

We appreciate your business, not your abuse: Incivility by customers predicts revenge toward
customers

We appreciate your business, not your abuse: Incivility by customers predicts revenge
toward customers

By

Akanksha Bedi, Hons. B. Comm., M.Comm, M.A. (Economics)

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AUTHOR: Akanksha Bedi, Hons. B. Comm., Master of Commerce, Master of Arts
(Economics)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Aaron C.H. Schat

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ABSTRACT

Past research on organizational revenge has often focused on the organization or organizational members (e.g., coworkers, or supervisors) as targets of revenge behaviours. Building on Tripp et al.'s (2007, 2009) model of workplace revenge, the present study examined the influence of customer incivility on customer directed revenge behaviours. Data from a survey of 434 customer service employees suggested that incivility from customers was positively associated with the service employee's desires for revenge and actual revenge behaviours against the uncivil customer. Specifically, employees who experienced customer incivility and blamed the customer for the mistreatment were more likely to desire and engage in revenge. Empathic concern, perspective taking and organizational tolerance of uncivil customers moderated the relationship between blame attributions and desire for revenge such that individuals who empathized with the transgressor, took his/her perspective, or perceived their organization as intolerant of uncivil customer behaviours were less likely to desire revenge. In addition, empathic concern moderated the relationship between blame attribution and actual revenge behaviours such that employees who empathized with the customer were less likely to act on their blame attributions and engage in revenge. Finally, empathic concern and perspective taking moderated the relationship between desire for revenge and actual revenge behaviours but in a direction opposite of the other observed moderation effects. Specifically, employees who empathized with the customer or took his/her perspective were more (not less) likely to act on their desires for revenge

and engage in revenge. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings and directions for future research are discussed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Many customers are rude or difficult, not polite like you or I. Getting your own back evens the score. There are lots of things that you do that no one but you will ever know—smaller portions, dodgy wine, a bad beer—all that and you serve it with a smile! Sweet revenge!”

- Harris & Ogbonna (2002)

The topic of revenge behaviour in organizations has garnered significant research attention during the last two decades (e.g., Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006; Bies & Tripp, 1996; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Increasing evidence suggests that revenge occurs in organizations (Morrill, 1995; Bies & Tripp, 1996) and is motivated by perceptions of injustice toward others (e.g., Neuman & Baron, 1998; Robinson & Bennett, 1997; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Previous research has established significant positive associations between organizational injustice and a variety of revenge motivated work behaviours including employee theft (Greenberg, 1990), organizational sabotage (Neuman & Baron, 1998; Robinson & Bennett, 1997; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), workplace aggression (Folger & Skarlicki, 1998), and workplace violence (Folger & Baron, 1996). Revenge behaviours such as these may result in significant economic and psychological cost to organizations, its employees or customers, making the need to understand revenge increasingly important to individual well-being and organizational success (Bensimon, 1994; Hollands, 1997; Jones, 2009).

One recent theoretical model that advances this research is Tripp and Bies's (2009) model of workplace revenge (see also Tripp, Bies, & Aquino, 2007), which proposes that employees need respect and justice at work, and therefore when they perceive acts of unfairness that the organization is not addressing, they work toward restoring the justice on their own. This model proposes acts of injustice as provocations, which lead to blaming, feelings of anger and a motivation for revenge. The victim decides how to deal or cope with the motivation for revenge by choosing a course of action in the form of revenge, forgiveness, or reconciliation. Which of these responses the victim chooses depends on the strength of the motive for revenge: the higher the motive, the more likely the victim chooses revenge over forgiveness or reconciliation, or both. In addition, factors such as the victim's power, personality, and perceptions of procedural justice may also influence that victim's response to the situation (Tripp & Bies, 2009).

Tripp et al. (2007) suggested that many victim employees are potential vigilantes who will pursue justice on their own if they believe justice will not be restored in any other way. Specifically, Tripp et al. (2007) stated: "Revenge is about vigilante justice. Only by understanding this vigilante motive for revenge can managers reduce revenge-motivated aggression in the workplace" (p. 31). Although Tripp et al.'s (2007) model provides a path toward understanding how an act of injustice triggers intentions to retaliate and actual revenge behaviours, empirical tests and theoretical extensions of the model and the motive to seek revenge are quite limited.

Past research on organizational revenge has often focused on the employee as the avenger and the organization as a whole, and/or other organizational members (e.g.,

coworkers, or supervisors) as targets of revenge behaviours. Although these are important targets of revenge behaviour, an exclusive focus on organizational insiders ignores revenge behaviours directed against organizational outsiders, such as customers or clients (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002, 2006; van Jaarsveld, Walker, & Skarlicki, 2010; Skarlicki, van Jaarsveld, & Walker, 2008). According to the theoretical and empirical work on emotional labor, service employees who experience unjust behaviour from customers (e.g., aggression, incivility), are expected to suppress negative emotions and display positive emotions toward their customers (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983). Moreover, the service context is such that in the event of customer mistreatment of a service employee, organizations are unlikely to take action against the offender. In the absence of an organizational response to the injustice, victimized employees are more likely to restore the justice on their own (Grandey, 2000; Harris & Reynolds, 2004; van Jaarsveld, Walker, & Skarlicki, 2010; Tripp & Bies, 2009; Tripp, Bies, & Aquino, 2007).

The means by which a service employee will get back at the offending customer are likely to be largely covert, subtle, and undetectable. One reason why covert revenge behaviours are likely is the fear of “being caught” and reprimanded. Another reason why employees may get back at uncivil customers by engaging in covert revenge behaviours is the short term, brief and episodic nature of customer-employee interactions. The focus of the customer service exchange is to satisfy a one- time short-term need, providing employees with an extra incentive to engage in covert revenge and get away with it (Duck, 1998). The nature of such retaliatory behaviour will depend on the service context, but examples include “accidentally” spilling a drink on a customer, fouling a

customer's food outside of the customer's presence, making fun of the customer away from their presence (to one's peers), or, in phone interactions, intentionally hanging up on a rude customer (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002; Paules, 1991; Reynolds & Harris, 2006; Skarlicki et al., 2008). The opening vignette about a waitress who serves bad beer, smaller portions, or "dodgy" wine to rude customers provides such an example. In addition to, or instead of such active forms of "doing something to" the customer, some employees may retaliate by withholding customer directed citizenship behaviours such as ignoring the customer, or taking away the "little extras" associated with the service delivery (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). From a managerial perspective, although the costs of customer directed revenge behaviours are difficult to estimate, such behaviours may negatively affect service delivery and diminish the profitability and reputation of the organization (Eerde & Peper, 2008; Harris & Ogbonna, 2002). Therefore, in addition to being of theoretical importance, gaining a fuller understanding of the factors that contribute to customer directed revenge is also of significant practical concern. Organizations that take steps to prevent and respond effectively to customer incivility may be successful in reducing the occurrence of revenge, thus promoting beneficial outcomes for both its customers and employees.

The objectives of this study are twofold. First, it advances Tripp et al.'s (2007, 2009) model and the research on customer directed revenge by investigating the relationship between service employee attributions of blame when they experience customer incivility and customer directed revenge behaviours. Although the organization that accepts or tolerates uncivil behaviours from customers may also be a target of blame

and retaliation, the focus of this study is on revenge directed against customers as theory on organizational (in)justice suggests that individuals' responses to mistreatment are usually directed to its source (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002; Homans, 1961; van Jaarsveld et al., 2010; Jones, 2009; Tripp & Bies, 2009). This approach is also consistent with social exchange theory, which considers revenge as a basic expression of reciprocity or a "tit for tat" response to harm the individual who has harmed you (Bies et al., 1997; Blau, 1964; Greenberg, 1996).

When employees experience uncivil behaviour from customers, they engage in an attribution process to understand why the customer behaved that way. The extent to which the employee blames the customer is influenced by the nature of the behaviour and the situational context in which the behaviour occurred (e.g., Shaver, 1985, Weiner, 1985, 1995). For example, public ridicule, destructive criticism, and violation of formal rules of conduct have been linked with increased levels of blame attribution (Tripp & Bies, 2009). The more the victim blames the perpetrator for the harm, the more motivated s/he is to desire and engage in revenge (Bies & Tripp, 1996, 2001). Thus, when a service employee perceives mistreatment from customers, if it triggers a retaliatory response, it will likely be directed toward the customer (Bies & Tripp, 1998; Greenberg, 1996; Skarlicki et al., 2008).

Another way this study advances Tripp et al.'s (2007, 2009) model of workplace revenge is by examining whether desire for revenge explains how and why mistreatment from customers translates into acts of revenge. Bies, Tripp, and Kramer (1997) in their thermodynamic theory of revenge highlight the cognitive and social dynamics of

workplace revenge. The model stipulates that intentions to retaliate and revenge behaviours arise in response to perceived personal harm or violation of the social order (Bies & Tripp, 1995). Specifically, Bies et al. (1997) argue that undesirable events, such as personal insults, violation of social norms, or some other form of moral or interpersonal violations, trigger negative emotions such as rage and anger – and more specifically a *moral* outrage that justifies (in the person's mind) the desire for revenge as “moral and in service of justice”. The person justifies their outrage as a rational response to what happened to them and desires revenge to get back at the perpetrator. The link between anger and desires can also be explained through cognitive theories of emotion that stipulate that emotions are cognition dependent and include various cognitive components such as activated appraisals, subsequent desires, and intentions (Lazarus, 1982, 1991; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). Unpleasant occurrences can instigate unpleasant feelings such as anger and distress that are linked with particular thoughts and memories and with certain kinds of expressive motor and physiological reactions (Berkowitz, 1983, 1989). In the case of mistreatment, desires to get even with the perpetrator arise as a response to the pent up negative emotions. To the extent the motivation for revenge and emotions continue, a heating up process occurs within the employee, which is ultimately released through venting, dissipation, burnout, or revenge (Bies et al., 1997). According to cognitive consistency theory, individuals desire to maintain consistency between their thoughts and actions (Abelson, Aronson, McGuire, Newcomb, Rosenberg, & Tannenbaum, 1968). Thus, individuals who possess desires to

behave in a vengeful way are more likely to engage in retaliatory behaviours to maintain a balance between their thoughts and actions and avoid the state of cognitive dissonance.

A second objective of this study is to explore several individual and organizational variables that could constrain or encourage the emergence of revenge desires and the enactment of revenge behaviour. Previous theoretical and empirical work on organizational revenge has established the role of both organizational and individual determinants of revenge and has called for research that integrates the two classes of variables, rather than consider them independently. This study tests the effects of three individual difference variables (perspective taking, empathic concern, and implicit readiness to aggress) and one situational variable (organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours) on the relations between blame attributions, desire for revenge, and customer directed revenge behaviours.

Empathic concern refers to the tendency to respond emotionally to the fortunes and misfortunes of others (Davis, 1980, 1983; Kamdar, McAllister, & Turban, 2006; Spector & Fox, 2002) and perspective taking – also referred to as cognitive empathy – is defined as the ability to understand and adopt the perspective of the other. According to the role theory, empathic concern and perspective taking or “taking the role of the other” are important in facilitating pro-social interpersonal behaviour, or behaviour that subordinates the self (or the self's perspective) to the larger society made up of other people (Cottrell, 1971; Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1934; Piaget, 1932). Individuals high in perspective taking and empathic concern are more likely to make positive attributions about other's actions, thereby facilitating pro-social thinking and behaviours (Baier,

1965; Hoffman, 1988). When faced with customer incivility, employees with high levels of empathic concern and perspective taking are more likely to take the perspective of the customer and be sensitive to their needs, thus making them less likely to engage in revenge (Rupp, McCance, Spencer, & Sonntag, 2008). Indeed, perspective taking and empathic concern foster high-quality relationships, by increasing altruistic motivation, forgiveness, organizational citizenship behaviours, and decreasing aggressive reactions (Batson, 1991; Kamdar, Davis, 1994; McAllister, & Turban, 2006; Parker & Axtell, 2001; Spector & Fox, 2002; Toi & Batson, 1982). Therefore, when individuals with high levels of perspective taking and empathic concern are exposed to customer incivility, they will be less likely to desire and engage in revenge than those with low levels of perspective taking and empathic concern.

Another individual difference variable that could influence the blame attribution-desires for revenge and revenge behaviour relationship is implicit readiness to aggress (James, 1998; James & Mazerolle, 2002). According to social cognitive theory of moral thought and action, individuals do not ordinarily engage in negative conduct until they have justified to themselves the morality of their actions (Bandura, 1991, 1999). Implicit readiness to aggress is a trait that represents individuals' unconscious and automatic justifications for aggressive behaviour (James, 1998; James & Mazerolle, 2002). Because individuals are motivated to think of themselves as being moral, sensible and socially responsible, they often rely on these unconscious justification mechanisms (JMs) to rationalize aggressive behaviour (Banaji, Bazerman, & Chugh, 2003; Hogan & Smither, 2001; James & Mazerolle, 2002). The justification mechanisms unconsciously shape

reasoning so that individuals perceive themselves as justified in acting out aggressively (Frost, Ko, & James, 2007). This process of moral justification encourages the rational appeal of undesirable behaviour by portraying it as serving a socially worthy or a moral cause (Bandura, 1999). In the context of this study, victimized employees may justify revenge toward customers as a rational and a just response to their mistreatment (Darley & Pittman, 2003; Tripp & Bies, 2009). Therefore, employees who blame the customer for the wrongdoing and rely on one or more aggression justification mechanisms are likely to act on their desires for revenge and engage in revenge behaviours (James, 1998).

An organizational variable that could influence the blame attribution - desire for revenge and revenge behaviour relationship is organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours. Organizational tolerance reflects the extent to which an organization is perceived as insensitive to, or tolerant of, uncivil customer behaviours. Indeed, embedded in the notion of “the customer is always right” is the organization’s implicit message that customers come first. According to psychological contract theory, when employees perceive a discrepancy between what they expect and what they actually receive, they are likely to take action to rebalance the employment relationship (e.g., Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Accordingly, if the organization fails to prevent or deal with uncivil customer behaviour, then employees are likely to take matters into their own hands and pursue justice on their own (Bies & Tripp, 1996). Individuals who lose their confidence in the justice restoring capabilities of the organization are more likely to attempt to redress the situation by contemplating and engaging in revenge against the customer (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006). A model outlining the proposed relations is

provided in Figure 1 (Appendix C). A more comprehensive description of specific hypotheses and their rationales is provided in chapter 2.

Insert Figure 1 here

Building on Tripp et al.'s (2007, 2009) model of workplace revenge, the present study contributes to the revenge literature by exploring a framework that addresses two main questions. First, do employees engage in covert, subtle and undetectable forms of revenge to “get back at” uncivil customers? Customers present a unique source of unfairness and, because of the nature of the service context, they occupy a powerful position vis-à-vis the employee. Therefore, when employees perceive customer mistreatment, they may retaliate by engaging in various forms of subtle or covert retaliatory behaviours. Organizational pressure to adhere to display rules, the fear of “getting caught” and being reprimanded are some of the reasons why covert retaliatory behaviours against customers are more likely than overt behaviours. Understanding various covert and indirect manifestations of customer directed revenge will provide greater insight into how service employees seek justice when faced with perceived injustice (incivility) from customers.

Moreover, although the theoretical work on the topic has stressed the importance of desires in the enactment of revenge behaviours against organizational insiders, empirical research documenting the role of desires in revenge behaviours directed against outsiders is limited. The test of the mediating processes between blame attribution and

customer directed revenge extends the literature on revenge and contributes to our understanding of how and why blame attribution leads to customer-targeted revenge. Desires for revenge may provide the motivational basis underlying the relationship between blame and employee revenge behaviours, and have important implications for employees and their organizations.

The present research also addresses a second question: What factors augment or constrain the likelihood that service employees will enact revenge behaviours against customers who mistreat them? Although, research has indicated the influence of both organizational as well as individual factors in limiting or enhancing the likelihood of revenge seeking, empirical research on the above variables is limited (for exceptions see Bradfield & Aquino, 1999, van Jaarsveld et al., 2010; Skarlicki, Folger, & Tesluk, 1999). Perspective taking and empathic concern are individual difference variables that help service employees understand and identify with the customer's point of view, thereby limiting retaliatory motives and behaviours (Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997; Takaku, 2001). Another dispositional variable that could influence an individual's decision to engage in revenge is implicit readiness to aggress (James, 1998; James & Mazerolle, 2002). Implicit readiness to aggress underlies unconscious rationalizations to respond aggressively to a perceived injustice. Individuals seeking revenge tend to rationalize their behaviour as a just response to mistreatment and are thus more motivated to seek revenge and act on those motivations (Tripp & Bies, 2009). Lastly, there are many aspects of the organizational environment that are likely to influence desires for revenge and actual revenge behaviours. This study focuses on one such characteristic, organizational

tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours. When organizational norms and policies fail to effectively address – and even implicitly condone – uncivil customer behaviours, then employees may be motivated to seek their own justice via revenge (Aquino et al., 2001; Tripp et al., 2007).

I have organized this dissertation as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on customer incivility, desires to engage in revenge, perspective taking and empathic concern, implicit readiness to aggress, organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours, and customer directed revenge behaviours. It also provides the study's hypotheses. Chapter 3 details the study's measures and methods. In Chapter 4, I present the analytic procedures employed and the results. Chapter 5 concludes by providing a discussion of the study's findings, including theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and future research directions.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Background

Aquino et al. (2001) define revenge as “an action in response to some perceived harm or wrongdoing by another party that is intended to inflict damage, injury, discomfort, or punishment on the party judged responsible”. There are two key elements of this definition. First, revenge is a provoked behaviour that occurs in response to some perceived injustice or mistreatment. Second, these behaviours are carried out with an intention to seek retribution, avenge an injury, or punish the offender for wrongdoing. As such, revengeful acts are intended to inflict physical or psychological harm on the individual deemed blameworthy for a transgression (Berkowitz, 1993).

Several theoretical perspectives have been used to examine organizational revenge. From an equity and justice perspective, revenge is considered an intentional act motivated by the desire to restore equity and “get back at” the perpetrator who has treated someone unjustly (Bies, Tripp, & Kramer, 1997; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Folger, 2001). From the standpoint of social exchange theory, revenge is viewed as a basic expression of reciprocity or a “tit for tat” response to harm the individual who has harmed you (Bies et al., 1997; Greenberg, 1996). Inflicting harm on someone who has harmed you becomes rewarding, as reflected in the concept of “sweet revenge” (Homans, 1967).

Past research has focused on both organizational and situational antecedents of revenge behaviours, such as wrongful dismissals (Folger & Baron, 1996), injustice (Parks, 1997), and violation of promises (Bies & Tripp, 2001), as well as personal antecedents to revenge behaviours such as attitudes towards revenge (Douglas & Martinko, 2001), attribution of blame (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001), and agreeableness (Skarlicki, Folger, & Tesluk, 1999). In addition, previous research has identified various negative consequences of revenge, such as theft (Terris & Jones, 1982) and industrial sabotage (Crino, 1994), as well as positive consequences such as improved job performance and cooperation (Bies, Tripp, & Kramer, 1997), reduced bullying, restored justice, and enhanced self esteem of the revenge seeker (Tripp & Bies, 1997). Revenge or threats of revenge can also act as a deterrent against power abuse by organizational authority figures and thus promote cooperation and obedience (Bies & Tripp, 1995).

Much of the focus of past research on organizational revenge has been on examining the role of perceived injustice as an antecedent to revenge (e.g., Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001, 2006; Cremer, 2006; Skarlicki, Barclay, & Pugh, 2008; Skarlicki, & Folger, 1997; Tripp, Bies, Aquino, 2007). When an individual perceives injustice, the revenge motive may be enacted which leads the victim to seek revenge (Bies & Tripp, 1998). For instance, Bies and Tripp (1995) argued that the motivation to engage in revenge arises after perceived mistreatment that violates trust. These revenge motives may then lead to revenge behaviours (Bies et al., 1997; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999).

Past research has also demonstrated the influence of organizational and individual difference variables on the relationship between injustice and revenge behaviours (e.g.,

Skarlicki, Folger, & Tesluk 1999; Greenberg, 1996; Skarlicki et al., 2008). For instance, Burton, Mitchell, & Lee (2005) demonstrated that the positive relationship between perceived injustice and retaliatory behaviours was stronger for individuals with high self-esteem compared to those with low self-esteem. The authors explained this finding by arguing that individuals with high self-esteem possess a desire to promote and protect the positive self-image, and may therefore be more likely to retaliate in the face of injustice compared to individuals with low self-esteem. Cremer (2006) studied the influence of procedural justice and identification with the group on organizational revenge and concluded that unfair procedures led to higher revenge especially among those who highly identified with the group. Finally, research by Grégoire, Laufer, and Tripp (2010) found that customers were more likely to engage in revenge against the organization (e.g., spreading negative words about the firm's products) when they perceived that the firm acted opportunistically, caring more about its profits than fairly rectifying the service problems.

This dissertation aims to contribute to the literature on revenge by proposing an integrative approach to understand the potential influence of several individual and organizational factors on customer directed revenge behaviours. There is considerable evidence to suggest that people want to “get even” for the perceived injustices from organization or organizational insiders and punish the transgressor. However, research on revenge behaviours directed against organizational outsiders (such as customers, clients, etc.) has only recently started to emerge (e.g., service sabotage; Harris & Ogbonna, 2002, 2006; van Jaarsveld et al., 2010; Skarlicki et al., 2008). In the proposed model, customer

incivility acts as provocation for retaliation. Incivility from customers triggers a blame appraisal process whereby the victim evaluates the offense and assigns blame to the offending customer. This attribution process then influences whether the employee experiences a desire for revenge, which, when present, serves as a motivation to restore equity and punish the transgressor (Bies & Tripp, 1998; Robinson & Bennett, 1997). However, individuals who empathize with the transgressor and try to adopt his/her perspective will be less likely to desire and engage in revenge. Additionally, individuals who implicitly consider aggression as a moral and just response to perceived mistreatment will be more likely to act on the associated motives to take revenge and engage in retaliatory behaviours compared to individuals who lack these justifications. Lastly, when organizations are perceived as tolerant of customer incivility, employees are more likely to seek revenge on their own and restore justice. Following is a more detailed presentation of my hypotheses,

2.1 Customer Incivility, Blame Attribution and Customer Directed Revenge Behaviours

The issue of customer incivility has gathered significant research attention in the last decade (e.g., BenZur & Yagil, 2005; Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004; Harris & Reynolds, 2003). Several conceptualizations of customer incivility have been offered in the organizational behaviour and marketing literatures including: customer aggression (BenZur & Yagil, 2005; Wegge, Vogt, & Wecking, 2007), customer interactional injustice (e.g., Holmvald & Sidhu, 2007; Rupp & Spencer, 2006), customer related social stressors (Dormann & Zapf, 2004), difficult customers (e.g., Grandey,

2000), aberrant customer behaviour (Fullerton & Punj, 1993), customer misbehaviour (Fullerton & Punj, 1997; Yagil, 2008), and customer mistreatment (Skarlicki et al., 2008). Although distinct in certain ways, these conceptualizations generally converge on the notion that customer incivility reflects negative customer behaviour that causes discomfort or harm to the service provider. In this study, customer incivility is defined as a non-violent behaviour by a customer or a client in a service context which violates the norms for mutual respect and which may cause psychological discomfort or harm to the target employee (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Examples include treating the employee in a rude, disrespectful way, such as yelling, making condescending remarks, and swearing. Three features of customer incivility should be noted. First, customer incivility reflects a variety of non-violent deviant behaviours by customers against the service provider. The focus is on non-violent behaviours as most customer-employee interactions are short term in nature and carried out in a social environment where various constraints make acts of violence unlikely (e.g., such acts are illegal, easily detected, and subject to serious punishment). Furthermore, past research on workplace aggression has indicated that non-violent forms of aggressive behaviours are considerably more prevalent than acts of physical violence (Neuman & Baron, 1998; Schat, Frone, & Kelloway, 2006). Second, uncivil behaviours violate shared norms of social conduct, and are viewed by many people as immoral, disrespectful, or demeaning. Third, although it is not always evident whether uncivil customer behaviours targeted toward a service provider are intended to cause harm, they often bring psychological discomfort or harm to the victim (see Yagil, 2008 for a review). For example, Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, (2004) surveyed

198 call centre employees and found that experiencing customer aggression was perceived as threatening and stressful, and was associated with heightened levels of burnout, emotional regulation and work absences. In a similar vein, BenZur and Yagil (2005) showed positive associations between customer aggression and burnout and emotion focused coping strategies.

Research on organizational revenge indicates that victims of injustice are likely to attribute blame to the offender (Tripp & Bies, 2009). Specifically, blame attribution is considered by some to be one of the most important predictors of revenge (e.g., Aquino et al., 2001; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Tripp & Bies, 2009, 2010). With respect to customer incivility, when employees perceive mistreatment by the customer, they evaluate the offense to understand why the customer did it and who is to be blamed for the transgression. To the extent the employee believes that the customer offended *on purpose*, the employee assigns fault and blame to the customer. The greater the blame, the greater is the likelihood that the employee will desire and engage in revenge. However, not all attribution processes are accurate. At times attributions are exaggerated and biased (Tripp & Bies, 2009). The exaggerated blame comes from an obsessive and ego-defensive process that portrays offender's actions as intentional and malevolent (Tripp & Bies, 2009). Revenge may be motivated partly by a "sinister attribution error" or overly "personalistic" attributions of malevolent motives to other's actions - "Not only did they do it, but they were out to get me!" (Bies et al., 1997; Kramer, 1994). Whatever the explanation, once the offender is judged accountable for the offense, the desire to get even and engage in revenge becomes likely. Blame attribution is a necessary precursor to

revenge as it provides the avenger with the purpose and motivation behind the offender's actions and justifies revenge as a moral and rational response to perceived injustice (Bies & Tripp, 2001). The significance of blame attribution is also reflected in Folger and Cropanzano's (1998) fairness theory, which suggests that blame is at the heart of social justice processes. Issues of fairness in social relations imply making judgments about the motives and intentions of the perceived wrongdoer and assigning accountability (i.e., who is to blame). Blame attribution allows the avenger to assign responsibility to the perpetrator for the harm and exact revenge (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999, Tripp & Bies, 1997).

According to social exchange theory, organizations are forums for transactions where social relationships are supported by the exchange of benefits between two parties (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997; Moorman & Byrne, 2005). These relationships then develop through a series of mutual exchanges, leading to a desire to reciprocate (Blau, 1964). The social exchange perspective suggests that individuals tend to direct their responses to the perceived source of unfairness (Malatesta & Byrne, 1997; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). For instance, employees who perceive injustice on the part of the organization reciprocate by engaging in harmful behaviours directed against the organization, or by reducing their job performance or organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB's) (Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002; Skarlicki, & Folger, 1997; Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). Similarly, individuals who perceive injustice from a coworker, supervisor, agent, and/or customer, respond by engaging in retaliatory behaviours directed toward the source of

injustice (Bies et al., 1997; Jawahar, 2002; Jones, 2009; van Jaarsveld et al., 2010; Schweiger, Ivancevich, & Power, 1987). For example, van Jaarsveld et al., (2010) examined data from 307 call center employees and found that customer incivility was positively associated with employee incivility toward customers. In another study, Skarlicki et al. (2008) studied the effects of customer mistreatment on sabotage behaviours for 358 customer service representatives. Results indicated that after controlling for other intra-organizational sources of unfairness, unfair treatment from customers was positively associated with customer-directed sabotage behaviours.

In sum, the attribution of blame will positively predict customer directed revenge behaviours from the victimized service provider. Stated alternatively, the extent to which a service provider blames the customer for uncivil behaviour is likely to positively predict revenge behaviours directed against that customer.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Service providers who blame customers' for behaving in an uncivil way toward them will be more likely to engage in revengeful behaviours than service providers who attribute less blame to the offending customers.

Past research suggests that blame attributions lead to increased desires to engage in revenge (Bies, 1987; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999). Individuals with strong desires for revenge are more likely to engage in actual retaliatory behaviours to maintain consistency between their thoughts and actions (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Festinger, 1957). In the next section, I propose that “desire for revenge” mediates the expected positive relationship between attributing blame to the customer(s) and customer directed revenge behaviours.

2.2 Desire for Revenge as a Mediator of Blame Attribution and Customer Directed Revenge Behaviours

Bies et al.'s (1997) thermodynamic theory of revenge proposes blame assignment as a critical antecedent to desires for revenge (Bies et al., 1997). According to this theory, an aggressive response following an offense is not spontaneous but rather follows a sequence of cognitive processing to evaluate the particular event. First, a provoking incident triggers a search of causal explanations to ascertain the intentions of the offender. Next, the victim assesses whether to hold the perpetrator responsible for the injustice. When the victim attributes blame and malevolent intentions to the perpetrator's actions, they experience a variety of negative emotions such as rage and anger and seek to repair the situation by returning the harm (Adams, 1965; Averill, 1982; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Tripp, Bies, & Aquino, 2007). In this way, retaliation may provide the victim an emotional and symbolic release for unexpressed negative emotions such as anger, disgust, or resentment and satisfy their desire to seek revenge (Bies et al., 1997; Aquino, Galperin, Bennett, 2006; Robinson & Bennett, 1997).

The link between blame attribution and desires for revenge can also be explained by cognitive theories of emotion, which suggest that people's emotions are intimately related to their cognitive appraisal of their circumstances, subsequent desires and intentions (Lazarus, 1982, 1991; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). Emotions represent adaptive responses to the demands of the environment and may thus prime thoughts that are consistent with the associated feelings (Bower, 1981; Bower & Forgas, 2001). Individuals who perceive mistreatment or injustice tend to blame the

perpetrator for the harm and experience anger and rage, which, in turn, is likely to provoke thoughts of revenge (Tripp et al., 2009). This desire “to get even” with the perpetrator arises as a result of pent up negative emotions (Bies et al., 1997; Tripp et al., 2009). Accordingly,

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Service providers who blame customers’ for behaving in an uncivil way toward them will be more likely to experience desire for revenge than service providers who attribute less blame to the offending customer.

Research indicates that revenge behaviours are often preceded by desires to punish the transgressor for his or her wrongdoings (Bies et al., 1997; Tripp et al., 2007; 2009). Although some acts of vengeance might be spontaneous and impulsive, generally they are thought out acts designed to “get even” for perceived harm (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). The proposed sequence from revenge desires to revenge behaviours can be explained by cognitive consistency theory which stipulates that individuals desire to maintain consistency between their thoughts and actions (Abelson, Aronson, McGuire, Newcomb, Rosenberg, & Tannenbaum, 1968). The basic premise of cognitive consistency theory is that individuals are motivated to maintain attitudes and behave consistently with their self-concept to avoid uncomfortable feelings of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Heider 1958). To avoid the state of dissonance people seek out, attend to, and interpret their environment in ways that reinforce their prior knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Where someone experiences the desire for revenge but does not act upon it, a sense of dissonance prevails. The positive association between the desire to revenge and revenge behaviours is also

explainable in terms of the thermodynamic theory of revenge. This theory holds that employees behave in a vengeful way to restore equity or to express their feelings of outrage and frustration (Bies et al., 1997; Tripp et al. 2007; 2009). Hence,

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Service providers who desire revenge against an uncivil customer are more likely to behaviourally act on their desires and engage in customer directed revenge behaviours than service providers who are less likely to experience such desires.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Service providers' desire to revenge perceived incivility from a customer mediates the positive relationship between the attributing blame to the customer and behaviourally expressing such desire.

Although desire for revenge and revenge behaviours occur when an individual perceives mistreatment and blames the offender, not every instance of mistreatment results in revenge. Previous theoretical and empirical work on organizational revenge has established that both individual and organizational factors may influence whether or not revenge occurs in response to mistreatment (Skarlicki, & Folger, 1999; Tripp & Bies, 2009; Tripp, et al., 2007). In this dissertation, I focus on the personality of the service employee who experiences customer incivility as well as the organizational climate with respect to the degree of tolerance for uncivil customer behaviours. Specifically, I focus on three individual difference variables: perspective taking, empathic concern, and implicit readiness to aggress; and one organizational factor, organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours.

2.3 Perspective Taking and Empathic Concern

Perspective taking refers to the ability to place oneself “in another’s shoes” and comprehend his or her point of view, and empathic concern refers to caring about the welfare of others and responding emotionally to their fortunes and misfortunes (Davis, 1983). Perspective taking is defined as “intellectual empathy” or the cognitive process of taking another person's perspective, while empathic concern refers to “affective empathy” or sharing the emotional state of another person (Duan & Hill, 1996: 263). Thus, perspective taking and empathic concern involve active consideration of another’s point of view, understanding or identifying with another’s experiences, and feeling concern for them when things go wrong for the target (Betancourt, 1990; Egan, 1990). According to Turner’s (1956) role theory, role taking is the process of “looking at or anticipating another’s behaviour by viewing it in the context of the role imputed to that other” (Turner, 1956). Role taking involves both the anticipation of behaviour of the other as well as identifying the feelings or motives behind such behaviour to shape one’s own behaviour (Turner, 1956). Role taking serves as the foundation for meaningful human interaction and involves mental reconstruction of both the objective and subjective worlds in which another person lives (Schwalbe, 1988). Individuals who practice role taking and are empathic to others’ situations develop social sensitivity and a moral self-concept to show compassion toward others’ plights (Grief & Hogan, 1973; Kohlberg, 1976; Mead, 1934).

A different yet related understanding of the role of perspective taking comes from the theory and research on emotion regulation and emotional labour, which suggests that the ability to understand another’s perspective can serve as a means of managing one’s

emotions (Gross 1998, 2002). Perspective taking is a form of deep acting wherein employees reappraise a situation by understanding the point of view of the other person with whom they are interacting (Grandey et al., 2004), in order to modify their interpretation of and emotional reaction to that person's behaviour (Grandey, 2000). When employees engage in active perspective taking, they are more likely to empathize with the target, and recognize the effects of external influences on the target's behaviour (Parker & Axtell, 2001).

I propose that the attribution of blame is less likely to lead to desiring revenge among employees who experience empathic concern and engage in perspective taking. Specifically, the thermodynamics theory of revenge predicts that blame attribution leads employees to seek revenge as an outlet for their anger, resentment, and desire for revenge (Bies et al., 1997). If, however, the victimized employees are able to take the offending customer's perspective and are emotionally sensitive to their circumstances, they are less likely to hold the uncivil customer personally accountable, thereby attenuating their desire for revenge (Hoffman, 1988; Stiff, Dillard, Somera, Hyun, & Sleight, 1988). Thus, employees who are able to 'put themselves in the customer's shoes' (i.e., identify emotionally with the customer) are likely to experience a muted emotional reaction to mistreatment by that customer. In turn, they should be less likely to feel the desire to take revenge.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Perspective taking moderates the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge such that individuals high in perspective taking will be less likely to desire revenge.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Empathic concern moderates the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge such that individuals high in empathic concern will be less likely to desire revenge.

Furthermore, employees who are able to take the perspective of the customer and experience compassion for them will be less likely to engage in revenge against them. Both perspective taking and empathic concern underlie high-quality interpersonal relationships and reflect a 'favored status' for the individual whose perspective has been taken (Parker & Axtell, 2001). Research shows that the ability to take another's perspective and appreciate their feelings relates positively to pro-social behaviours such as organizational citizenship behaviours and altruism (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997; Davis, 1996; Eisenberg, 1991), and negatively to anger, desiring for revenge, and retaliatory behaviours (Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997; Rupp, McCance, Spencer, & Sonntag, 2008; Singer, Seymour, O'Doherty, Stephan, Dolan, & Frith, 2006; Takaku, 2001). In customer-service encounters, employees who take the perspective of the customer are more likely to understand the customer's point of view, feel concern for them, and try to offer them greater assistance (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Accordingly, I expect that employee perspective taking and empathic concern for customers will reduce the likelihood that employees will engage in revenge toward customers.

Hypothesis 7(H7): Perspective taking moderates the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours such that individuals high in perspective taking are less likely to engage in revenge.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): Empathic concern moderates the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours such that individuals high in empathic concern are less likely to engage in revenge.

Previously I argued that employees who blame the offender for the perceived harm and are high in perspective taking and empathic concern are less likely to desire revenge and less likely to be vengeful. Another individual difference variable that is likely to affect the blame attribution – desire for revenge and desire for revenge – revenge behaviour relationships is a personality trait called implicit readiness to aggress (James, 1998; James & Mazerolle, 2002).

2.4 Implicit Readiness to Aggress

Dispositional factors may have direct, indirect, or moderating effects on workplace revenge behaviours (Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Tripp & Bies, 2009; Tripp et al., 2007). Specifically, the model of workplace revenge suggests that personality traits can influence revenge behaviours at work (Tripp & Bies, 2009; Tripp et al., 2007). The likely role of personality emerges from the observation that people act differently to an identical situation, with some choosing to forget uncivil behaviour directed toward them and others expressing more discontent and responding more aggressively (Tripp & Bies, 2009). An individual with a tendency to view organizational events in a negative light will be more sensitive to perceived mistreatment and more likely to respond aggressively to negative stimulation (Berkowitz, 1993; Tripp & Bies, 2009). Skarlicki et al. (1999), for instance, found that personality moderated the relationship between fairness and retaliation such that when negative affect (NA) was high or agreeableness was low, the

interaction of distributive and interactional justice was more strongly associated with retaliatory behaviours.

The above research, however, is limited in that it is based primarily on self-report measures of personality. The level to which one self ascribes trait anger is valuable information, but because respondents are explicitly aware of the targeted construct, they are likely to respond in a socially desirable manner (Barrick & Mount, 1996; Ones, Viswesvaran, & Reiss, 1996). In addition, the motives to aggress are shielded by various defense mechanisms that portray aggression as a justified response to perceived injustice (see Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). These justifications operate at a subconscious level and cannot be reliably assessed by direct measures (Baron & Richardson, 1994; Berkowitz, 1999; James & Mazerolle, 2002; Frost, Ko, & James, 2007; McClelland, Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989).

Social cognitive theory of moral thought and action argues that individuals do not ordinarily engage in harmful conduct until they have justified to themselves the morality of their actions (Bandura, 1991, 1999). According to this theory, individuals who face injustice and blame the offender for wrongdoing experience a *righteous* anger or *moral* outrage (Darley & Pittman, 2003). The moral justification encourages the rational appeal of aggressive behaviour by portraying it as serving a socially worthy or a moral cause (Bandura, 1999). The moral justification shifts the responsibility of one's own aggressive actions to the opponent, and avengers view their actions as "morally right" and "in service of justice" (Frank, 1987). At times, these justifications exist outside of the conscious awareness, and are thus unavailable for conscious self-report (James &

Mazerolle, 2002). Some previous research has therefore emphasized the importance of assessing these implicit processes via indirect measures (i.e. measures that assess the extent to which individuals rely on unconscious processes like justification mechanisms) (see for e.g., Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Hogan, Hogan, & Roberts, 1996; James & Mazerolle, 2002; Winter, John, Stewart, Klohn, & Duncan, 1998). Hence, the use of an indirect measure in the current study should better capture implicit motives to seek revenge and the justification mechanisms shielding the awareness of such revenge motives (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; James, 1998; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). In contrast to explicit motives to aggress, assessing such motives implicitly does not require individuals to self report on their level of or readiness to engage in aggression. Hence, with such implicit measures one's actual underlying tendency to justify aggressive behaviour is better captured (James & Mazerolle, 2002).

Readiness to aggress has been assessed implicitly using the Conditional Reasoning Test for Aggression (CRT-A) (CRT-A; James, 1998; James & Mazerolle, 2002; James, McIntyre, Glisson, Green, Patton, & LeBreton, et al., 2005). CRT-A suggests that because individuals are motivated to hold a positive view of themselves and because they believe their behaviour is moral and socially acceptable, they often rely on unconscious justification mechanisms (JMs) to rationalize aggressive behaviour (James, 1998; James & Mazerolle, 2002). These rationalizations or implicit biases enhance the rational appeal of behaving aggressively (James, 1998), thereby enabling the aggressive individuals' self-deceptive thinking that their behaviour is rational (James, 1998). James (1998) identified six justification mechanisms that aggressive individuals unconsciously

use to enhance the rational appeal of aggressive behaviour: hostile attribution bias, potency bias, derogation of target bias, retribution bias, victimization by powerful others bias, and social discounting bias.

Hostile attribution bias is the tendency to interpret others' actions as having hostile intentions, even when they do not. Individuals with a hostile attribution bias view benign acts by others as covert attempts to inflict harm intentionally. For example, a service employee with hostile attribution bias is likely to interpret a suggestion by a customer as an intentional attempt to demean his or her work. The *potency bias* applies to individuals who frame social interactions in terms of dominance versus submissiveness, or strength versus weakness. Individuals with this bias perceive acts of aggressiveness as symbols of bravery, power, strength, and assertiveness, whereas nonaggressive acts connote submissiveness, weakness, impotence, and fear (Anderson, 1994; Gay, 1993; Hare, 1999; James, 1998; LeBreton, Binning, & Adorno, 2006; Millon, 1990). The *derogation of target bias* involves ascribing negative traits to the target or ignoring positive traits to make the target seem more deserving of aggression. For example, a victim may characterize the perpetrator as evil or dishonest and thus deserving of punishment. The *retribution bias* reflects implicit beliefs that aggression is justifiable in order to restore respect or avenge wounded pride. Someone with this bias has a tendency to retaliate rather than to seek reconciliation following an offense. The *victimization by powerful others bias* entails seeing oneself as a victim (as having been taken advantage of). It sets the stage for rationalizing aggression as a legitimate strike against oppression, redressing wrongs, or correcting an inequity. Finally, the *social discounting bias* refers to

using socially unorthodox and antisocial beliefs to interpret social events and relationships, wherein aggression is justified as a means to liberate oneself from repressive social customs, while exercising one's lawful right to freedom of expression.

Because revenge is often viewed as an irrational and illegitimate act, taking revenge requires a moral basis to justify such behaviour to oneself or to others (Bies & Tripp, 2005; Bandura, 1991, 1999). Implicit readiness to aggress provides the necessary foundation to engage in customer directed revenge as implicit biases cognitively prepare individuals with necessary justifications to aggress, thereby enhancing the perceived appropriateness of revenge behaviour. Research on implicit readiness to aggress has shown that scores on this trait positively relate to a proclivity to engage in aggressive behaviours. (James et al., 2005). In particular, implicit readiness to aggress relates positively to both active and passive indicators of aggression such as theft, student conduct violations, absenteeism, and dishonesty (James et al., 2005).

Implicit measures of personality may predict aggressive behaviours over and above explicit personality measures (Frost et al., 2007). Frost et al. (2007) for instance, examined the joint effects of explicit and implicit personality in predicting aggressive behaviours in 183 intramural basketball players. Both were positively associated with overt aggression, but implicit personality was a stronger predictor of overt aggressive behaviours than explicit personality ($r = 0.54$ and 0.38 respectively). Similar results were obtained for passive aggressive behaviours with implicit personality emerging as a stronger predictor of passive aggression than explicit personality ($r = 0.61$ and -0.16 respectively). The direction of these relationships suggest that the individuals who engage

in passive aggressive behaviours are unaware of their latent aggressive natures. Based on the social cognitive theory of moral thought and action and the aforementioned empirical evidence, individuals with an implicit justification to aggress will be more likely to engage in retaliatory aggressive behaviours than will individuals who lack these justifications.

Hypothesis 9 (H9): Implicit readiness to aggress will moderate the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours, such that it will be more positive for individuals with an implicit readiness to aggress.

Implicit readiness to aggress is also likely to moderate the relationship between desire for revenge and revenge behaviour. Specifically, the relationship between desiring revenge and customer directed revenge behaviours is likely to be stronger for individuals who are implicitly prepared to aggress. When faced with customer mistreatment and desire for revenge, individuals who harbor one or more justification mechanisms in their reasoning framework will be more likely to act on those desires and engage in behaviours that are consistent with their reasoning (James, 1998). The implicit biases will render individuals more likely to justify their motive-fulfilling behaviour, thus increasing the perceived rationality of behaving aggressively (James, 1998). On the other hand, individuals not possessing these biases are less likely to consider revenge as a justifiable response – even when holding their target of revenge blameworthy and desiring revenge.

Hypothesis 10 (H10): Implicit readiness to aggress will moderate the relationship between desires for revenge and customer directed revenge behaviours, such that it will be more positive for individuals possessing an implicit readiness to aggress.

Research on organizational revenge has also indicated the significant influence of organizational variables on revenge behaviours (Tripp & Bies, 2009). One variable that has a clear conceptual relevance for explaining revenge behaviours is a climate of organizational tolerance for uncivil customer behaviours.

2.5 Organizational Tolerance of Uncivil Customer Behaviours

Organizational climate refers to the shared perceptions of organizational members about the practices, norms, and behaviours that are rewarded (or penalized) in a particular setting (Schneider, 1990). Research on sexual harassment and workplace aggression has highlighted the influence of organizational climate (and more generally, organizational tolerance of injustice) on aggressive behaviours, including higher incidences of sexual harassment, revenge, workplace aggression and negative individual outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and reduced job satisfaction (Bishop, Korczynski, & Cohen, 2005; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Schat, 2004; Tripp & Bies, 2009; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007; Yagil, 2008).

With respect to customer incivility, organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours refers to employees' perceptions of the extent to which the organization ignores, fails to address, or implicitly condones uncivil behaviours from its customers. In other words, it reflects the perception among organizational members of an organization's insensitivity to or tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours. In a service oriented work environment, organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours is reflected in the marketing mantra, the "customer is the king", or "customer is always right". Any interaction between a customer and a service worker is imbued with the

belief that the customer is relationally superior to the employee and should be treated with respect, courtesy, and deference (Korczynski & Ott, 2004; Paules, 1991). This requires service employees to adhere to specific “display rules” (e.g., service with a smile) that dictate how and when certain emotions should be expressed or suppressed (Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983), even (or especially) when the customer is treating the employee rudely or disrespectfully. In contrast, customers are under no obligation to adhere to specific display rules or exhibit positive emotions (BenZur & Yagil, 2005) and may at times be rude, discourteous, and aggressive without sanction (see for e.g., Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004; Harris & Reynolds, 2004; Rupp & Spencer, 2006; Skarlicki et al., 2008). Service organizations with such a climate are unlikely to confront uncivil customers for fear of losing business. In such environments, employees experiencing customer incivility will be more likely to redress the situation on their own.

According to psychological contract theory, individuals form subjective beliefs about obligations that exist between themselves and their organizations (Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993). Unlike formal or written contracts, psychological contracts are inherently perceptual and entail employee beliefs about what their organizations owe them and what they owe to their organization in return. For instance, an employee may expect organizational support or fair treatment at work and in return offer to work diligently. A perceived breach of a psychological contract, a cognitive appraisal process, arises when an employee perceives that the organization has failed to fulfill its obligations (Rousseau, 1989). This perceived breach influences employee behaviours and attitudes.

Past research has linked violations of psychological contract to decreased job satisfaction, organizational trust, job performance and increased organizational cynicism, and acts of deviant behaviour such as sabotage, theft, and aggression (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Robinson, 1996; Turnley & Feldman, 1999). Organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours represents a psychological contract violation because it represents a failure of the organization in its duty to protect its employees from a threat to their well-being – uncivil customers. Employees are likely to expect their organization (represented by its managers) to prevent uncivil behaviour or to intervene in some way to address it when it does happen. Without such protection or concern from their organization, when faced with uncivil customers, employees are likely to seek justice on their own, via revenge. Consistent with this reasoning, Bordia et al. (2008) found that employees who perceived a breach of psychological contract experienced feelings of anger and betrayal and associated desires to seek revenge and engage in deviant behaviours. Organizational policies and procedures that allow – or fail to address – uncivil customer behaviours comprise a breach of the psychological contract. This exacerbates the relations of blame attribution with revenge desires and behaviours.

Hypothesis 11(H11): Organizational tolerance for uncivil customer behaviours will moderate the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours such that it will be more positive for employees who perceive that their organization tolerates uncivil customer behaviours.

Hypothesis 12(H12): Organizational tolerance for customer uncivil behaviours will moderate the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge

such that it will be more positive for employees who perceive that their organization tolerates uncivil customer behaviours.

Perceptions of the organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours can also influence how victims of incivility respond to desires for revenge. When organizations are seen as tolerant of uncivil customer behaviours, employees are likely to be more inclined to act on their desires to exact revenge against the offending customer. The thermodynamics theory of revenge posits violation of professional norms and conduct as “sparking events” that can motivate individuals to “get even” in organizations (Bies et al., 1997). Organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours represents one such violation that may trigger employees to seek personal revenge. In tolerant climates, employees lose their confidence in the justice restoring capabilities of the organization and therefore attempt to redress the situation on their own (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006). The desire to punish the perpetrator coupled with the organization’s inability to punish the offending customer implies that employees are more likely to act on these desires and take revenge. Thus, the desire to seek revenge may be especially strong when employees believe that their organization is unwilling to protect their interests and when they feel betrayed by organizational policies. Indeed, research on organizational revenge has consistently indicated the relevance of fair policies and procedures in influencing revenge motives and behaviours (Tripp & Bies, 2007, 2009). For instance, Aquino et al. (2001, 2006) found that employees are more likely to get even and take revenge when they perceive lower levels of procedural justice or a failure on the part of their organization to punish the offenders.

Hypothesis 13(H13): Organizational tolerance will moderate the relationship between desires for revenge and customer directed revenge behaviours such that it will be more positive for employees who perceive that their organization tolerates uncivil customer behaviours.

Chapter 3

Method

3.1 Participants and Procedures

Participants of this study were 434 customer service employees. Of these, 319 were employees working in customer service occupations located across Canada; the rest were undergraduate students of a mid-size Ontario University who had current or previous experience working in a customer service role. The service employee sample was relatively older (mean age = 31.06 years versus 20.52 years for student employees) and more experienced (mean tenure = 7.71 years versus 1.86 years for student employees). The two samples were combined as comparisons between the two groups on study hypotheses indicated no significant difference between the two samples. Of the 434 participants, 294 (67.7%) were females and 140 (32.3%) were males. The average age was 26.50 years, and average organizational tenure was 6.16 years.

Online surveys were used to collect the study data. The sample of student service employees received an email invitation with a link to an online survey. Service employees of a large national union were invited via a message posted on the union's website. All participants were told that the research was voluntary and that the study pertained to "understanding service employee reactions to rude customers". They were also assured of their confidentiality and told that the information they provided would be used solely for research purposes. Upon finishing the survey, respondents were invited to participate in twenty prize draws worth \$50 each. A sample of the survey cover letter is provided in Appendix A.

3.2 Measures

Measures were taken by asking the respondents to recall a specific incident of customer incivility they experienced and their reaction to it. Specifically, the following question was asked: “Think about a time when a customer was rude to you. Briefly describe the incident including what led up to this interaction, what the customer said or did to you, and how you responded to the customer”. After describing the incident, each respondent also completed a series of measures regarding his/her cognitive and behavioural response to the offense. These measures are briefly described below; more detailed information about the study questions is provided in Appendix B.

Blame attribution. Blame attribution was measured using a single item, “The customer was NOT wrong in what he/she did to me” from Wade’s (1989) victimization subscale. The one item measure reflects a simple and a straightforward conceptualization of blame attribution and has been frequently used in the research on organizational revenge (Bies & Tripp, 1996). Response options ranged from 1 = ‘Strongly disagree’, 5 = ‘Strongly agree’. The item was reverse scored to provide an index of blame attributed to the rude customer.

Desire for revenge. Five items taken from Bradfield & Aquino (1999) assessed revenge desires (i.e. the extent to which they entertained each of a number of vengeful thoughts after having experienced the customer incivility). Sample items are “I’m going to get even”, and “I’ll make them pay”. Respondents provided ratings to each item using a 5 point Likert type scale (1 = ‘Not at all true’, 5 = ‘Very much’). Principal components

analysis revealed a unidimensional solution, the items of which exhibited an internal consistency of $\alpha = .87$ (Table 1).

Customer directed revenge behaviours. Customer directed revenge behaviours were measured using items drawn from Harris & Ogbonna's (2002), Paules's (1991), and Batrus Hollweg International's (2002) measures of anti-service work behaviours performed by restaurant employees. A critical incident technique was used to develop additional items for customer directed revenge behaviours. For this, a group of 97 individuals with previous customer service experience was given the following description: "Customer service employees may sometimes feel mistreated by their customers, and may try to find ways to 'get back' at the customer and somehow even the score. Think about your experience with such customers and provide some examples of what you or your coworker(s) did to get back at them". Overall, 58 incidents were generated. A majority of these items pertained to behaviours that were limited to specific industries or occupations and were unusable for a survey that was not occupation- or industry- specific. Examples included raising the air conditioning temperature, giving a bad seat to the customer, convincing the customer to order expensive items on the menu, etc. Duplicate and ambiguous items were deleted, reducing the list to 14 items. These 14 items were then presented to a focus group of 10 subject matter experts (i.e. customer service employees working in various occupations) who rated the extent to which the items corresponded to customer directed revenge behaviours. Specifically, the following instruction was given: "Research suggests that when employees feel unfairly treated by their customers, they tend to find ways to 'strike back' and somehow even the score. The

following survey is designed to assist in the development of a scale to measure customer directed revenge behaviours. Customer directed revenge behaviours are defined as “intentional behaviours by service employees designed to get back at an abusive customer”. Please evaluate the extent to which the following behaviours reflect the definition of customer directed revenge behaviours provided above”. Response choices ranged from 1 (*does not relate to customer directed revenge behaviour*) to 5 (*relates a lot to customer directed revenge behaviour*). Eleven items with highest mean level ratings (mean levels exceeding 3.5 or more) were retained for use. Finally, 3 scholars with research experience in the area of workplace aggression were invited to evaluate the items for clarity and consistency. Based on their recommendations, 3 of the 11 items were excluded because of ambiguity or lack of clarity. The remaining 8 items are provided in Appendix B. Sample items are “I argued with that customer”, “I did something else to get back at that customer”, and “I swore at that customer behind his/her back”.

To reduce the salience of revenge behaviour and limit socially desirable responding, the revenge items were embedded within 7 distractor items that referred to various other service oriented behaviours such as extra role customer service behaviours (adapted from Bettencourt & Brown, 1997), customer service orientation (adapted from Donovan, Brown, & Mowen, 2004), ingratiation service employee behaviours (adapted from Strutton, Pelton, Lumpkin, 1995), and forgiveness (adapted from McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). Sample items are “I helped that customer even if it meant going beyond job requirements”, “I provided prompt and efficient service to that

customer”, “I went out of my way to help that customer”, and “I forgave the customer” respectively. The 7 distractor items and 8 items from customer directed revenge scale were then administered to study participants, with reference to the specific incident they recalled: “After interacting with that customer who mistreated you, please indicate (yes/no) whether or not you behaved in the following ways”. The responses were coded using a 1 = ‘Yes’, 2 = ‘No’ format. The complete scale for this measure is shown in Appendix B.

Individuals who participated in the focus group and critical incident parts of this study did not participate in the rest of the study.

Perspective taking. Perspective taking was measured using four items from the Axtell, Parker, Holman, and Totterdell’s (2007) measure of customer oriented perspective taking. The respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they, for example, “tried to see things from customer’s viewpoint”, and “imagined how things looked from the customer’s perspective” (Appendix B). The items were rated on a 5 point Likert type scale (1 = ‘Not at all true’, 5 = ‘Very much’). Exploratory (principal) factor analysis suggested that the items comprised a single factor with an alpha reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .93$ (Table 1).

Empathic concern. The extent to which the service employees empathized with the customer was measured using three items from Axtell et al. (2007). A sample item is “I feel concerned for customers if they are experiencing difficulties” (Appendix B). Responses were scored on a 5 point Likert type scale (1 = ‘Not at all true’, 5 = ‘Very

much'). Exploratory (principal) factor analysis revealed one factor and the reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .84$ (Table 1).

Implicit readiness to aggress. The Conditional Reasoning Test of Aggression (CRT-A; James & McIntyre, 2000) was used to assess implicit aggression, that is, the presence of cognitive biases that enhance the rational appeal of behaving aggressively. The CRT-A measure consists of 22 conditional reasoning problems and 3 traditional inductive reasoning problems (to enhance face validity). On the surface, the conditional reasoning items appear to respondents as inductive reasoning problems, but they actually reflect implicit biases associated with rationalizing aggressive behaviour. Each conditional reasoning problem has two illogical alternatives, one non-aggressive alternative, and one aggressive alternative. The aggressive alternatives are designed to appeal to aggressive individuals, as opposed to non-aggressive alternatives that are more appealing to individuals low on trait aggressiveness (James et al., 2005). The scale is called the Justification of Aggression scale (JAGS). Respondents will score a "+1" for an aggressive answer, a "0" for an illogical answer, and a "-1" for a nonaggressive answer. These scores are summed across all 22 conditional reasoning items to create composite scores, which are then linearly transformed (in order to preserve the underlying distribution) into a standardized variable.

High scores on the CRT-A (a score of eight or above) indicate that justification mechanisms (JMs) for aggression are instrumental in shaping the reasoning to rationalize aggressive behaviour (James & McIntyre, 2000). These individuals are referred to as "justifiers", or individuals who are implicitly prepared to rationalize motives to harm

others and yet consider themselves as moral and just (James & Mazerolle, 2002; James et al., 2005). In addition, “justifiers” are also more likely to have engaged in aggression in the past or engage in future aggressive behaviours (James et al., 2005). In contrast, low scores on the justification of aggression scale (JAGS) indicate that JMs for aggression are not instrumental in shaping the reasoning to aggress. These individuals are referred to as “non-aggressive” and lack strong motives to harm others. The lack of defensive mechanisms to justify aggressive behaviours suggests a weak proclivity to engage in acts intended to harm others.

The 434 participants in this study had a mean JAGS score of 4.13, ranging from 0 to 13 and a standard deviation of 2.18 (Table 1).

Organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours. Organizational tolerance was measured using four items developed by Schat (2004). Sample items are “My place of work takes steps to deal with rude customers”, and “My place of work tolerates customers who use profanity or threats to get their way”. Responses were scored on a 5 point Likert type scale (1 = ‘Strongly disagree’, 5 = ‘Strongly agree’). Exploratory (principal) factor analysis resulted in a unidimensional solution and the reliability coefficient was $\alpha = .82$ (Table 1).

Control variables. Demographic variables that are likely to influence the study results were measured and controlled for in the data analysis. Specifically, the study controlled for gender because there is evidence to suggest that men hold more favorable attitudes toward revenge than women (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). Age and tenure were also controlled as older employees and employees with substantial work experience

may be less likely to engage in deviant behaviours than younger employees (Geen, 1995). In addition, social desirability was included to control for the individual tendency to impression manage and thus under report unethical behaviours such as revenge. This construct was measured using the revised six item version of Form X2 by Fischer and Fick (1993). Items were answered using a true-false format. Finally, the study controlled for neuroticism as neurotics tend to have fewer psychological resources to meet demands, appraise situations more negatively, and are less tolerant of stress (Hart, 1999; Mount & Barrick, 1995). These characteristics may make neurotics more sensitive and responsive to customer incivility. Neuroticism was measured by two items taken from Rammstedt & John's (2007) short version of big five scale ($r = .29$, $p < .001$). Prior to analysis, all continuous measures were mean centered (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). Mean centering has been recommended as it assists with the interpretation of the main effects in a way that is different than the uncentered effects. However, it should be noted that the difference is in the interpretation and because both models are mathematically equivalent, the results for the un-centered data are the same and can be easily obtained from the mean-centered model (Echambadi & Hess, 2007).

3.3 Data Analysis

To test for common method variance, a potential problem for my self-report study, I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess whether each of the measurement items would load significantly onto the scales with which they were associated. As is typical in any CFA with large sample size (Kelloway, 1998), the chi-square associated with the proposed oblique model was significant, χ^2 ($df = 266$) = 1437,

$p < .001$. However, the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) of .08 and the comparative fit index (CFI) of .84 indicated an acceptable fit to the data. Standardized parameter estimates from items to factors ranged from 0.51 to 0.91. In addition, the results for the CFA indicated that the relationship between each indicator variable and its respective variable was statistically significant ($p < .01$), establishing the posited relationships among indicators and constructs, and thus evidence for convergent validity. Next, I compared the fit of the measurement model with a competing model that allowed all items to load on a single, common method latent variable. The fit of this model was worse than the proposed six-factor model $\chi^2 (df = 275) = 3732$; CFI = .53; RMSEA = .13. Additionally, the results from Harman single-factor test (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) indicated that the items did not significantly load onto one single factor but rather six different factors. Thus, common method bias was not a major concern in this study.

Collectively, Hypotheses 5 – 13, which examine the moderating effects of individual and situational variables on blame attribution, revenge desires and revenge behaviours, entail “moderated mediation”. Moderated mediation happens if the mediated effects are dependent on the value of a moderator variable (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). As applied to the present study, this requires that individual and organizational variables (i.e., perspective taking, empathic concern, implicit readiness to aggress, and organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours) moderate the mediated effect of desires for revenge on revenge behaviours. To test for moderated mediation I used the moderated mediation framework proposed by Edwards and Lambert (2007). Edwards and

Lambert outline deficiencies with previous approaches (e.g., piecemeal approach) used to test combinations of moderation and mediation, and present a path analytic approach that simultaneously tests for moderation and mediation effects. Specifically, it produces statistical tests for moderation of each of the three individual paths of the mediated model (paths a, b, and c), and gives estimates of indirect effects ($a \times b$) and total effects ($a \times b + c$) for different levels of the moderator, where “a” represents the path from predictor to mediator, “b” is the path from mediator to the outcome variable, and “c” reflects the direct path from predictor to the outcome variable. Mediation is framed as a path model and the relationships among study variables are expressed with regression equations. Mediation is therefore expressed in terms of direct, indirect, and total effects (path coefficients for mediation effects) at selected levels of the moderator variable.

The present study used the total effect moderation model (Figure 2) which tests the overall mediated relationship (i.e., blame attribution, desire for revenge, and customer directed revenge behaviours), as well as the potential effect of the moderator of interest (i.e., perspective taking, empathic concern, implicit readiness to aggress, and organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours). Although the study hypothesis predicted each moderator to influence a specific path (Figure 1), in this study a total effects approach was adopted and each moderator was allowed to influence each of the direct and indirect paths (Figure 2). This is because the support of a particular path can change when terms that represent another path are included in the model (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). To test the total effect moderation model, two regressions were

estimated: The first equation examines whether the specific moderator of interest moderates the effect of independent variable on the mediator:

$$M = a_0 + a_1X + a_2Z + a_3XZ + e_M \quad (1)$$

In this equation, M, X, and Z refer to customer incivility, desire for revenge, and the specific moderator variable respectively. The second equation captures the moderating effects of the moderator variable on the relationships of the independent variable and the mediator with the dependent variable.

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X + b_2M + b_3Z + b_4XZ + b_5MZ + e_Y \quad (2)$$

In this equation, Y refers to customer directed revenge behaviour.

Coefficients generated from the above regression equations were used to compute path coefficients for both indirect and total effects. I used the supplemental materials (i.e. excel spreadsheet, and SPSS macro) provided by Edwards and Lambert (2007) to compute simple slopes and path coefficients for the study moderators. Conventional methods of estimating standard errors assume the sampling distribution of the product of two random variables as normal. This assumption is flawed as the distribution of a product term is non-normal, even when the variables comprising the product are normally distributed (Anderson, 1984). To overcome this problem, I used constrained non linear regression (CNLR) coefficients from 1000 bootstrap samples and bias corrected confidence intervals to test the significance of product variables (i.e., differences across levels of the moderator variable).

 Insert Figure 2 here

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, coefficient alphas, and zero order correlations for the study variables are presented in Table 1. Zero order correlations were all in the expected direction. With respect to demographics, customer directed revenge behaviours were related negatively to age ($r = -.28, p < .01$) and tenure ($r = -.12, p < .01$). Neuroticism was positively related to revenge, such that individuals high in trait neuroticism were more likely to engage in customer directed revenge behaviours ($r = .12, p < .01$).

Insert Table 1 here

The percentage of respondents reporting each of the customer directed revenge behaviours is provided in Table 2. With regard to a specific pattern of results, revenge behaviours that could be considered passive or indirect were more highly endorsed. Examples include, “I complained about that customer to the manager or coworkers” (67.9%), and “when serving the customer I didn’t do more than I absolutely had to” (49.4%). Items that were aimed at the customer directly were less consistently endorsed. For example, the item “I argued with that customer” was endorsed by only 23.5% of the respondents (Table 2).

Insert Table 2 here

4.2 Hypothesis Tests

Hierarchical regression analyses were run to test hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. The first step included the control variables: age, gender, tenure, neuroticism, and social desirability in the regression equation. The next step included the respective predictors (i.e., blame attribution or desires for revenge). Blame attribution was positively related to customer directed revenge behaviours lending support to hypothesis 1 ($\beta = 0.32, p < .001$) (Table 3). Hypothesis 2 which predicted a positive relationship between blame attribution and desires for revenge was also supported ($\beta = 0.18, p < .001$) (Table 3). Finally, there was a positive relationship between desire for revenge and customer directed revenge behaviours supporting hypothesis 3 ($\beta = 0.36, p < .001$) (Table 3).

Insert Table 3 here

Hypothesis 4 stated that desire for revenge mediates the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours. This was tested using the approach suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). Results as shown in Table 4 were as follows: First, blame attribution positively predicted desire for revenge ($\beta = 0.18, p < .001$). Next, blame attribution positively predicted customer directed revenge behaviours ($\beta = 0.32, p < .001$). Finally, when desire for revenge was included along with blame attribution as predictors of revenge behaviour, both desire for revenge ($\beta = 0.31, p <$

.001) and blame attribution ($\beta = 0.27, p < .001$) were significant predictors, indicating partial mediation (Table 4).

Instead of using the Sobel test to confirm the significance of the mediation, bootstrap methods were used. Bootstrapping is recommended over the Sobel test because it does not assume the indirect effect is normally distributed and generates bias corrected confidence intervals to provide greater power and control over Type 1 error rates (e.g., Cheung & Lau, 2008; MacKinnon et al., 2002; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). A structural equation model (SEM) using bootstrapping techniques was created to test the significance of mediation effect. Partial mediation is indicated by statistically significant direct effects between the independent variable and the mediator, between the mediator and the dependent variable, and between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Results indicated significant association between blame attribution and desire for revenge ($\beta = 0.17, p < .001$), between desire for revenge and customer directed revenge behaviours ($\beta = 0.34, p < .001$), and between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours ($\beta = 0.27, p < .001$). In addition, statistically significant standardized indirect effects were found between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours ($\beta = 0.06, p < .001$) with a bias corrected confidence interval of .03 to .09. Thus in support of hypothesis 4, blame attribution positively predicted customer directed revenge behaviours and this relationship was partially mediated by desires for revenge.

Insert Table 4 here

4.3 Hypothesis Tests: Moderated Mediation

Hypothesis 5 predicted that the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge is moderated by perspective taking. Regression coefficients generated from equations 1 and 2 are presented in Tables 5 and 6. Results indicate that the indirect path between blame attribution and desire for revenge was moderated by perspective taking, thus supporting hypothesis 5 ($b = -.13, p < .001$). Coefficients for the analysis with perspective taking as the moderator (presented in Tables 5 and 6) were used to calculate simple effects at one standard deviation above and below the mean on perspective taking. Results for the simple effects (presented in Table 7) suggest that the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge was moderated by perspective taking such that there was a strong positive relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge for those low on perspective taking ($b = .34, p < .01$), but no relationship for those high on perspective taking ($b = .03, ns$) (Figure 3). Hypothesis 7, which predicted a moderating effect of perspective taking on the blame attribution-customer directed revenge behaviour relationship, was not supported. Results indicated no significant interaction between perspective taking and blame attribution on customer directed revenge behaviours ($b = .00, ns$). Interestingly, perspective taking moderated the relationship between desire for revenge and revenge behaviours ($b = .02, p < .05$), but in a direction opposite to the other observed moderation effects (Tables 5 and 6). Results for the simple effects suggested that the relationship between desire for revenge and revenge behaviours was moderated by perspective taking such that there was a stronger positive relationship between desire

for revenge and revenge behaviours for those high on perspective taking ($b = .12, p < .01$) than for those low on perspective taking ($b = .06, p < .01$) (Figure 4).

Insert Tables 5 – 7 here

Insert Figures 3 - 4 here

Hypothesis 6 predicted that the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge is moderated by empathic concern. Regression coefficients generated from equations 1 and 2 are presented in Tables 5 and 6. Results indicate that the direct path between blame attribution and desire for revenge was moderated by empathic concern ($b = -.63, p < .001$). Hence, hypothesis 6 was supported. Results for the simple effects, which are presented in Table 7, suggest that the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge was moderated by empathic concern such that there was a strong positive relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge for those low on empathic concern ($b = .85, p < .01$) and a strong negative relationship for those high in empathic concern ($b = -.56, p < .01$) (Figure 5).

Empathic concern also moderated the blame attribution – revenge behaviour relationship, thus lending support to hypothesis 8 ($b = -.24, p < .001$). Results from simple effects suggests that there was a strong positive relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours for those low on empathic concern

($b = .33, p < .01$) and strong negative relationship for those high in empathic concern ($b = -.20, p < .01$) (Figure 6).

Finally, although not hypothesized, empathic concern moderated the relationship between desire for revenge and revenge behaviours ($b = .04, p < .01$) (Tables 5 and 6). Results for the simple effects, suggested that the relationship between desire for revenge and revenge behaviours was moderated by empathic concern such that there was a stronger positive relationship between desire for revenge and revenge behaviours for those high on empathic concern ($b = .13, p < .01$) than for those low in empathic concern ($b = .03, p < .01$) (Figure 7).

Insert Figures 5 – 7 here

Hypothesis 9 predicted that implicit readiness to aggress moderates the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours. Regression coefficients generated from equations 1 and 2 are presented in Tables 5 and 6. Results indicate that implicit readiness to aggress did not moderate the direct path between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours, failing to support hypothesis 9 ($b = .01, ns$). Hypothesis 10 suggested that implicit readiness to aggress moderates the desire for revenge – revenge behaviour relationship. This hypothesis was not supported. Thus, employee's readiness to aggress did not serve as a moderator of desire for revenge and revenge behaviour relationship ($b = .00, ns$).

Hypothesis 11 predicted that organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours moderates the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours. This hypothesis was not supported. Organizational tolerance did not influence the direct relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours ($b = .00, ns$) (Tables 5 and 6).

Hypothesis 12 suggested that blame attribution – desire for revenge relationship is moderated by organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours. Results indicate that the indirect path between blame attribution and desire for revenge was moderated by organizational tolerance ($b = .08, p < .05$) (Table 5). The simple effects suggested that there was a positive relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge for those who perceived high organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours ($b = .22, p < .01$), but no relationship for those who perceived low organizational tolerance ($b = .05, ns$) (Table 7) (Figure 8). Hence, hypothesis 12 was supported.

Finally, hypothesis 13, which predicted a moderating effect of organizational tolerance on the desire for revenge – revenge behaviour relationship, was not supported ($b = -.02, ns$). The model depicting the paths most supported by the above results is presented in Figure 9. See Table 8 for a summary of all hypotheses indicating which were supported and which were not.

Insert Figures 8 & 9 here

Insert Table 8 here

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Issue Addressed

The last two decades have seen a dramatic growth in research on organizational revenge and its implications for both organizations and their members. Revenge occurs routinely in organizations and is motivated by perceptions of injustice (Bies & Tripp, 1997; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Morrill, 1995). Most of this research has focused on the organization or organizational members (e.g., coworkers, or supervisors) as targets of revenge behaviours. Surprisingly, studies on revenge behaviours directed against uncivil customers have been relatively scarce (for exceptions see Harris & Ogbonna, 2002, 2006; van Jaarsveld et al., 2010; Skarlicki et al., 2008). Addressing this gap, the present study examined the influences of blame attribution, desire for revenge, perspective taking, empathic concern, implicit readiness to aggress, and organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours on customer directed revenge behaviours.

5.2 Core Premise

Building on Tripp et al.'s (2007, 2009) model of workplace revenge, the core premise of the study was that incivility from customers triggers a blame placing appraisal process which motivates desire for revenge and actual revenge behaviours. However, it was proposed that individuals: (a) who empathize with the transgressor, (b) take his/her perspective, or (c) lack the moral justifications to engage in revenge are less likely to desire to engage in revenge or to act in a vengeful way. It was further proposed that

employees who perceive their organizations as intolerant of uncivil customer behaviours are less likely to desire or to exact revenge.

5.3 Summary of Findings

The proposed model and the associated hypotheses were largely supported. The results indicate that employees who experience customer incivility and blame the customer for the mistreatment do “get back” at the customer, often in covert and indirect ways. Moreover, results show that desire for revenge partially mediates the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours and that these relationships are moderated by both individual (perspective taking, empathic concern) as well as organizational factors (organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours). Specifically, as hypothesized, perspective taking moderated the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge, but not the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours. Empathic concern moderated the relationships between blame attribution and desire for revenge, between desire for revenge and customer directed revenge behaviours, and also the direct relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours. Implicit readiness to aggress, on the other hand, did not moderate any of these relationships. Organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours moderated the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge, but not the relationship between desire for revenge and revenge behaviours. Finally, even though perspective taking and empathic concern were not hypothesized as likely to influence the relationship between desire for revenge and revenge behaviour, they were found to moderate this relationship. Specifically,

individuals high in perspective taking and empathic concern were more likely to act on their desires for revenge and engage in revenge behaviours.

5.4 Theoretical Implications

The present study extends research on organizational revenge in several important ways. First, the positive associations between customer directed revenge behaviours and both attributing blame and desiring revenge suggest that once a victimized employee appraises a customer's actions as malevolent and meriting blame, desires for revenge and actual vengeful behaviours increase. This finding answers researchers' calls for incorporating attributions into the analysis of revenge (Aquino et al., 2001; Bies et al., 1997; Tripp & Bies, 2009). Attributions of blame provide the necessary impetus for revenge and justify revenge as an appropriate response to perceived injustice. The results reported here therefore extend previous research on the processes underlying revenge behaviour in that they show that employees subjected to uncivil behaviour from the customers are likely to blame the customer (i.e. hold him or her responsible for such uncivil behaviour) before taking revenge.

Second, this is the first study to link blame attributions to revenge directed toward organizational *outsiders* (i.e. an organization's customers), complementing those studies that have shown this relationship to hold with respect to revenge behaviours taken against organizational *insiders* (e.g., Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006; Bies & Tripp, 1996; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). This study's results suggest that blame attribution is an important precursor to engaging in revenge; the greater the blame, the greater the likelihood of revenge. These findings are supportive of attribution and social exchange theories (Blau,

1964; Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997; Weiner, 1985, 1995). Mistreatment from a customer appears to initiate a cognitive evaluation process wherein the employee assigns blame (i.e. responsibility) before exacting revenge against the perpetrator of mistreatment (i.e. the uncivil customer).

Third, the positive relationship between attributing blame and customer directed revenge behaviours runs contrary to the ethos that the “customer is always right”. However, rather than entirely suppressing revenge, the service context appears to change the nature or transparency of the revenge taken, such that it results in covert revenge which may be hidden both from the target as well as others. This is a contribution to the literature as most research on organizational revenge has conceptualized covert revenge as hidden from others but known to the target. In the case of customer directed revenge it appears that the revenge behaviours are “doubly covert” such that they not only disguise the identity of the avenger from others but also from the target. Examples include, making fun of the customer behind their back or complaining about the customer to one’s coworkers or managers. These examples elucidate the “doubly covert” nature of customer directed revenge behaviours in that they are hidden from both the target (i.e. uncivil customer) as well as the observers (i.e. other customers). Future research should therefore recognize customers as a distinct target of such “doubly covert” revenge behaviours.

Fourth, results suggest that perspective taking mitigates the desire for revenge, even when the offender is judged blameworthy. Specifically, the strength of the relationship between blame and desire for revenge diminishes when the victimized employee takes the perspective of the customer. Perspective taking, however, did not

moderate the direct relationship between blame and revenge behaviours. This indicates that the way perspective taking reduces revenge behaviour is by reducing the desires that lead to revenge behaviour. Perspective taking or “intellectual empathy” is a cognitive process involving the consideration and understanding of another’s perspective, as captured in such items as “I try to imagine how things look from the customer’s perspective” and “I think about how I would feel in a customer’s situation”. These items capture the thought processes of the victimized employee. To the extent that revenge behaviours occur in response to desires for revenge, perspective taking is likely to be effective in reducing revenge. However, if revenge behaviours occur as a direct response to the blame attributed to the uncivil customer, perspective taking may not influence revenge. These findings are now in need of replication.

Fifth, as hypothesized, empathic concern moderated the relationships between blame attribution and desire for revenge, and between blame and revenge behaviours, such that when blame attribution was high, individuals who empathized with the customer were less likely to desire and engage in revenge. With respect to revenge in particular, these results underscore the importance of the affective experience of empathy in shaping the motivation behind revenge and, more importantly, the actual revenge behaviour. This is notable, as perspective taking did not moderate the relationship between attributing blame and taking revenge. Together these findings suggest that in comparison to perspective taking, an affective or emotional experience of another’s feelings can reduce the likelihood of revenge behaviour while the taking another’s perspective (more cognitively based) does not. The results demonstrate the importance

of distinguishing between perspective taking and emotional empathy, and support the value of empathy in mitigating revenge behaviours.

Sixth, although not hypothesized, perspective taking and empathic concern moderated the relationship between desire for revenge and revenge behaviours. Individuals high in perspective taking and empathic concern were more likely to act on their desires for revenge and engage in revenge behaviours. This suggests that perspective taking and empathic concern exacerbate the effect of desire for revenge on revenge behaviours. In a way, the above results are surprising as they are opposite of how perspective taking and empathic concern influence the other relations in the model. That is, whereas perspective taking and empathic concern weaken the relationships between blame attribution and both desires for revenge and revenge behaviours, in this case, they strengthen the relationship between desire for revenge and revenge behaviours. The finding that perspective taking and empathic concern are associated with an increased likelihood of revenge behaviour challenge the traditional theorizing of perspective taking and empathic concern as facilitators of pro-social interpersonal behaviours and suggest that once the avenger has assigned the blame to the offender and desires revenge, the likelihood of revenge is increased. Accordingly, when individuals desire revenge, and take the perspective of or empathize with an uncivil customer, but find no basis for excusing the customer's behaviour, they are more likely to judge the customer's behaviour as being worthy of the revenge. In other words, empathy and perspective taking may make an employee less likely to aggress or avenge if the act of empathizing or perspective taking provide them with the information that helps them to understand

and excuse the customer's negative behaviour to some degree. If, however, an employee's empathizing or perspective taking provides no basis to understand or excuse the customer's behaviour – then it may strengthen the motivation to avenge, because the transgressor is held entirely responsible for the negative behaviour. Accordingly, the desires to seek revenge are justified in the employee's mind and the employee engages in revenge. However, because these findings are opposite of the effects of perspective taking and empathy that are reported in the literature – which are consistently prosocial in nature – it is important to acknowledge the possibility of type I error, or rejecting the null when it is actually true. Clearly, more research is needed to further substantiate the study findings and better understand the conditions under which perspective taking and empathic concern may positively predict revenge behaviours.

Seventh, implicit readiness to aggress (assessed by CRT-A) did not moderate any of the hypothesized relationships. Specifically, implicit readiness to aggress did not moderate the relationships between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviour and between desires for revenge and customer directed revenge. A possible explanation may lie in the cognitive processes underlying blame attribution, which involves a cognitive evaluation of others' actions to understand the reasons for their behaviours. When employees experience incivility from their customers, they evaluate the situation to understand the reasons behind such ill treatment. The perpetrator of the uncivil behaviour is judged blameworthy if the employee believes that the intent was to inflict harm or to derogate. The more a victim blames the target, the more likely that he/she will desire revenge and to act out that desire (Bies et al., 1997). Thus, perhaps

once victimized employees blame the target and contemplate revenge, they do not need other justifications to rationalize their behaviour. If true, then once the victimized employee holds the customer accountable for transgression and desires or takes revenge, implicit readiness to aggress does not strengthen those revenge desires and behaviours.

Another possible explanation for the lack of support of implicit readiness to aggress is in its measurement. CRT-A is a general measure of implicit biases to justify aggression and captures six different biases to rationalize aggressive behaviour. It is possible that, in the present study, as a measure of aggression, it was too broad. For instance, arguing with an uncivil customer may tap into retribution bias, but may not represent other defense mechanisms such as potency bias (i.e., framing one's social interactions in terms of dominance versus submissiveness, or strength versus weakness; James, 1998) or social discounting bias (i.e., justifying aggression as a means to liberate oneself from repressive social customs; James, 1998). Since the current study focused on revenge, examining a specific justification mechanism, such as retribution bias, may have been more appropriate than examining all of the six biases in one measure.

Notwithstanding the above explanations, it may be premature to conclude from the findings reported that implicit readiness to aggress plays no moderating role in that perhaps its effects are more pronounced for specific kinds of covert revenge behaviours that were not examined in this study.

An eighth and final contribution of the current study lies in its examination of organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours. Research on workplace harassment has consistently established the influence of organizational tolerance of

sexual harassment on the amount of harassment behaviours observed within the organization, as well as other negative psychological and job-related outcomes (e.g., Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Glomb et al., 1999; Malamut & Offerman, 2001). My results extend this work by examining and establishing the role of organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours on customer directed revenge. As hypothesized, organizational tolerance moderated the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge such that this relationship was stronger when individuals perceived their organizations as tolerant of uncivil customer behaviour. This suggests that organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours is likely to create fertile conditions for employee intentions to take revenge against customers who mistreat them. Organizational norms and policies that fail to address customer incivility may lead employees to believe that their only recourse is to take matters into their own hands and to punish the offender.

However, the hypothesized moderating role of perceived organizational tolerance on the relationship between blame attribution and revenge behaviours, and between revenge desires and revenge behaviours, received no support. Taken together, these results suggest that perceived organizational tolerance is more influential in affecting the cognitive attribution processes associated with revenge rather than actual revenge behaviours. Clearly, more research is needed to substantiate these findings.

In summary, the results of the present study suggest that employees' desire and engage in revenge against customers who they judge as blameworthy of an act of incivility. Moreover, the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge appears to be moderated by perspective taking, empathic concern and organizational

tolerance of uncivil customers. Specifically, individuals low in perspective taking and empathic concern and who perceive their organization as tolerant of uncivil customer behaviours are more likely to desire revenge. Furthermore, perspective taking and empathic concern appears to moderate the relationship between desires for revenge and revenge behaviours but in an opposite direction. Here, individuals high in perspective taking and empathetic concern are more likely to engage in revenge. Finally, the relationship between blame attribution and revenge behaviours appears to be moderated by empathic concern, such that individuals who are less likely to empathize with the customer are more likely to engage in revenge.

5.5 Practical Implications

Customer incivility is harmful. When employees experience mistreatment from their customers they are prone to behave in ways that are likely contrary to their organization's best interests. Moreover, most revenge behaviours directed against customers are indirect, covert and thus hard to detect. They are likely to have financial costs associated with them, adversely impacting the employing organization. As a result, managers need to watch for, and manage, revenge behaviours taken by their employees against their customers. Because these behaviours are predicted by customer incivility and exacerbated by tolerance of incivility, one of the best strategies to deal with these behaviours would be to take action to prevent and respond effectively when customers engage in uncivil behaviour. Second, the findings provide empirical support for potential interventions to target and limit revenge behaviours. My proposed model identifies processes through which uncivil behaviours from customers can elicit revenge behaviours

from the targeted employees. This model suggests various points at which interventions can be implemented. At the start, to prevent the occurrence of revenge motives and revenge behaviours, organizations need to attack the root cause of the problem – uncivil customer behaviours. Employee-friendly policies that discourage customer incivility and encourage employees to come forward with complaints may mitigate some of the unfairness and anger associated with such events. Further, training employees on how to manage rude customers effectively, providing them with sufficient autonomy and coworker and supervisor support are some of the other strategies to manage reactions to uncivil customer behaviours. Finally, selecting and training employees with respect to high levels of empathic concern and perspective taking may be another option to reduce desires for revenge. Employees who are more likely to take the perspective of the customer or be empathic to their concern are – in most cases – less likely to desire and engage in revenge. However, employees may require additional training or support with respect to perspective taking and empathic concern, as my results suggest that employees who take the perspective of the customer and are empathic to their concerns are less likely to act on their blame attributions and engage in revenge. However, they are more likely to engage in revenge when the desires for revenge are high. This suggests that perspective taking and empathic concern training programs should focus more on reducing the blame attributions associated with customer incivility rather than the desires for revenge.

5.6 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The present study was a field study where all the measures were collected from a single source at a single point in time. The use of self-reports might have inflated the relationships among the study variables because of common method bias (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). However, this concern is alleviated partly because of the results obtained. An examination of zero-order correlations in Table 1 reveals that there were several non-significant correlations, and the majority of the statistically significant correlations were of low magnitude. For example, customer directed revenge was not associated with implicit readiness to aggress ($r = .06, ns$) and empathy was only modestly correlated with neuroticism ($r = -.09, p < .05$). In addition, I controlled for several covariates (specifically, age, gender, neuroticism, and social desirability) that relate to revenge motives and behaviours, thus instilling confidence in the reported results. Finally, although I relied on self-report data, it is not clear whether the model proposed can be accurately tested using data from other sources (e.g., coworkers, supervisors). Variables such as blame attribution and desires for revenge reflect an employee's perception and appraisal of a situation rather than the objective conditions in the work environment (Fox & Spector, 1999). Given this dynamic, self-report data may be more useful as it is difficult for someone else to report on whether or not the avenger blames an offender or desires revenge. Moreover, the use of external sources to collect information on customer directed revenge behaviours could be equally problematic given the indirect and covert nature of these behaviours. Thus, revenge behaviours assessed by other means may not be more accurate – and may be less accurate – than self-ratings. Nevertheless, to substantiate the findings reported in this study, future

research needs to collect data from multiple sources. One such possibility would be to have coworkers or supervisors report incidents of the victimized employee's uncivil customer experiences and the extent to which the coworker or supervisor lays blame with the customer. These coworker/supervisor reports of exposure to customer incivility and blame attribution could then be linked with the victimized employees' desires for revenge and revenge behaviours.

A second limitation is the sample used and perhaps limited generalizability of the results. The sample came from a variety of service organizations located across Canada and there may be some question about the generalizability of study findings to other non North American contexts. Individuals from collectivist cultures such as India and China place more emphasis on maintaining collegial relationships with others, and conforming to societal norms than individuals from individualistic cultures such as North America and Western Europe, who are more interested in justice and fairness (Takaku, Weiner, & Ohbuchi, 2001). Indeed, Kadiangand, Mullet, and Vinsonneau (2002) found that individuals from collectivist cultures such as Congo were more willing to forgive than their European counterparts. Thus, cultural differences might account for differences in how and to what extent customer directed revenge behaviours are carried out by employees. Future research is therefore needed to assess whether the expected and unexpected relationships found in this study can be replicated in other countries.

A third limitation deals with the way data on the variables for this study were collected. I asked employees to recall an incident of customer incivility and to report their reaction to it, which is subject to recall bias. However, past research has indicated that

individuals are typically able to recall a specific event, especially the negative ones with good accuracy (e.g., Lee et al., 1999). In addition, since the employees had the liberty to choose any event of customer incivility, it is likely that they selected an event that was particularly salient and memorable to them thus increasing the accuracy of the recall. Nonetheless, future research should strive to attain this information through other robust means such as experience sampling or daily diary methods.

A fourth limitation is that there might be other mediating mechanisms through which the revenge episode unfolds in organizations. For instance, Tripp and Bies (2009) in their model of revenge discussed the influence of negative emotions such as anger or resentment that fuels the desire for revenge. Negative emotions may therefore mediate the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge. Moreover, there could be other responses to customer incivility besides revenge. Future research should attempt to measure additional responses such as forgiveness and reconciliation to better understand the complex ways in which people respond to mistreatment in organizations.

A fifth and final limitation of this study is that blame attribution was assessed using a single item measure by Wade (1989). The item used in this study relied on Bies and Tripp's (1996) conceptualization of blame attribution as "being wronged by someone" – i.e., assessing the extent to which they believed that "the customer was wrong in what he/she did to them". The single item was used for simplicity, directness and to limit questionnaire length. Moreover, research on attribution has commonly used single-item measures. Nevertheless, future research examining the relationship among

blame attribution, desires for revenge, and revenge behaviours may benefit from a multi-item scale of blame attribution.

5.7 Conclusion

The current study extends the literature on organizational revenge by providing an overview of the processes by which customer incivility is associated with customer directed revenge behaviours. The results provide support for the theorized mediated relationships, with desires for revenge partially mediating the effects of blame attribution on customer directed revenge behaviours. In addition, perspective taking, empathic concern, and organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours moderated the relations between blame attribution, desire for revenge, and revenge behaviours, which depending on the relationship being examined, make revenge behaviour in response to customer incivility more or less likely. Taken together, these results enrich our understanding of the dynamic processes that influence the occurrence of customer directed revenge in service settings. Further research is required to enhance understanding of how and why employees engage in revenge against customers and how to best address such revenge behaviours and the behaviours by customers that may precipitate them.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Survey Cover Letter



Understanding service employee reactions to rude customers

You are being asked to participate in a study that is investigating the work experiences of employees in the service industry. The purpose of this study is to understand service workers' opinion of their work environment and how they respond to rude customers. This research will hopefully lead to a better understanding of workers' experiences with customers, and in doing so, facilitate better outcomes for workers and organizations.

If you decide to participate you will be completing the following questionnaire. The questionnaire asks about your demographic background (age, gender, education), personality, experiences with rude customers, as well as your attitudes and behaviours at work. In addition you will be asked to respond to 25 questions designed to assess patterns of reasoning and logic. I want to see whether these are connected to your responses to rude customers.

The questionnaire should take about 35 minutes to complete. Most questions require only a simple check mark. Please note that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential.

To thank you for your time, I will be conducting 20 prize draws of Tim Hortons gift cards worth \$50. To be considered for these prizes, please provide your email address or phone number at the end of the survey. This information is optional and will be collected for compensation purposes only. Since your information is collected on a different page, I will not be able to link your e-mail address or phone number to the responses you provide on the survey.

☐ I consent to participate in this study

Thank you for your assistance with this research.

APPENDIX B
Survey on service employee reactions to rude customers

The following information is collected for statistical purposes.

1. What is your age?
☐ 20 or under 20
☐ 21 - 30
☐ 31 - 40
☐ 41 - 50
☐ 51 and Over 51
2. What is your gender? ☐ Female ☐ Male
3. How long have you worked at your current place of work? _____ months
4. How long have you worked in your current position? _____ months
5. What is the highest level of education you have attained to date?
☐ Have not finished high school
☐ Graduated high school
☐ Attending college/ university (undergraduate)
☐ Graduated college/ university (undergraduate)
☐ Attending graduate school
☐ Graduated graduate school (Masters or higher).
6. On average, how many customers do you interact with everyday? _____ customers
7. What percentage of your job is spent in direct contact with clients or customers?
_____ %
8. In which type of service setting do you currently work?
☐ Restaurant
☐ Bar/ Pub
☐ Hotel
☐ Coffee shop
☐ Airline
☐ Grocery store
☐ Retail store
☐ Other (please specify): _____
9. Are you currently employed as a
a. ☐ Restaurant server b. ☐ Cashier c. ☐ Food services clerk
d. ☐ Bartender e. ☐ Flight attendant f. ☐ Assistant department manager
g. ☐ Airline ground staff h. ☐ Retail sales clerk
i. ☐ Other (please specify) _____
10. Is your present job a full time ☐ or part time job ☐?
Would you prefer to work full time ☐ or part time job ☐?

Social Desirability

Please indicate the extent to which the following is true about you.

| | True | False |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------|
| 1) I have never intensely disliked anyone | T | F |
| 2) I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way | T | F |
| 3) There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right | T | F |
| 4) I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable | T | F |
| 5) There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others | T | F |
| 6) I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favours of me | T | F |

Organizational tolerance of rude customers

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| 1. My place of work takes steps to deal with rude customers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. My place of work doesn't seem to care if customers are rude to employees | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. In my place of work very little is done to prevent customers from being rude or abusive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. My place of work tolerates customers who use profanity or threats to get their way | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

INSTRUCTIONS

For the following questions, think about a recent encounter with a customer who was rude to you.

In the space below, briefly describe a recent interaction with a rude or aggressive customer. In your description, please include what led up to this interaction, what the customer said or did to you, and how you responded to the customer

Blame attribution

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement about that customer.

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| The customer was NOT wrong in what he/she did to me | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|

Desire for revenge

While interacting with that customer who mistreated you, to what extent did you experience the following?

| | Not at all true | A little | Somewhat | A Lot | Very much |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|-------|-----------|
| 1) I thought about getting even with that customer | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2) I wanted to see that customer hurt and miserable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3) I wanted to see that customer get what he/she deserves | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4) I wished that something bad would happen to that customer | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5) I wanted to make that customer pay for what he/she did to me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Perspective taking

While interacting with that customer who mistreated you, to what extent did you experience the following?

| | Not at all true | A little | Somewhat | A Lot | Very much |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|-------|-----------|
| 1) I tried to imagine how things looked from that customer's perspective | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2) I thought about how I would feel in that customer's situation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3) I tried to see things from customer's viewpoint | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4) I tried to imagine myself as a customer in a similar situation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Empathic concern

| | Not at all true | A little | Somewhat | A Lot | Very much |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|-------|-----------|
| 1) I tried to understand why customer was frustrated | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2) I identified and empathized with the problems that customer was experiencing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3) I felt concerned for the difficulties that customer was experiencing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Customer directed revenge behaviours, Customer service orientation, Ingratiation service employee behaviours, and Forgiveness items

After interacting with that customer who mistreated you, please indicate (yes/no) whether or not you behaved in the following ways.

| | Yes | No |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1) I helped that customer even if it meant going beyond my job requirements | 1 | 0 |
| 2) I made fun of the customer behind his/her back | 1 | 0 |
| 3) I served the customer but was not very enthusiastic or friendly to him/her | 1 | 0 |
| 4) I went out of my way to help that customer | 1 | 0 |
| 5) I argued with that customer | 1 | 0 |
| 6) I went "above the call of duty" when serving that customer | 1 | 0 |
| 7) I slowed down the service to that customer | 1 | 0 |
| 8) I provided prompt and efficient service to that customer | 1 | 0 |
| 9) I swore at that customer behind his/her back | 1 | 0 |
| 10) I considered that customer as very important | 1 | 0 |
| 11) I complained about that customer to the manager or coworkers | 1 | 0 |
| 12) I willingly helped the customer | 1 | 0 |
| 13) When serving the customer, I didn't do more than I absolutely had to | 1 | 0 |
| 14) I tried to meet all the requests made by that customer | 1 | 0 |
| 15) I did something else to get back at the customer | 1 | 0 |

Conditional Reasoning Test for Aggression

The CRT-A is a proprietary measure used with permission from Dr. L. James. The items and other information of the measure are provided in James and McIntyre (2000).

Thank you for answering the above questions.

APPENDIX C

Tables and Figures

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliability Estimates for Study Variables

| | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|------------|------------|------------|-------|------------|----|
| 1. Age | 2.65 | 1.37 | — | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Gender | 1.32 | 0.47 | -.03 | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Tenure | 75.48 | 100 | .57** | .11** | — | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Neuroticism | 2.39 | 0.94 | -.16** | -.10* | -.18** | — | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Social desirability | 3.32 | 1.47 | .14** | .07 | .07 | -.11* | — | | | | | | | |
| 6. Blame attribution | 4.32 | 1.01 | -.05 | -.08 | .00 | -.00 | -.05 | — | | | | | | |
| 7. Perspective taking | 2.52 | 1.17 | .10* | .05 | .03 | -.07 | .12* | -.36** | .93 | | | | | |
| 8. Empathic concern | 2.31 | 1.10 | .19** | .02 | .10* | -.09* | .13** | -.36** | .80** | .84 | | | | |
| 9. Revenge desires | 1.51 | 0.81 | -.14** | .12** | -.11** | .10* | -.12* | .17** | -.22** | -.24** | .87 | | | |
| 10. Implicit readiness to aggress | 4.13 | 2.18 | -.03 | .17** | .06 | .00 | .01 | -.02 | .04 | .00 | .07 | — | | |
| 11. Organizational tolerance | 2.59 | 1.03 | .11* | .09 | .13** | -.014 | .00 | .02 | -.05 | -.08 | .24** | .13** | .82 | |
| 12. Customer directed revenge | 0.34 | 0.23 | -.28** | .03 | -.12* | .12* | -.13** | .33** | -.34** | -.42** | .39** | .06 | .05 | — |

Note. $N=434$. Age is coded as 1 = 20 or less than 20, 2 = 21-30, 3 = 31-40, 4 = 41-50, 5 = 51 and over 51. Gender is coded as 1 = Females and 2 = Males. Tenure is the number of months worked at current organization. Social desirability is coded as 1 = True and 0 = False. Alpha reliabilities appear in bold along the diagonal.

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Table 2

Percentage of employees who engaged in customer directed revenge behaviours

| Item | Percentage of those who agreed (%) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| I complained about that customer to the manager or coworkers | 67.9 |
| I served the customer but was not very enthusiastic or friendly to him/her | 50.2 |
| When serving the customer I didn't do more than I absolutely had to | 49.4 |
| I made fun of the customer behind his/her back | 35.3 |
| I swore at that customer behind his/her back | 23.7 |
| I argued with that customer | 23.5 |
| I slowed down the service to that customer | 15.5 |
| I did something else to get back at the customer | 4.4 |

Note. Tabled values are percentages of the sample who endorsed the item

Table 3

Hierarchical regression results for hypotheses 1, 2, and 3

| Independent variable | Dependent variable | |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | Desire for revenge | Customer directed revenge behaviours |
| Hypothesis 1: | | |
| Age | | -.26** |
| Gender | | .06 |
| Tenure | | .04 |
| Neuroticism | | .09* |
| Social desirability | | -.08 |
| Blame attribution | | .32** |
| R ² | | .20** |
| ΔR ² | | .10** |
| Hypothesis 2: | | |
| Age | -.05 | |
| Gender | .16** | |
| Tenure | -.08 | |
| Neuroticism | .08 | |
| Social desirability | -.10* | |
| Blame attribution | .18** | |
| R ² | .09** | |
| ΔR ² | .03** | |
| Hypothesis 3: | | |
| Age | | -.26** |
| Gender | | -.02 |
| Tenure | | .08 |
| Neuroticism | | .05 |
| Social desirability | | -.05 |
| Revenge desires | | .36** |
| R ² | | .21** |
| ΔR ² | | .12** |

Note. ** $p < .001$ * $p < .05$

Table 4

Regression results for mediation analyses

| Independent variable | Dependent variable | |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | Desire for revenge | Customer directed revenge behaviours |
| Step 1: | | |
| Age | -.05 | |
| Gender | .16** | |
| Tenure | -.08 | |
| Neuroticism | .08 | |
| Social desirability | -.10* | |
| Blame attribution | .18** | |
| R ² | .09** | |
| ΔR ² | .03** | |
| Step 2: | | |
| Age | | -.26** |
| Gender | | .06 |
| Tenure | | .04 |
| Neuroticism | | .09* |
| Social desirability | | -.08 |
| Blame attribution | | .32** |
| R ² | | .20** |
| ΔR ² | | .10** |
| Step 3: | | |
| Blame attribution | | .27** |
| Revenge desires | | .31** |
| R ² | | .27** |
| ΔR ² | | .19** |

Note. ** $p < .001$ * $p < .05$

Table 5

Regression coefficients for Equation 1 listed by moderator

| Dependent variable: Desire for revenge | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------|-------|-------------|-----------|-------------------|-------|
| Moderator variable | a_0 | Blame | Moderator | Blame attribution | R^2 |
| | | attribution | | X Moderator | |
| Perspective taking | -.25 | .18** | -.11** | -.13** | .15** |
| Empathic concern | -.26 | .12* | .05 | -.63** | .14** |
| CRT-A | -.08 | .14** | .02 | -.02 | .09** |
| Organizational tolerance | -.02 | .14** | .18** | .08* | .15** |

Note. a_0 = Unstandardized regression coefficient.** $p < .001$ * $p < .01$

Table 6

Regression coefficients for Equation 2 listed by moderator

| Dependent variable: Customer directed revenge behaviours | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------------|------------|-----------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------|
| Moderator variable | b_0 | Blame | Desire for | Moderator | Blame | Desire for | R^2 |
| | | attribution | revenge | | attribution X Moderator | revenge X Moderator | |
| Perspective taking | .45** | .05** | .09** | -.04** | .00 | .02* | .32** |
| Empathic concern | .42** | .05** | .08** | .02 | -.24** | .04** | .39** |
| CRT-A | .46** | .06** | .09** | .00 | .01 | .00 | .29** |
| Organizational tolerance | .46** | .06** | .10** | .00 | .00 | -.02 | .29** |

Note. b_0 = Unstandardized regression coefficient used in follow up analyses.** $p < .001$ * $p < .05$

Table 7
Moderated mediation: Analysis of simple effects

| Moderator variable | Stage | | Effect | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| | First | Second | Direct | Indirect: | Total |
| | Blame attribution to desire for revenge | Desire for revenge to revenge behaviours | Blame attribution to revenge behaviours | Through desire for revenge | Indirect + direct |
| Perspective taking | | | | | |
| Low | .34** | .06** | .05 | .02** | .07** |
| High | .03 | .12** | .05** | .00 | .05** |
| Difference | -.31** | .06* | .00 | -.02* | -.02 |
| Empathic concern | | | | | |
| Low | .85** | .03** | .33** | .03** | .36** |
| High | -.56** | .13** | -.20** | -.07** | -.27** |
| Difference | -1.40** | .01** | -.53** | -.10** | -.63** |
| Implicit readiness to aggress | | | | | |
| Low | .20* | .09** | .08 | .02** | .09** |
| High | .10 | .08** | .05** | .01 | .05** |
| Difference | -.10 | .00 | .03 | -.01 | .04** |
| Organizational tolerance | | | | | |
| Low | .05 | .12** | .06** | .01 | .07** |
| High | .22** | .08** | .06** | .02** | .08** |
| Difference | .17 | -.05 | -.01 | .01 | .01 |

Note. Simple effects were computed using Zs that were one standard deviation below and above the mean of centered variable. For perspective taking, low and high Zs = -1.182 and 1.154, respectively; for empathic concern, low and high Zs = -1.151 and 1.058, respectively; for implicit readiness to aggress, low and high Zs = -2.207 and 2.149, respectively; and for organizational tolerance, low and high Zs = -1.030 and 1.028, respectively. Differences in simple effects were computed by subtracting the high scores from the low scores. Tests of differences for the first stage, second stage, and direct effect reflect tests of blame attribution X moderator, desire for revenge X moderator, and blame attribution X moderator, respectively, as reported in tables 4 and 5. Tests of differences for the indirect and total effects were based on bias-corrected confidence intervals derived from bootstrap estimates.

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Table 8

Summary of results

| Hypotheses | Supported |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Hypothesis 1 (H1):</i> Service providers who blame customers' for behaving in an uncivil way toward them will be more likely to engage in revengeful behaviours than service providers who attribute less blame to the offending customers. | Yes |
| <i>Hypothesis 2 (H2):</i> Service providers who blame customers' for behaving in an uncivil way toward them will be more likely to experience desire for revenge than service providers who attribute less blame to the offending customer. | Yes |
| <i>Hypothesis 3 (H3):</i> Service providers who desire revenge against an uncivil customer are more likely to behaviourally act on their desires and engage in customer directed revenge behaviours than service providers who are less likely to experience such desires. | Yes |
| <i>Hypothesis 4 (H4):</i> Service providers' desire to revenge perceived incivility from a customer mediates the positive relationship between the attributing blame to the customer and behaviourally expressing such desire. | Yes (partial mediation) |
| <i>Hypothesis 5 (H5):</i> Perspective taking moderates the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge such that individuals high in perspective taking will be less likely to desire revenge. | Yes |
| <i>Hypothesis 6 (H6):</i> Empathic concern moderates the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge such that individuals high in empathic concern will be less likely to desire revenge. | Yes |
| <i>Hypothesis 7(H7):</i> Perspective taking moderates the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours such that individuals high in perspective taking are less likely to engage in revenge. | No |
| <i>Hypothesis 8 (H8):</i> Empathic concern moderates the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours such that individuals high in empathic concern are less likely to engage in revenge. | Yes |
| <i>Hypothesis 9 (H9):</i> Implicit readiness to aggress will moderate the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours, such that it will be more positive for individuals with an implicit readiness to aggress. | No |
| <i>Hypothesis 10 (H10):</i> Implicit readiness to aggress will moderate the relationship between desires for revenge and customer directed revenge behaviours, such that it will be more positive for individuals possessing an implicit readiness to aggress. | No |
| <i>Hypothesis 11(H11):</i> Organizational tolerance will moderate the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours such that it will be more positive for where employees perceive that their organization tolerates uncivil customer behaviours. | No |
| <i>Hypothesis 12(H12):</i> Organizational tolerance will moderate the relationship between blame attribution and desire for revenge such that it will be more positive for employees who perceive that their organizations tolerate uncivil customer behaviours. | Yes |
| <i>Hypothesis 13(H13):</i> Organizational tolerance will moderate the relationship between desires for revenge and customer directed revenge behaviours such that it will be more positive for employees of organizations that are seen as tolerant of uncivil customer behaviours. | No |

Figure 1: Hypothesized model

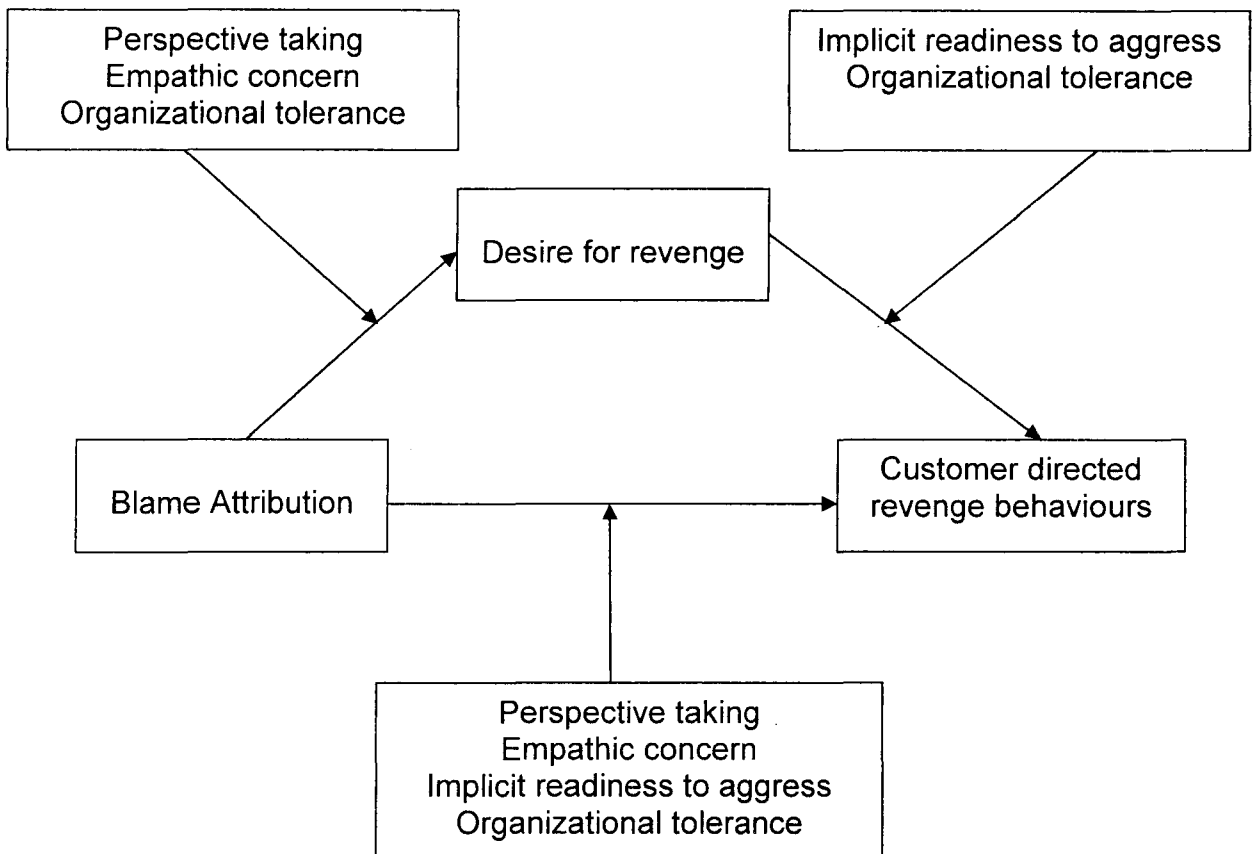


Figure 2. Total effect moderation model used to test moderated mediation study hypotheses

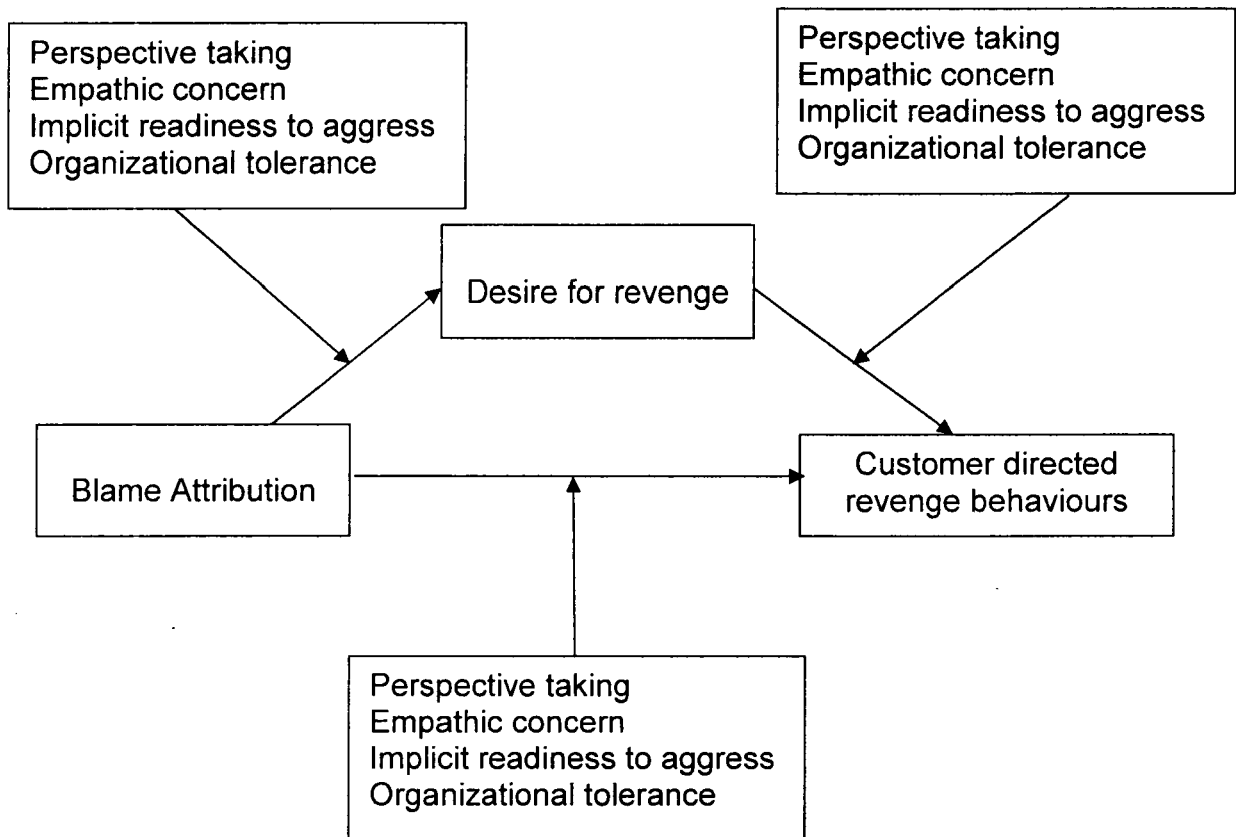
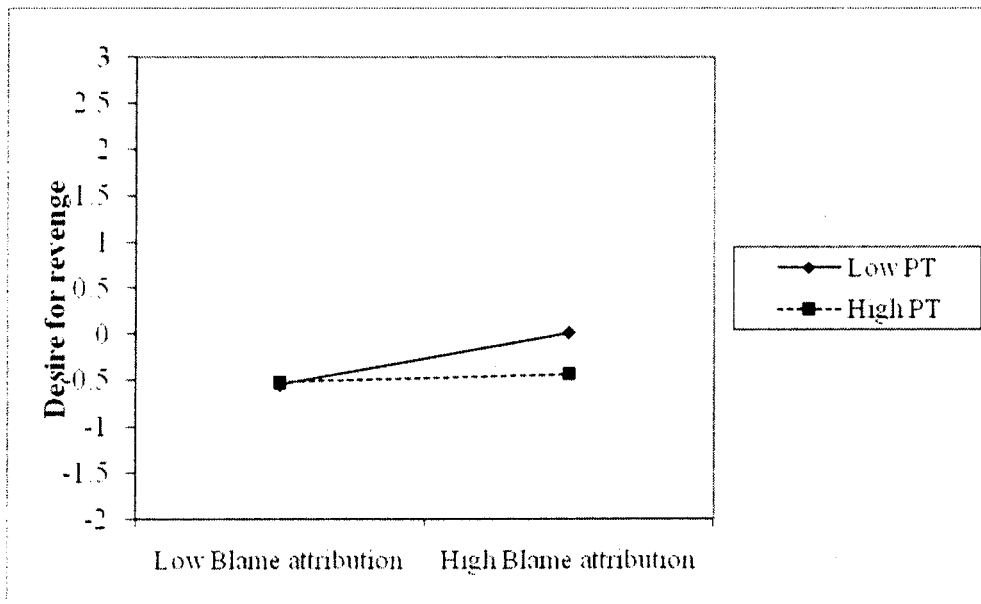


Figure 3. Relation between perspective taking and blame attribution on desire for revenge



Note. PT = Perspective taking

Figure 4. Relation between perspective taking and desire for revenge on customer directed revenge behaviours

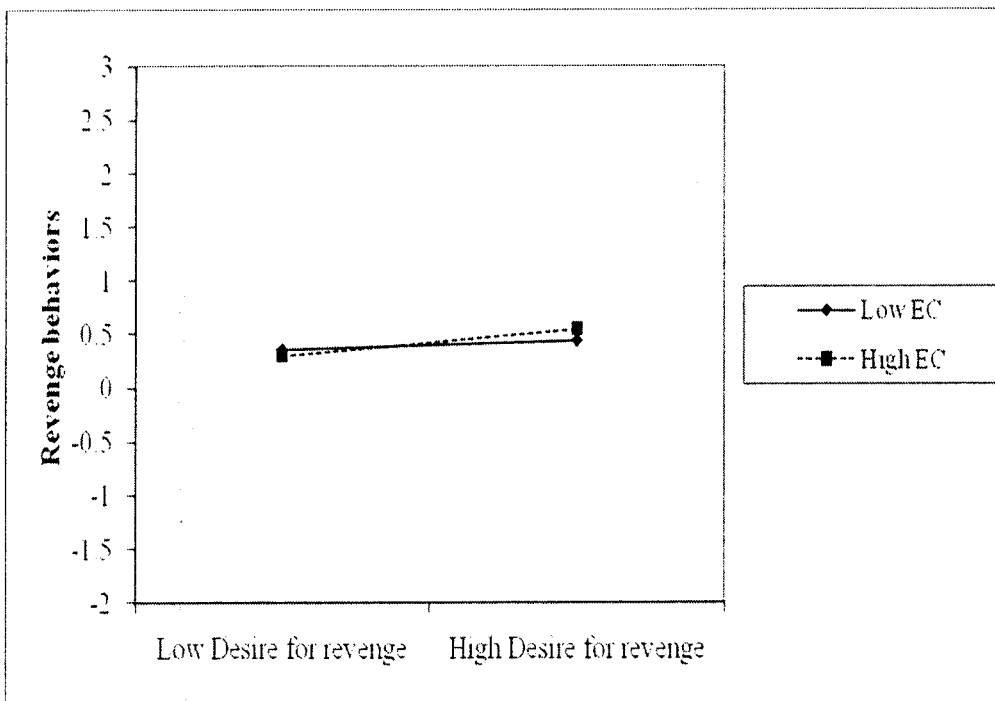
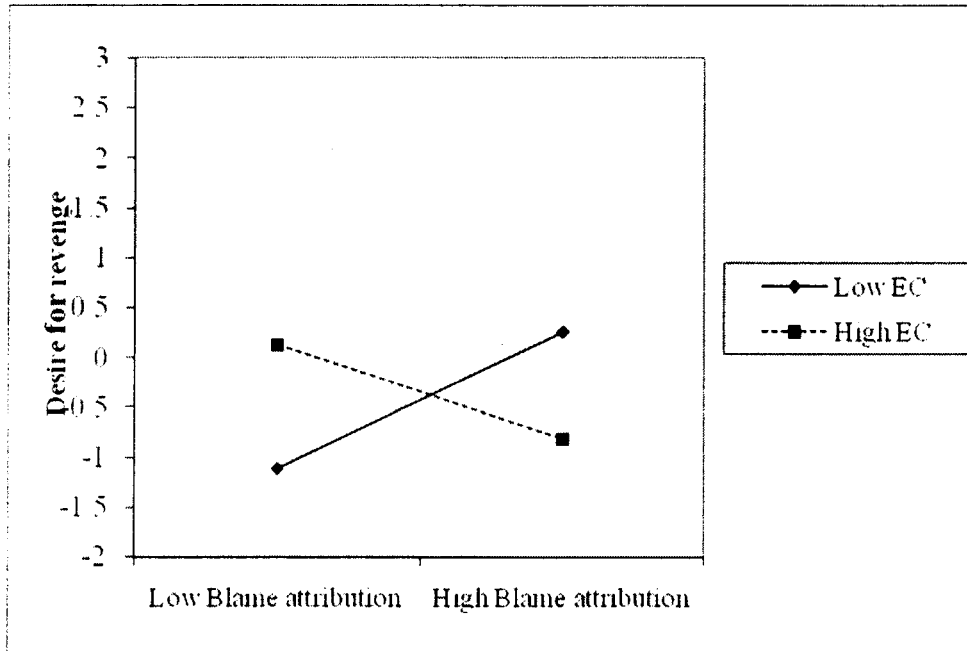


Figure 5. Relation between empathic concern and blame attribution on desire for revenge



Note. EC = Empathic concern

Figure 6. Relation between empathic concern and blame attribution on customer directed revenge behaviours

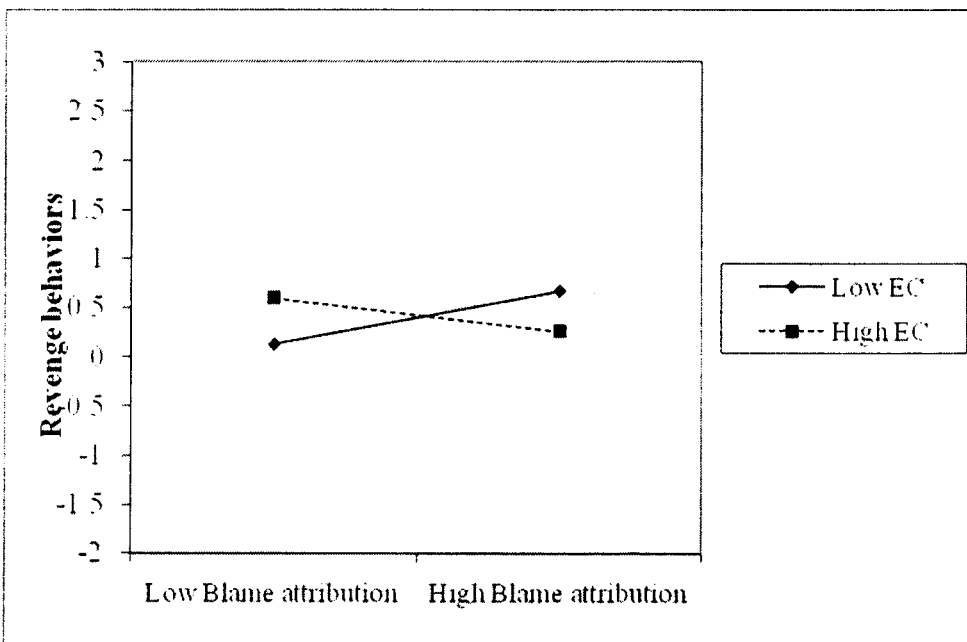


Figure 7. Relation between empathic concern and desire for revenge on customer directed revenge behaviours

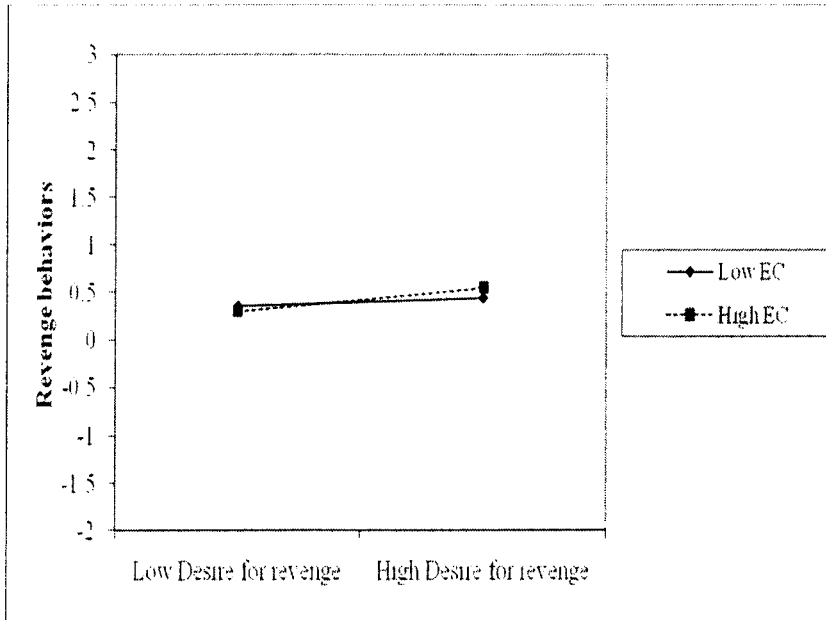
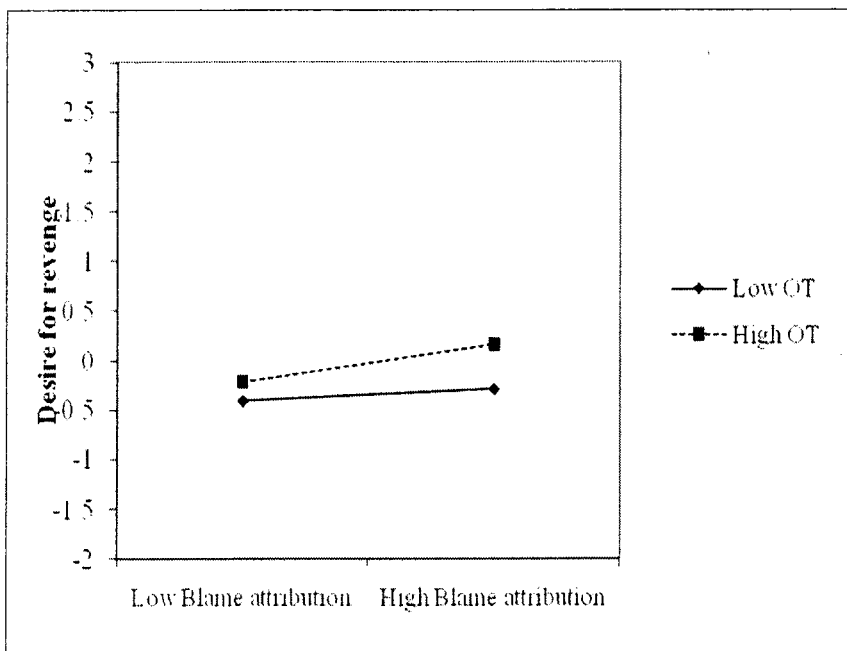


Figure 8. Relation between organizational tolerance of uncivil customer behaviours and blame attribution on desire for revenge



Note. OT= Organizational tolerance of rude customer behaviours

Figure 9. Final model representing the relationship between blame attribution and customer directed revenge behaviours

