follow-up to this study. Would you be willing to be contacted?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes, please answer the following questions. Any information you give will be entirely confidential.

Your first name: ______________________ Your phone number: __________________
APPENDIX 5.3

**MAIN STUDY:**
**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO A POOR SERVICE EXPERIENCE**
**TELEPHONE SCREENING GUIDE**

Hello, my name is ______________________ from the Survey Research Centre at the University of Western Australia. We are conducting research on what makes bad service, from a customer’s point of view. We would like to talk to someone in your household who is 18 years or older and who has had a bad service experience in a face to face situation during the last 6 months. We are interested in service over a number of areas such as government departments, banks, shops, restaurants, hairdressers, doctors and so on – in fact, anywhere you are buying a product or using a service. Have you had a bad service experience in a face to face situation in the last 6 months?

*If no, ask if there is anyone else in the household 18 years or over who has. For a new person, need to repeat the conditions – bad service in a face to face situation when buying a product or using a service. When suitable person on the phone:*

1. Record sex of respondent M/F.
2. Was the experience of bad service in a face to face situation enough to make you angry at the time or were you just annoyed?
   1. Angry
   2. Annoyed
3. Where did the bad service experience happen?
   1. government department
   2. bank
   3. retail business (dept store or small shop)
   4. restaurant
   5. hairdresser
   6. doctor
   7. other specify ______________________.

We would like to hear more about your experience. Can we send you a questionnaire to complete? It takes about 20-30 minutes and we find that most people enjoy filling it in. Your response will be anonymous and confidential. We just need your name and address to send the questionnaire to you.

Catherine Bachleda: Towards a Theory of Customer Aggression
The questionnaire will arrive in the next week. Thankyou for your participation in this research project.

NOTES

Screener 1 – no experiences
Screener 2 – age

Quotas.
Angry male 150   Annoyed male 50
Angry female 150   Annoyed female 50
Dear Participant Name

Thank you for considering participation in this survey. This information sheet has been compiled to provide you with information about the aims of the research project and your rights in taking part in the survey.

The survey is being conducted by Catherine Bachleda, a doctoral candidate at the Graduate School of Management of the University of Western Australia, to gather data for her research project. The candidate is being supervised by Dr Rob Donovan, a professor at the Graduate School of Management. If you have any questions about any aspects of the research Dr Donovan can be contacted on (08) 9380 3980 by telephone or email rdonovan@ecel.uwa.edu.au, and Catherine Bachleda can be contacted on (08) 9221 9122 or email cbachled@student.ecel.uwa.edu.au.

The purpose of this project is to identify what annoys or angers customers during a face to face service experience and how customers felt or acted as a result of this annoyance or anger. A greater understanding of what annoys or angers customers and how they respond will assist service managers to develop strategies to reduce customer dissatisfaction during a face to face service experience. A survey of customers who have experienced a very poor face to face service experience will provide most of the data needed for the study.

If you agree to be part of the research please complete the attached consent form (as required by the University's ethics committee) and the questionnaire about your service experience. The estimated time to complete the questionnaire is 30-45 minutes. Should you require assistance with completing the questionnaire, telephone support is available and can be obtained by contacting Catherine Bachleda on (08) 9221 9122.

The study complies with the ethics committee of the University of Western Australia. All data gathered in the survey will remain confidential at all times. No name identifying data will be kept with participant's responses to questions in the survey.

Your participation in the survey is completely voluntary and you are not obligated in any way to complete any of the questions should you not wish to do so. However, there are no right or wrong answers, all responses are confidential and it would greatly assist the study if you completed all questions to the best of your recollection about the service incident you described previously.
FACTORs CONTRIBUTING TO A POOR SERVICE EXPERIENCE

SURVEY CONSENT FORM

I have read the information sheet provided by the researcher and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily and willingly agree to participate in this survey, knowing that I may withdraw at any time.

I understand that all information provided is treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required to do so by law.

I agree that the research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not used.

________________________________________  __________________________
Participant signature                      Date

The Committee for Human Rights at the University of Western Australia requires that all participants are informed that, if they have any complaint regarding the manner, in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or, alternatively to the Secretary, Committee for Human Rights, Registrar’s Office, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, WA 6907 (telephone number (08) 9380 3703). All study participants will be provided with a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for their personal records.
APPENDIX 5.5

MAIN STUDY
NON RESPONSE BIAS: FOLLOW-UP CALLS
PROMPT SHEET

1. Hello I’m ..................... (state name) and I’m calling on behalf of Catherine Bachleda – a Doctoral student at the University of Western Australia

2. You may remember some time ago that you offered to complete a questionnaire for her on a poor service experience.

3. I’m not ringing to ask you to complete a questionnaire – However I am interested in why you didn’t complete it and would be very grateful if you would spent a few minutes answering a couple of questions for me.

4. What was the main reason why you didn’t complete the questionnaire?

5. Other people have given a number of reasons. I will read these out one at a time. Please tell me for each one whether it influenced your decision not to complete the survey either: not at all, a little or a lot **

   a) The length of the questionnaire
   b) The number of questions requiring written responses versus just ticking boxes
   c) The need to sign a consent form
   d) The personal nature of the questions
   e) The layout of the questionnaire
   f) The time required to complete the questionnaire

** Order of questions to be varied

6. Thank-you for your assistance.