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**Disrespect in Consumer Markets: An analysis  
of causes and effects using the Critical  
Incident Technique**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
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by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

As consumer reportings of disrespect become more frequent, it is important to gain an in-depth understanding of potential causes and consequences of disrespectful behaviour. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to examine behaviours that define disrespect in the marketplace, the effects on customers and implications on organisations. The findings revealed six main themes representing causes or influencers of disrespect. These are rude responses, perceptions of discrimination, the presence of an audience, a sale-focussed atmosphere, personal conversations and process-related problems.

Two important concepts emerged through analysis of behaviours that cause disrespect. The first considers that disrespectful behaviour can be categorised as being either person-related or process-related. An important finding was that switching behaviour dominantly resulted from process-related disrespect. The second emergent concept was based on the idea that some causes of disrespect may be specific to market environments. In such cases, perceptions of disrespect were influenced by the high standards of service that customers expect in the marketplace.

Analysing the effects of disrespect on customers also revealed new findings. It was interesting to find that victims considered the offender's perspective following a disrespectful encounter. Evidence of this transpired through empathy towards the disrespectful party and concern for the organisation. Two distinct coping mechanisms used by victims were also uncovered. These were decisions to change future behaviour and mutual disrespect.

In regards to implications of disrespect on organisations, many disrespected customers continued patronising organisations responsible; however, this was accompanied by a decrease in relationship strength.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Reportings of disrespect are becoming increasingly frequent in the marketplace. Evidence of this transpires in many facets of everyday life, such as in conversations with others, in magazines and newspapers, and on television. Due to increases in technology, disrespected customers are also able to share their experiences with others through the numerous internet forums and consumer review websites that now exist, for instance, PlanetFeedback and My3cents.com (PlanetFeedback, 2009; My3cents.com, 2000; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Such websites indicate that disrespectful treatment in the marketplace is a growing problem.

In spite of this, there is very little coverage of disrespect in the existing marketing literature. Accordingly, it is important to gain an understanding of the various things that can influence customers' perceptions of disrespect, in an effort to begin to remedy the problem. From a managerial perspective, it is also important to be aware of the organisational implications of disrespect, as this can potentially pose considerable threat to the success of businesses. Hence, disrespect in the marketplace is a key issue for both customers and practitioners.

The purpose of this research was to investigate people's experiences of disrespect in the marketplace, the intention being to uncover behaviours that are perceived to be disrespectful, as well as potential consequences of disrespectful behaviour. The research was approached according to three questions. The first sought to identify behaviours that define disrespect in the marketplace; the second was based on the effects of disrespectful behaviour on customers; and the third examined the implications of disrespect on organisations. The motivation for this

research was to better understand the nature of disrespect and extend the literature by considering the effects of disrespect from a marketing perspective.

This research intends to complement the literature regarding respect in marketing because an insight into the nature of disrespect is critical to fully understanding the concept of respect. An awareness of behaviours that cause disrespect can educate people in acting respectfully and appropriately towards others, and ensure that these practices are effectively applied to market environments. The findings of this study should add depth to other streams of research in marketing such as customer satisfaction and loyalty, relationship marketing, service quality, and service failure and recovery.

This investigation was undertaken using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. It seeks to define the behaviours that connote disrespect in the marketplace, as well as determine potential effects of disrespect from a customer and an organisational perspective. The paper begins with a review of the existing literature on respect and disrespect. It follows with the methods, results and a discussion of the findings, which includes important implications for practitioners and potential directions for future research.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

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### **2.1 Respect and Disrespect in the Literature**

There is limited coverage of both respect and disrespect in the existing literature, with little research dedicated to the application of either of these constructs to marketing. The concept of respect has received more attention than disrespect in the wider literature; research has been conducted in a range of disciplines including psychology (Boeckmann & Tyler, 2002), sociology (Pope, 1999), politics (Middleton, 2004), ethics and human resource management (Darwall, 1977), as well as coverage in relationship and marriage literature (Kesler, 1994). Despite this, research investigating respect in consumer markets remains scarce; the few existing papers are predominantly conceptual and aim to develop theoretical knowledge on the topic (Costley et al, 2005; Mazur, 2008).

Disrespect has received some interest in the field of psychology, particularly with regards to the construct of injustice; however, much of the existing research on disrespect can be found in literature relating to the public sector (Honneth, 1992; Martin, 2007; Miller, 2001). A handful of studies have been undertaken to empirically investigate the effects of disrespectful treatment in hospitals, schools and police encounters (Blanchard & Lurie, 2004; Mastrofski, Reisig & McCluskey, 2002; Shwalb & Shwalb, 2006). Implications of the nature of disrespect and its effects in terms of consequent emotions and behaviours are alluded to in the respect literature, as well as the services marketing literature.

### **2.2 Respect Defined**

The multi-dimensional nature of respect signifies that it can be viewed from a number of different standpoints. Although the construct has not been

explicitly defined, various authors have developed understanding by conceptualising the dimensions of respect. The most common standpoint exhibited in the literature is a moral or ethical stance, which is consistent with Kant's early writings, professing that respect entails treating persons as ends in themselves and never simply as means (Darwall, 1977; Kant, 1959). This refers to our obligation to treat others with the respect and consideration that we ourselves feel entitled.

Two fundamental types of respect that were identified in the seminal work of Darwall (1977) are recognition and appraisal respect. These two forms are amongst the most frequently cited dimensions of respect in the literature and have been influential to subsequent developments in the area. Recognition respect is defined along the same lines as Kant's theories of moral obligations towards others. It can be likened to the basic habitual tendency to act appropriately towards others simply because they are people. Alternatively, appraisal respect consists of a positive evaluation of a person and is based on the implication that respect is earned by those who are deserving of it (Costley et al, 2005; Darwall, 1977).

Respect has been conceptualised from a variety of perspectives and each is slightly different to the other. For instance, Pope (1999) has derived three forms of respect, which are a variation of Darwall's (1977) original classification. These three forms are: "esteem", an expression of positive appraisal or admiration; "moral esteem", which is earned by those of special moral excellence; and "civil respect", which is granted to everyone who is civil in a moral sense (Pope, 1999). This categorization differs from that of Darwall (1977) in that respect is always established on the basis of positive attributes in the object, as opposed to recognition respect in particular, which is theoretically granted to everyone as

human beings, even those who are not necessarily deserving of it due to their mistreatment of others.

It should be recognised that respect will be different for different people. A key factor in defining respect is understanding that it is based on individual behavioural expectations and perceptions (Campbell, 2007). Therefore, perceptions of respect will vary across different cultures and social settings (Campbell, 2007; Middleton, 2004). Peoples' ideals of respect will also change over time, both across and within cultures (Shwalb & Shwalb, 2006; Sung, 2004). Such factors are highly relevant to the construct of respect but they have contributed to the difficulties in distinctively defining it.

### **2.3 Respectful Behaviours**

The dominant behaviours that connote respect are consistent with the theme of morality. These behaviours include equal treatment, fairness and acceptance (Campbell, 2007; Costley, Babis, Friend & FitzPatrick, 2004; DeCremer, 2002; Egge, 1999; Frei & Shaver, 2002; Kesler, 1994; Mazur, 2008). Such behaviours are important because being treated with neutrality and without bias allow people to feel included and respected (Boeckmann & Tyler, 2002). It is expected that equality, fairness and acceptance of others are behaviours that form the foundations of respectful treatment, and an absence of any of these would be common grounds for perceptions of disrespect.

A second group of behaviours that is imperative to respect relates to the concept of regard, which entails deliberations about how one should act in relation to a particular object or person (Darwall, 1977). Consideration and empathy are frequently cited in the literature as being associated with both regard for others and respect, as they signify being aware of the needs and concerns of other people

(Blodgett, Wakefield & Barnes, 1995; Costley et al, 2004; Frei & Shaver, 2002; Murphy, 1999; Winsted, 2000). Additional related behaviours are integrity, dignity, honesty and sincerity (Campbell, 2007; Costley et al, 2004; Frei & Shaver, 2002; Murphy, 1999; Murphy, Laczniaak & Wood, 2007; Pope, 1999).

There is also evidence that listening to the views and opinions of others is considered an important component of respectful treatment (Frei & Shaver, 2002; Miller, 2001). Simply allowing others to express themselves is of vital importance because, as people, we are all entitled to a voice; therefore, respect is given by ensuring that others are granted the same entitlement. Similarly, understanding and tolerance are also behaviours that connote respect (Campbell, 2007; Costley et al, 2004; Frei & Shaver, 2002).

Bitran and Hoech (1990) take an alternative approach in regards to behaviours that connote respect by demonstrating the relationship between respect and power. They propose that feelings of powerlessness can arise when one is denied respectful behaviours such as those described above; these occurrences are determined by the amount of exercisable power held by each party in any given situation. It is suggested that a willingness to forgo power by either party is indicative of a show of respect for the other party (Bitran & Hoech, 1990)

## **2.4 Related Concepts**

Darwall (1977) theorises that different forms of respect are dependent on the objects towards which they are directed. To illustrate, persons can be the object of recognition respect, while the features or attributes of a person that represent their excellence are the objects of appraisal respect (Darwall, 1977). The three concepts related to respect that are to be discussed can be described according to their objects; these concepts are self-respect, mutual respect and the

dark side of respect. The object of self-respect is one's self. Alternatively, the object of mutual respect is another person; however, the effect of this is reciprocal since if one shows respect towards another person, they themselves will become the object of respect. The dark side of respect deals with peoples' efforts to become the object of respect from peers by disrespecting others.

The literature on respect frequently mentions the construct of self-respect. The term 'self-respect' is often used in reference to recognition respect for oneself as a person, whereby there is an acceptance of self-worth (Darwall, 1977). Self-respect is highlighted as one of six qualities that allow individuals to appear respect-worthy to their peers; additionally, it is regarded as an essential trait for the creation of a just society (Frei & Shaver, 2002; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2000; Middleton, 2004). Also closely related to self-respect is the concept, self-esteem; it is widely recognised that respect can have both positive and negative effects on one's self-esteem. Respectful treatment can significantly enhance feelings of self-esteem and self-worth; this finding is particularly prominent in literature regarding intra-group relationships (Boeckmann & Tyler, 2002; DeCremer, 2003; DeCremer & Tyler, 2005). There is also evidence that the denial of respect can result in decreased self-esteem, which is damaging to people's sense of regard for themselves (Honneth, 1992; Miller, 2001). This can potentially have negative effects on one's ability to function normally as a person, with consequences like self-destructive and harmful behaviour (Darwall, 1977). Those lacking in self-respect are often guilty of violating the respect of others by treating them with disrespect and showing a disregard for their feelings and well-being (Middleton, 2004; Pope, 1999). This illustrates the significance and relationship of self-respect with the concept of respect as a whole.

Another dimension that receives frequent mention in the literature is that of mutual respect and its influence on other factors. Mutual respect is associated with moral principles that govern respect, such as equality and value for others (Egge, 1999; Kesler, 1994). The presence of mutual respect has positive effects on personal relationships, as well as society as a whole. Mutual respect can foster long lasting relationships and increase trust and security (Frei & Shaver, 2002; Honneth, 1992; Murphy et al, 2007). Objects such as a boomerang or mirror have been metaphorically likened to mutual respect, which signifies that when we treat others with respect, we gain respect in return (Reilly, 2002). From a market perspective, mutual respect can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty; therefore, its application in the market environment should produce pleasing results (Gittell, 2002).

Respect is multi-dimensional and thus can be viewed from a variety of different perspectives. A viewpoint that is rarely featured in the literature concerns the dark side of respect. A few academics have considered the negative connotations that respect can have when people use unethical behaviour in an attempt to gain respect from their peers. For instance, a bully may gain respect from friends by causing harm to others (Baumeister, Smart & Boden, 1996). Similarly, the rapid increase in crimes, such as tagging and gang violence, can be attributed to the demand for respect. A driving force behind such crimes could also be the search for self-respect, in which case the behaviours may be self-enhancing, yet very much socially undesirable (Baumeister et al, 1996; Langdon, 2007; Shwalb & Shwalb, 2006).

## **2.5 Effects of Respect**

The dominant areas in which the effects of respect are observed include personal identities, interpersonal relationships and group behaviour. Respectful treatment can have a positive effect on people's identity, as well as their perceptions of identification. The respect cues that people perceive from others often exert a strong influence on the construction of their own social identity and self-definition (Boeckmann & Tyler, 2002; DeCremer, 2002; DeCremer & Tyler, 2005). An additional outcome of valuing and respecting others is stronger feelings of identification towards the group or other party (Barreto & Ellemers, 2002; Boeckmann & Tyler, 2002). In many cases, this identification is accompanied by increased feelings of inclusion and belongingness (Boeckmann & Tyler, 2002; DeCremer, 2003; DeCremer & Tyler, 2005). The dimensions identification, inclusion and belongingness are illustrative of the considerable influence that perceptions of respect can have on social factors.

The construct of respect is highly influential to the nature of relationships, as well as the level of trust that exists within relationships. The perception of respect in interactions between two parties encourages and fosters the formation of a relationship, while sustained respect can enhance the quality and longevity of existing relationships (Boeckmann & Tyler, 2002; DeCremer, 2003; Duncan, 1997; Gittel, 2002). Research has also indicated that respect is an effective predictor of relationship satisfaction in various contexts (Costley et al, 2005; Frei & Shaver, 2002). The literature features many reportings that link the constructs, respect and trust. A number of authors propose that respect leads to increased levels of trust and that trust might begin with feelings of respect (Costley et al, 2004; Frei & Shaver, 2002; Kesler, 1994; Reilly, 2002). It can be suggested that

either of these constructs may not exist without the other; respect cannot be present without trust and trust cannot be present without respect.

The effects of respect are also observed in individuals' levels of cooperation and contribution in groups. The perception of respect from others can satisfy human needs for inclusiveness and belongingness, which in a group environment can result in collective identification with the group and, in turn, positively influence cooperation with the group (Barreto & Ellemers, 2002; Boeckmann & Tyler, 2002; DeCremer, 2002; DeCremer & Tyler, 2005; Simon & Sturmer, 2003). Some of the cited behaviours that accompany general cooperation are group-serving actions and compliance with the rules of the group (Simon & Sturmer, 2003). Another common outcome of respect in group situations is contribution to the group, which can include behaviours such as voluntary assistance to group causes and donations (Boeckmann & Tyler, 2002; DeCremer, 2002; DeCremer, 2003).

## **2.6 Respect in Marketing**

Aspects of respect that have received attention in the literature include the potential customer-related outcomes and organisational outcomes of respectful treatment in the marketplace. The marketing literature posits that respect is one of the most effective tools for building and maintaining relationships, in this case, with the customers of an organisation (Costley et al, 2005; Duncan, 1997; Murphy et al, 2007). The literature also reinforces the association between respect and trust, as customers who are treated with respect are expected to have greater levels of trust for the organisation (Frei & Shaver, 2002; Reilly, 2002). Additionally, it is suggested that customer loyalty and commitment increase with a continuous effort to treat all customers respectfully (Barreto & Ellemers, 2002; Costley et al,

2005; DeCremer & Tyler, 2005; Simon & Sturmer, 2003). This, in turn, can have a positive effect on related dimensions such as repeat patronage and customer retention, with a decrease in the number of customers engaging in switching behaviour.

Several authors have identified the relationship between respect and customer satisfaction. They propose that respectful treatment will result in increased satisfaction (Bitran & Hoech, 1990; Costley et al, 2004; Winsted, 2000). Bitran and Hoech (1990) extend this theory by hypothesising that the effect of respect on satisfaction is especially important in high contact services where customers have expectations of a certain level of service quality. A further proposed outcome of respect in the marketplace is positive word-of-mouth (Blodgett et al, 1995; Costley et al, 2005). Positive word-of-mouth communications can be highly beneficial to an organisation and are one of the most effective forms of advertising; therefore, making a commitment to treating each individual equally and with the respect they deserve can positively influence the profitability of an organisation.

Research in services marketing by Blodgett et al. (1995) found that respectful treatment given to dissatisfied customers could positively influence overall satisfaction, intentions of subsequent patronage, word-of-mouth behaviour and loyalty. Respect in this case entails a fair settlement regarding the cause of the customer's dissatisfaction, as well as respectful and courteous service (Blodgett et al, 1995). The manner in which employees treat customers after they have laid a complaint is of vital importance, as a customer who receives a fair settlement while being treated with rudeness or resentment will leave feeling disrespected. Blodgett et al (1995) suggest that dissatisfied customers who are pleased with the outcome of a complaint may become even more loyal and will

spread goodwill for the organisation by engaging in positive word-of-mouth behaviour.

A number of organisational outcomes also embody the effects of respect. For instance, Campbell (2007) and Ramarajan and Barsade (2006) suggest that the creation of a respectful work environment will lead to an increase in overall productivity. There are three main reasons behind this. Firstly, employees feel appreciated and valued by both management and other employees, allowing them to exhibit greater levels of commitment by exerting more effort and engagement to their work (Campbell, 2007). Secondly, showing continual respect towards all customers and potential customers has a positive effect on the reputation of the organisation, and therefore the value of the brand (Campbell, 2007). Finally, an increase in profitability ultimately results from treating customers with respect because satisfied customers will engage in repeat patronage, as well as recruit new customers through positive word-of-mouth (Blodgett, 1995; Campbell, 2007).

The determinants of customer respect for an organisation are an important consideration in marketing. Costley et al (2005) propose that customer respect is based on organisational performance, reputation and trust. Thus, all three components are imperative in establishing the level of respect a customer has for an organisation. A company's reputation may be derived from external perceptions of that company; however, evaluations of performance and trust are judged primarily from interactions with the organisation. This emphasises the importance of treating every customer justly and respectfully, as this may encourage positive evaluations of performance and trust, and the organisation should consequently gain respect in return.

A few authors have started to examine what respect in marketing entails, which is vital to understanding the construct in a market environment. Costley

and Friend (2007) and Mazur (2008) suggest that customers desire more personalized communication, such as one-on-one interactions with service providers. This is consistent with the themes of relationship marketing, indicating that building genuine relationships with customers will not only result in increased commitment and loyalty, but also increased respect for the organisation. Respect is characterised by equal and fair treatment to all customers, as well as providing them with honest, unbiased and non-deceiving information (Costley & Friend, 2007; Mazur, 2008). Another important dimension of respect in the marketplace is respect for the privacy of customers. With the rapid increase in the use of technology, marketers can obtain vast amounts of consumer information. This allows organisations to specifically target groups of customers through a number of different communication channels such as postal mail, email and phone. Accordingly, Murphy (1999) and Myers (1997) assert that showing respect for a customer connotes being sensitive to their rights to privacy and choice. Respect in marketing also entails the avoidance of being intrusive by repeatedly contacting targeted customers, and allowing them to decide when, where and how they would prefer to be contacted (Costley et al, 2004). This area of research continues to grow, with calls from many authors for the development of a deeper understanding of respect in the marketplace.

## **2.7 Disrespect Defined**

The existing literature lacks a clear and comprehensive definition of disrespect. An account of the nature of disrespect can be obtained by combining the works of a few authors from different streams of research. The psychology literature theorises that feelings of disrespect are experienced when one feels that they are denied something that they are entitled to (Miller, 2001). The component

of entitlement is strongly related to disrespect; it is generally made up of two variables, interpersonal sensitivity, which is based on the belief that one is entitled to just and respectful treatment from others, and accountability, whereby people feel they are entitled to an explanation for actions that have personal consequences for them (Miller, 2001). Both of these variables can influence feelings of disrespect. It is expected that perceptions of disrespect may be associated with the denial of recognition respect from others, as this is the basic form of respect that one feels entitled to as a person. Accordingly, disrespectful treatment is often viewed as a form of injustice, whereby the disrespected party feels that they are undeserving of a particular outcome (DeCremer & Tyler, 2005; Honneth, 1992; Miller, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006).

Bird (2004) describes disrespect as a violation of social, ceremonial or ritual expectations, meaning that one failed to fulfil the actions connoting performative respect. Performative respect refers to the respectful attitudes and dispositions expected in specific situations (Bird, 2004). For example, a violation of expectations could be characterised by behaviours such as making jokes at a funeral. Bird's (2004) classification of disrespect implies that perceptions of disrespect may be different for different people since they are based on individual expectations, which is consistent with the position of Mastrofski et al (2002), who propose that feelings of disrespect may arise from social, cultural and economic differences.

## **2.8 Disrespectful Attitudes and Behaviours**

Disrespect often stems from characteristics such as ignorance, arrogance or insensitivity, which leads to behaviours such as a lack of acceptance, discrimination and the failure to listen to the voice of others (Mendleson, 1998).

These behaviours are often regarded as patronising, condescending or degrading, all of which signify disrespect (Buttny & Williams, 2000; Honneth, 1992; Myers, 1997; Pope, 1999). Perceptions of disrespect frequently arise after being negatively judged by others, whereby the actions that accompany judgments are experienced during relational interactions. Incidents where one feels inappropriately judged by others may be associated with a lack of acceptance, implying that the differences and choices of another person are not respected (DeCremer & Tyler, 2005; Egge, 1999). The effects of a lack of acceptance between individuals are differentiable from the effects in a group situation. A lack of acceptance may result in patronising or condescending behaviour, as well as impoliteness and ignoring between individuals; however, in a group context, a lack of acceptance from group members is likely to cause exclusion and alienation.

One of the most frequently researched determinants of disrespect is discrimination. Discrimination can take many different forms; it can depend on a number of factors including demographics, physical appearance, and social and economic status. Discrimination of others is often a consequence of the components of disrespect discussed above, a judgmental disposition and a lack of acceptance. A dominantly cited example of discrimination, which influences feelings of disrespect, is biased or unequal treatment (Boeckmann & Tyler, 2002; Buttny & Williams, 2000; Keaveney, 1995). Stereotyping is a related behaviour that also depends on some form of discrimination. Stereotyping causes disrespect because it is usually based on a false assumption of a person's character through a judgment of their external traits (Buttny & Williams, 2000; Egge, 1999; Simon & Sturmer, 2003; Wolfram, Mohr & Schyns, 2007).

A number of studies have conceptualised and investigated disrespectful treatment based on discrimination, finding a range of different attributes that are associated with disrespect. Myers (1997) proposes that, in accordance with judgments of age, youth and elderly are more likely to experience disrespect, while women are more likely to face disrespectful treatment based on gender. Many authors also identify ethnic minorities, as well as those stereotyped based on their religion or language, as being likely to experience disrespect (Blanchard & Lurie, 2004; Buttny & Williams, 2000; Egge, 1999; Mastrofski et al, 2002; Myers, 1997). Social and economic factors like perceived wealth, education and social class can also influence discrimination (Blanchard & Lurie, 2004; Buttny & Williams, 2000; Mastrofski et al, 2002). Additional attributes that have received brief mention in the literature include marital status, sexual orientation and disability (Egge, 1999). In accordance with the various attributes identified, factors based on physical appearance, such as standards of dress and physical features, could also act as a cue for discriminatory behaviour.

The literature on disrespect includes a brief account of some specific actions considered disrespectful. One of the most commonly cited actions is failing to listen to the voice of others (Buttny & Williams, 2000; Miller, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Failure to listen causes people to feel that their beliefs and opinions are not valued or even acknowledged, leading to perceptions of disrespect. Ignoring others has similar effects, and is often viewed as insulting, impolite and, ultimately, disrespectful (Keaveney, 1995; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). In an organisational context, behaviours like betrayal by co-workers and wrongful accusations by superiors can have direct effects on feelings of disrespect and injustice (Bies, 1993; Kesler, 1994; Miller, 2001). Furthermore, deceiving others, being dishonest and intentionally intimidating people can influence perceptions of

disrespect (Keaveney, 1995; Kesler, 1994; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). These actions are believed to be disrespectful because they are viewed as unjust and denying basic human rights. The majority of reportings in the literature regarding disrespectful attitudes and behaviours are based on theoretical or conceptual grounds. With the exception of a few studies on discrimination, there is little empirical evidence to identify behaviours that lead to perceptions of disrespect.

## **2.9 The Impact of Disrespect**

The impact of disrespectful treatment can emerge in three distinct areas: internalised effects on the disrespected party, consequent feelings and emotions, and consequent behaviours. The internalised effects of disrespect refer to changes in the disrespected person's attitudes and general disposition. A frequently cited effect is a decrease in self-esteem, which can stem from forms of disrespect like social devaluation (Honneth, 1992; Middleton, 2002; Miller, 2001). Mastrofski et al. (2002) posit that disrespectful treatment may also demean and diminish a person's sense of identity. The behavioural effects associated with these aspects include decreased confidence and depression (Honneth, 1992; Miller, 2001). The effects discussed can exert a substantial influence on one's value for themselves, as well as their feelings of self-worth, which may, in extreme cases, lead to self-harm or harm to others. Disrespectful treatment resulting in lowered self-esteem and sense of identity often arises when one feels denied something that they are entitled to, in this case, appropriate and respectful treatment from others.

The literature suggests that variations in a person's general disposition and personality may result from disrespectful treatment. Several studies show that disrespectful behaviour affects the stress levels of the disrespected party, which leads to outcomes such as burnout and decreased work standards in an

organisational context (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Lim & Cortina, 2005; Ramarajan & Barsade, 2006). Disrespect may also influence cynicism and hostility (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Ramarajan & Barsade, 2006; Shwalb & Shwalb, 2006). Both of these dimensions influence organisational burnout and productivity; however, they may additionally influence an increase in confrontational behaviour. Accordingly, it is recognised that the internalised effects of disrespect can govern future behaviours, as well as attitudes and dispositions.

The impact of disrespect on one's feelings and emotions is considerable. One of the most commonly cited emotions that accompany disrespectful treatment is anger (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Costley et al, 2004; Miller, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Anger can be viewed from different perspectives in regards to disrespect. Disrespect is a common determinant of anger, but those who exhibit high levels of anger may have a low threshold for the perception of disrespect (Miller, 2001). Anger is regarded to be an empowering emotion and increases the motivation for action, which means that the arousal of anger can be a strong predictor of the likelihood of action against the disrespectful party (Honneth, 1992; Miller, 2001). Further emotions that are associated with disrespect include frustration, annoyance and resentment (Costley et al, 2004; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Ward & Ostrom, 2006).

The literature reports that people may feel betrayed, belittled or degraded following a disrespectful encounter. Feelings of betrayal generally arise when one is disrespected by another party with whom they have an interpersonal relationship, for instance a friend, family member, partner or service provider (Kesler, 1994; Miller, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Betrayal accompanies anger as an emotion that empowers the disrespected party to take action. Disrespect is also likely to cause the victim to feel degraded and belittled (Honneth, 1992;

Pope, 1999; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Degradation of another person is related to the deprivation and denial of basic human rights; this constitutes the recognition respect that all people are entitled. It can cause the disrespected party to question their self-worth, which is consistent with the negative effects of disrespect on self-esteem. Pope (1999) asserts that “basic respect refuses to reduce people to less than human status and therefore prohibits their degradation” (p. 61). Also associated with disrespectful treatment are emotions of humiliation, vulnerability and defencelessness (Honneth, 1992; Miller, 2001).

The literature emphasises that disrespect and the emotions it arouses may be a strong determinant for a motivation for action. Miller (2001) proposes that disrespect causes retaliation behaviour from the victim, which is stimulated by both emotions and internalised effects. The intention of retaliation, from the perspective of victim, is to either restore their self-esteem or educate the offender about the unacceptability of their actions (Miller, 2001). The two main forms of retaliation are retaliation by withdrawal and retaliation by attack. Retaliation by withdrawal is often associated with depression, resentment and self-esteem issues; it is represented by behaviours such as a withdrawal of commitment and an avoidance or resistance of situations relevant to the experience of disrespect (Mastrofski et al, 2002; Miller, 2001; Reilly, 2002). Retaliation by attack is related to anger and hostility, and involves the victim taking assertive action against the offending party. For instance, the victim may bad-mouth the offender in the presence of others, complain to a higher authority, or in some cases, pursue legal action (Miller, 2001).

## **2.10 Disrespect in Marketing**

The marketing literature currently lacks any research that focuses specifically on disrespect; however, much of the literature regarding respect alludes to the potential consequences of disrespectful treatment in the marketplace. One of the effects of disrespect towards customers is a decrease in levels of commitment and loyalty (Miller, 2001). In cases where the perceived severity of disrespect is particularly high, the result could be the discontinuation of a long-term relationship (Duncan, 1997; Myers, 1997; Shwalb & Shwalb, 2006). Switching behaviour is also consistent with decreased commitment and dissolved relationships, as disrespected customers may seek an alternative when they are dissatisfied with the service they receive (Costley et al, 2005; Keaveney, 1995). The potential effects of disrespect are important considerations in marketing, as it is widely accepted that it is more expensive to make efforts in attracting new customers than maintaining and satisfying existing customers. The implication of this is that disrespecting customers can ultimately have a negative effect on the overall profitability of an organisation.

Disrespectful treatment towards customers may result in a decrease in trust for the organisation (Ramarajan & Barsade, 2006; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Decreased trust affects the organisation because trust can often influence patronage since it is one of the cues used by customers to evaluate businesses. Accordingly, trust can be associated with organisational reputation as it enables the judgment of a company. Trust may also relate to the preservation of relationships, with the recognition that distrust can break relationships.

Some of the most significant effects of disrespectful treatment in the marketplace are complaining behaviour and negative word-of-mouth. Disrespect can lead to complaints by the disrespected party to a higher authority (Honneth,

1992). This proposition is consistent with the theory that disrespect amplifies a motivation for action in order to educate the offender and ensure that the same incident does not reoccur (Miller, 2001). Negative word-of-mouth is frequently cited as a potential effect of disrespect towards customers (Honneth, 1992; Keaveney, 1995; Miller, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Keaveney (1995) discovered that 75 percent of people who have been disrespected to the point of switching service providers will tell at least one person, and often several other people, about the incident. Such findings are of particular significance because they imply that potential customers may be deterred from patronising a business due to the power of word-of-mouth from a known associate. In the present day, word-of-mouth behaviour has widespread effects and may be a highly influential force on the decision-making processes of other customers. Ward and Ostrom (2006) illustrate this, showing that customers who experience disrespect in the marketplace may react by constructing complaint or protest websites against the organisation responsible. The motivation for this is thought to be to either advise other customers about the true nature of the organisation, or to get revenge by asserting that their voice can be influential to others and, ultimately, damaging to the organisation.

Disrespect also has negative consequences at an intra-organisational level, meaning that disrespectful treatment within an organisation, either between management and employees or amongst employees, can influence the overall outcomes of the company. Employees experiencing disrespect from managers are likely to suffer from burnout, which results in decreased work standards and productivity (Mendleson, 1998; Ramarajan & Barsade, 2006). There could also be a level of resistance from employees, as well as diminished levels of general helpfulness, courtesy and commitment (Mendleson, 1998; Moorman, 1991;

Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). In the case of particularly severe incidents, employees may be forced to exit the employment relationship altogether. Campbell (2007) reports that such effects can cause an overall reduction in productivity and profitability, which are likely to be detrimental to an organisation. Ultimately, disrespectful behaviour directed at both customers and employees can have highly negative effects on the health of an organisation. Therefore, efforts to eliminate such behaviours should be made.

## **2.11 Summary of Literature**

The vast majority of the literature regarding both respect and disrespect are predominantly conceptual writings. There is a fair degree of agreement amongst respect researchers that respect is a multi-dimensional construct. Much of the respect literature stems from the seminal work of Darwall (1977), who identifies two fundamental forms of respect, recognition and appraisal respect. Some of the dominant behaviours conceptualised to connote respect include equal treatment, fairness, acceptance and consideration (Campbell, 2007; DeCremer, 2002; Egge, 1999; Frei & Shaver, 2002). From a marketing perspective, respect can be related to customer loyalty, satisfaction and trust, as well as building and maintaining relationships with customers (Barreto & Ellemers, 2002; Duncan, 1997; Frei & Shaver, 2002; Murphy et al, 2007; Winsted, 2000).

Disrespect is somewhat less clearly defined than respect, however much of the literature appears to be based on the idea that perceptions of disrespect arise when one feels they are denied something they are entitled to. Accordingly, disrespect may result from behaviours like a lack of acceptance, discrimination and not listening to others (Buttny & Williams, 2000; DeCremer & Tyler, 2005; Egge, 1999; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Disrespect also has important implications

to market contexts. It is conceptualised to influence decreased commitment, loyalty and trust, switching behaviour and negative word-of-mouth (Honneth, 1992; Miller, 2001; Keaveney, 1995; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). This suggests that disrespect could have considerable effects on various organisational outcomes, as well as the overall success of a business.

Much of the disrespect literature is based on conceptual writings. However, a few empirical studies have investigated the relationship between disrespect and discrimination, revealing that disrespectful behaviour can stem from attributes like gender, ethnicity, age and social class (Blanchard & Lurie, 2004; Mastrofski et al, 2002; Shwalb & Shwalb, 2006). The literature has yet to provide empirical evidence regarding the specific behaviours that cause disrespect, as well as the potential effects and outcomes of disrespect. Thus, this research endeavours to approach these areas from a market perspective. The literature suggests that one would expect disrespectful treatment to negatively influence customer loyalty, trust and the likelihood of recommending organisations in question to others. It also implies that the severity of disrespect may be associated to organisational variables such as satisfaction, loyalty, trust, and future business intentions.

## **3.0 RESEARCH METHODS**

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### **3.1 Overview**

The purpose of this study was to empirically investigate the nature and impact of disrespect in the marketplace. This research sought to identify the behaviours that cause people to feel disrespected in market environments. Additionally, the potential consequences of disrespect were examined from both customer and organisational perspectives. From the customer perspective, the intention was to determine how disrespect affects the customers who experience it; this was done by exploring their consequent thoughts, feelings and actions. The organisational perspective was centred on how disrespect influences the organisations responsible for it. This was investigated by considering the organisational implications of customers' consequent actions. Thus, the three research questions that this study focuses on are:

- What behaviours define disrespect in the marketplace?
- How does disrespectful behaviour affect the customers who experience it?
- What are the implications of disrespectful behaviour for the organisations responsible for it?

### **3.2 Data Collection Procedures**

Data was collected for this study using two qualitative research methods, the critical incident technique and depth interviews. Using both research methods allowed for the triangulation of findings and provided both depth and breadth of responses. The two methods were performed and analysed separately, but the results are discussed collectively. Data collection was carried out over a period of

three months, between 1<sup>st</sup> August and 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2008, in Hamilton, New Zealand.

### **3.2.1 The Critical Incident Technique**

Flanagan (1954) originally introduced the critical incident technique. It has been defined as a qualitative procedure that facilitates the investigation of significant occurrences as identified by the participant, including a description of the management of these occurrences and the outcomes in terms of perceived effects. Accordingly, the critical incident technique is an appropriate method for this investigation, as the purpose is to explore the occurrence and effects of disrespectful behaviour in the marketplace. One of the main benefits of the technique is that it provides a rich set of data by allowing participants to report and evaluate the incidents that are most relevant to them (Gremler, 2004).

The critical incident technique was implemented using a self-administered survey instrument. The first of the survey's two sections consisted of a series of open-ended questions about participants' experiences of disrespect. Participants were initially asked to describe a personal experience of disrespectful treatment in the marketplace. Then they were prompted to recall the behaviours that influenced their perceptions of disrespect, as well as the thoughts, feelings, emotions, and consequent actions that resulted from the incident.

The second section of the survey asked participants to quantitatively evaluate their experiences according to eight variables. A six-item equal interval scale was provided to evaluate the following variables: favourability of thoughts, intensity of emotions, severity, satisfaction, future business intentions, loyalty, trust and likelihood of future recommendations. Specifically, the survey asked participants to rate their current state, as well as their state at the time of the

incident, for favourability of thoughts, satisfaction and future business intentions. Furthermore, they were asked to rate their current state, as well as their state before the incident occurred, for loyalty, trust and likelihood of future recommendations. This section also requested participants to provide an estimation of the time elapsed since the incident occurred, the purpose being to gain insight into the effects of time on each variable. The survey instrument was pre-tested to ensure that the combined qualitative and quantitative methods could be applied effectively. (*The survey instrument can be found in Appendix 1*).

### **3.2.2 Sample Selection and Distribution for the Critical Incident Technique**

Participants for this study were selected from Hamilton, New Zealand. The intention was to obtain a wide range of demographics in order to gain a breadth of different perspectives. The surveys, accompanied by a detailed information sheet to participants, were distributed to various community groups. (*The information sheet can be found in Appendix 2*). A purposeful sample of participants was assembled according to the following communities: students from the University of Waikato, secondary school teachers, retirement village residents, church group members, members of a 60-plus continuing education group and ESL (English as a Second Language) students. The main criteria for participation in this study were that the incident reported should be a personal experience, and the participant's role must be as a customer. These criteria were later used in determining the responses that were to be analysed.

Distribution began by approaching the leaders of the community groups to request permission, after which the surveys were distributed to community members, to be collected at a later date. This distribution method allowed participants to complete the survey in their own time, and eliminated barriers to

participation such as the cost of returning completed questionnaires. The survey instrument was also uploaded onto the internet, giving potential participants the opportunity to choose the questionnaire administration method that was most convenient to them.

### **3.2.3 Depth Interviews**

The completion of the critical incident technique was followed by a phase of in-depth qualitative interviews. The purpose of this was to gain further insight into the nature of disrespect and its potential effects. The semi-structured interviews allowed for probing in order to gain greater depth of information, and thus, increase the understanding of participants' reported experiences. A list of questions was developed for each participant based on the individual experiences reported in the critical incident phase. These were used as a basis to initiate the interviews, while allowing for the addition of supporting questions during the interviews. This process gave participants the opportunity to express further details about their experiences, which resulted in a more complete understanding of the experience from participants' perspectives. It also allowed participants to report any other experiences of disrespect they may have had, which was a rich source of additional information. The interviews were between 30 and 90 minutes in length, and were recorded and transcribed with the participants' consent.

### **3.3 Hypotheses**

A series of hypotheses were formulated in relation to the ideas put forward in the existing literature. The purpose was to address the third question of this study, which deals with the implications of disrespect on organisations. The

hypotheses were analysed using the data obtained from the quantitative section of the critical incident surveys.

Disrespectful behaviour in the marketplace can significantly influence customers' decisions and behaviours. The effects of disrespect can be observed in various organisational outcomes. Honneth (1992) asserts that experiencing disrespect drives a motivation for action against the offender. Some of the frequently cited reactions to disrespect in marketplace include dissolution of long-term relationships, decreased commitment and switching behaviours (Berry, 1995; Costley et al, 2005; Duncan, 1997; Keaveney, 1995; Miller, 2001; Myers, 1997; Shwalb & Shwalb, 2006). Each of these outcomes is associated with customer loyalty, leading to the hypothesis that disrespectful behaviour will decrease customer loyalty through behaviours like decreased or discontinued patronage and switching.

*H<sub>1</sub>: Disrespectful treatment will negatively influence customer loyalty.*

The literature also alludes to the relationship between respect and trust, suggesting that trust cannot exist without respect (Costley et al, 2004; Frei & Shaver, 2002; Kesler, 1994; Reilly, 2002). Accordingly, a lack of respect is likely to lead to lower levels of trust (Ramarajan & Barsade, 2006; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Thus, it is proposed that disrespectful treatment towards customers will result in decreased trust for the organisation.

*H<sub>2</sub>: Disrespectful treatment will negatively influence customers' trust towards the organisation.*

Similarly, the construct of respect is also associated with word-of-mouth communication. Disrespectful behaviour in a market environment can cause disrespected parties to engage in negative word-of-mouth behaviour (Honneth, 1992; Keaveney, 1995; Miller, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). This occurrence is consistent with a decreased likelihood of future recommendations for the organisation in question.

*H<sub>3</sub>: Disrespectful treatment will negatively influence the likelihood of future recommendations.*

The dimension, severity, is included in the survey instrument as a measure of criticality, the purpose being to determine the magnitude of seriousness of a disrespectful encounter. Gremler (2004) asserts that this measure is important for understanding the health of customers' relationships with organisations. The effects of disrespect on customer-organisation relationships can be established according to variables such as satisfaction, future business intentions, loyalty, trust and likelihood of future recommendations. Accordingly, participants' evaluations of these variables at present are hypothesised to be negatively associated with the perceived severity of a disrespectful encounter.

*H<sub>4</sub>: Satisfaction, future business intentions, loyalty, trust and the likelihood of future recommendations following a disrespectful encounter are negatively associated with the perceived severity.*

Severity is also proposed to be related to the time elapsed since a disrespectful encounter occurred. To expand, under conditions where a short

period of time has passed since the incident occurred, the perceived severity will be greater than if a long period of time has passed. This means that the perceived severity will be strong at the time of the incident and recently after, but this effect is expected to decrease with time.

*H<sub>5</sub>: The perceived severity of a disrespectful encounter will decrease as the time since the incident increases.*

### **3.4 Analyses**

The nature of the research questions required both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The critical incident reports and depth interviews were analysed qualitatively, while quantitative procedures were used to test the hypotheses put forward.

#### **3.4.1 Qualitative Analysis**

The data obtained from the critical incidences and depth interviews was analysed using two complementary qualitative processes, a key word analysis and thematic analysis. This allowed for the triangulation of findings, as well as a more thorough understanding of the nature of disrespect.

- **Key Word Analysis:**

Initially, a key word analysis was performed on the critical incident reports. The purpose of this phase was to uncover the specific words used by participants to describe various causes of and responses to disrespect. This analysis was also useful in establishing frequency counts for the words used, providing an idea of the most common perceptions and responses. A coding

scheme for the key word analysis was derived based on theoretical concepts from the literature. The coding scheme was designed as a guide for identifying and recording the words used by participants to describe their experiences according to the following categories: behaviours that caused disrespect, feelings that resulted from disrespectful treatment, and consequent actions towards the disrespectful party and/or organisation responsible.

The coding scheme was used to categorise the words used by participants in their critical incident reports. One of the limitations of this method was that due to limited research in this field, the coding scheme did not cover the complete breadth of responses for each category. However, since the purpose of this phase was to identify the explicit terms used by participants, each time a new term emerged, it was simply added to the coding scheme. It was important to maintain the exact words used by participants, particularly in describing the behaviours that caused disrespect and the feelings aroused. The significance of this was that the participants' voices were preserved, allowing for a more holistic view of the nature of disrespect.

- **Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analyses were performed on both the critical incident reports and depth interview transcripts. The purpose was to find themes specifically associated with causes of disrespect, subsequent feelings and consequent actions. The process for the thematic analysis consisted of reviewing the critical incident reports by identifying and recording distinctive elements of each encounter in accordance with the three categories, causes of disrespect and consequent feelings and actions. The results were analysed by examining the similarities and

differences across the elements, finding a number of reoccurring elements for each category.

The dominant themes were uncovered based on patterns that emerged across the three categories. The majority of themes were based on causes of disrespect. It became clear that many potential causes of disrespect were accompanied by specific patterns of responsive behaviour from victims; therefore, the featured themes focus on identifying and interpreting these commonalities. The thematic analysis yielded six main themes, which either caused or influenced the outcomes of disrespectful behaviour. The themes were not considered mutually exclusive, meaning that each individual critical incident report could potentially include several different themes.

### **3.4.2 Quantitative Analysis**

The purpose of the quantitative analysis was to test the five hypotheses put forward. It was also useful in revealing the general trends across the sample for the eight variables evaluated, favourability of thoughts, intensity, severity, satisfaction, future business intentions, loyalty, trust and likelihood of future recommendations. The hypotheses and general trends were examined using descriptive analyses, correlations and t-tests.

Descriptive analyses revealed the mean values of the quantitative variables, which indicated the general trends.  $H_1$ ,  $H_2$  and  $H_3$ , which were based on the negative effects of disrespect on loyalty, trust and the likelihood of future recommendations, were addressed using paired samples t-tests. Correlations analyses were used to address  $H_4$ , which considered associations between severity and satisfaction, future business intentions, loyalty, trust and likelihood of future

recommendations, and  $H_5$ , which considered the relationship between severity and time.

## 4.0 RESULTS

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This sections begins with a description of the participants who took part in the study. The qualitative results follow, with the findings from the key word analysis, as well as the emergent themes. The qualitative findings are relevant to the first two research questions in particular, which seek to identify behaviours that lead to disrespect and the effects of disrespect on customers. Finally, the quantitative results address the proposed hypotheses. This relates to the third research question, which deals with the implications of disrespect on organisations.

### 4.1 Participants

The implementation of the critical incident technique resulted in a total of 64 usable surveys. Some of the main barriers to participation in this study included a reluctance to participate due to the length of the survey and an inability to recall a relevant experience. In regards to the latter, a number of potential participants indicated a willingness to take part in the study, but were unable to do so because they could not recall a specific disrespectful encounter.

All 64 returned surveys were subject to analysis as each one met the section criteria of being a personal experience of disrespect in the marketplace. Of the 64 participants, 41 percent were male and 59 percent were female, with ages ranging from 20 to 69 and an average age of 39. The dominant ethnic group of this country, New Zealand European, represented 53 percent of the total sample, while 47 percent was made up of minority groups including New Zealand Maori, American, British, Scottish, South African, Indian and Asian. (*See Appendix 3 for a full account of demographics*).

Participants for depth interviews were selected from a sample of volunteers who completed the critical incident surveys. Eight participants from the Waikato region volunteered; four of these, who represented a range of disrespectful encounters, were selected for the interview process. The selection criteria were based on the results of the critical incident phase. The intention was to gain greater depth and detail into the most common experiences across the sample; therefore, the four participants were selected according to the key elements of their experiences. These key elements contributed to the development and understanding of the main themes that emerged from this study. Considerations were also made to ensure that different demographic groups were included in the sample. The demographics of the four participants are indicated in the table below.

**TABLE 1**

**Demographics of Sample Selected for Depth Interviews**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Level of Formal Education</b>
P1	Male	59	European	Post Graduate
P2	Female	60	Indian	Higher Level Diploma
P3	Female	20	Indian	University Graduate
P4	Female	66	European	High School

## **4.2 Qualitative Results**

This section begins by reporting the results of the key word analysis. It follows with a complete account of the main themes uncovered through thematic analysis of the critical incident reports and depth interviews.

### **4.2.1 Results of Key Word Analysis**

The key word analysis identified specific words used by victims to describe the perceived cause of disrespect, as well as their consequent feelings and

responses. It must be noted that in this study, the term ‘victim’ is used in reference to the disrespected party, whereby they are a victim of disrespect; it is not intended to carry implications of victimisation. For each of the three categories, tabulated results show a complete list of words used, as well as frequency counts for each word across the 64 critical incident reports. To compare the emergent words with those that exist in the literature, the table includes references for the elements that have already been conceptualised. The table of words is accompanied by a categorised list, which groups frequently mentioned words into broadly labelled categories identifying a general cause or effect. The reason for this was that participants often used a variety of words to describe the same overall notion, so the categories provide greater meaning to the results.

- **The Perceived Cause of Disrespect**

The specific words used by participants to describe behaviours that led to disrespect are essential to understanding potential causes of disrespect. Forty-eight different behaviours were mentioned in the critical incident reports. There were 112 citations of these behaviours across the 64 responses. These findings revealed a greater number of behaviours than the conceptual literature, which yielded only 20 different behaviours, used to compile the coding scheme. The table below lists the words used to describe disrespectful behaviour and indicates those featured in the literature. The bottom of the table is highlighted indicating words from the coding scheme that were not mentioned in the critical incident reports.

**TABLE 2****Words used to Describe the Perceived Cause of Disrespect**

<b>Key Words</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>References for Existing Elements</b>
Abrupt	2	
Accusation	1	Miller, 2001
Annoyed	1	
Argued	2	
Arrogance	2	Mendleson, 1998
Chauvinistic	1	
Condescending	2	Buttny & Williams, 2000; Myers, 1997
Defensive	2	
Degrading	3	Honneth, 1992; Pope, 1999
Discriminatory	1	Buttny & Williams, 2000; Simon & Sturmer, 2003
Disregard	1	
Distrust	2	
Grumpy	1	
Ignorance	3	Mendleson, 1998
Ignored	7	Keaveney, 1995; Ward & Ostrom, 2006
Impolite	1	Buttny & Williams, 2000; Keaveney, 1995
Intimidating	1	Keaveney, 1995
Irritated	1	
Judgemental	1	
Lack of concern	2	
Lack of courtesy	1	
Lack of dignity	1	
Lack of trust	2	
Nasty	1	
Negative attitude	6	
Negative facial expressions	4	
Negative tone of voice	7	
Not listening	2	Buttny & Williams, 2000; Miller, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006
Patronising	2	Myers, 1997
Physical abuse	1	
Racist	3	
Rude	15	
Sarcastic	2	
Sharp	1	
Scepticism	1	
Snobby	1	
Superior	2	
Unacceptable	1	
Uncaring	3	
Uncooperative	2	
Unfair	4	
Unhelpful	6	
Unkind	1	
Unprofessional	2	
Unrealistic	1	
Unreasonable	1	
Verbal abuse	2	
Wrongful assumption	2	

<b>Key Words</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>References for Existing Elements</b>
Betrayal	0	Kesler, 1994; Miller, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006
Deception	0	Kesler, 1994
Dishonesty	0	Ward & Ostrom, 2006
Humiliation	0	Buttny & Williams, 2000; Honneth, 1992; Miller, 2001
Insensitive	0	Kesler, 1994; Mendleson, 1998
Insulting	0	Honneth, 1992; Middleton, 2004; Ward & Ostrom, 2006
Lack of acceptance	0	DeCremer & Tyler, 2005; Egge, 1999
Stereotyping	0	Buttny & Williams, 2000; Egge, 1999; Simon & Sturmer, 2003
Unequal treatment	0	Boeckmann & Tyler, 2002; Buttny & Williams, 2000; Keaveney, 1995

The following table categorises key words into six behavioural categories, grouping words that represent an overall form of behaviour. These categories indicate frequencies for general causes of disrespect.

**TABLE 3**  
**Categorised Words Describing Causes of Disrespect**

<b>Behavioural Category</b>	<b>Key Words</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Total</b>
General rudeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rude</li> <li>• impolite</li> <li>• nasty</li> <li>• unkind</li> </ul>	15 1 1 1	18
Negative Expressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• negative tone of voice</li> <li>• negative facial expressions</li> <li>• negative attitude</li> <li>• sarcasm</li> </ul>	7 4 3 2	16
Unwillingness to help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ignored</li> <li>• unhelpful</li> <li>• uncooperative</li> <li>• disregarded</li> </ul>	7 6 2 1	16
Actions of superiority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• degrading</li> <li>• arrogance</li> <li>• condescending</li> <li>• patronising</li> <li>• superior</li> <li>• chauvinistic</li> <li>• snobby</li> </ul>	3 2 2 2 2 1 1	13
Perceptions of inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unfair treatment</li> <li>• racism</li> <li>• discrimination</li> <li>• judged</li> </ul>	4 3 1 1	9
Uncaring behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uncaring</li> <li>• lack of concern</li> <li>• failure to listen</li> </ul>	3 2 2	7

- **Consequent Feelings Resulting from Disrespect**

One of the areas in which the effects of disrespect can be observed is in the consequent feelings aroused in the victim. A total of 54 different feelings were specifically mentioned 157 times across the 64 critical incident reports. Again, a greater number of feelings emerged in comparison to the existing literature, which referred to only 18 different feelings. The table below provides references for those featured in the literature.

**TABLE 4**

**Words used to Describe Consequent Feelings**

<b>Key Words</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>References for Existing Elements</b>
Anger	38	Costley et al., 2004; Miller, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006
Angst	1	
Annoyed	22	Ward & Ostrom, 2006
Ashamed	2	
Belittled	1	Ward & Ostrom, 2006
Bemused	1	
Concern	2	
Confusion	1	
Contempt	2	
Defeated	1	
Defensive	1	
Degraded	2	Honneth, 1992; Pope, 1999
Diminished self-concept	1	
Disgust	3	
Disappointment	7	Costley et al., 2004; Ward & Ostrom, 2006
Discriminated against	2	
Disregard	1	
Dissatisfied	1	
Embarrassment	6	
Frustration	9	
Hatred	2	
Hostile	1	
Hurt	5	
Impatient	1	
Inadequate	1	
Indignation	2	
Inferior	3	
Infuriated	1	
Insulted	1	
Irritation	2	
Lack of belonging	1	DeCremer & Mulder, 2007
Loss of confidence	1	Honneth, 1992
Loss of faith	1	
Negative	2	

<b>Key Words</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>References for Existing Elements</b>
Offended	1	
Overwhelmed	1	
Patronised	1	
Pissed off	3	
Powerless	1	
Put down	1	
Rage	1	
Sad	1	
Segregation	1	
Shocked	2	
Small	1	
Stressed	1	Ramarajan & Barsade, 2006
Surprised	2	
Uncomfortable	4	
Unfairly treated	1	
Unvalued	1	
Unwelcome	1	
Upset	4	
Victimised	1	
Violated	1	
Alienation	0	Costley et al., 2005
Betrayed	0	Miller, 2001
Cynicism	0	Ramarajan & Barsade, 2006; Shwalb & Shwalb, 2006
Defenceless	0	Honneth, 1992
Depressed	0	Miller, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006
Dishonour	0	Honneth, 1992
Humiliation	0	Honneth, 1992; Miller, 2001
Loss of dignity	0	Mastrofski et al., 2002
Loss of self-esteem	0	Miller, 2001
Vulnerable	0	Honneth, 1992

Table 5 below groups some of the frequently mentioned words into five broad categories describing general feelings portrayed by the responses.

**TABLE 5****Categorised Feelings Resulting from Disrespect**

<b>Emotion</b>	<b>Key Words</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Total</b>
Anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• angry</li> <li>• pissed off</li> <li>• hostile</li> <li>• infuriated</li> <li>• rage</li> </ul>	38 3 1 1 1	44
Annoyance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• annoyed</li> <li>• irritated</li> </ul>	22 2	24
Feelings of inferiority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inferior</li> <li>• degraded</li> <li>• belittled</li> <li>• defeated</li> <li>• diminished self- concept</li> <li>• inadequate</li> <li>• loss of confidence</li> <li>• patronised</li> <li>• put down</li> <li>• small</li> </ul>	3 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	13
Sadness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hurt</li> <li>• upset</li> <li>• sad</li> </ul>	5 4 1	10
Frustration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• frustrated</li> </ul>	9	9

- **Consequent Responses Resulting from Disrespect**

Another area in which the effects of disrespect can be observed is in the responses of the victim. The crucial distinction between the consequent feelings and consequent responses is that the response of the victim can often influence the organisation responsible for disrespectful behaviour. Twenty different responses were mentioned 91 times across the sample, as indicated in Table 6 below.

**TABLE 6****Responses Resulting from Disrespect**

<b>Consequent Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>References for Existing Elements</b>
Avoidance (of organisation)	13	Mastrofski et al, 2002; Reilly, 2002
Avoidance (of offender)	4	
Change in future behaviour	2	
Complaint	9	Honneth, 1992
Considered not purchasing	2	
Dealt with different salesperson	7	
Decreased commitment	1	Miller, 2001
Disregard	3	
Educated offender	4	Miller, 2001
Left store	8	
Loss of confidence (in organisation)	1	
Negative word-of-mouth	11	Honneth, 1992; Keaveney, 1995; Miller, 2001; Ward & Ostrom, 2006
No action taken	8	
Rude response towards offender	1	Shwalb & Shwalb, 2006
Sought compensation	1	
Switching	13	Berry, 1996; Costley et al., 2005; Keaveney, 1995
Visit organisation but don't purchase	3	
Decreased trust	0	Ramarajan & Barsade, 2006; Ward & Ostrom, 2006
Discontinuation of relationship	0	Duncan, 1997; Myers, 1997; Shwalb & Shwalb, 2006

Avoidance and switching behaviour were the most common responses to disrespectful treatment, closely followed by negative word-of-mouth. Each of these responses would be expected to have negative effects on the success of the organisation responsible for disrespect. Complaining behaviour also features prominently as a response to disrespect. It may be recalled that the arousal of anger is thought to determine a motivation for action (Honneth, 1992; Miller, 2001); thus, it is proposed that assertive responses like switching, negative word-of-mouth and complaining may be associated with feelings of anger caused by disrespect.

An emergent finding was that the choice to not take any specific action against the person or organisation responsible was a common response to

disrespect. It is difficult to anticipate potential reasons for such a response; however, some participants indicated that they did not consider their experiences serious enough to take formal action against the offender.

The choice to deal with a different salesperson was also a new finding. In such cases, victims chose to conduct business with a different salesperson within the organisation upon encountering disrespect. When comparing this type of response with some of those tabulated above, a few critical differences are observed. The choice to deal with a different salesperson can be characterised as a form of action specifically against the individual party responsible for disrespect. However, when considering behaviours such as the avoidance of the organisation, switching, complaining, negative word-of-mouth and leaving the store, it is clear that these are actions against the organisation as a whole. In some cases, an entire organisation may be held responsible for the actions of one person. Alternatively, the decision to deal with a different salesperson implies that the individual offender is held accountable for disrespectful behaviour; thus, the negative impact on the organisation is minimised because the victim continues to do business with them.

The findings of this analysis also contribute to existing knowledge by providing support for recent conceptualisations in the literature. An action cited as a potential response to disrespectful behaviour was the choice to educate the offender (Miller, 2001). This involves the victim making a point of speaking to the disrespectful party about the unacceptability of their actions and the potential repercussions. The psychology literature originally proposed that such behaviour may be a response to general forms of disrespect; this study provides empirical support for these theories and shows that such behaviour can also be expected in the marketplace. Similarly, Shwalb and Shwalb (2006) suggest that hostility

towards the offender may also result from disrespectful behaviour. In such cases, victims indicated that disrespect from another party caused them to respond in a rude manner, which was uncharacteristic of their normal behaviour. This type of responsive behaviour is consistent with a theory that researchers have referred to as the mutual disrespect; this is based on the idea that disrespect is contagious in that disrespectful behaviour can stimulate disrespectful responses (Mendleson, 1998; Reilly, 2002). The results show that one participant indicated responding in such a manner.

#### **4.2.2 Results of Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analyses were performed on the 64 usable critical incident reports and four depth interviews to identify the dominant themes. The purpose of this phase of analysis was to gain an in-depth understanding of the cognitive, emotional and behavioural elements that accompany disrespect in the marketplace. The intention was to develop an understanding of the most commonly reported causes of disrespect from the victims' perspectives and examine the effects that arise under different conditions. This relates directly to the overall research purpose, which entails identifying the causes and effects of disrespect in the marketplace. Participants reported incidents across many different types of organisations, which will be discussed where they are relevant to the themes. (*See Appendix 4 for an account of the organisational types represented*). The six themes uncovered are:

- Rude responses
- Perceptions of discrimination
- The presence of an audience
- A sales-focussed atmosphere

- Personal conversations
- Process-related problems

Five of the six themes represent perceived causes of disrespect; however, the remaining theme, the presence of an audience, represents a separate element that specifically relates to disrespect in the marketplace. It was classified as an external component, which is not the original cause of disrespect, but is an important factor because it can have significant effects on the impact of disrespect on the victim.

- **Rude Responses**

Rude responses were one of the most frequently reported determinants of disrespect in the marketplace. The situational context for this theme is centred on verbal interactions between a customer and an employee of an organisation, whereby the customer is either asking a question or expressing a concern about the organisation. Thus, this theme is based on the rude responses of customer service representatives in relation to customer queries or concerns. Disrespected parties reported rude responses on the basis of four main categories, which are reported as sub-themes. These are verbal and facial expressions, the act of ignoring, an unhelpful manner, and expressions of distrust. It is clear that the four sub-themes of responses are different from one another, but one of the main commonalities between them is that victims distinctly described the behaviour reported as being rude. Each sub-theme represents a perceived cause of disrespect. These causes will be reported individually; however, the subsequent effects are discussed collectively as similar patterns of thoughts, feelings and actions arise across all four sub-themes.

### Verbal and Facial Expressions:

One of the ways in which rude responses transpired was via the presence of verbal or facial expressions during an interaction. A crucial feature is that it was not specifically what was said during a particular encounter that caused people to feel disrespected, but rather the manner in which it was said. Perceptions of disrespect were derived from characteristics like the tone of voice of the other party, expressions of sarcasm, and the detection of negative facial expressions. The critical incident reports revealed many instances of such behaviour, some of which will be discussed below. The tone of voice used by sales personnel in responding to customers was found to be a potential cause of disrespect. One of the victims of this described an encounter at an electronics retailer, where a simple question regarding product placement was responded to in an unexpected negative tone.

*The sales rep in the electronic gaming department was rude and grumpy. I walked up to him asking where the flash drives were stored and the rep, without looking at me, answered gruffly "By the checkouts". I was making my way to the checkouts, rather shaken by the reply I got, when I saw a box containing 2 GB flash drives on special so I picked one up and made my way back to the rep as he was the only one around. I asked him whether it was fit for my purpose, he replied even more grossly "No". I asked him what he recommended, only to be met with an even ruder, "4 gig-a-bytes". [male, 41]*

This incident is exemplar of a situation where it was not what was said that influenced disrespect. The salesperson did in fact answer all of the customer's questions but the tone and manner in which he responded was considered

disrespectful. The participant refers to feeling “shaken” by the encounter; similarly, victims of related behaviours report feelings of shock and surprise following salespeople’s responses to seemingly simple questions. This suggests that they perceive this behaviour as uncalled for and unexpected, particularly in market contexts where customers recognise that part of a salesperson’s responsibilities are to answer their questions and address their concerns.

Expressions of sarcasm in response to customer queries were also found to influence disrespect. The following participant describes the behaviour of a video store employee regarding a question about product promotions.

*It was \$4 for new releases instead of the usual \$8. I asked to confirm this and was wondering how long it was on for. I asked “So are all the new releases \$4 now?” and he replied very sarcastically and degradingly, “Well, that’s what the sign says”, as if I was stupid. I’d read the signs but I was just double-checking. [female, 24]*

Additionally, the facial expressions of sales personnel during interactions with customers were cited as being disrespectful. The excerpts below represent the observations of victims who experienced such behaviour, as well as their interpretations of the encounter.

*By now, the cashier has a sarcastic smile on her face. The smile the cashier was giving me must have looked to others as if I was lying. [female, 60]*

*His disrespectful attitude was communicated non-verbally, in the form of rolling his eyes and a sort of sniffing or barely perceptible snorting. [male, 44]*

*The assistant rolled her eyes several times as if I was being a real nuisance to her. The reactions of the assistant – rolling her eyes and appearing to be rather exasperated with me – made me feel angry. [female, 43]*

It is clear from the reportings that perceptions of disrespect were not derived from the verbal communications that took place. Disrespect was specifically influenced by the verbal and facial expressions detected during the interaction. This finding complements the results of the key word analysis, which identify the negative expressions of the other party as a potential cause of disrespect. It extends these results by additionally revealing responses that may accompany such behaviour, which will be discussed in following sections. The findings also contribute to the existing literature by uncovering verbal and facial expressions as a potential cause of disrespect.

#### The Act of Ignoring:

The second sub-theme of rude responses is described as the act of ignoring. It is based on participants' perceptions that their questions or concerns are being ignored. Much of the literature addressing ignoring behaviour refers to acts such as a failure to acknowledge or listen to potential customers. The findings of both the key word and thematic analyses provide empirical evidence to support the literature. The thematic analysis also uncovered a further dimension of the act of ignoring. This dimension is characterised by situations where the

questions or concerns of the customer are ignored and the focus is diverted to suit the purposes of the salesperson or organisation. Two specific incidents exemplifying such behaviour are described below.

*At a kitchen appliance shop, a salesman brushed aside our questions about the microwave oven's ventilation (that we were asking based on the kitchen builder's concerns) with haughty attitude and the claim that "We've sold thousands of these and never had a problem", among other things. As we pressed our rather simple question, the salesman assumed the tone of a parent who is explaining to a child that there is no Santa Claus. Still unable to answer the simple question "Where does the microwave vent?" he went on to say "I've never heard of any problem with it", with the sort of head and shoulder movements that suggested "so the problem must be in your head".*  
[male, 44]

*I pointed out that we have an older [internet] exchange as we live in the country and as such we cannot get broadband, the salesperson insisted that we could. I asked how and they ignored the question and tried to get me to change phone companies for free internet broadband. I repeated my question and they put the phone down on me as I was taking up too much of their time. I was annoyed that they were trying to sell under false pretences.* [male, 44]

In examining these two reports and others describing similar behaviour, it becomes apparent that two separate processes are occurring. The first is not listening to the customer, which was demonstrated by ignoring their questions. The psychology literature makes reference to such behaviour, implying that not

listening to the voice and opinions of others signifies a failure to carry out the moral obligations that define recognition respect, which we as people are entitled to and owe to others (Buttney & Williams, 2000; Darwall, 1977; Miller, 2001). The second process occurs after the customers' initial query has been ignored and involves the disrespectful party diverting the focus of the interaction to suit their own purposes. In market environments, these purposes may entail achieving organisational goals like making sales, as both of the above participants imply. The discovery of this second process distinguishes such behaviour as being unique and different from the actions of ignoring that have been conceptualised to date, suggesting that some form of personal or organisational motivation may accompany it.

#### An Unhelpful Manner:

The third sub-theme is characterised by the unhelpful manner of customer service representatives. In such cases, victims specifically sought some form of assistance from an organisation, only to be met with salespeople's unwillingness to help. The two reports below describe this process in detail and offer some insight into the thoughts and feelings of the respective victims.

*I was calling companies to enquire about repairing my broken heat pump. Being an old brand of heat pump, the company I called was not willing to help. They couldn't get the right parts and would not really provide much assistance. I thought they were very rude; they did not offer to come out and have a look at the heat pump and did not offer any helpful suggestions. They were very abrupt, saying "Sorry can't help", and hung up. [female, 69]*

*I was there [at a local pharmacy] to look for a fragrance by a label called Juicy Couture. I asked one of the staff if they had the fragrance and she just blatantly said no. Usually I get asked if I need any help when going into a store but the staff here were very unhelpful and I waited ages for help, but then I finally gave up and approached them. The way she said no to me made me angry and she wasn't helpful at all after that either. She didn't even suggest to order it in or anything. [female, 20]*

The effects of sales personnel's unwillingness to help customers has been predominantly conceptualised in the marketing and services literature. An unhelpful manner within an organisation can lead to service failure and dissatisfaction, which may result in actions like negative word-of-mouth and switching (Lewis & McCann, 2004; Johnston, 2004). While the existing literature associates unhelpful behaviour with service failure and dissatisfaction, this study extends knowledge by uncovering the relationship between an unhelpful manner and disrespect. Another emergent finding is represented by the victims' expectations that organisations should be willing do anything in their power to help them. This can be interpreted from phrases like: *"they did not offer to come out and have a look at the heat pump and did not offer any helpful suggestions"*; *"usually I get asked if I need any help when going into a store ... she didn't even suggest to order it in"*. Such expressions are likely to stem from comparisons to the high standard of service that customers have come to expect in the marketplace. Customers appear to hold higher expectations in market environments and when these expectations are not completely met, it leads to the perception of disrespect. This study develops knowledge by suggesting that these higher expectations may be specific to a market context, meaning that such

expectations are not imposed on others in day-to-day life, but rather are exclusive to customer service contexts. A possible reason for this may be that it is recognised that part of an organisation's responsibilities to the customer is to provide them with the help they need. A failure to make efforts in doing so is considered disrespectful.

#### Expressions of Distrust:

The final sub-theme of rude responses is expressions of distrust. This sub-theme is characterised by situations where product-related requests are posed to sales personnel, only to be met with distinct expressions of distrust in what the customer is saying. A more comprehensive understanding of such situations can be gained from the reports of the two participants below.

*The incident occurred when I needed to top up a Telecom pre-paid phone which had been converted from Vodafone. I rang the Telecom network and gave the lady on the phone my cell phone number. She proceeded by telling me it was a Vodafone number so I explained that I had converted the number to Telecom. She didn't believe this could be done and said again, "No, it's a Vodafone number". This went on with me explaining the situation again and again but she could not accept the fact that I knew what I was talking about. She was very rude in the end, which infuriated me. [male, 22]*

*I came to the cashier to pay for the groceries that I wanted to buy. Pak N Save are celebrating their birthday at the moment and have a lot of promotions in store, through this I had taken some air fresheners. The cashier had no knowledge of this promotion and insisted that I was mistaken. I was*

*holding the coupon in my hand. I was showing it to her, I said “This says 50% off”, but she wouldn’t believe me. What also annoyed me was this girl was not prepared to listen that there was any promotion. [She] was very persistent that I was lying. “It’s not true, it’s not true”, she kept on saying. In other words, I felt that she was saying “You’re lying, you’re lying, you’re lying”. [female, 60]*

These two excerpts reveal a number of commonalities regarding such behaviour. Expressions of distrust were communicated through actions like not making efforts to listen to or believe customers, as well as informing customers that they were mistaken. Such behaviours were associated with perceptions of a lack of trust from the organisation. Victims also reported that salespeople did not make any efforts to rectify the situation. A depth interview conducted with the participant who reported the second incident featured above also revealed that the situation would not have escalated if it had been handled differently. This participant asserts, *“if she [sales assistant] had said ‘I do not know, but I’ll find out’, I would have had a lot of respect for her”*. Similarly, a victim reporting a comparable incident makes the statement: *“Perhaps if she had gotten off her high horse and not been so rude, it may have been resolved”* [female, 50]. These reportings suggest that the rude responses, despite causing disrespect, could have been resolved with a change of attitude from the offender.

The discussion of the four sub-themes of rude responses, verbal and facial expressions, the act of ignoring, an unhelpful manner and expressions of distrust, has revealed a number of emergent findings regarding potential causes of disrespect. One of the main distinctions uncovered was that some reported behaviours may be exclusive to market environments, which is of particular

significance considering that there is little existing knowledge about the occurrence of disrespect in the marketplace. It must be noted that the four sub-themes seem to overlap to some degree. This means that multiple elements from each individual sub-theme may be present in some critical incident reports. The analysis has also been useful in providing support for theories proposed in the literature, such as the association of ignoring others with disrespect. Additionally, it has revealed potential causes that have yet to be conceptualised, for instance, the detection of verbal and facial expressions. The following sections address this theme more holistically by discussing further trends that accompany such behaviour. These will be based on the consequences of rude responses to customer queries and concerns.

#### Effects of Rude Responses:

The effects of rude responses take form in the victims' consequent thoughts, feelings and actions. The dominant thought process that emerged was the expression of concern for the organisation as a whole. In this study, concern for the organisation is defined as the victim's assessment of the incident from an organisational perspective, which, in reference to disrespectful behaviour, is connoted by concern for the business practices and outcomes of the organisation. It was found that rude responses to customer queries can stimulate an expression of concern from the victim. In such cases, disrespect is often caused by the behaviour of an individual party, so it is noteworthy that concern is shown for the organisation as a whole. Some reported examples of expressions of concern are featured below.

*I was sceptical as to whether Telecom actually keep their staff up to date with changes. [male, 22]*

*My thoughts toward the organisation are that they wouldn't sell many appliances in America, where the customer is always right and the customer's concerns are paramount. [male, 44]*

*I thought that the management of Pak N Save should not hold anything they cannot handle. They should educate their employees before anything of this nature happens. They should hold courses with their cashiers and other employees on public relationships. [female, 60]*

*I would advise them to choose their employees better... [I feel] a bit of concern for Dick Smith Electronics, who would have a lot of lost customers if all their staff were like the one whom I stumbled upon. [male, 41]*

These statements are comparable in that each holds implications of the effects of disrespect on the overall success of an organisation, and often, there is the inference that the continuation of such behaviour will be detrimental to the organisation's success. Expressions of concern for the organisation may be driven by a sense of disbelief on the part of the victim; it seems that victims cannot believe that an organisation can continue to operate successfully while its employees so blatantly display disrespectful behaviour. Further research is called for in this area to investigate any additional conditions under which such responses arise and how often this phenomenon occurs. It would also be interesting to determine whether this dimension is specific to a market context. If

it can also result from disrespect in general, there would be a need to develop an understanding of any conditions for this. A distinguishing condition within the marketplace is that concern is directed towards the organisation as a whole rather than the individual party responsible for the behaviour.

The most common feelings that resulted from disrespect were those of worthlessness. Feelings of worthlessness were primarily based on the victim's perception that they were being put down by the disrespectful party. Victims who express this may feel a sense of disregard from either the organisation or the offender. Some of the various cognitions of victims are featured below.

*I felt as though I was being brushed off.* [female, 69]

*I felt small. My self concept and confidence went right low.* [female, 60]

*I felt disrespected, put down, patronised, regarded as inferior in all respects.*  
[female, 40]

*[I felt] that I did not matter.* [female, 20]

*[I] felt very belittled by the way she talked to me.* [female, 60]

It is clear from such comments that a sense of worthlessness can commonly result from rude responses. A possible reason for this could be that an unnecessarily rude response was unexpected and its cause was unknown to the victim. It becomes clear that the consequent thoughts and feelings are distinctly different from one another in that expressions of concern for the organisation are

indicative of an external focus in interpreting the disrespectful behaviour encountered; a sense of worthlessness, on the other hand, suggests that the victim focussed internally when interpreting their encounter. The behaviour that embodies this theme is relatable to a denial of fundamental forms of respect that the literature conceptualises as recognition respect. Although recognition respect has received a great deal of coverage in the existing literature, the denial of recognition respect has not yet been given as much attention. The results of this study therefore assist in developing an understanding of potential effects of the deprivation of basic forms of respect that all people are entitled to. Feelings of worthlessness can stem from a lack of recognition respect, leading to outcomes like decreased confidence and perceptions of inferiority. The findings obtained from the key word analysis also identify feelings of inferiority, which is closely associated to worthlessness, as a response to disrespect. The results of the thematic analysis are useful in extending this discovery by revealing a specific condition under which such responses arise.

Finally, the responsive actions of victims of rude responses will be discussed. A few dominant trends emerged in regards to this dimension. The various actions that were taken as a result of rude responses included: negative word-of-mouth communications, complaining behaviour, the choice to deal with a different salesperson and avoidance of the offender. However, it was surprising to find that one of the more prominent responses was the decision to not take any action against either the salesperson or the organisation. The majority of victims, including those who may have taken any of the forms of action referenced above, also continued to do business with the organisation in question after disrespect occurred. It was suggested in the discussion for the key word analyses that a possible reason for victims to decide against taking any action is that they do not

consider their experience to be critical enough to provoke action. This phase of analysis has uncovered some evidence to support this theory through interpretations made by the participants themselves in the critical incident reports, as exemplified by the following statement.

*I didn't think it was serious enough to make me want to take any action towards the organisation or the person. [male, 41]*

Another reason reported was that the victim perceived the incident to have been dealt with in an appropriate manner and any negative feelings towards the organisation were reduced. The following excerpts provide some insight into such reasoning.

*I did not take an action against the cashier or the company, only because the one supervisor was very nice and apologised for the cashier's behaviour. If the supervisor had not dealt with her properly, I might have complained and I might even have stopped going to that shop. [female, 60]*

*As soon as I spoke to the boss, the situation was solved. [male, 22]*

There is also evidence to suggest that decisions to not take any action against the disrespectful party or the organisation, may be influenced by trade-offs made by the victim. These trade-offs could be associated with factors like price, convenience and the availability of an alternative. The participants below refer to such factors and provide some insight into reasons behind their choices to not taken any action and continue doing business with the organisation in question.

*The organisation, Dick Smith Electronics, is one which I prefer when it comes to electronics so I have no thoughts or comments to make towards the organisation.* [male, 41]

*I continued [to do] business with them as they were a cheaper provider.*  
[female, 33]

*I thought this was a human error and it is convenient to me to shop there.*  
[female, 60]

The analysis of this theme, which embodies the occurrence and consequences of rude responses to customer queries, has been useful in developing an understanding of how such behaviour can cause disrespect. The analysis has revealed that distinct patterns in thoughts, feelings and actions accompany such forms of disrespect. The four sub-themes of rude responses were found to dominantly stimulate either concern for the business practises within the organisation or feelings of worthlessness. It was surprising to find that the most common form of responsive action was no action at all. This was the first study to find that the choice to not take any action against the offender is a potential response to disrespect in the marketplace. It would be fundamental to investigate whether general forms of disrespect in other contexts also result in victims not taking any action. And if so, what trade-offs or cognitions drive this choice of behaviour. The analysis of this theme has also uncovered a few new dimensions. These include the discovery of verbal and facial expressions as a potential cause of disrespect, the act of ignoring questions in order to divert the focus of a

conversation and expressions of concern as a response to disrespect. This analysis has also led to the development of the proposition that some dimensions discussed may be exclusive to market contexts; a theory that may be supported with the analyses that follow.

- **Perceptions of Discrimination**

Similarly to rude responses to customers, perceptions of discrimination were a common cause of disrespect in the marketplace. Over 25 percent of the total sample made reference to some form of discrimination. Discriminatory behaviour transpired from a number of different demographic elements; however, it was acted upon according to two distinct behaviours, a superior manner and unequal treatment. The discussion of this theme begins with an overview of the various forms of discrimination that emerged in this study. It follows by exploring the specific actions that caused disrespect, as well as the consequent thoughts, feelings and actions.

Participants reported many different forms of discrimination including discrimination according to age, ethnicity, social-economic factors, education and gender. Victims suggested that offenders often based discriminatory behaviour on some form of judgement of them. These judgements appear to be derived from aspects such as physical attributes or generalisations. Discriminatory behaviour based on the age of the victim was predominantly reported by youth in comparison to other age groups. This form of discrimination occurred when victims were younger than the targeted clientele of organisations in question. Ethnic and social-economic discrimination were commonly interpreted as being based on judgements of physical attributes or assumptions made by the disrespectful party. For example, in cases of social-economic discrimination,

victims reported judgements of their appearance, standard of dress or perceived wealth. Further forms of discrimination were based on the level of education and gender of victims. Gender discrimination was only cited by the females in this study. The four forms of discrimination discussed, age, ethnicity, social-economic factors and gender, have received considerable attention in the existing literature (Buttny & Williams, 2000; Egge, 1999; Mastrofski et al, 2002). In comparison, the perceived level of education as a source of discrimination has only been briefly discussed (Blanchard & Lurie, 2004). In this study, discrimination has been found to be more common according to the knowledge of the victim rather than specific education levels. To expand, this means that employees of an organisation may discriminate against customers based on their lack of knowledge or expertise in a particular market, which can lead to the perception of disrespect. Such occurrences will be discussed in the sections that follow. The distinction between the two terms, knowledge and education, is that knowledge is based on one's familiarity with a particular topic area, while education level is based on levels of qualification.

Two dominant forms of behaviour represented discrimination across all the reported incidents. Despite the demographic form that discrimination was based on, it was acted upon by the offender according to either of two distinct behaviours, a superior manner or unequal treatment of the victim. The superior manner of the sales personnel was commonly reported in association with discrimination. Such behaviour was often based on judgments of the perceived level of knowledge of the victim. In some cases, the superior manner exhibited by salespeople was also accompanied by negative verbal and facial expressions. The displays of superiority of salespeople, as well as the commonalities described, are

represented in the following excerpts. All three are based on experiences in either hardware or electrical specialist organisations.

*[The salesman] had an attitude straight off the bat. [He] was tall, in a suit, and looked down on me. Made me very conscious that I don't fit the blonde, botoxed, monied matron of Remuera mould. [He] rolled his eyes at my question and looked bored as he patronisingly told me that it would be fine, "as it's standard". [I was] treated as an idiot with insufficient money or social status to be worth the salesman's time. [female, 40]*

*When purchasing timber or hardware, it is not uncommon for store people to try and act in an all superior fashion when they realise that you are not totally versed in all of the terminology of the building trade. The incident was simply a matter of correcting my terminology for specific products. This when they were fully aware of the product to which I was referring. [male, 68]*

*In my exploration for the construction of a compost bin, I was doing some scoping of potential building materials. In making my enquiries, I felt that the men working in these places treated me as if I had no idea of what I was talking about and that I was kidding myself if I thought I could construct a compost bin. Yes, I may not have always used the 'correct' terminology, but that does not mean that I did not know. I was left with the impression that, as a woman, I was ill-equipped to take on to take on such a project. They treated me as if I was a joke. I thought the men involved were arrogant chauvinists who had not yet realised that gender roles have moved and women are more than capable of 'men's work'. [female, 36]*

These accounts show that some form of negative judgement of the victim drives the superior manner of sales personnel. The first participant was judged according to social-economic factors, whereby the salesman based his opinion of her on physical features and standards of dress, leaving her to feel as though she was beneath him. The second participant encountered the superiority of salespeople upon their realisation that he did not possess a complete knowledge of their area of business, while the third participant experienced similar behaviour in conjunction with gender discrimination. Regarding actions of superiority, the existing literature has only gone as far as proposing the relationship between some specific actions that connote superiority and disrespect. These actions include arrogance, and patronising and condescending behaviour (Buttny & Williams, 2000; Mendleson, 1998; Myers, 1997). This study has added to the literature with the finding that superior behaviour on the part of the offender can stem from discriminatory judgements of the victim, which ultimately leads to the perception of disrespect. Thus, the association between discrimination, superior behaviour and disrespect emerges.

A second form of behaviour that appears to stem from discrimination is unequal treatment. A combination of actions on the part of the disrespectful party represents unequal treatment in market environments. These actions include ignoring the victim and choosing to serve other customers first, with the knowledge that the victim has been waiting longer. The following participants describe such behaviour.

*The sales assistant at the perfume counter continued to ignore my sister and I as we waited to test the perfumes available. Although she was busy, as there*

*were a lot of customers, she tended to new arrivers even though we had been waiting for a long time. Finally [she] served us, however [she] spoke to us in a disrespectful and degrading way by asking if we actually wished to purchase anything or [if we] just wanted to test all the perfumes. I felt that the sales assistant was degrading and made me feel like I was just there wasting her time as I was young. [female, 20]*

*I was there to buy a leather satchel for my daughter for her graduation. The saleswoman did not give us the time of day when we entered the shop. She would not acknowledge us or serve us; she just ignored us the whole time we were in the store. We were dressed casually so I thought we were treated this way because of the way we looked. Another woman who entered the store, who was more dressed up, was immediately served by the same saleswoman. It made me think that we were not worth the saleswoman's time. [female, 66]*

*We waited at the counter as the middle-aged salesperson finished wrapping a gift for the customer in front of us. While we were waiting, another customer, also middle-aged, came and stood beside us, waiting to be served as well. When the salesperson finished wrapping the gift, she glanced at us, then quickly turned away and began serving the other customer, even though she was well aware that we were waiting for longer. I think that she disregarded us because we were probably younger than their usual client base, however I feel that this is unfair because we were paying customers as well and deserve the same treatment as everyone else. The experience made me feel as though I did not belong in such a shop due to my age, I felt that I wasn't welcome and I still rarely shop there. [female, 21]*

The first and third participants interpreted the behaviour encountered as being caused by discrimination according to their age; both considered that they were treated in this manner because they were younger than the targeted customers of the respective organisations. The second participant was a victim of social-economic discrimination, and got the impression that she was discriminated against due to her standard of dress on that particular occasion. A depth interview conducted with this participant revealed that the incident occurred on a weekend, so she was dressed much more casually than normal. It also became clear that although she was shopping in an exclusive store, she had not expected to be judged based only on what she was wearing. An additional reporting is included in this discussion; it is of particular interest because the form of discrimination described has not yet been considered in the literature. This incident took place when the victim was holidaying in a remote part of the country and features many commonalities present in the above excerpts. The main distinction is that the discriminatory behaviour encountered was not based on judgements of physical attributes, but rather on whether or not the victim was known to the salesperson. The participant describes the incident below.

*I was in the queue waiting to be served (or so I thought). It quickly became clear that others in the shop – presumably ‘locals’ or ‘regulars’ – were to be given preferential treatment, presumably on the grounds that they were ‘known’ to the person serving, whereas I was not. They were served before me and I was, presumably, expected to simply wait and accept this behaviour. Two people who came in after me were served before me. [male, 47]*

This form of discrimination was based on unequal treatment, driven by whether or not the salesperson knew the customer. The victim interpreted the behaviour as being due to the fact that he was not local to the area. Using this incident as the basis for the development of theory, it can be proposed that such occurrences may be more frequent in rural areas as opposed to in cities, since businesses in smaller communities are more likely to have regular clientele. Further investigation is required in this area to gain an understanding of the conditions under which such behaviour arises and the various processes that follow.

A number of commonalities emerged across the reportings of unequal treatment. Disrespectful salespeople were found to display a blatant disregard for the victim, which appears to be based on some form of discriminatory judgement. All incidents reported featured either of two specific actions, ignoring the customer or choosing to serve other customers as a priority. A few researchers have conceptualised the association between unequal treatment and disrespect (Boeckmann & Tyler, 2002; Buttny & Williams, 2000; Keaveney, 1995). This study extends theory by providing empirical evidence to support this association. The key word analysis also lent support for these findings, as the perception of inequality was a commonly identified cause of disrespect and was also related to discrimination. Accordingly, it can be proposed that the causal relationship between unequal treatment and disrespect may be driven by discrimination.

Perceptions of discrimination were based on the two main forms of behaviour described above, but they were also accompanied by trends characterising the responsive thoughts, feelings and actions of the victims. One of the dominant thought processes that emerged was that victims interpreted the behaviour they encountered as being due to the ignorance of the offender. The

notion of ignorance has received brief mention in the literature, along with insensitivity, as being a driver of organisational disrespect; however, this study finds that victims also believe it to be a determinant of discrimination (Mendleson, 1998). A portrayal of this is expressed in the following excerpts.

*I thought the cashier was disrespectful to me because of her ignorance. I felt that she had no knowledge of how to deal with the public and elderly people like me. [female, 60]*

*I took the goods, which I had intended to purchase, and dumped them on the counter. I explained that I had intended to purchase these goods but, due to the ignorance of the person in front of me, he could stick them in a place where the sun don't shine! [male, 47]*

*I thought that the whole situation was a bit unfair and the salesperson was ignorant in not realising that all customers should be treated equally. [female, 21]*

A few distinct patterns emerged in regards to feelings resulting from discrimination. Anger was by far the most frequently reported feeling across all the critical incidences, as indicated by the results of the key word analysis. The thematic analyses add further dimension to these results by revealing that discrimination is a potential determinant of disrespect, which then results in anger. The thematic analyses prove to be very useful in uncovering the situational contexts and conditions under which the various responses to disrespect arise. Feelings of worthlessness and inferiority were also aroused, as was the case with

the previous theme. This phase of analysis allows for an increased understanding of this dimension; it can now be proposed that feelings of inferiority may arise specifically in association with rude responses and discriminatory behaviour. Feelings of worthlessness and inferiority were communicated with victims' sentiments that they either were wasting the salesperson's time or were not worth the salespersons time, as well as feeling unwelcome within the organisations in question. Such feelings are exemplified by some of the statements featured in the above reportings of unequal treatment. A number of additional victims of such behaviour also noted similar feelings, a few of which are included below.

*The body language and attitude made me feel inferior.* [female, 45]

*[I felt] inadequate. I questioned my own understanding.* [female, 36]

A number of trends, as well as a few new findings, emerged from the analysis of the consequent actions resulting from discriminatory behaviour. The most common responsive actions were negative word-of-mouth communications, complaining behaviour and the choice to deal with another salesperson. These behaviours were found in the key word analysis to be among the most dominant responses to disrespect in the marketplace. It is interesting to note that avoidance and switching were not very prominent in response to discrimination, as these two behaviours exhibited the largest frequencies in the key word analysis. Consistent with this is the discovery that the majority of victims of discrimination continue to do business with the organisation in question following a disrespectful encounter. A likely explanation for these findings is that victims of discrimination may attribute blame to the individual party responsible, rather than the organisation as

a whole. This proposition is consistent with the finding that discrimination dominantly results in negative word-of-mouth, complaining, and choosing to deal with another salesperson. Although these actions have some impact on the organisation, they are generally directed towards the disrespectful party in particular. The impact of such behaviour on the organisation is less detrimental than avoidance and switching because the organisation retains their patronage. The proposition can be further supported by comparing the favourability of thoughts towards the offender and the organisation at the time of the incident. The favourability of thoughts towards the offender has a measure of 1.46 while the thoughts towards the organisation has a measure of 2.69, on a scale that is anchored with the numbers 1 and 6, representing the terms highly unfavourable and highly favourable respectively. This result illustrates that the favourability of the victim's thoughts towards the offender were lower than those towards the organisation as a whole, which suggests that the individual party responsible is held accountable. It is thought that victims of disrespect act very rationally in responding to the behaviour encountered. The emergent findings show that an entire organisation often will not be held responsible for the behaviour of one person, which indicates that victims tend to rationalise their responses. One of the depth interview participants sums up this proposition very well with the statement *"it only takes one person, through having a bad day or inexperience, and the public gets a bad impression"*. He continues to express that, despite encountering disrespectful behaviour, he evaluated a number of trade-offs including the good service he usually receives and convenience factors, and consequently decided to continue doing business with the organisation in question.

An emergent behaviour, which may be a potentially common response to discrimination, is referred to in this study as a conscious change to future

behavioural patterns. Only a few participants reported this behaviour, but it is included in the discussion because it is of particular interest. A conscious change to future behavioural patterns is based on the victim's evaluation of their experience. This results in a conscious decision to alter their future behaviour in the hope that it reduces the likelihood of encountering the behaviour that originally caused disrespect. This phenomenon can be illustrated by the experiences and reactions of the following two participants. Both of their experiences have been featured in the above discussions; the first encountered expressions of distrust as a response to her query about promotional products, which she perceived to be due to discrimination based on age, and the second experienced gender discrimination and the superiority of salesmen in her search for building materials for a compost bin.

*I have never bought any promotions things again. Just lately, they had some more promotions of this kind, and I did not buy any. And now, for Christmas, they are going to have more promotions, but I will not buy. [female, 60]*

*I have chosen to explore options online, which allows me control, and then I will just go in and tell them what I want. And where this doesn't work, [I will] go to places, but when asked if I want help, [I'll] decline politely, do the decision making on my own and then tell them what I want. [female, 36]*

These two excerpts show that the victims have decided to take control by changing their own behaviour. The motivation for this appears to be the desire to avoid situations that originally caused perceptions of disrespect. It would be necessary to determine whether such responsive behaviour is specific to incidents

involving discrimination or whether it can result from disrespect in various different contexts. The existing literature does not specifically conceptualise conscious changes in behavioural patterns as a response to disrespect; however, the psychology literature does propose that disrespect may influence internalised effects on the victim, which could lead to changes in their general disposition (DeCremer & Tyler, 2005; Honneth, 1992; Miller, 2001). These changes include decreased self-esteem, decreased confidence and a diminished sense of identity. The crucial distinction between such changes and changes in behavioural patterns is that the internalised effects mentioned in the literature are subconscious, and the victim may be unaware of them. Comparatively, the changes in behaviour exemplified above are clearly conscious and deliberate alterations made by the victim. It is possible that these behavioural changes will stem from internalised effects of disrespect, but the findings of this phase show that they are acted upon in a conscious and purposeful manner.

An additional element that emerged from the analysis of this theme, which lends support to theories proposed in the literature, is based on the contagious nature of disrespect. This dimension has been discussed briefly as part of the key word analysis, whereby reportings of hostility towards the offender represented disrespectful behaviour acting as a stimulant for disrespectful responses. In such cases, negative judgements of the offender embody disrespectful responses. It was interesting to find that the discriminatory behaviour of the offender triggers discrimination on the part of the victim. The following excerpts are indicative of the contagious nature of disrespect.

*[I'm] still angry about it. And bemused as to how a middle-aged guy who sells ovens derives his inflated opinion of his place in the world. [female, 40]*

*[He] must live a very ineffectual life if he must pretend social and/or intellectual superiority over his potential customers in order to mask his lack of knowledge about the items he sells. I also think that he is the product of Post-Colonial syndrome, wherein he is attempting to assume the role of arbitrary authority who holds power over the customers because he controls the supply of kitchen items. [I claim] Californian superiority over the 'rural expertise' of a dressed-up agricultural bumpkin. [male, 44]*

These excerpts illustrate that both victims make negative judgements about the offender. It is clear that, in both cases, the judgements are based on demographic characteristics or blatant generalisations. These findings complement the theory by providing empirical evidence of the contagious nature of disrespect. Further research is required in this area to determine how often such behaviour arises as a response to disrespect, as well as to investigate aspects of causality.

The analysis of this theme has revealed many specific trends that accompany perceptions of discrimination. Five of the different forms of discrimination featured in the literature were reported in this study; an emergent form of discrimination, which is based on whether or not the customer is known to the salesperson, was also uncovered. The findings lend support to the existing literature, which has cited discrimination as a cause of disrespect and conceptualised the contagious nature of disrespect. The thematic analysis adds further depth to the results of the key word analysis by revealing specific actions that drive perceptions of discrimination. These actions took one of two forms, the superior manner of salespeople and unequal treatment of customers. Additionally,

many commonalities were found in the responsive thoughts, feelings and actions of victims. This included a number of new findings, including conscious changes to future behavioural patterns as a response to disrespect, which are representative of potential areas for future research. There is one additional dimension of discrimination that has not yet been discussed. This dimension is of particular significance to the construct of disrespect and its discovery provides empirical evidence to support conceptual theories proposed in the literature. Accordingly, it is important to discuss this dimension as a separate theme; it is based on the effects of the presence of an audience.

- **The Presence of an Audience**

The presence of an audience is an external component and is not the original cause of perceptions of disrespect, but it does exert a considerable influence on its effects. It must be distinguished that the other themes of this study are centred on causes of disrespect, but the presence of an audience represents an external component that influences the impact. It can be proposed that the presence of an audience may heighten the impact of disrespectful behaviour on the victim. This component reveals a number of commonalities regarding thought processes, feelings and consequent actions. These are of particular interest because they are vastly different from the dominant responses reported for discrimination alone. This suggests that the presence of an audience may have distinct effects on perceptions of discrimination and disrespect. All reported incidents that make reference to the presence of an audience were caused by some form of discriminatory behaviour by sales personnel. The forms of discrimination reported were based on either age or ethnicity, or a combination of the two. Over 20 percent of the total number of participants reporting

discrimination also mentioned the effects of the presence of an audience. Some of these incidents, featuring references to both discrimination and the presence of an audience, are reported below. The first two incidents exemplify unfair or unequal treatment, which is attributed to discrimination in both cases.

*The situation arose in a jewellery shop, where my husband and I went to buy a present for our wedding anniversary. The sales girl was extremely rude and verbally abusive. We chose a ring that needed to be sized. We asked her how many days it would take for the sizing. I do not know if she could not understand me or was pretending to not understand us. She took my finger size and said a month. We explained to her that we wanted it earlier. She got annoyed (maybe a bad day for her) and passed a few racist comments, which was offending, especially when a few other customers were around. Another salesperson, a senior, intervened and asked how she could help us. The senior then told me I could get the ring in a week and a half. Analysing the sales girl's behaviour over a small issue, I think she was having a bad day [and] she probably did not like serving 'blacks'. It was an embarrassing situation, especially being treated so unfairly in the presence of others. [female, 48]*

*[The incident occurred] in a restaurant where I had gone to have dinner with my family and friends. Though we had ordered dinner before two other couples, who were of a different background, our meals came after. After questioning the waitress, we were rudely told off and asked to wait if we wanted to eat. The waitress was of another background than us. I felt bad because it was a public place and others seemed quite interested in our argument. We felt embarrassed and angry as well. [female, 26]*

The following two incidents signify expressions of distrust towards the customer, which were also attributed to discrimination. One of these incidents has been featured in the analysis of the above themes; it is based on a participant's attempts to use promotional coupons in a supermarket, only to be told that there was no such promotion.

*The cashier had no knowledge of this promotion and insisted that I was mistaken. I had the promotional pamphlet, which said 50% off, but she would not believe me. There were a lot of people behind me waiting to cash their groceries. I thought she was doubting my honesty and the others standing in that crowd were also doubting me because she was doubting me. By now, I was too embarrassed and decided not to buy the product. Then another supervisor came up, he knew about it, apologised to me and told the cashier about it. I was angry, feeling embarrassed as there were other people watching. The smile the cashier was giving me must have looked to the other as if I was lying. [female, 60]*

*I went to ANZ to withdraw my money from the bank. [I had] just got my passport renewed and I had told them before. Because my new passport's serial numbers are different from the previous one, the banker was thinking that I was going to steal money from other people's accounts. I tried to explain to her but she asked "Why would you withdraw a lot of money?" I think I was withdrawing \$15000 in cash; I said "I am going to pay my school fees" and she said "It's too much, man". She was talking with a kind of rudeness and she did not believe that I have that much money in my bank*

*account. She called the manager [and] the manager was also thinking that I was going to steal money. The manager said “The passport’s serial numbers are different”. I tried to explain that different countries have different systems of passport renewal, because in my country when we renew our passports, usually we would have different serial numbers. There were a lot of people waiting in the line. They were hearing all the stuff and they kept on looking at me. That made me feel that I did something wrong. I felt very embarrassed because I am not stealing money [so] why would people give me a strange look. They gave me an eye of ‘what is this guy doing? Is he trying to steal money from people?’ Later on, they found my new passport’s serial numbers on the computer. They did not even say sorry to me. I was thinking “because I am an Asian?” I am quite small-sized for my age, I do not look like I am 23 years old; I think they thought I was a kid or something. I felt like I should not have been there. I was just trying to get my money; I am not supposed to be an object for people to give a strange look. [male, 23]*

It is clear from the four incidents that the presence of an audience exerts a considerable influence on the effects of disrespectful behaviour. It seems to heighten the impact of disrespect. Additionally, it appears to be the element that is predominantly focussed on by each victim in interpreting his or her experience. This suggests that the potential effects of disrespect may be reduced with the elimination of other people observing the encounter. This proposition was discussed in a depth interview, conducted with the participant above who was accused of being mistaken regarding a store promotion, and it was found that she anticipated that some of the effects would be reduced. She states that *“[I may] not be as embarrassed as I was, but I would have still felt that she was trying to*

*get me down*". She also expresses that the negative effects on her self-confidence may have been reduced if the situation did not involve a group of on-lookers. The analysis of this interview also revealed that this participant was discriminated against by someone of her own ethnicity. There is extensive theory and evidence regarding racial discrimination between ethnic groups, yet there is little research into racial discrimination within ethnic groups (Blanchard & Lurie, 2004; Egge, 1999; Mastrofski et al, 2002; Myers, 1997). Such behaviour is highly unexpected, but the analysis of this incident showed that it can be a potential source of disrespect. The participant interpreted the encounter as being due to the stereotypes that are present in her home country, whereby older people are not as well educated as young people; she felt unfairly judged according to these stereotypes. She perceives that she was discriminated against according to both her age and her ethnicity by the salesperson, who was a young girl of the same ethnicity as her. The victim's interpretation of the behaviour is featured below.

*I am an oldish person, so she may have thought that I do not know English or I may have misunderstood this lady. And this girl was from Fiji, where I am from, and back in Fiji there are people of my age who are not literate. She may have thought that I was not literate and I may have misunderstood the lady who was doing the promotions. I would understand because back in Fiji there are people like that, they think all old people are ignorant. [female, 60]*

A number of commonalities were found in the responses of victims who encountered disrespect in conjunction with the presence of an audience. These commonalities emerged in relation to the responsive thoughts, feelings and actions of the victims. Regarding the consequent thoughts, one of the most

common cognitions involved the expression of empathy towards the disrespectful party. In this study, expressions of empathy are characterised by statements showing understanding or sympathy towards the offender. These findings were particularly surprising and unexpected because there is nothing in the literature to suggest that victims of disrespect may consider the perspective of the offender in their interpretation of the encounter. Some of the participants' expressions of empathy can be detected in the incidents above. For instance, the first participant, who experienced disrespect in a jewellery store, stated several times that she perceived the sales assistant to be having a bad day, which may have accounted for her behaviour. Similarly, the participant who encountered expressions of distrust from a cashier in a supermarket expresses that "*even their machine did not know it was a promotion, so the cashier was not totally to blame*". Both of these cognitions indicate that the victim showed a certain degree of understanding towards the offender by considering alternative reasons for their behaviour. A further example of empathy is expressed by the participant who sensed unfair and unequal treatment in a restaurant. She states, "*I did not lodge any complaint regarding the waitress because she would have lost her job*". Such thoughts indicate sympathy towards the offender in reference to consequences that may arise as a result of their behaviour. Further research is required in this area to gain greater understanding of the cognitive processes that lead to such thoughts, as well as the specific conditions under which they arise.

The most common emotion reported was embarrassment. All of the participants who encountered disrespect in the presence of an audience made reference to feelings of embarrassment, as can be observed in each of the descriptions above. Feelings of anger were also quite prominent, but there was a greater frequency of references to embarrassment. Anger was found to be the

most commonly reported response to disrespect in the key word analysis, while embarrassment had much lower frequencies. Therefore, it is surprising that, in such situational contexts, feelings of embarrassment dominate. A possible reason for this is that humiliation often accompanies public statements of disrespect; so accordingly, it is highly likely that feelings of embarrassment may be aroused as a direct result of the presence of an audience. This proposition is derived from theoretical writings in the psychology literature, which suggest that public knowledge of an offence will compound the victim's feelings of disrespect with public humiliation (Miller, 2001). The theory in this area also asserts that disrespectful behaviour in the presence of others will produce more anger in the victim. The findings of this phase reveal that this is true; however, feelings of embarrassment are much more prominent, and this is primarily attributed to the presence of an audience.

In regards to consequent actions, the conceptual literature proposes that the intensity of the anger produced by the behaviour, coupled with the nature of the audience, will affect the likelihood and intensity of retaliation (Miller, 2001). The findings show that, despite the arousal of anger in the majority of cases, none of the victims chose to take any formal action against either the disrespectful party or the organisation. The dominant response of victims in the presence of an audience was to take the moral high ground by choosing to educate the offender. The choice to educate the offender is based on victim's decisions to inform the disrespectful party about the unacceptability of their actions. One of the participants chose to do this with the use of expressions and gestures rather than a conversation, in the hopes of getting her message across.

*I did stop and say 'Thank you' to her at the end before leaving the place. She may have got the message though. [female, 26]*

Another participant explains her consequent actions following a disrespectful encounter, expressing that she resisted the urge to react in a disrespectful manner and ultimately decided to educate the offender on how they should behave.

*I felt like throwing the item and walking away, but I decided not to be so unprofessional. I tried to stay calm, listen carefully and then I replied to the salesperson. I told her she needed to build her customer service qualities so that she knew how to treat people equally and fairly. [female, 48]*

The psychology literature also conceptualises the choice to educate the offender as a potential response to disrespectful behaviour (Miller, 2001). This may be driven by the victim's desire to restore their self-esteem after experiencing disrespect. A number of questions have been raised by the findings of this phase. For instance, it would be valuable to determine how often such behaviour arises in the marketplace, as well as what drives the decision to educate the offender. Miller (2001) proposes that the motivation is to restore self-esteem, but in-depth research is called for to gain greater insight about the driving forces.

The analysis of this theme has been useful in developing the understanding of the ways an external component, which is not the initial cause of disrespect, can influence potential responses. It was found that each incident referring to the presence of an audience also featured some form of discriminatory behaviour, which ultimately led to feelings of disrespect. However, although this was the

trend in this study, it cannot be assumed that discrimination and the presence of an audience are directly related. Further research is required to determine whether the presence of an audience has similar effects in different situational contexts. One of the emergent findings was that victims may express empathy towards the offender. Additionally, it was found that the dominant emotional response to disrespect in the presence of an audience was embarrassment, which is attributed to public knowledge of the encounter. Regarding behavioural responses, the most common was the choice to educate the offender; this lends support to the theories proposed in the relevant literature. The analysis of this theme has also uncovered a number of important areas for future research.

- **A Sales-focussed Atmosphere**

This theme is based on the identification of a sales-focussed atmosphere as a potential cause of disrespect. Participants reported that a dominant focus on sales or revenues within an organisation was considered disrespectful, whether this was represented by the behaviour of an individual salesperson, or the organisation as a whole. All of the reported incidents occurred in retail organisations. This suggests that such behaviour may be prominent in retail; however, at this stage, it cannot be assumed that it is exclusive to this organisational type. Over 30 percent of the total number of incidents relating to retail stores cited a sales-focussed atmosphere as the primary cause of disrespect. A sales-focussed atmosphere was represented by two different classifications of behaviours. The first is a lack of professionalism in processing sales, and the second is based on a lack of respect for customer privacy.

The first classification of behaviour representing a sales-focussed atmosphere is a lack of professionalism in processing sales. Victims reported

incidents where the behaviour of sales personnel caused them to feel as though the primary concern of the organisation was the sale rather than the customer. Such perceptions were the result of what a few participants referred to as the “unprofessional” manner of the sales staff in processing their intended purchases. Descriptions of a few participants’ experiences are featured below.

*I found a pair of shoes that I liked but told the girl who was serving me that I would think about it and would return later if I decided to buy them. When I returned I could not see the girl who had served me, so I took the shoes to the counter to pay for them. As the salesperson who was at the counter began to put the sale through, the girl who had served me appeared from the store room. She told the other salesperson that she had served me so the sale should have been hers. They began to argue in front of me as I waited to pay for the shoes. This continued for a few minutes before the manager came to the counter, causing them to stop. I thought the two salespeople were very unprofessional; they made me feel as though I had done something wrong. It felt like they only cared about the sale and not about the way they were behaving. [female, 23]*

*I was in Australia and needed some retail therapy. [I] tried some clothes on and went to the counter to pay for it. I had my husband’s credit card and all I had to do was enter the pin but in Australia, for some odd reason, you have to sign. So I told them “I can’t sign because it’s my husband’s”, and the girl over the counter said with an attitude that she didn’t care because they just wanted my money. I felt disrespected; they only wanted my money and didn’t care about service. The retailer was huffing and puffing as if I was wasting*

*her time. So I said, because of her service, I don't want to spend my money at their shop and [would] rather spend my money else where, where I am appreciated/respected. [female, 26]*

These incidents show that a lack of professionalism at the point of sale can lead to perceptions of disrespect. The second participant above reports that she was so insulted by the behaviour of the sales assistant that she decided to leave the clothes she had intended to purchase and exited the store: *"I really loved the clothes, but I didn't buy it"*. The participants anticipated that a possible reason for such behaviour was that the primary focus within the organisations was the sale. They also expressed perceptions of a lack of care by sales personnel for the behaviour exhibited and the level of service offered. Victims' interpretations of their encounters indicated that they sensed an uncaring manner in the sales staff. Such cognitions were embodied by statements like: *"They made me feel as though I had done something wrong"* and *"[it felt like] I was wasting her time"*. This is consistent with the perception that the main concern of salespeople was for the sale itself; this appears to have detrimental effects on the level of care for the customer.

Certain elements of this theme have received attention in the existing literature. For instance, researchers investigating services marketing and emotions streams have proposed that customer care is of vital importance in interactions and relationships between service providers and customers (Keaveney, 1995). The findings of this study add further dimension to such theories by illustrating the relationship between a perceived lack of care for the customer and a dominant focus on sales and revenues. These findings are also consistent with the results of the key word analysis, whereby uncaring behaviour

is cited as a dominant cause of disrespect. The thematic analysis extends these findings by revealing a situational context in which such feelings are prominent. It also extends existing theories as it relates unprofessional behaviour with the perception of a sales-focussed atmosphere and finds this to be a potential cause of disrespect.

The second classification of behaviour consistent with a sales-focussed atmosphere is defined as a lack of respect for customer privacy. This was characterised in this study by behaviours such as approaching customers multiple times and following them around the store, as well as opening dressing room doors while customers are changing. All of the victims of such behaviour anticipate that it was driven by the desire to gain sales. Specific examples of such incidents are included below.

*Within seconds of walking in the door, a sales assistant asked if I needed help finding anything; I replied that I was just having a quick look. About a minute later, a different sales assistant greeted me and began showing me the promo items, and soon after, another salesperson tried to persuade me to look at something else. All up, four different salespeople approached me in the space of about five minutes. It made me feel as though I couldn't browse at anything on my own, I felt like just leaving the store. The whole experience was just a bit overwhelming. [female, 23]*

*[I was in] Max to buy a new summer wardrobe. The shop assistant didn't leave me alone, she was constantly hounding me. [She] opened my dressing room door [and was] too sales-driven. I felt like I had been violated when I left the shop. [female, 21]*

*Me and my brother-in-law were happy to look around. The sales lady was around but not interfering. However, suddenly the male manager started pestering the lady to show us around and follow us. We told him we were ok just looking but he repeatedly asked her to follow us and show us around. He was desperate to get some sales done. We did not feel like staying in the shop any longer. We walked out. [male, 30-40]*

These excerpts show that victims of such behaviour desire for their sense of space to be respected. Accordingly, they allude to perceiving the encounter as an intrusion of privacy. This is exemplified by statements like: *“I felt like I had been violated when I left the shop”*, *“I felt that it was an invasion of my privacy”*, and *“The salesperson should have been more sensitive to people’s need for privacy while changing”*. Many participants who encountered this form of behaviour also expressed the urge to exit the situation, which the majority of them did.

The construct of privacy has received some attention in the marketing literature in relation to respect. Murphy (1999) asserts that “respect is often associated with not interfering with another” (p. 115). References to privacy in marketing are dominantly associated with market research; more specifically, the need to respect the privacy of customers regarding the use of personal information in distributing and conducting surveys. The findings of this study reveal that respect for privacy is also required in marketplace environments, indicating that a lack of respect for customers’ personal space and privacy can influence disrespect. It also becomes clear that a lack of respect for customer privacy can be associated with the perception of a sales-focussed atmosphere.

Distinct patterns emerged regarding the responsive feelings and actions of victims of the above behavioural classifications. The dominant feelings aroused were annoyance and discomfort. These feelings are consistent with behaviour characterising a sales-focussed atmosphere, as can be deduced from the excerpts above. It can be proposed that actions like opening dressing room doors will cause discomfort, while following customers and approaching them multiple times will lead to feelings of annoyance. The results of the key word analysis show that annoyance is one of the most common emotive responses to disrespectful behaviour; however, feelings of discomfort have much lower frequencies in the tabulated results. In this study, feelings of discomfort are specific to incidents that report perceptions of a sales-focussed atmosphere. The findings suggest that the relationship between discomfort and privacy issues in the marketplace may be a potential area for future research.

Consequent actions that resulted from of a lack of professionalism in processing sales and a lack of respect for privacy were negative word-of-mouth and the decision to leave the store. Many participants indicated that the behaviour exhibited by sales personnel forced them to leave the respective organisations; a number of victims also indicated that they were intending to purchase items, but the behaviour encountered deterred them from doing so. Such forms of disrespect are detrimental to the success of organisations because it causes victims to not only discard items they wished to buy and leave the organisation, but also respond with negative word-of-mouth communications. It is widely recognised that word-of-mouth is a highly powerful form of advertising, meaning that negative word-of-mouth may be equally as powerful in dissuading potential customers. It is unclear from the critical incident reports whether victims of such behaviour continue to do business with the organisations in question after the reported

encounters, so this would be an area to investigate further. These findings provide further depth to the results of the key word analysis, which indicated that both negative word-of-mouth communications and the choice to leave the store are dominant responses to disrespect. The driving forces behind the decision to leave the organisation responsible for disrespect were unclear in the discussion of the key word analysis. The findings of the thematic analysis support the proposal that leaving the store may be driven by feelings of annoyance and discomfort, which result from perceptions of a sales-focussed atmosphere.

This theme has contributed a number of emergent dimensions to the respect and disrespect literature. The existing literature provides the foundation for this theme by relating respect and privacy in the context of moral and ethical values to be applied in conducting market research. This study extends these writings by proposing that respect for customer privacy is also a necessity in the marketplace. The analysis has revealed that a lack of respect for privacy, as well as a lack of professionalism in processing sales, is associated with the perception of a sales-focussed atmosphere within an organisation. The findings are useful in providing further depth and meaning to the results of the key word analysis, as well as revealing potential directions for future research. For instance, an emergent finding is that feelings of discomfort may be aroused in conjunction with disrespect. In this study, discomfort is associated with privacy issues and the sales-driven nature of the organisation, but it would be interesting to investigate alternative situations in the marketplace that may cause feelings of discomfort.

- **Personal Conversations**

Personal conversations within organisations embody a further theme that represents disrespect in market environments. This theme is represented by a

lesser number of specific incidents than the above themes. Despite this, its inclusion in this study is important because it features a number of dimensions and patterns of behaviour that are significant to understanding disrespect in the marketplace. One of these dimensions is the act of ignoring, which is a form of behaviour also found to represent rude responses to customer queries. With regards to rude responses, the offender chose to ignore the questions of customers and divert the focus of the conversation for their own purposes. Comparatively, for this theme the act of ignoring is an element of the overall behaviour of continuing personal conversations in the presence of customers. All incidents relating to this theme reported perceptions of being ignored while customer service representatives were engaged in personal conversations, either while the customer was waiting to be served or while carrying out organisational duties. As with the reportings of a sales-focussed atmosphere, the majority of these incidents occurred in retail organisations. Again, this does not suggest that such behaviour is exclusive to retail contexts, but does imply that it may be predominant in this area. Personal conversations within organisations took a number of different forms in the reported incidents. These included conversing with other salespeople or an outside party in the presence of the customer, and talking on the telephone, forcing customers to wait for service. Insight about such behaviour can be gained from a few victims' descriptions of their experiences.

*[I was at] Silver Moon looking for earrings. The whole time I was in the store, the salesgirl was on the phone having a very loud conversation. It sounded like it was a personal call. She didn't acknowledge me. I wanted to ask where I could find the earrings I was after, but ended up walking out.*

[female, 20]

*I had telephoned ahead to arrange a time to be there. When I arrived I introduced myself to the receptionist, who in turn announced my arrival to her employer. He was on the telephone and it was very obvious it was a personal call. I waited 15 minutes before he ended the call and came to see me (no apologies for the delay). If there had been somewhere else I could have gone for the same service, then I would have left. [female]*

*[The experience occurred] in a retail store. [I was] ignored at a checkout while the customer service assistants finished a personal discussion and other duties. A lack of customer service provided to customers that are the bread and butter of why they are providing a service. [female, 25]*

These excerpts illustrate that the act of ignoring appears to be a dominant component of such behaviour. Perceptions of disrespect were caused by a combination of being ignored and the realisation that customer service representatives were engaged in personal conversations. The analysis of this theme revealed that the main cause of offence was that victims were forced to wait for service so staff could finish personal conversations. It is expected that if salespeople were finishing business-related discussions, victims may have been more understanding of the situation and would not have considered the behaviour to be disrespectful. Thus, the nature of the conversation may have a considerable effect on perceptions of disrespect. These expectations are hypothetical at this stage, but further in-depth analysis in this area may provide added insight into potential effects under different circumstances. The relevant literature has yet to conceptualise the relationship between personal conversations within an

organisation and disrespect; however, as mentioned in previous sections, the act of ignoring has been identified as a determinant of disrespect. It is closely related to the construct of recognition respect, in that ignoring others is characteristic of denying fundamental forms of respect that all people are entitled to. A further element that must be considered is whether the effects of such behaviour are specific to market contexts. It was proposed in previous discussions that behaviours like the unhelpful manner of sales personnel as a cause of disrespect might be exclusive to the marketplace. This suggests that an unhelpful manner is more likely to lead to disrespect in interactions with sales personnel in particular rather than general interactions with others. This is due to the higher level of expectations that are placed salespeople in market contexts. Again, further research is required to investigate such dimensions.

All victims of such behaviour expressed some form of concern for the business operations of the respective organisations. This is thought to result from an evaluation of the disrespectful encounter from an organisational perspective. Consequently, concern is expressed for the business practices and outcomes of the organisation. For this theme, victims convey concern for the suitability of the ways customers are treated and note potential repercussions of the continuation of such behaviour. Some specific examples of these thought processes are featured below.

*A customer should be given full attention upon nearing the checkout or reception area. [female, 25]*

*If this is the way customers are going to be treated, it's lucky they have any business at all!! [female, 54]*

*Do they think because they are one of the very few outlets for this service in New Zealand that they do not need to be worried about the quality of service they offer?* [female]

*She could have at least said hello. They ended up losing a sale, as I was prepared to buy.* [female, 20]

These findings indicate that expressions of concern as a cognitive response to disrespect can be supported in two distinctly different situational contexts relating to the market environment. Expressions of concern not only result from rude responses to customer queries, as previously discovered, but also from encountering personal conversations within an organisation.

In regards to responsive feelings, it was found that, unlike previous themes, there was an absence of any distinct trends to represent the dominant emotions. A possible reason for this is that the analysis of this theme involved a lesser number of reported incidents than above themes. Consequently, it becomes difficult to deduce specific patterns and trends when there is a diverse range of responses across a small sample. The various emotions victims reported included anger, annoyance, insult and disappointment. Feelings of disappointment had marginally greater frequencies than the others, which raises the question of whether disappointment may emerge as the dominant emotive response across a larger sample.

The dominant action that resulted from encountering personal conversations within an organisation was switching behaviour. The majority of victims reporting such behaviour assert that they did not continue to do business

with the organisation in question. It is widely recognised in business literature that customer switching is detrimental to the success of an organisation because, not only does the customer discontinue patronising the organisation, but they also begin doing business with a competing company. The loss of existing customers implies that the organisation must exert greater efforts in attracting new customers, which is documented as being much more difficult than retaining existing customers. Further research is called for in this area to gain an understanding of the specific reasons behind victims' decisions to switch to a different service provider upon encountering personal conversations.

The analysis of this theme has revealed that personal conversations within an organisation represent a potential cause of disrespect in the marketplace. Perceptions of disrespect appear to be caused by a combination of elements including being ignored and the realisation that a personal conversation is being carried out in what the customer views as their time. It would be fundamental to determine whether the identification of such behaviour as a cause of disrespect is exclusive to market environments. The analysis lent further support to the finding that expressions of concern are a possible cognitive response to disrespectful behaviour, which was initially identified in relation to rude responses. A major limitation of the analysis of this theme was that the sample size was much smaller than that for previous themes examined; therefore, the findings and emergent trends may vary with a larger sample. However, the findings are still valuable in laying the groundwork by identifying personal conversations within customer service organisations as a potential cause of disrespect, as well as outlining a number of areas for future research.

- **Process-related Problems**

The final theme discussed is the discovery of process-related problems as a cause of disrespect. Process-related problems are defined in this study as problems caused by the business operations of an organisation, which consequently lead to perceptions of disrespect. This indicates that feelings of disrespect are primarily attributed to problems in the processes and procedures of an organisation rather than the behaviour of any particular person. In making this distinction, it can be deduced that this theme differs significantly in comparison to those discussed previously. The foundation of the themes discussed above is that disrespect is primarily caused by the behaviour of an individual party or parties. Comparatively, this theme is the only one to deal with perceptions of disrespect that are attributed to the organisation as a whole. Analysis of the critical incident reports revealed that a number of participants had experienced process-related problems. All of the reported incidents involved a fault in the service offered by the organisations in question, but it is interesting to note that the fault in service was not the cause of disrespect. Disrespect was caused by process-related problems such as lengthy waiting times in attempting to report faults, a lack of response and also inappropriate responses to attempts at contact. A few specific incidents are included below. The first describes an incident involving lengthy waiting times; this participant also refers to the preference for a personal response rather than an automated answering system, which adds a further dimension to this theme.

*[A] fault on the phone prompted a call to Telecom. [I was] presented with a multiple choice answering system then, when arriving at the correct place, there was a 35 to 40 minute wait to talk to the operator. My call was*

*important to me and therefore should have been important to Telecom. The disrespect shown was in their lack of a quick, personal response. [male, 60]*

The following incident is based on lengthy waiting times, as well as a lack of response by the organisation on a number of different occasions.

*[There was a] fault on my landline where I couldn't ring out or receive calls in. When [I] tried to log the fault with a call to Vodafone, [I] had to wait 40 plus minutes several times just to talk to someone. [I] logged the fault by email and got no reply until two weeks later. It took several calls and days just to get through and talk to someone due to the waiting time. 40 plus minutes is really unacceptable. The email I got two weeks later actually said they didn't even know if my problem had been fixed and I had to let them know. [female, 36]*

The final incident features various elements including the failure to install a particular service that the victim was being charged for, lengthy waiting times, a lack of response to attempts at communication and, ultimately, a highly inappropriate response to the problem by the organisation.

*This experience took place over about 2-3 months in communications with Slingshot. We had our telephone service connected with them and inquired about getting the Internet connected with them as well because, at the time, there was a deal to get connected for \$20. Our Internet did not get connected over the course of 2-3 months so we were frequently calling Slingshot with no response, as each time we had to wait at least 10-15 minutes. After this time*

*we would simply hang up, not having enough time to sit and wait for our call to be answered. We then tried emailing Slingshot to let them know we had not yet been connected, again with no response. The lack of response was disrespectful. The \$20 charge for the connection was charged to our account; we continued to pay our phone bill as per usual but did not pay the \$20 for a service we were not getting. Then, over Easter weekend, our phone was disconnected. When we called Slingshot, they told us this was due to the \$20 that had not been paid. I thought they could have at least sent us a letter to let us know that our phone line would be disconnected if we didn't pay the full bill. If they had done so, they would have obtained the reason for this – we weren't going to pay for a service we weren't getting. Also, had they responded to our attempts at communication with them, the problem would not have occurred. [female, 53]*

Lengthy waiting times and a lack of response to the communication efforts of customers were regarded as being unacceptable. Some reports also indicated that the organisations in question were considered to be uncaring, as one participant expresses: *“My call was important to me and therefore should have been important to Telecom”*. The other element of process-related problems was inappropriate responses to customer's attempts at communications. This is exemplified in the third experience reported, where the organisation in question disconnected the victim's phone service in response to her refusal to pay for the Internet service she was not receiving. This was perceived to be disrespectful because the victim had repeatedly attempted to inform the organisation of the problem, with no response. The victim expressed a *“loss of faith in the company”* and ultimately switched to a different service provider for both her phone and

Internet use, stating that, “*although we pay a bit more, it is worth it because we trust them much more*”. A few victims also alluded to a desire for more personalised service when dealing with such organisations; this addresses to the increase in automated answering systems as a means for processing the requests and queries of customers.

This is the first study to uncover process-related problems as a cause of disrespect in the marketplace. However, some elements of this theme can be associated with research in areas like services and relationship marketing. The services marketing literature cites lengthy waiting times in service organisations as a potential determinant of dissatisfaction and service failure (Keaveney, 1995). Similarly, the relationship marketing literature recognises the benefits of personalised service between an organisation and its customers (Berry, 1995; Gronroos, 1997). Certain elements of this theme can also be related to the results of the key word analysis. It was found that uncaring behaviour was a dominant cause of disrespect, which is consistent with a common perception that emerges from the analysis of this theme.

A common thought process that resulted from process-related problems was the recognition that disrespect was caused by the organisation as a whole rather than any particular person. The majority of participants reporting such behaviour referred to either an element of the service or the organisation in general, as the cause of disrespect. These cognitions suggest that victims recognise process-related problems and the blame is not attributed to individual salespeople, who are often the ‘messengers’ in such situations. Some of the victims’ thoughts and expressions are featured below.

*This was not one person’s fault but a corporate one.* [male, 60]

*[The organisation] doesn't let the left hand talk to the right. I have lost confidence in the organisation. [female, 52]*

*I am actually an Ihug customer. Vodafone have recently bought Ihug with supposedly no change in service. This is not true. Customer service has gone down hill since the change of ownership. [female, 36]*

Specific patterns in responses were also observed regarding feelings aroused by process-related problems. Anger and frustration were the two dominantly reported feelings. They were often cited in conjunction with each other, meaning that such forms of disrespect were commonly associated with both anger and frustration. These two emotions were found in the key word analysis to be dominantly reported emotional responses to disrespectful behaviour. Feelings of anger were, by far, the most frequently reported responses, which suggests that anger may be prominent across all six themes featured in this study. The frequencies for frustration were not as high; this indicates that frustration may be strongly associated with process-related problems in particular. It is hypothesised that a possible source of frustration may be a sense of powerlessness in a particular situation, whereby a victim feels as though they do not have much control over the situation. This may be due to factors like the lack of response of the organisation and difficulties in getting through to the organisation. One of the victims of such behaviour specifically mentions his feelings in relation to a loss of control: *"[I was] angry, frustrated and not in control of the situation"* [male, 60]. As mentioned, all incidents reported for this study were centred on some fault in a service that victims were attempting to report. This suggests that there may have

been a sense of urgency in amending the fault, which could also influence feelings of frustration. The psychology literature is useful in shedding some light into the arousal of both anger and frustration in response to process-related problems. A stream of literature dedicated to investigating the frustration-aggression hypothesis posits that frustration produces instigations to a number of different types of response, one of which is an instigation to some form of aggression (Miller, 1941). This indicates that frustration can often determine the arousal of anger, which lends support to the findings.

The analysis of this theme revealed a significant pattern of behaviour that commonly results from process-related problems. The majority of the victims reported that their experiences caused them to switch to a different service provider. As has been mentioned, switching behaviour is detrimental to an organisation's success and implies that increased efforts must be made to retain and satisfy existing customers. It can be proposed that such forms of disrespect result in switching because the blame is attributed to the organisation as a whole. The analysis of previous themes indicated that victims often continue to do business with organisations when disrespect is attributed to the behaviour of an individual party or parties. In such cases, trade offs are commonly made and victims realise that it may be unfair to hold the organisation responsible for the behaviour of one person. However, in such cases, where disrespect is caused by the processes or procedures of an organisation, it may be difficult for victims to rationalise their experiences by evaluating the trade offs they could make. Ultimately, they may decide that the solution to the problem is to simply change service providers.

Analysis of this final theme has allowed for increased insight into the distinctions that may be present across various forms of disrespect in the

marketplace. The previous themes have been based on the behaviours of individuals as the cause of disrespect. Comparatively, process-related problems represent forms of disrespect that are attributed to the organisation as a whole due to negative aspects in business operations. This distinction is crucial to investigating disrespect in market contexts because it has been found that the potential outcomes vary greatly. This means that the overall impact on the organisation may also vary between process-related disrespect and person-related disrespect. It can be proposed that the overall impact will be greater for process-related disrespect if, as the analysis of this theme has found, it dominantly results in switching behaviour. An important area for future research would be in conducting a study that specifically compares process and person-related disrespect, in order to gain a more detailed understanding of the distinctions between them and the consequent outcomes of each.

### **4.3 Quantitative Results**

Descriptive analyses and a paired samples t-test were initially performed on the data set, identifying the mean values and mean differences for the quantitative variables. Table 7 below shows the means, as well as t-values for the mean differences. In regards to the mean values, 1 represents the lower end of the equal interval scale and 6 represents the higher end for all dimensions

**TABLE 7****Means and t-values of Mean Differences for Quantitative Variables**

	Mean	T
Thoughts (person)	1.50	
Thoughts (org – at time of incident)	2.00	5.928*
Thoughts (org – now)	2.81	
Intensity of emotions	5.16	
Severity of the incident	4.33	
Satisfaction (at time of incident)	1.91	5.602*
Satisfaction (now)	2.55	
Business intentions (at time of incident)	2.16	4.298*
Business intentions (now)	2.71	
Loyalty (before incident)	4.25	-7.929*
Loyalty (now)	2.48	
Trust (before incident)	4.63	-12.137*
Trust (now)	2.33	
Recommendations (before incident)	4.73	-12.499*
Recommendations (now)	2.29	
Average disrespect	2.23	
Average severity	3.19	
Average time elapsed	84.27 weeks	

\* Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

NOTE: Mean values are based on a 6-item equal interval scale. 1 = lower end of scale, 6 = higher end of scale

The means of the quantitative variables revealed a few dominant trends across the sample. Firstly, the items measuring the favourability of thoughts towards the other person involved in the incident and the organisation enabled an understanding of whom the victim held accountable for disrespectful behaviour. The results show that the favourability of thoughts is greater towards the organisation, suggesting that the cause of disrespect is dominantly attributed to the individual person responsible for the behaviour. Secondly, the mean values for the intensity of emotions and severity of the experience are on the higher end of the six-item scale, which indicates that the incidents reported are perceived to be high in criticality. This lends support to the presumption that, in order for an incident to be reported in such a study, the magnitude of seriousness must be high.

General trends with respect to time were also uncovered. The use of paired samples t-tests, which identified the mean differences, was beneficial to understanding the effects of disrespect over time. Thoughts towards the organisation, satisfaction and future business intentions were evaluated according to perceptions at the time of the incident and at present. It was expected that the mean values for these variables would increase with time, since the impression of disrespect is often perceived to be more serious at the time of the incident. The results supported this theory, finding that the difference in means was positive and significant for all three variables. The mean differences were also useful in analysing the effects of disrespect on loyalty, trust and the likelihood of future recommendations. These variables were evaluated according to perceptions before the incident occurred and at present. The difference in means for all three variables was negative and significant. This finding supported H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, and H<sub>3</sub>, indicating that disrespect negatively influences loyalty, trust and the likelihood of future recommendations.

Correlations analyses determined associations between severity and intensity, favourability of thoughts, satisfaction, business intentions, loyalty, trust, likelihood of future recommendations and time. These tests were performed in reference to H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub>, which proposed correlations between severity and satisfaction, business intentions, loyalty, trust, future recommendations and time. The results are featured in the Table 8 below.

**TABLE 8****Correlations between Severity and Reported Responses**

	Intensity	Thoughts (person)	Thoughts (org-then)	Thoughts (org-now)	Satisfaction (then)	Satisfaction (now)
Severity (Pearson Correlation)	.478**	-.285*	-.221	-.062	-.089	-.085
	Business Intentions (then)	Business Intentions (now)	Loyalty (before)	Loyalty (now)	Trust (before)	Trust (now)
Severity (Pearson Correlation)	-.101	-.034	.255*	.127	.299*	-.037
	Future Recommendations (before)		Future Recommendations (now)		Time Elapsed	
Severity (Pearson Correlation)	.399*		-.094		.651	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results show that five of the fifteen associations tested were significant at either the 0.01 or 0.05 levels, which indicates an association with the perceived severity of disrespectful behaviour. Intensity of emotions was strongly correlated with severity ( $r = .478$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that the more severe an encounter is perceived to be, the greater the intensity of the emotions aroused was. Severity is also correlated with the favourability of thoughts towards the other person involved ( $r = -.285$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). In this case, the sign of the Pearson correlation value is negative, which suggests that the greater the severity, the less favourable the thoughts towards the other party were. There does not appear to be any association between severity and thoughts towards the organisation; this lends support to the idea that the source of disrespectful treatment is often attributed to the offending party rather than the organisation as a whole.

H<sub>4</sub> hypothesises that severity is negatively associated with perceptions of satisfaction, future business intentions, loyalty, trust and the likelihood of future

recommendations following a disrespectful encounter. Table 4 shows that the 'now' dimension of each of these variables is not significant; therefore, H<sub>4</sub> is not supported. However, the results show that perceived severity is positively correlated with loyalty(before) ( $r = .255, p < 0.05$ ), trust(before) ( $r = .299, p < 0.05$ ) and future recommendations(before) ( $r = .399, p < 0.05$ ). These findings indicate that the greater loyalty, trust and the likelihood of future recommendations were before disrespect was encountered, the greater the perceived severity was. These three variables often imply the strength of a customer's relationship with an organisation; it is thought that the stronger the customer-organisation relationship is, the greater the perceived severity may be. Thus, although H<sub>4</sub>, which considered the effects of disrespect on relationships, was not supported, the results revealed an emergent finding. It was found that the strength of a relationship can influence the effects of disrespect.

Correlations analyses were also used to test H<sub>5</sub>, which proposed that the perceived severity of disrespect will decrease over time. The above results show that there is no significant correlation between severity and time elapsed, so H<sub>5</sub> is not supported. However, it was important to investigate the relationship between severity and time further. An analysis of means revealed that the perceived severity was high if the incident of disrespect occurred either less than a year ago ( $\bar{x} = 4.48$ ) or more than two years ago ( $\bar{x} = 4.83$ ); however, between one and two years ago, the reported severity of disrespect appears to plateau slightly ( $\bar{x} = 3.92$ ). A scatter plot, using time elapsed as the independent variable and severity as the dependent variable, complemented these findings by uncovering a cluster in the data range of low period of time elapsed and high severity. This was expected as it was hypothesised that recently encountered disrespect will be perceived to be high in severity. In regards to the finding that incidents reported over two years

ago are also high in severity, it is thought that this may be the case because the magnitude of seriousness must be high for the experience to be recalled and reported after a long period of time. Therefore, severity will also be high with longer periods of time elapsed. Accordingly, a number of readings were also found in the data range of high period of time elapsed and high severity but there was not enough to reveal a distinct cluster. Again, further investigation is required in this area because a larger sample size may have provided evidence to support the hypotheses.

The quantitative analysis of the numerical data was useful in uncovering general trends in cognitions and behaviours that result from disrespect. It also revealed relationships and associations across the different variables and considered possible explanations for these. Additionally, the results of the quantitative analysis have been valuable in enhancing the understanding of dominant findings that emerged from the thematic analyses. For instance, the thematic analyses revealed that the many participants continue to do business with an organisation after experiencing disrespect. Only upon encountering process-related problems were customers dominantly found to discontinue patronage. Across the other five themes, the general trend was to respond in various actions but continue to patronise the organisation in question. This suggests that the negative effects on the disrespectful organisation were minimal, since they retained their customers. The results of the quantitative analysis extend these findings by revealing that, although many customers decide to stay with the organisation, the strength of their relationship decreases. This is clear from the negative effects on customer loyalty, trust and the likelihood of future recommendations. Such findings have important implications for organisations, suggesting that although disrespected customers may not switch, efforts must be

made to ensure that the effects on the customer-organisation relationship are minimised.

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

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In understanding disrespect, it is important to gain insight into how disrespect is experienced, felt and responded to. This will be done by addressing the first two research questions with greater depth and detail. A discussion of the third research goal will follow in order to gain an awareness of the organisational implications of disrespect. To conclude, emergent findings and potential directions for future research will be put forward.

The first research question sought to determine behaviours that define disrespect in the marketplace, which represents how disrespect was experienced by customers. Evidence of this was found in five of the six themes examined. These were rude responses, discrimination, a sales-focussed atmosphere, personal conversations within organisations, and process-related problems. Each of these overall causes was embodied by specific behaviours, which were revealed through examination of the themes. The main contributions of this study are exemplified by the numerous emergent findings. Emergent behaviours uncovered as causes of disrespect include: negative verbal and facial expressions, an unhelpful manner, a dominant focus on sales and process-related problems.

This study is the first to uncover the relationship between negative verbal and facial expressions and disrespect. Such expressions were found to cause disrespect in conjunction with rude responses and discrimination. Analysis of discriminatory behaviour revealed that verbal and facial expressions are often accompanied by a sense of superiority on the part of the disrespectful party. In such cases, judgements based on physical attributes or generalisations influence them in assuming a superior manner during interactions with the victim. This finding adds further depth to the causal relationship between negative expressions

and disrespect, with the suggestion that it is driven by discriminatory judgements and superiority. The findings also extend the existing literature, which has conceptualised the relationship between discrimination and superiority through associations with arrogance, as well as patronising, condescending and degrading behaviour (Buttny & Williams, 2000; Mastrofski et al, 2002; Mendleson, 1998; Myers, 1997). These findings go further by revealing that the relationship between discrimination and superiority may instigate negative expressions.

An unhelpful manner and a dominant focus on sales during interactions with customers also emerged as potential causes of disrespect. In analysing reports of unhelpfulness, it was interesting to find that sales personnel often addressed customers' questions or concerns; however, customers felt disrespected when salespeople did not go the extra mile in attempting to solve their problems. Comparatively, a sales-focussed atmosphere was represented by behaviours like approaching customers multiple times and following them around the store. Customers interpreted such behaviour as being driven by the desire to gain sales. This was perceived as disrespectful because there was a lack of respect for customer's privacy and personal space. These behaviours are particularly interesting because they seem to represent two extremes - not paying enough attention to customer's needs and, alternatively, giving customers too much attention. Yet, the driving force of both is a lack of care for the customer. Sales personnel are viewed as being uncaring when they do not do everything within their power to help the customer. A lack of respect for privacy is also perceived to be uncaring of customers' needs. As well as uncovering the interrelationships between perceptions of unhelpfulness and a sales-focus, this study has also extended the knowledge of privacy issues in marketing. Respect for customer privacy has previously been conceptualised in relation to the moral and ethical

judgements required for conducting market research. This entails appropriately using customers' contact details, being un-intrusive in modes of contact and providing anonymity for the use of customer information (Murphy, 1999; Myers, 1997). This study provides evidence to suggest that respect for customer privacy is equally important in physical marketplace contexts.

The discovery of process-related problems as a cause of disrespect was also uncovered in this study. Process-related problems are distinct from other determinants reported because disrespect is caused by the processes or operations within an organisation rather than the actions of any individual party. It was clear from the critical incident reports that victims attributed the cause of disrespect to the organisation as a whole. They did not place blame on any other parties involved, recognising that customer service representatives were the messengers and were not at fault. A distinct trend emerged regarding consequences of process-related problems in that the majority of victims reported switching as a result. In examining all six themes, it became clear that process-related problems were the most likely to induce switching behaviour. This finding is particularly important to gaining a greater understanding of potential causes of disrespect in the marketplace. The results indicate that disrespect can be caused either by person-related disrespect or process-related disrespect. It is interesting to examine the differences between these two forms. Process-related disrespect dominantly results in switching; however, customers who experience disrespect caused by a particular person appear to consider switching only as a last resort. Disrespect attributed to the actions of another person is often rationalised by the victim, with the recognition that the entire organisation should not be held responsible for the behaviour of one person. In such cases, victims have been found to evaluate numerous trade-offs including convenience factors, price and past experiences.

They will also respond in various ways such as negative word-of-mouth, complaint and choosing to deal with another salesperson, rather than simply switching. Such actions are often directed at the individual party responsible for disrespect, thus the negative effects on the organisation are minimised. These findings suggest that customers are not pre-disposed to switch at the first sign of trouble. They rationalise their experiences thoroughly, evaluating trade-offs and the attribution of blame before deciding whether to switch. One of these trade-offs may be the likelihood of experiencing similar behaviour in future. In the case of person-related disrespect, victims recognise that the cause was specifically the behaviour of one person and the likelihood of every employee exhibiting the same behaviour is low. However, process-related disrespect determined by the processes or operations that are in place within an organisation, meaning that there is not a lot of variation. Therefore, the likelihood of encountering similar problems in future is evaluated to be significantly higher, which drives the decision to switch.

An emergent concept uncovered in examining how customers experience disrespect is the idea that some causes of disrespect may be exclusive to market environments, while others represent general forms of disrespect that may be experienced in everyday life. For example, examining the unhelpful behaviour of sales personnel revealed that perceptions of disrespect arose not because salespeople refused to help, but rather because they did not go the extra mile in regards to customer requests. It is proposed that this form of disrespect may be exclusive to market contexts because disrespect stems from comparisons to the high standard of service that customers have come to expect in the marketplace. Customers appear to impose higher expectations on employees of customer service organisations. When these expectations are not completely fulfilled, it

leads to the arousal of disrespect. Behaviours that exemplify these effects may be market-specific because people are not bound by the same expectations in everyday life. It would be interesting to examine other potential causes that may be market-specific.

The first research question is answered with the identification of the main themes and the specific behaviours that embody them. However, greater insight can be gained into how disrespect is experienced by customers by examining the underlying causes of the behaviours found. Unhelpful behaviour, a dominant focus on sales, personal conversations within organisations and process-related problems were interpreted as being indicative of a lack of care and concern. Discrimination was found to stem from a judgemental view of the victim and was represented by unfair or unequal treatment. In general, disrespectful behaviour appears to originate from a denial of recognition respect, which represents a failure to carry out the basic moral obligations that we as people are entitled to and owe to others. Unfair and unequal treatment signify a lack of recognition respect. Ignoring behaviour, which was a prominent cause of disrespect found, also represents a lack of recognition respect because it entails denying another person's entitlement to voice. To summarise, customers appear to experience disrespect through either a lack of care or concern, or a denial of recognition respect.

The second research question was based on investigating how disrespectful behaviour affects the customers who experience it. The purpose was to gain insight into how victims felt and responded to disrespect, which was done by examining their consequent thoughts, feelings and actions. As expected, anger and annoyance were the most common emotional responses to disrespect, as many researchers in the area have conceptualised (Costley et al, 2004; Miller, 2001;

Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Such feelings were cited across all six themes, indicating that they are common responses despite the form that disrespect takes. Comparatively, feelings of inferiority and worthlessness dominantly resulted from ignoring behaviour and discrimination in particular. Both ignoring behaviour and discrimination represent unfair and unequal, which is consistent with the arousal of feelings of inferiority and worthlessness. Perceptions of unfairness and inequality may be primary determinants of feelings of inferiority and worthlessness, since the arousal of such feelings is exclusive to ignoring and discriminatory behaviour.

The presence of an audience during a disrespectful encounter can also influence the effects of disrespect on the victim. This is the first study to find empirical support for the theory that public knowledge of an offence can affect the pain of an insult, as well as the reaction to it (Miller, 2001). The findings reveal that the presence of an audience intensifies the effects of disrespect and a few specific responses result. All victims of disrespect in the presence of an audience reported distinct feelings of embarrassment. This supports Miller's (2001) proposal that the presence of an audience will compound the victim's feelings of disrespect with public humiliation. Therefore, the arousal of embarrassment is primarily attributed to the presence of onlookers during a disrespectful encounter. A further response that was exclusive to incidents involving the presence of an audience was the decision to educate the offender. This finding also supports the work of Miller (2001), which originally conceptualised educating the offender as a means to re-gain self-esteem following a disrespectful encounter. These results offer further insight to the literature, illustrating that the presence of an audience and the choice to educate the offender may be directly related.

A new finding that emerged regarding the effects of disrespectful behaviour was that victims may express empathy or concern for the offender. Empathy was expressed in the form of understanding or sympathy for the disrespectful party, while concern was expressed for the organisation. These findings were particularly interesting because it was highly unexpected that victims would interpret the behaviour encountered from the perspective of the offending party. This also suggests that disrespected customers think and act very rationally in response to disrespect.

In examining how disrespect affects customers, an understanding of the ways in which they cope with disrespect must be gained. Two distinct coping mechanisms were found in this study. The first, which is described as a conscious change to future behaviour, is a new finding. A conscious change to future behaviour is driven by the desire to reduce the likelihood of encountering the behaviour that originally caused disrespect. It also appears to be associated with the victim's need to regain control by altering his or her own behaviour. This finding is of interest because the literature has yet to conceptualise such occurrences. Writings in the psychology literature have conceptualised the avoidance of a particular situation and changes in a person's general disposition result from disrespect (Miller, 2001; Reilly, 2002). Conscious changes to future behaviour may be related to these streams in that they could be driven by similar motivations. However, this finding differs in that the change in behaviour is deliberate, while avoidance and changes in disposition are conceptualised as internal and subconscious. The second coping mechanism exemplifies the contagious nature of disrespect. It was found that victims of disrespect may make discriminatory judgements of the offender as a result of disrespectful treatment. This study is the first to find empirical support for this phenomenon, which

researchers refer to as mutual disrespect (Mendleson, 1998; Reilly, 2002). Mutual disrespect may arise from the victim's desire to regain self-esteem and self-confidence.

It is clear from the findings that customers feel and respond to disrespect in a variety of different forms. This study has contributed to knowledge by revealing that the arousal of emotions can be specific to the form that disrespect takes, as exemplified by feelings of inferiority, worthlessness and embarrassment. It has also been found that, surprisingly, disrespected customers may consider the perspective of the offender in interpreting their experiences. Additionally, a few coping mechanisms were uncovered; these may enable the victim to regain control, self-esteem or self-confidence.

The final research question addresses the implications of disrespectful behaviour for the organisations responsible for it. An understanding of these implications was gained by analysing victims' consequent actions, as well as their quantitative responses to the scaled survey items. Analysis revealed that process-related problems, which were attributed to the organisation as a whole, commonly resulting in switching. Comparatively, disrespect caused by a particular person resulted in negative word-of-mouth, complaining or the choice to deal with a different sales-person, but trade-offs usually prevented victims from switching. The quantitative analysis revealed that disrespect negatively influenced customer loyalty, trust and the likelihood of future recommendations. This implies that, although many disrespected customers may choose to continue doing business with the organisation in question, this is accompanied by a decrease in loyalty, trust and future recommendations. Accordingly, it is suggested that the strength of customers' relationships with an organisation, as well as their commitment to the relationship are weakened as a result of disrespectful behaviour.

In terms of the organisational implications of these findings, it is proposed that many of the problems representing causes of disrespect can be easily solved. The majority of participants reported disrespectful behaviour that was caused by a particular person or persons. It was found that, in such cases, many victims chose to continue doing business with the organisation in question. This decision was accompanied by a decrease in the strength of the customer-organisation relationship, but the positive for the organisation is that the incident does not result in switching behaviour. This suggests that implementation of service recovery plans targeted at disrespected customers may counter the negative effects of the disrespectful behaviour encountered. This is designed to diminish the effects on customer loyalty and trust, as well as strengthen the relationship with the customer. Additionally, organisations would also benefit from instigating employee training programmes based on eliminating disrespectful behaviours such as general rudeness, ignoring the customer and discrimination, as well as promoting the need for customer care within the organisation. In the case of process-related problems, it is vital to put service recovery plans in place in an attempt to decrease switching behaviour. Additionally, organisations that engender switching due to process-related problems must make efforts towards consistently delivering quick and personalised service, which will reduce the problem altogether. These implications suggest that, although disrespect is a common occurrence in the marketplace at present, it does not have to be and the implementation of a few important programmes can radically diminish such occurrences. For person-related disrespect, these programmes should aim to rebuild customer-organisation relationships; for process-related disrespect, the programmes must prevent switching.

The discussion will conclude with an overview of the main contributions, as well as possible directions for future research. The findings of this study have been useful in contributing knowledge to a number of different streams including the marketing, respect and disrespect literature. The results have filled a gap in the literature by addressing the occurrence and effects of disrespect in the marketplace. Empirical evidence has been gained to lend support for existing theories and conceptualisations. Our knowledge has also been extended with the discovery of a number of emergent findings, which add greater depth and detail to the understanding of disrespect in general, as well as in market contexts.

Findings that represented a good fit with the literature included the discovery of discrimination as a dominant cause of disrespect. The relationship between discrimination and disrespect has been investigated through research in the public sector; this study finds that this relationship also exists in market environments. Additionally, seminal theories of recognition respect and the denial of recognition respect were highly relevant to the findings. The results also provided empirical evidence to support existing conceptual writings. These include conceptualisations of mutual disrespect, the presence of an audience and the choice to educate offenders.

An increased understanding of disrespect has been gained from the many new findings that have emerged from this study. Various behaviours were uncovered as potential causes of disrespect. These included: negative verbal and facial expressions, a dominant focus on sales, personal conversations and process-related problems. In terms of responses to disrespectful behaviour, it was interesting to discover the emergence of a number of passive responses that have not yet been considered in the literature. These included: expressions of concern or empathy, conscious changes to future behaviour and the decision to not take

any action against the disrespectful party or parties. Several new concepts have also been learnt through the course of this study. One of these is the idea that disrespect in the marketplace can be attributed to either the individual party responsible or the organisation as a whole. In cases where the individual party is held accountable, the long-term effect on the organisation is minimised; however, when the organisation is held accountable, switching behaviour often results. Another new concept to emerge is that certain behaviours reported as causes of disrespect may be exclusive to market contexts, meaning that such behaviours may not be considered disrespectful in general everyday environments. The body of research would benefit greatly from further research into each of these emergent findings.

Finally, this study has uncovered many potential areas for future investigation. There is very little existing knowledge regarding disrespect in the marketplace and this study has laid the groundwork by qualitatively identifying and analysing potential causes of and responses to disrespectful behaviour. Various suggestions of future research directions have been included in the discussion of the results and findings, but some of the areas that are of particular significance are listed below.

- Disrespect in relation to attribution theory: It is deemed vital to increase the understanding of distinctions between person-related disrespect and process-related disrespect. Process-related disrespect is attributed to the organisation as a whole; what are the cognitive processes that accompany these attributions? What are the differences in the cognitions that drive attribution of the blame towards the disrespectful party or, alternatively, the organisation?

- Market-specific disrespect: This research deals with the question of whether certain actions and behaviours cited as causes of disrespect are exclusive to market contexts. Would such behaviours cause disrespect in everyday situations? Why do such behaviours cause disrespect specifically in market environments?
- Severity of disrespect: The findings of this study suggest that the perceived severity of disrespect will be high for incidents that occurred recently, as well as incidents that are being reported after a long period of time. It would be interesting to further investigate this non-linear relationship.
- The impact of minor incidents of disrespect: The incidents reported in this study were classified as being high in criticality, as indicated by the high level of severity reported across the incidents; accordingly, it would be important to gain an understanding of the effects of minor incidents of disrespect in the marketplace. Is there a decreased effect on organisational outcomes such as customer loyalty and business intentions?
- External influences on the impact of disrespect: It was found that the presence of an audience can influence the effects of disrespectful behaviour, despite the fact that it does not represent the original cause of disrespect. Are there any other external components that influence the effects of disrespect?
- Relationship between anger and consequent actions: It would be valuable to investigate the conceptualised relationship between the arousal of anger and the motivation for action. Do feelings of anger lead to action against the offender? Which forms of responsive behaviour dominantly result from the arousal of anger?

## 6.0 LIMITATIONS

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There are several limitations to this study that must be discussed. The main limitation is that the sample size was lower than expected, with a total of 64 returned responses. A possible reason for this low response rate was that the survey instrument and completion time were longer than a traditional quantitative questionnaire. The inclusion of a qualitative section, which requested participants to write about a particular experience, may have been a barrier to participation. Despite this, the inclusion of the qualitative section was highly important to this type of investigation, where the purpose was to gain a depth and breadth of information due to limited existing knowledge in the area. In some cases, potential participants indicated a willingness to participate, but had difficulties in recalling a specific incident to report. Future studies in this area may overcome such problems with the use of a more generalised survey instrument, which will reduce time barriers and increase the likelihood of participation. This is plausible because the limitations of a research direction where very little is known will have been overcome with the availability of more information.

Some of the consequences of a small sample size include the notion that trends uncovered in this study may differ with a larger sample size. In regards to the quantitative analysis, the general trends in cognitions and behaviours revealed by the mean values are likely to remain similar; there may be slight variations in magnitudes, but the direction is expected to be the same. However, the correlations analysis and independent samples t-tests, in particular, may find new and different results.

Similarly, different trends may emerge regarding causes of and responses to disrespect uncovered by the key word analysis. Despite this, the limiting

effects of a small sample size are minimal for the key word analysis because the main purpose was to uncover a breadth of different responses, rather than identify dominant cognitions and behaviours. However, a larger sample may have produced a greater number of different dimensions for inclusion in the analysis. The limiting effects on the thematic analysis are also minimal; the purpose was to interpret disrespectful incidents holistically, which resulted in the discovery of a number of emergent dimensions. Potential differences that may arise with a larger sample size include variations in the patterns and trends found to accompany disrespectful behaviour. Despite this, the findings of this phase are still essential to increasing the understanding of various causes of and responses to disrespect.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

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The investigation of disrespect in consumer markets was an important area of research due to the growing number of reported incidents and the limited existing knowledge in the area. The analysis qualitatively uncovered six main themes, rude responses, perceptions of discrimination, the presence of an audience, a sales-focussed atmosphere, personal conversations and process-related problems. These themes represented causes of and influencing factors on disrespect. A couple of emergent concepts related to causes of disrespect were also uncovered. The first was centred on the notion that disrespectful behaviour in the marketplace can be categorised as either person-related or process-related. Process-related disrespect was attributed to the organisation as a whole and had serious ramifications for the organisation as it resulted in switching. The second emergent concept considered that some forms of disrespect might be specific to market environments. This was exemplified in this study by the unhelpful manner of sales personnel.

Analysis of the effects of disrespect on customers also revealed some new findings. Disrespectful customers were found to consider the perspective of the offender through expressions of empathy or concern. Results also showed evidence of coping mechanisms employed by victims. These included conscious changes to future behaviour and mutual disrespect; they were interpreted as a means to re-gain control, self-esteem or self-confidence. In regards to the implications of disrespect on organisations, an important finding was that many customers continued to do business with organisations when person-related disrespect was encountered; however, this was accompanied by a decrease in the

strength of the relationship. This suggests that service recovery plans must be implemented, even when customers do not consider switching.

This research suggests that respect and disrespect in the marketplace need to be examined in more detail. In particular, it will be worthwhile to explore forms of respect and disrespect that are specific to market contexts, as well as person-related vs. process-related disrespect.

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## APPENDIX 1: Survey instrument



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

Waikato Management School  
Te Raupapa

### Disrespect in Consumer Markets

**PART 1:** This section contains a series of open-ended questions based on disrespectful treatment in the marketplace. Please answer the following questions according to your specific experience of disrespect using the spaces provided.

1. Describe in detail where this experience of disrespect took place and why you were there.

2. What were the specific actions and behaviours that caused you to feel disrespected?  
Include a description of the other person(s) involved in the incident.

3. Describe your reactions towards the organization by answering the following questions (include an account of your reactions both during and after the incident occurred):

a) What were your thoughts towards the organization and the other person(s) involved?

b) Tick one box to indicate your answers to the following questions:

Describe your overall thoughts towards the <b>other person(s) at the time</b> of the incident.	Highly favourable	<input type="radio"/>	Highly unfavourable					
Describe your overall thoughts towards the <b>organisation at the time</b> of the incident.	Highly favourable	<input type="radio"/>	Highly unfavourable					
Describe your overall thoughts towards the <b>organisation now</b> .	Highly favourable	<input type="radio"/>	Highly unfavourable					

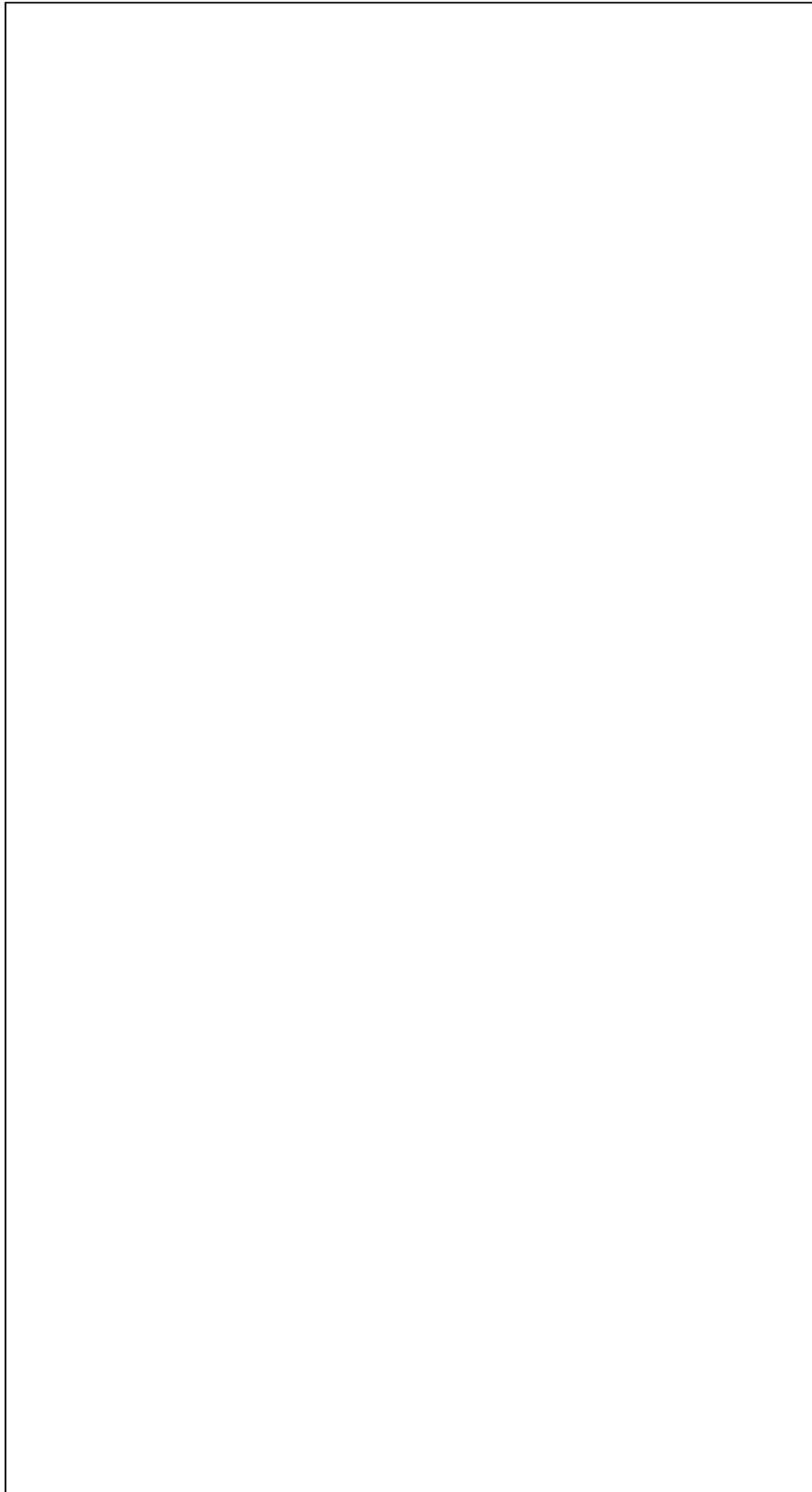
c) What feelings and emotions were aroused?

d) Tick one box to indicate your answer.

What was the intensity of your feelings and emotions?    Weak                            Strong

e) Describe your consequent actions towards the organization and the other person(s) involved?

- 4. Please use the box below if there is any additional information you would like to include about your experience.**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to provide additional information about their experience.

**PART 2: Please answer the questions in this section to further describe your experience by following the instructions provided.**

5. For the following questions, tick one box to indicate your answers.

How severe was your experience?	Extremely weak	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Extremely severe
How satisfied were you with the organisation <b>immediately after</b> the experience?	Extremely unsatisfied	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Extremely satisfied
How satisfied are you with the organisation <b>now</b> ?	Extremely unsatisfied	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Extremely satisfied
Describe your intentions to do business with the organisation <b>immediately after</b> the experience.	Never	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Definitely
Describe your intentions to do business with the organisation <b>now</b> .	Never	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Definitely
How loyal were you to this organisation <b>before</b> the experience?	Not at all loyal	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Strongly loyal
How loyal are you to this organisation <b>now</b> ?	Not at all loyal	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Strongly loyal
How much did you trust this organisation <b>before</b> the experience?	Not at all trusting	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Extremely trusting
How much do you trust this organisation <b>now</b> ?	Not at all trusting	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Extremely trusting
Would you have recommended this organisation to others <b>before</b> the experience?	Definitely not	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Definitely
Would you recommend this organisation to others <b>now</b> ?	Definitely not	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Definitely
How often do you experience disrespect in the marketplace?	Very rarely	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Very frequently
On average, how severe are these experiences?	Extremely weak	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Extremely severe

6. How long ago did this incident occur?

\_\_\_\_\_ weeks          \_\_\_\_\_ months          \_\_\_\_\_ years

7. If you currently do business with the organization in question, how long after the incident occurred did you begin to visit them again?

\_\_\_\_\_ weeks          \_\_\_\_\_ months          \_\_\_\_\_ years

**PART 3: Please answer the following questions regarding your personal details.**

8. What is your gender?  Male  
 Female

9. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ years

10. What is your ethnicity?  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. What is your highest level of formal education?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you. Your participation in this study is much appreciated. If you are willing to take part in the second stage of the study, the depth interviews, please provide your contact details below. The depth interviews will be about 30-90 minutes in length and will involve providing additional information about your experience.**

-----

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 2: Information sheet to participants



### Disrespect in consumer markets

My name is Nidhie Kumar and I am conducting a research project in the area of marketing for my Masters thesis. The research investigates disrespectful treatment in consumer markets and the motivation for this research is the need to remedy this problem.

Your participation in this study by completing the attached questionnaire would be much appreciated. Participants need to be over the age of 18 and should have had a personal experience of disrespectful treatment in the marketplace. So, if you have a particular experience in any consumer market, I would love to hear your story. Completing the questionnaire should take about 15-20 minutes. You can also access an electronic copy, which can be submitted on the web, at: <http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/marketingdcm>

This stage of data collection will be followed by an interview phase with the selection of 10-15 participants. If you are willing to take part in the depth interviews, which will involve providing more details about your experience and should take about 30-90 minutes, please provide your contact details. This information, as well as all participants' identities, will remain confidential at all times. The results from the questionnaires will be aggregated and reported in a Masters thesis, and may be subject to further publications and/or presentations. Only myself and my two supervisors will have access to the raw data.

In taking part in this study, you have the right to:

- Request additional information about the study by contacting me via email at [nk22@students.waikato.ac.nz](mailto:nk22@students.waikato.ac.nz)
- Refuse to answer any particular question included in the questionnaire.
- Withdraw any part of your contribution by emailing me before 31 October, 2008.
- Access a summary of the findings on completion of the study under the Research link at University of Waikato Marketing Department website: <http://wms-soros.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/Departments/Marketing/Research.htm>

Your consent for participation in this study will be indicated by returning a completed questionnaire. Your participation in this research project would be very much appreciated.

Thank you,

Nidhie Kumar  
Waikato Management School  
University of Waikato

[nk22@students.waikato.ac.nz](mailto:nk22@students.waikato.ac.nz)

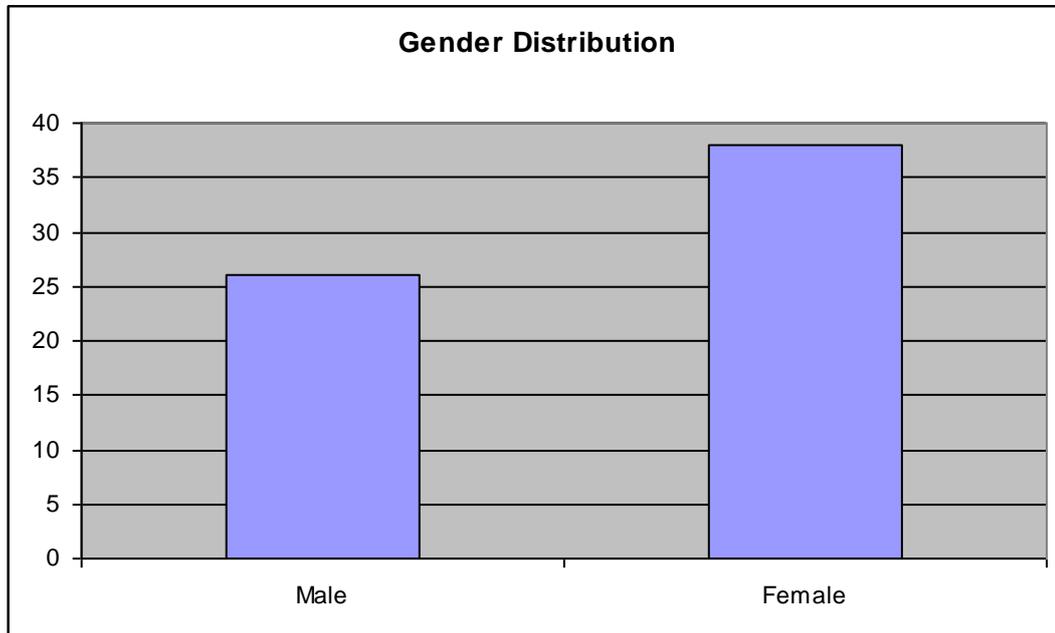
#### Supervisors:

Lorraine Friend  
(07) 838 4466 Ext 8982

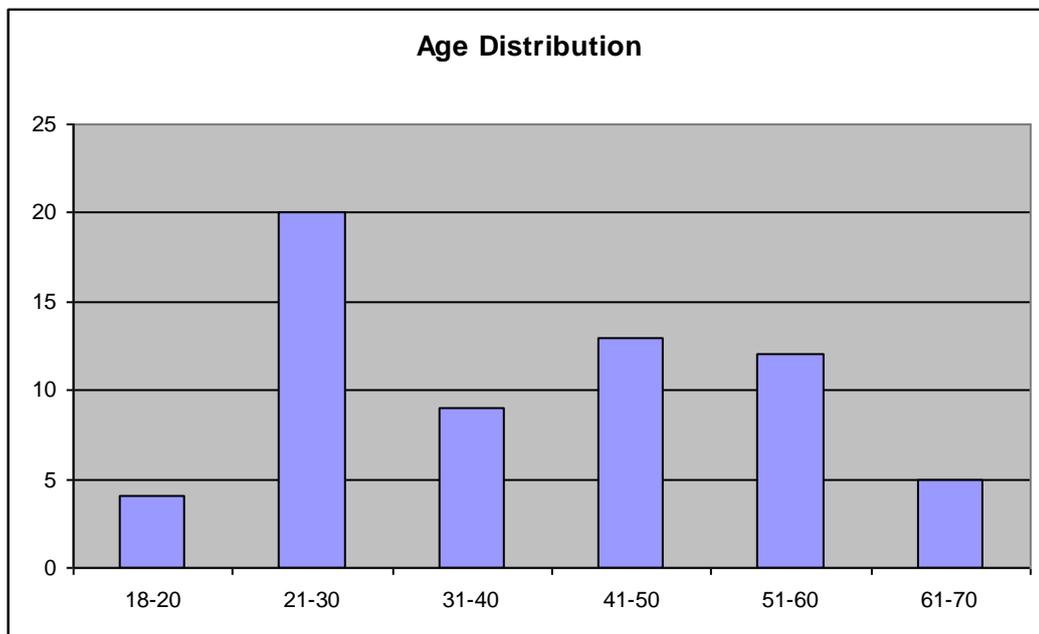
Carolyn Costley  
(07) 838 4466 Ext 8648

### APPENDIX 3: Diagrammatic Representation of Demographic Distributions

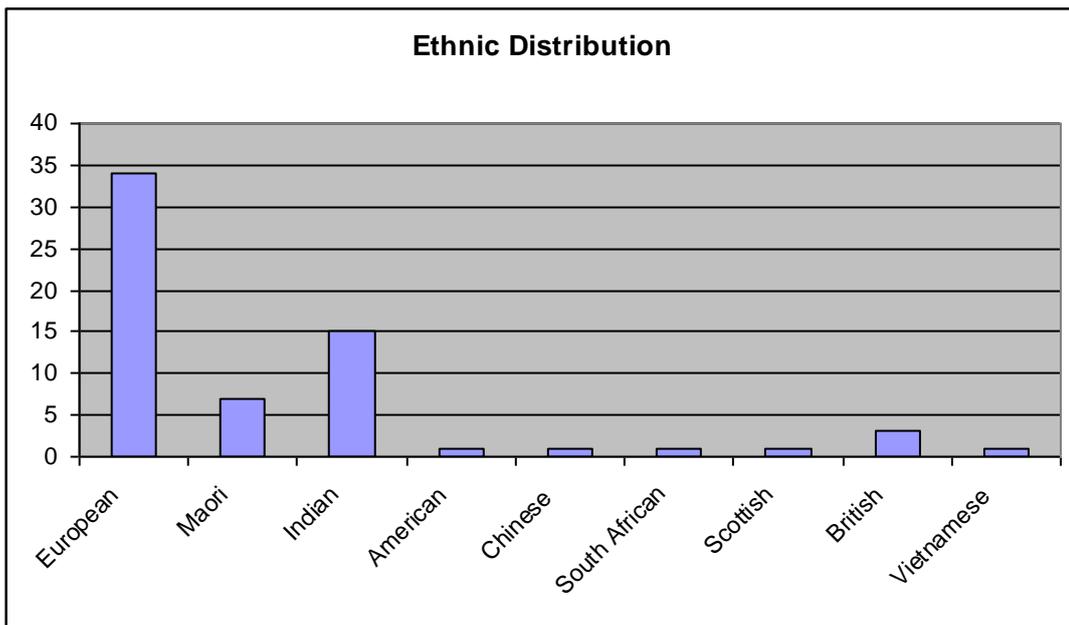
Gender:



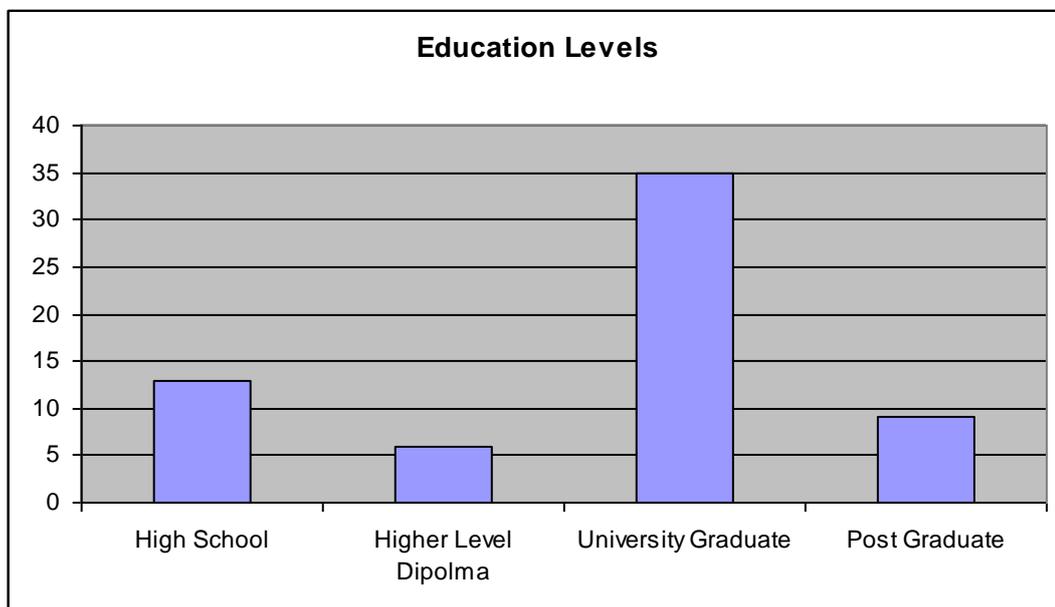
Age:



Ethnicity:



Education Level:



**APPENDIX 4: Organisational types represented in critical incident reports**

<b>Type of Organisation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Bank	4
Car dealership	1
Construction	3
Electrical specialist	2
Hardware specialist	2
Hospitality	3
Medical	1
Private sale	1
Promotions	2
Retail	23
Service station	1
Supermarket	4
Telecommunications	7
Video shop	1