CONSUMER RETALIATION AS A RESPONSE TO DISSATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

Hirschman's Exit-Voice-Loyalty model is expanded to include retaliation, an aggressive behavior done with the intention of getting even. The first study showed that people, when asked, were able to provide personal stories of consumer retaliation. The six consumer retaliation categories that emerged from 185 consumer retaliation stories differed in terms of emotional response, age, level of education, and sex of the retaliator. The second study established that voice, exit, and retaliation are essentially independent consumer behaviors. Individuals seem to have a preferred response to dissatisfaction, most use more than one response, and none relied on retaliation behaviors alone. From the seller's perspective, retaliation is an ineffective consumer response because it does not identify either the cause of the problem or person offended; therefore no corrective action can be taken. From the consumer's perspective, retaliation is primarily cathartic.

INTRODUCTION

"In a grocery store, I asked a man who delivers bread a question about his product. When he brushed me off, he was rude and terse. I was rather put out, and I decided to get back at him. I waited until no one was around, then I grabbed his bread from the shelf and twisted it so that no one would want to buy it. After a short sigh of satisfaction, I took off."

Far more sobering is the Northwestern National Life Insurance Company (1993) report that 15% of workers have been physically attacked on the job, and that these attacks were twice as likely to come from customers than from co-workers, and that one in six of those attacks was with a lethal weapon. Further, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that assaults and violent acts by customers and clients in the United States resulted in 35 deaths in 1992 (Windau and Toscano 1993), 43 deaths in 1993 (Toscano and Windau 1995a), and 42 deaths in 1994 (Toscano and Windau 1995b). In both 1993 and 1994, 4% of all job-related homicides were committed by customers/clients (Toscano and Windau 1994, 1995).

Albert O. Hirschman (1970), as a result of his observation of the railway system in Nigeria, proposed that dissatisfied consumers might exit (stop consuming the product), voice (tell management what is wrong and what is expected), or remain loyal (continue to purchase the product). What Hirschman calls "his little idea" has become the basic model of consumer dissatisfaction response. The Hirschman (1986) model states that social actors experiencing disorder have available to them two activist reactions: exit and voice. However, while exit of customers serves as a signal to management that something is amiss, it does not provide any definitive information about what has gone wrong. Voice is the direct and more informative way of alerting management of problems.

The story at the beginning of this article and probably the majority of consumer assaults are related to consumer dissatisfaction. Something that the business or salesperson did led consumers to react in these ways. Are these types of reactions voice, exit, or loyalty? Definitely not. Some consumer reactions to dissatisfaction clearly do not fit Hirschman's voice/exit/loyalty model. The bread story and consumer assaults seem best described as retaliation. We propose that retaliation is a separate class of response to dissatisfaction and that it extends Hirschman's model.

Hirschman's model has been applied to research in many areas, such as patients filing medical malpractice suits (May and Stengel 1990), union membership (Hersch and Stone

1990; Miller and Mulvey 1991), environment-alism (Fortmann and Kusel 1990), and government and public policy issues (Bratton 1990; Herbst 1990; Hill 1991; Huntington 1991-1992; Lee 1992).

Given its wide acceptance by researchers and applicability to dissatisfaction, it is not surprising that much theorizing has been built upon Hirschman's model. Some have even observed that Hirschman's model is a good starting point for research in modeling consumers' responses to dissatisfaction (Singh 1991).

Extending Hirschman's Model

There has been a growing awareness that the Hirschman model is not inclusive of all possible behaviors in various contexts. Rusbult's (Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, and Mainous 1988; Rusbult, Zembrodt, and Gunn 1982) 2 by 2 response grid (active-passive, constructive-destructive) added "neglect" to Hirschman's basic model. Rusbult's research in the areas of interpersonal and employee relations found support for these four types of response to dissatisfaction: 1) exit (active-destructive) leaving the relationship, 2) voice (active-constructive) trying to improve conditions through discussing the problems, 3) loyalty (passive-constructive) optimistically waiting for conditions to improve, and 4) neglect (passive-destructive) allowing conditions to deteriorate. An acronym formed from these four options is the "EVLN" model.

However, in Rusbult's work there are hints of even "darker" responses to dissatisfaction than the EVLN model initially proposes. Emotional or physical abuse in the context of interpersonal relations (Rusbult, Zembrodt, and Iwaniszek 1986), or organizational delinquency in an employment context (Farrell and Rusbult 1992), were both classified as neglect . However, abuse and organizational delinquency transcend the passive-destructive response of simply allowing conditions to deteriorate. Behaviors such as accidents and sabotage are more active-destructive than passive-destructive, going beyond the EVLN model (Farrell 1983), not fitting either

classification.

There have been several other attempts to extend Hirschman's basic model, mostly based on the observation that the exit, voice, loyalty categories seem in various contexts to be too general. Some have argued for two types of loyalty (Graham and Keeley 1992; Withey and Cooper 1992), while others have argued for two types of exit (Lehman-Wilzig 1991; Lyons and Lowery 1989). Also, there have been attempts to classify antagonistic and aggressive behaviors with voice (Gorden 1988; Lehman and Simpson 1992). One study proposed listing subversion as a separate category, along with exit, voice, and loyalty, as an option people exercise within organizations (Hawthorne and Zusman 1992).

Retaliation

Retaliation is aggressive behavior. Social psychology defines aggression as physical or verbal behavior intended to hurt someone (Myers 1990). Retaliation is that type of aggressive behavior done with the intention to get even, making it an equity issue. It is not so much a real equity, but a psychological equity: You got me. I got you back. Now we're even.

The research literature on retaliation has found that the failure of conflict intervention often leads to retaliation (Zuk and Zuk 1989), that retaliatory behavior is not limited by fear of retaliation (Ohbuchi and Saito 1986), that retaliation is mediated by the attribution of intent to the attacker (perceived intentional acts elicit more) (Dyck and Rule 1978 ; Nickel 1974; Ohbuchi and Kambara 1985), that retaliation is a key principle in the escalation of criminal violence (Felson and Steadman 1983), and that violent delinquent crimes are committed primarily for retaliation/revenge (Agnew 1990). It has been observed that retaliation is a natural aspect of human behavior (Smith 1976), and that people retaliate when they lack better means of restoring equity (Baron and Fisher 1984 ; DeMore, Fisher, and Baron 1988; Fisher and Baron 1982). While retaliation has been the study of extensive research in many areas, it has received only

passing mention in the area of consumer dissatisfaction and complaining behavior.

Consumer Retaliation

One area that specifically discusses consumer retaliation is the research literature on shoplifting. One study reported that 28.7% of shoplifters cite revenge as the motivation for their actions (Turner and Cashdan 1988). Another study reported that shoplifters felt that "stealing the object is a justified payback or retribution for what the merchants, the restaurant owners, the hotel owners, the big organizations, or the Government take away from all of us" (Arboleda-Florez, Durie, and Costello 1977, p. 205-206). However, based on informal interviews with retailers, shoplifting as retaliation is dismissed as a lame excuse rather than as a result of consumer dissatisfaction. This may be true, but if it is not, this misperception precludes corrective action.

Fornell and Westbrook (1979) and Richins (Richins 1983; Richins and Verhage 1987), citing the assertiveness literature (Alberti and Emmons 1975, 1982; Bloom, Coburn, and Pearlman 1975; Butler 1981; Jakubowski and Lange 1978; Lange and Jakubowski 1976), have specifically examined consumer assertiveness and aggression. Aggression is behavior that is intended to hurt another, having no analog in Hirschman's model, but it is similar to our notion of retaliation. Fornell and Westbrook's (1979) factor analysis of consumer response to dissatisfaction found seven factors, two of which (aggressive self-assertion and aggression with undertones of violence) were clearly aggressive.

Richins (Richins 1983; Richins and Verhage 1987) developed a scale to measure aggression and assertiveness in the consumer context, and found them to be statistically independent. Their research also found that aggression was unidimensional, consisting primarily of self-reports of verbal aggression. They theorized that aggression is unidimensional perhaps due to the limited forms that it is likely to take in the consumer context. What was interesting were the higher correlations found between pleasure in seeking redress and aggression ($r = 0.37$) than between pleasure in seeking redress and assertiveness ($r = 0.07$).

One other study found that 16.25% of dissatisfied customers warned family and friends about the brand, product, or store (Day and Ash 1979), but it is unclear whether this response was retaliatory (intended to hurt the business rather than protect family and friends).

With the view of extending Hirschman's basic model to include these types of behaviors, Hunt (1991) hypothesized three outcomes to consumer dissatisfaction: voice, exit, and retaliation. Retaliation occurs when the customer intentionally does something to hurt the store or business. Our first study was an attempt to assess the scope of retaliation as a response to consumer dissatisfaction. Because of the limited research on consumer aggressiveness/retaliation, we first set out to discover the types of behaviors in which dissatisfied consumers engage. In order to assess the content of consumer retaliation, this first study was basically exploratory.

STUDY 1

Because of the limited research done on consumer retaliation, our first study was exploratory, and was intended to discover the types of retaliation behaviors in which dissatisfied consumers engage. With no previous verification of retaliatory consumer behavior, the principal task in the first study was to establish that consumer retaliation exists. If successful, the second purpose was to identify broad categories of consumer retaliation.

Hypotheses

We expected to find that

1) People, when asked, would be able to provide either personal or secondhand stories of consumer retaliation.

2) The different types of consumer retaliation would vary in terms of the

emotions the individual felt at the moment.

3) The type of retaliation stories would vary with sex, age, and education.

Method

Respondents. Because our research goals focused on examining the relationships between variables, rather than trying to estimate true population values, we relied on what has been termed "fortuitous sampling" (Rosenthal and Rosnow 1991). Thirty students in a consumer behavior class, as part of an optional class project, were asked to obtain up to three stories of consumer retaliation from 12 people in order to obtain full credit for the project. The stories were obtained from family, friends, acquaintances, and their own personal experience. Four students chose to not participate. Three-hundred thirty-one respondents provided from one to three stories, for a total of 376 stories. Of these, 58 stories were eliminated because they were just of consumer dissatisfaction and had no retaliation component (nothing was done to get back at the business). Nineteen stories were eliminated because they were employee retaliation and not consumer retaliation. Of the remaining 299 consumer retaliation stories, 185 were first-person and 114 were secondhand stories. Because many of the questions on the questionnaire could only be answered by the person who retaliated, the 114 secondhand stories were not included in the analysis. For the 185 first-person retaliatory stories, the average age at the time of retaliation was 32.3 years ($\underline{s} = 15.8$), and the average level of education was 14.5 years ($\underline{s} = 1.9$).

Procedure. A single sheet of paper labeled "respondent instructions" and three questionnaire sheets were given to each respondent. The instruction sheet gave some background on the project, explaining that when a consumer is dissatisfied with a store or brand or service, three kinds of actions can happen, alone or in combination: voice, exit, or retaliation. A definition and an example of each of these were given. Retaliation was defined as a situation in which "the dissatisfied consumer intentionally does something to hurt the store, brand, or service provider." The example given for retaliation was "The evening the ad was delivered in the newspaper you went to the grocery store just to buy a really good advertised special which turned out to be out of stock--so you push your cart around the store randomly filling it with groceries, then leave the filled cart blocking the aisle and leave the store." It was emphasized that this project dealt with the "retaliation" response to consumer dissatisfaction--those instances when the consumer intentionally does something to hurt the store or brand.

Respondents were asked to give one to three personal retaliation examples of either their own experiences or the experiences of another which they had either personally witnessed or heard firsthand. If respondents could think of more than one consumer retaliation experience, they were asked to relate stories involving different types of retaliation rather than the same type of retaliation involving different stores. Because the intent of the action was critical, we asked consumers to tell us about their own retaliation experiences. The respondent's rights were clearly explained and respondents were assured of complete anonymity. The research findings were discussed in class as part of the consumer satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and complaining behavior segment of the course.

Instrument. The questionnaire consisted of a set of general instructions and four subsections. The general instructions were as follows: "These questions are all written as though this was your own personal experience. If you are writing about someone else's experience, please word your answers accordingly. Spend a moment to think about the retaliation experience and what happened. Remember that most of all we need your own personal retaliation experiences."

The first subsection asked whether the experience was first- or secondhand, spur of the moment or premeditated, a one-time effort or continuous over time, whether others were aware

of it, and who was there during the retaliation (no one, spouse, child, parent, friend, or other). A little over half the sheet of paper was lined for respondents to write their consumer retaliation story in as much detail as possible. Respondents were told to attach additional sheets if they needed more space.

The second subsection requested a description of the emotions respondents felt during the retaliation experience. Ten emotional responses were listed, with a 0 (not at all) to 4 (very) unipolar rating scale. The emotional responses listed were 1) excited, 2) anxious/tense, 3) confident/in control, 4) angry/mad, 5) fearful/afraid, 6) pleased/satisfied, 7) ethical/upright, 8) remorseful/sorrowful, 9) irritated/annoyed, and 10) playful/lighthearted.

The third subsection was labeled "personal characteristics." It asked respondents to rate themselves on several five-point scales: how frugal versus free-spending they were; whether they make purchase decisions quickly versus taking a long time; whether they frequently versus seldom get angry; and whether compared to others they felt they retaliated much more versus much less. There was also a question about their perceived financial situation, with several statements along a continuum. The statements ranged from "I seldom have enough money to buy the basic things I need" to "I buy anything I want to--I have more money than I need and buy anything I want."

The fourth subsection asked respondents for their age, age then they retaliated, sex, marital status, family income, and years of formal education.

Results

Respondent's responses included 185 retaliation stories. Central to our analysis was the process of identifying broad categories of consumer retaliation.

Classification of the Retaliation Stories. Based on a reading of the 185 consumer retaliation stories, 6 common retaliation themes

emerged: create cost/loss, vandalism, trashing, stealing, negative word of mouth, and personal attack. While separately and then jointly reviewing the stories, the authors agreed on the six general categories of retaliatory behavior. Two examples for each consumer retaliation theme follow. "X" is used as the fictitious name for all businesses.

Create Cost/Loss. Create cost/loss is a specific effort to cost the store money by creating extra work, spoiling products, placing false orders, etc.

1) I had my hair cut at a ritzy place called X. They were supposed to have the best cuts in town. Wrong! They cut my hair unevenly and cut my neck while shaving it. I was mad! I planned my revenge. In the following two weeks, I set up hair appointments for 8 fictitious people. X being a very popular place, appointments had to be made two weeks in advance. Therefore, X didn't feel my revenge for a while. I figure that I cost them well over $100 dollars in lost revenue (considering that a haircut is $10 and a perm is $35) as I set up appointments for 3 perms and 5 cuts.

2) I had gone into a hardware store to get my hunting license. The man at the desk gave me a hard time because my hunter's safety card was blurred because it had gone through the wash. After I finally got the license, I was mad and walked around the store. I came to the bins full of nuts and bolts. After looking around, I mixed handfuls of the different sizes into other bins. I left the store and nobody saw me.

Vandalism. Vandalism consists of the destruction or damage of something in order to "get back" at the business.

1) Last year I was eating at X and the waiter brought me a cold burrito. When I arrived home, I realized it was cold. Two hours later, I took the burrito back. They would not give me a refund. Being upset and angry, I stormed out of the restaurant. Later that night, a friend and I spray painted graffiti on their back wall. It was great until the manager came out. Luckily it was dark

so he didn't see our faces. However, he chased us for nearly an hour. We were lucky to get away.

2) I purchased a solid oak entertainment center from X. My $900 entertainment center was delivered by them. A day or so later, while cleaning it, I noticed that the wood on the sides was beginning to develop a large crack. After many tries to get them to come out and look at it, with no luck, I took some pictures and showed them to the store manager. I wanted a new cabinet. He told me that it was my fault, that I had damaged it, and that he could not replace it. We argued for a long time, still he would do nothing. I was so mad that on my way out I took out my knife with a small saw and I quickly sawed deep cuts into three of their large kitchen tables.

Trashing. Trashing stories involved making a mess by either dumping clothes or product on the floor, or making a mess in a restaurant.

1) A couple of girlfriends and I went out to lunch at a fairly respectable restaurant - X. Our waitress was extremely rude and made me very angry. I had eaten there many times before and was always pleased but this time was a different story, she even served one of my friends the wrong dish. So out of disgust and anger, I played a childhood joke to get her back. I turned all the water glasses over, with the napkin on top so that when she lifted them up the water would go everywhere. Then my friends proceeded to mix up the sugar with the salt. We felt pretty justified in doing our childish actions because of her terrible service.

2) Once I was so mad at a clothing store that I took 5 or 6 outfits and tore off the labels and took them off of the hangers and threw them on the floor in a dressing room so they would have to clean it up themselves. I did not try them on at all.

Stealing. Stealing is taking a product without paying for it in order to "get back" at the business, not just to obtain the product for nothing.

1) I purchased a X power tool with the knowledge of their lifetime unconditional guarantee which a sales person told me was on all their X tools. The tool broke 14 days after purchase and I went to return the tool and a salesperson then said the guarantee was on hand tools only, not power tools, but a 90-day guarantee was on power tools and then asked me for my receipt. I threw the receipt away earlier as a result of my prior knowledge of the guarantee. They wouldn't trade or refund my money. So I went and traded the broken tool for a new tool on my own and left the store.

2) Several years ago, a local pizza restaurant was offering an "All You Can Eat" lunch special. For the low price of $2.99, a person could treat himself to all the pizza, salad, and pasta he could eat. This offer was good Monday through Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Being a pizza junky, I decided to take advantage of this special every day during my lunch break.

I don't like to brag, but eating pizza was one thing I could do better than anyone I know. Sometimes a friend would challenge me to a pizza-eating contest. We would go to the restaurant together and count the number of pieces we each ate. The one who had eaten the most pieces at the end of the lunch break was deemed the winner. I was undefeated with a record of 28 pieces in one lunch hour.

One day while I was enjoying my lunch, the restaurant manager approached me. He said he had been watching me for some time. He felt I was abusing the "All You Can Eat" special. He therefore asked me to leave the restaurant and never come back again. I informed him that I had broken no rules. I had come to his restaurant every day and eaten "all I could eat" -- just like his sign outside said. Nevertheless, he removed me from the restaurant.

Three weeks went by and I decided to return to the restaurant. It was my hope that the manager had forgotten about me. I would then be able to enjoy the "All You Can Eat" special again. No sooner had I sat down than the manager approached me. Not being as polite as during our first encounter, he insisted I leave. After a brief argument, I obliged.

My friends and I devised a plan to get back at

the restaurant. One of my friends went into the restaurant and ordered the "All You Can Eat" special. The manager didn't know him, so he was not suspicious. The rest of us were waiting outside behind the restaurant. The friend inside the restaurant filled his plate with pizza. He would then walk to the back of the restaurant and pass the pizza to the rest of us through the door marked "Fire Exit Only." This continued throughout the lunch hour. There were six of us altogether. Collectively we ate 102 pieces of pizza - - not bad for $2.99.

Negative Word of Mouth. Negative word of mouth is telling others of one's dissatisfaction experience (or some exaggerated version) with the intent to hurt the business. Excluded from this category were stories in which the intent seemed to be warning others of a consumer risk. The intent had to be clearly one to hurt the business.

1) I bought a [sport truck] from X. It was a new '88 with full everything. There had been minor adjustments and tune-ups during the first 6 months. At 17,000 miles the warranty was up. That's when the problems happened. Within the next 3 months I had to take it into the shop 8 times. The shocks, plugs, head gaskets, fan belt, thermostat and finally transmission all had to be replaced. My expenses were upwards of $3,000. Why weren't these problems taken care of/detected before the warranty was up? In retaliation I bought alphabet letters and wrote on my shell windows: I bought this lemon at X. 6 mos. warranty without problems, then $3,000 problems in the first 3 mos. following the warranty expiration. Don't buy from X!!! I now get daily satisfaction (in retaliating) while driving my [sport truck] around. My family/friends all agree that I've done the right thing. I even put an ad in the newspaper telling of my experience.

2) We had dinner reservations for 7:30 and arrived at 7:25. At 8:30 we were very irritated, at 9:00 very angry. Then we all started thinking of what we could do to protest and soon began to enjoy ourselves. If we couldn't enjoy dinner, we would get our enjoyment another way. (Yes, we had checked with the hostess several times. She

seemed upset that we wouldn't go into the bar to drink.) We talked about sending out for pizza, told people coming in that they should bring a book, and finally, getting louder, starting telling people coming in that the restaurant was through serving for the evening. That's when the manager came over, apologized, seated us immediately, and assigned two waitresses to our table exclusively. Before being seated, we managed to turn away six customers who left when we said the restaurant was through serving.

Personal Attack. Personal attack is a specific effort to in some way hurt the salesperson or manager either through abusive language, negative feedback to supervisors, or physical aggression.

1) The owner of a vintage clothing store had a dislike for young people. When we would go to her store she would try and kick us out telling us that all young people were cheap and that she didn't need our business and so forth. One day she went too far and we became disturbed. My friend and I left and gathered some other friends and went back to her store. We tried on all her clothes and made a real scene in the store. We spoke very rude to her, very loud so others could hear us. We also told other people who were coming in her store not to come in and told them all about the things she had said. We stayed probably 45 minutes and messed up everything. The retaliation wasn't so much that we broke or messed up anything, it was a mental retaliation because we knew that our being there drove her crazy. Finally she lost control and we left.

2) My father was extremely ill so we put him into the hospital for treatment. I explicitly told the doctor that my dad was allergic to penicillin. The doctor did not listen to what I had to say. Later in the week I came to visit my dad. All of a sudden he began to have a stroke. The doctor came in and tried to save him, but nothing could be done. I found out that his heart attack was due to his reaction to penicillin. In retaliation I took the doctor to court and filed for malpractice. I won and eventually put the man out of business.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and F-scores[†] for Each of the Retaliation Categories for the 10 Emotional Responses plus Age at the Time of Retaliation and Education

		Negative Word	Create Cost/Loss	Vandalism	Personal Attack	Trashing	Stealing	F-score
Excited	M	2.34	2.50	2.87	2.59	2.41	2.72	.95
	s	1.31	1.23	1.01	1.41	1.15	1.04	
Anxious/Tense	M	2.20	2.31	2.17	2.49	2.07	2.61	.52
	s	1.38	1.47	1.23	1.36	1.30	1.20	
Confident/In control	M	2.85	2.58	2.56	2.66	3.14	2.66	.92
	s	1.13	1.18	1.02	1.48	1.23	1.12	
Angry/Mad	M	3.40	3.24	3.30	2.96	3.00	3.30	.94
	s	.84	.97	1.04	1.04	1.27	.90	
Fearful/Afraid	M	.59	.82	1.46	.90	1.20	1.30	3.12**
	s	1.00	1.08	1.24	1.12	1.33	1.21	
Pleased/Satisfied	M	2.23	2.61	3.20	2.39	3.11	2.71	3.13**
	s	1.48	1.32	.93	1.41	.88	1.40	
Ethical/Upright	M	3.02	1.59	1.62	2.34	1.62	2.11	9.51***
	s	1.07	1.31	1.22	1.42	1.18	1.15	
Remorse/ Sorrowful	M	.44	.68	1.08	.60	.74	.83	1.81
	s	.91	.96	1.25	1.07	1.09	.83	
Irritated/Annoyed	M	3.64	3.21	3.09	3.07	2.77	2.32	5.72***
	s	.63	.96	1.07	1.02	1.36	1.40	
Playful/ Lighthearted	M	.75	1.51	1.76	1.57	2.41	2.19	6.59***
	s	1.05	1.40	1.42	1.66	1.38	1.41	
Age	M	37.46	30.66	34.50	29.09	22.19	31.22	3.52**
	s	15.64	15.26	18.32	12.72	6.64	17.83	
Education	M	15.16	14.29	13.65	14.36	14.33	14.33	3.00*
	s	1.64	1.93	2.06	1.76	1.80	2.09	

† For each test df = 5, 179.
* p < .05   ** p < .01   *** p < .001

Statistical Analysis

A one-way (retaliation categories) MANOVA was run using the ten emotional responses, age at the time of retaliation, and education as the dependent measures. The MANOVA was significant for the retaliation categories ($\underline{F}$ (60, 790) = 2.62, $\underline{p}$ < .0001). The means, standard deviations, and F-scores for the 6 retaliation categories for the dependent variables are in Table 1. The univariate $\underline{F}$s for the retaliation categories were significant for fearful/afraid, pleased/ satisfied, ethical/upright, irritated/annoyed, playful/ lighthearted, age, and education. The remaining variables (excited, anxious/tense, confident/in control, angry/mad, and remorseful/sorrowful) were not significant at the .05 level.

Scheffe's S (1953) post hoc test was run to test which of the six retaliation categories was

Figure 1
The Multigraph Showing the Relationship Between the Retaliation Categories in Relation to the Reported Emotional Response at the Time of the Retaliation
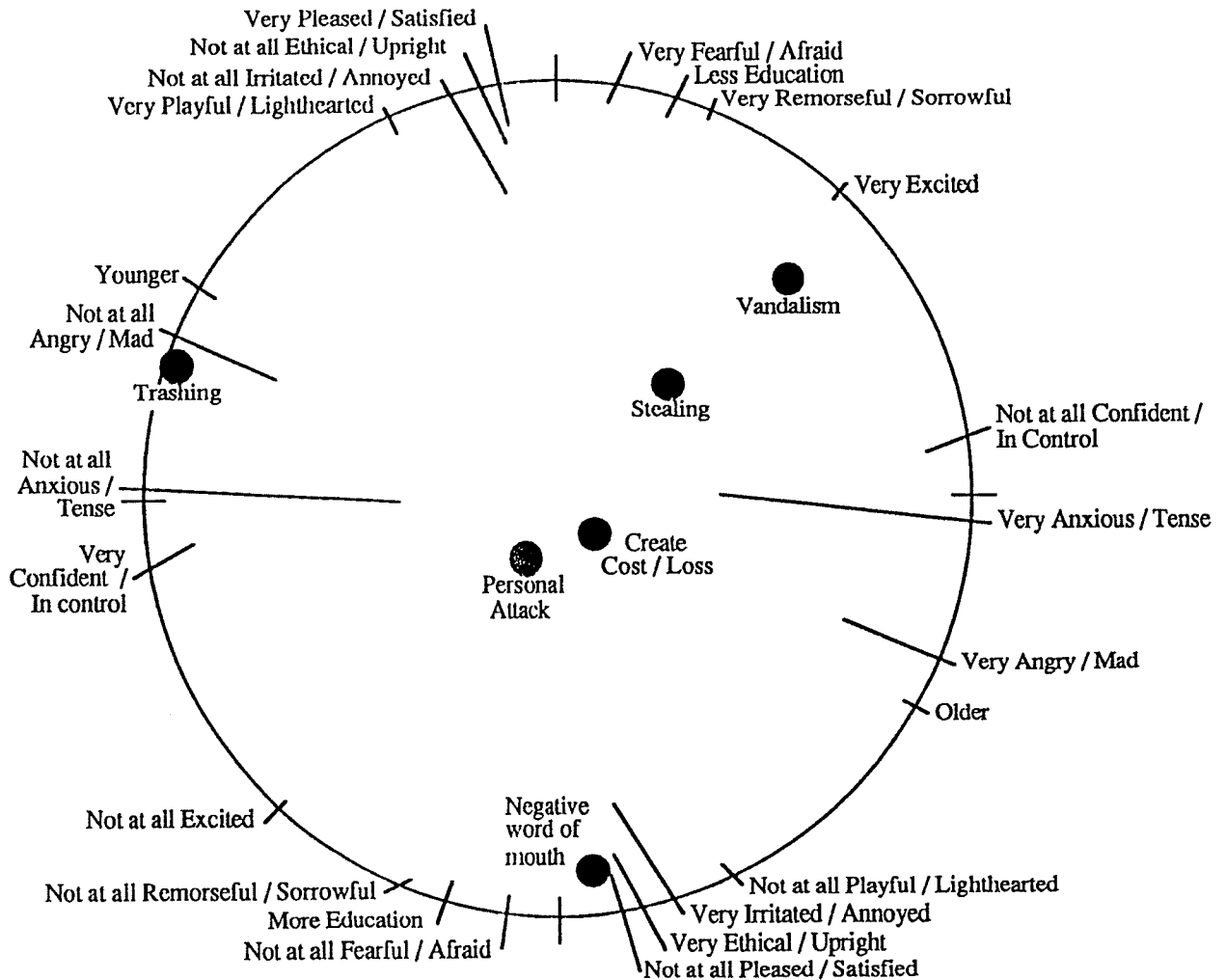
A MultiGraph is a way of taking advantage of the redundancy in a data set and shows in a two dimensional plotting the combined results on all questions simultaneously (Echo Data, 1991; Brown, Giles, & Thakerar, 1985). Each point labeled in the MultiGraph represents the end point on a vector from the center of the circle to that point. The closer the points are to the perimeter of the circle, the more of that item's variance is accounted for by the two-dimensional space. Conversely, the closer the points are to the center of the circle, the less an item is accounted for by the two-dimensional space. If a line is drawn from one end of the vector to the other, lines drawn at right angles from that line to the group scores reproduce the distribution of the means for the groups on that score. A MultiGraph is nothing more than a plotting of the factor scores of the subject groups superimposed upon the factor pattern (the plotting of the vectors) for the questions in the two factor space (Brown, Williams, & Barlow, 1984).

Table 2
Factor Loadings Matrix for the Multigraph in Figure 1

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Communalities
Excited	0.7098	0.6660	-0.1014	0.9576
Anxious	0.0067	0.3878	-0.9204	0.9976
Confident	-0.1067	-0.8868	0.2023	0.8387
Angry	-0.2921	0.6862	0.3135	0.6545
Fearful	0.9451	0.1242	0.0428	0.9105
Pleased	0.8920	-0.1213	0.4197	0.9865
Ethical	-0.8467	0.1299	-0.2052	0.7759
Remorse	0.8990	0.3640	0.2259	0.9918
Irritated	-0.7264	0.1308	0.5647	0.8636
Playful	0.8693	-0.3882	-0.2390	0.9634
Age	-0.4868	0.8278	0.2132	0.9677
Education	-0.9047	-0.2645	-0.1342	0.9065
Eigenvalues:	6.1535	2.9536	1.7072	
Percent Eigen:	51.2790	24.6136	14.2268	90.1194

statistically different from the others for each of the statistically significant variables. For fearful/afraid, the only significant difference was between negative word of mouth ($\underline{M}$ = 0.59) which had the lowest mean, and vandalism ($\underline{M}$ = 1.46) which had the highest mean. For pleased/satisfied, the only significant difference was between negative word of mouth ($\underline{M}$ = 2.23) which had the lowest mean, and vandalism ($\underline{M}$ = 3.20) which had the highest mean. For ethical/upright, negative word of mouth ($\underline{M}$ = 3.02) was significantly higher than create cost/loss ($\underline{M}$ = 1.59), vandalism ($\underline{M}$ = 1.62), and trashing ($\underline{M}$ = 1.62). For irritated/annoyed, negative word of mouth ($\underline{M}$ = 3.64) was significantly higher than stealing ($\underline{M}$ = 2.32) and trashing ($\underline{M}$ = 2.77). For playful/lighthearted, negative word of mouth ($\underline{M}$ = .75) was significantly lower than vandalism ($\underline{M}$ = 1.76), stealing ($\underline{M}$ = 2.19), and trashing ($\underline{M}$ = 2.41). For age, the only significant difference was between trashing ($\underline{M}$ = 22.19) which had the lowest mean and negative word of mouth ($\underline{M}$ = 37.46) which had the highest mean. For education, the only significant difference was between vandalism ($\underline{M}$ = 13.65) which had the lowest mean and negative word of mouth ($\underline{M}$ = 15.16) which had the highest

mean.

A MultiGraph statistical procedure was run using the mean values for retaliation categories for the 10 emotional responses, age at the time of the retaliation story, and education. A MultiGraph is a principle components factor analysis using stabilized data in which groups are plotted as factor scores in the resulting factor space (Brown, Icke, and Linker 1990; Echo Data 1991). The MultiGraph in Figure 1 is based on the means given in Table 1. The vertical dimension (the first factor) accounts for 51.3% of the variance, the horizontal dimension (the second factor) accounts for 24.6% of the variance for a total explained variance of 75.9% shown in the two dimensional MultiGraph. There is also a third factor, which accounts for another 14.2% of the variance, with 90.1% of the variance explained by the three factors. The factor loadings for the ten affective variables, age, and education for the three factors are given in Table 2. The vertical dimension was negatively correlated with education, ethical/upright, and irritated/annoyed, and positively correlated with fearful/afraid, remorse, pleased/satisfied, playful/lighthearted, and excited. The horizontal

Table 3
Cross-tab Table Showing Frequency, Column %, and Row %
for Each of the Retaliation Categories for Males and Females

		Negative Word	Create Cost/Loss	Personal Vandalism	Attack	Trashing	Stealing	Totals and Column %
Male	N	26	19	28	14	12	13	112
	Column %	47.3%	54.3%	82.4%	63.6%	57.1%	72.2%	60.5%
	Row %	23.2%	17%	25%	12.5%	10.7%	11.6%	
Female	N	29	16	6	8	9	5	73
	Column %	52.7%	45.7%	17.6%	36.4%	42.9%	27.8%	39.5%
	Row %	39.7%	21.9%	8.2%	11%	12.3%	6.9%	
Totals	N	55	35	34	22	21	18	185
	Row %	29.7%	18.9%	18.4%	11.9%	11.4%	9.7%	

dimension was positively correlated with age, angry/mad, and excited, and negatively correlated with confident/in control. The third factor, shown in Table 2 but not in the two dimensional MultiGraph, was negatively correlated with anxious/tense.

A 2 by 6 cross-tab analysis (sex by retaliation categories) was run. The observed frequencies and row and column percents are shown in Table 3. For this analysis the chi-square was 12.62, $p = .03$. Relative to the other retaliation behaviors (the row percentages), men were more likely than women to perform "vandalism" (25% for men versus 8.2% for women) and "stealing" (11.6% for men versus 6.9% for women). Women were more likely to engage in "negative word of mouth" (39.8% for women versus 23.2% for men) and "creating costs" (21.9% for women versus 17% for men). The percentage differences for "trashing" and "personal attack" were very close: women were more likely to "trash" and men were more likely to engage in "personal attack."

Discussion

The 185 first-person consumer retaliation stories establish that consumers sometimes retaliate in response to unsatisfactory consumer experiences, and are willing to share their retaliation stories under conditions of anonymity. Also, 114 secondhand consumer retaliation stories

were not used in this analysis. Thus the hypothesis that people would be able to provide either personal or secondhand stories of consumer retaliation was supported.

The MANOVA results showed that the different consumer retaliation categories were significantly different in terms of respondents' emotional responses. The six retaliation categories were significantly different on 5 of the 10 emotional responses to the retaliation. The greatest overall statistical effect was for negative word of mouth, which was usually significantly different from vandalism and trashing. Self-reports indicated that people using negative word of mouth felt more ethical/upright and irritated/annoyed, and less fearful/afraid, pleased/satisfied, and playful/lighthearted at the time of the retaliation behavior. Vandalism was the highest for fearful/afraid and pleased/satisfied, while trashing was the least ethical/upright and irritated/annoyed, and the highest for playful/lighthearted. This suggests that individuals who retaliate using negative word of mouth, while feeling more ethical about what they've done, report higher levels of irritation and generally less satisfaction with the results than do those who trash or vandalize. At least to some extent, perhaps trashing and vandalism serve to cathart the anger and frustration associated with dissatisfaction (Tedeschi 1983), allowing these retaliators to feel more satisfied and playful about

their "unethical" behaviors.

There were also significant differences between the retaliation categories for the two demographic variables: age and education. Average age and education were highest for the negative word of mouth stories. The significant differences were between negative word of mouth and trashing on age, and negative word of mouth and vandalism on education. Negative word of mouth, which is positively related to maturity and education, carries less personal risk to the retaliator, while potentially being the most damaging to the business.

The MultiGraph showed that the six categories of consumer retaliation do differ in terms of felt emotional response, age, and education. The vertical dimension represents the first factor, which explained 51.3% of the variance. This factor seems to represent the way people responded emotionally to socially acceptable versus unacceptable forms of retaliation. The horizontal dimension represents the second factor, which explained an additional 24.6% of the variance. This factor seems to represent the way people responded emotionally in either a self-assured or an unsure, non-confident manner. The third dimension explained 14.2% of the variance and was related solely to anxious/tense (as shown in Table 2) but could not be shown in the two-dimensional MultiGraph.

The negative word of mouth category at the bottom of the MultiGraph, perhaps the most socially acceptable response category to a negative consumer experience, was statistically different from the other categories on most of the emotional response measures. These people felt irritated/annoyed and ethical/upright, and did not feel fearful/afraid, pleased/satisfied, remorseful/sorrowful, or playful/lighthearted. Individuals who retaliated with negative word of mouth were also more likely to have a higher level of education. These are people who were dissatisfied and expressed their dissatisfaction through attempts to hurt the business or product by telling others about the bad experience. This was the most subtle of the retaliation categories in that there is no immediate evidence of

dissatisfaction, only long-term loss of business. From the business' perspective the long-term loss of business may be due to any number of market forces (recession, more effective competition from business rivals, shifting consumer trends, etc). The business may be completely unaware of the loss of business due to consumer retaliation.

Both the personal attack and create cost/loss categories are in the middle of the MultiGraph and, on both dimensions, were intermediate retaliation responses to a dissatisfactory experience. These categories were not similar to negative word of mouth in terms of emotional response. Personal attack is a specific effort to hurt in some way the sales person or manager either through abusive language, negative feedback to supervisors, or physical aggression. Create cost/loss is a specific effort to cost the store money by creating extra work, spoiling products, placing false orders, etc. While socially unacceptable behavior, these types of retaliation were perceived as more acceptable than trashing, stealing, or vandalism.

Trashing was done by people who were younger, felt very confident/in control and playful/lighthearted, and did not feel anxious/tense. Trashing stories involved making a mess by either dumping clothes or product on the floor, or making a mess in a restaurant. This suggests that cocky youths were those who related the trashing responses to consumer dissatisfaction.

Both stealing and vandalism evoked fairly similar emotional responses in those respondents who told these stories, with vandalism producing the more extreme emotional response. Those who gave us vandalism stories said that at the time of the vandalism they felt very excited, but were also very remorseful/sorrowful, very fearful/afraid, and not at all confident/in control. They were also the group with the lowest level of education ($M =$ 13.6 years). What is noteworthy about the level of education for this group is that it is fairly unrelated to their age ($M = 34.5$), which was the second highest mean for age. Vandalism seems to be a very visceral response. The emotional response to stealing is virtually identical to vandalism, only less in terms of degree (see

Figure 1).

It is interesting that four of the six retaliation categories fall along the vector for the emotion "excited." Vandalism was the extreme, followed by stealing, create cost/loss, and then personal attack. This indicates that these four groups differed most in the reported level of excitement felt during the retaliation experience.

The MANOVA and MultiGraph support both the second hypothesis that the retaliation categories would differ in terms of emotional response, and the part of the third hypothesis that the retaliation categories would differ in terms of age and level of education.

The crosstab analysis showed that men and women in our study differed in terms of the types of consumer retaliation stories they told. Men reported the more extreme retaliatory responses. Men were more likely than women to have told "vandalism" and "stealing" stories. Women were more likely than men to have told "negative word of mouth" and "creating cost/loss" stories. This goes along with research which has found that men are more likely to physically aggress, while women are more likely to verbally aggress (Archer, Pearson, and Westeman 1988; Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, and Kaukiainen 1992; Harris 1993). This supports the last part of the third hypothesis that stories would vary by the sex of the retaliator.

STUDY 2

Study 2 was an attempt to compare consumer retaliation with the more traditional categories of consumer dissatisfaction: exit and voice (Hirschman 1970). Many of the retaliation stories obtained in Study 1 also contained elements of both voice and exit. Examples of this were stories in which complaining to the manager did not produce the desired effect and led to retaliation, or the negative word of mouth stories which were usually accompanied by statements about intending to never go back to the store. We did not include Rusbult's neglect in this study because of the research finding that neglect is not used much in dealing with consumer dissatisfaction

(Malafi 1990).

Hypotheses

We expected to find that

1) The voice, exit, and retaliation subscales would be statistically independent.

2) The type of consumer reaction (voice, exit, and retaliation) most frequently selected by an individual would vary by sex, marital status, education, age, and income.

Method

Respondents. Twenty-one students in a consumer behavior class distributed questionnaires to family, friends, and acquaintances. Three hundred and ninety-three respondents returned completed questionnaires, 201 men and 192 women. One hundred seventy-one of the respondents had never been married, 204 were currently married, and 18 were previously married. The average level of education for respondents was 14.7 years, the average age was 33.1 years, and the average income was $41,621.

Procedure. The consumer behavior students chose to participate in an extra-credit class project in which they obtained questionnaire responses from three respondents in each of five different age groups (14-18, 19-25, 26-40, 41-55, 56 and older). Complete respondent anonymity was guaranteed. The research findings were discussed in class as part of the consumer satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and complaining behavior segment of the course.

Each respondent received a packet containing a cover letter, the questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope. The cover letter explained that each of the 28 items in the questionnaire came from stories told to us in previous research. Respondents were instructed to respond to every

item.

Instrument. A questionnaire asking about different consumer reactions to dissatisfactory experiences was developed. The questionnaire was based on a multi-act behavioral criterion model (Fishbein and Ajzen 1974). Respondents were asked twenty-eight questions about different behaviors they had performed during the last six months. Each question was based on the following four-point scale: 0 = never, no times; 1 = one time; 2 = two times; 3 = three or more times. The questions were meant to fall into three basic categories: 1) voice, 2) exit, and 3) retaliation. The retaliation questions were based on respondent responses in Study 1. The exit and voice questions were based on the literature on exit and voice responses to consumer dissatisfaction. Examples of voice items were, "because of a problem I complained to a store manager," and "because of a problem I complained by phone or letter to regional or national headquarters." Examples of exit items were, "because of a problem I left the business and purchased the product elsewhere," and "because of a problem I stopped buying at that business and have never gone back." Examples of retaliation items were, "because of a problem I told everyone possible in order to hurt the business," and "because of a problem I damaged some part of the building or facilities of the business that upset me." We also asked for demographic information (age, sex, etc.).

Creation of the Subscales. The twenty-eight behavioral items were combined into three subscales: voice, exit, and retaliation. Cronbach's alpha and factor analysis were used to test the internal reliability and unidimensionality of the three subscales. The Cronbach's alpha for the three subscales were voice = 0.67, exit = 0.79, and retaliation = 0.71. These values, while moderate, indicate that each of the subscales is fairly unidimensional. Factor analysis confirmed the voice and exit subscales, each on separate factors. The retaliation questions were split between five factors. However, perhaps because

each of these retaliation subscales had such low behavioral frequencies, the Cronbach's alpha based on these factors were substantially lower than the Cronbach's alpha for the original, conceptually based subscale. Because of the low frequencies of many of the retaliation behaviors and the higher Cronbach's alpha of the conceptually based subscale, the subscale composed of all the retaliation items was used.

Results

The frequencies for the individual questionnaire items are given in Table 4. Each item is preceded by "E," "V," or "R" representing exit, voice, or retaliation. They are rank ordered by the percent of people who said they had done that behavior within the last six months. All of the 28 behaviors had been performed at least once by the 393 respondents within the last six months. The most common response was warning family and friends so that they would not have the same problem, which was performed at least once by 76.1% of the sample. The response with the lowest frequency was striking an employee, which only one respondent reported having done within the last six months. In general, voice and exit behaviors were the most common responses to consumer dissatisfaction.

Figure 2 is a Venn Diagram showing the relationship between the three categories of consumer response to dissatisfaction. Each cell shows the number and percent of individuals who reported having performed at least one exit, voice, or retaliation behavior in the last six months. The two biggest groups were those who had performed at least one voice and exit behavior (n = 178) and those who had performed at least one voice, exit, and retaliation behavior (n = 142) in the last six months. Much smaller groups had performed only voice (n = 28), only exit (n = 10), or both voice and retaliation (n = 9) behaviors in the last six months. Twenty-six individuals reported having performed none of the 28 behaviors in the last six months. No one performed just retaliation or just retaliation and exit behaviors.

Figure 3, a Venn Diagram showing the

Table 4
Because of a Problem . . .
(% Who Had Done this Behavior One or More Times, N = 393)

76.1% - V - I warned friends and family so that they would not have the same problem.
72.8% - V - I complained to a store clerk.
58.0% - E - I left the business and purchased the product elsewhere.
55.5% - E - I stopped buying at that business and have never gone back.
53.4% - E - I stopped buying a brand and have never bought it again.
46.1% - E - I only shop at that store when I absolutely have to.
39.2% - E - I canceled an order.
38.2% - E - I stopped buying for a while, but have since gone back.
36.4% - V - I complained to the store manager.
25.7% - R - I told everyone possible in order to hurt the business.
22.4% - V - I complained to regional or national headquarters.
21.9% - R - I threatened an employee that I would go to their supervisor if the problem wasn't corrected.
16.0% - R - I threatened to tell everyone I could if the problem wasn't solved.
11.5% - R - I used name calling or obscenities in venting my frustration.
10.2% - R - I intentionally left a mess so that the employees would have to do extra work.
8.7% - R - I cut up that store's credit card.
7.9% - R - I disturbed other customers so that they would leave and thus hurt the business.
7.4% - V - I made a formal complaint to the BBB or Board of Health.
5.9% - R - I left a full cart or moved items around in order to create work.
5.7% - R - I deliberately stayed past closing hours so that employees would have to stay late.
3.6% - R - I got even by taking something from the store without paying for it.
3.3% - R - I got even by eating a product in the store without paying for it.
2.3% - R - I intentionally broke or damaged a product in the store.
2.0% - R - I placed a food product where it would not be found and would spoil.
1.5% - R - I damaged some part of the building or facilities of the business that upset me.
1.0% - R - I filed a lawsuit that asked for more than just damages.
.8% - R - I placed a fake order or reservation in order to run up business expenses.
.3% - R - I struck an employee.

interrelationships between the three subscales, is based on partial correlation analysis and reports the adjusted R^2. The overlap of the three circles corresponds to the amount of variance that all three subscales have in common. The area where two circles overlap, but not all three, corresponds to the amount of variance shared between the two subscales. The area of the circle which does not overlap any other circle corresponds to the amount of variance of that subscale that is independent of the other two subscales. Partial correlation analysis shows the three subscales to be fairly independent: 64.3% for exit, 60.6% for voice, and 77.2% for retaliation. Only 22.8% to 39.4% of the variance for any subscale is also common to the other subscales. The majority of the variance for voice, exit, and retaliation is independent of the other subscales. The partial correlation analysis, along with the Cronbach's alpha and the factor analysis, support the hypothesis that voice, exit, and retaliation are essentially independent consumer behaviors.

Stepwise multiple regression analyses used sex, marital status, education, age, and income to predict exit, voice, and retaliation. Age and marital status contributed significantly to the

Figure 2
The Number and Percent of Individuals Who Said They Had Done One or More of Each of the Three Categories During the Last 6 Months
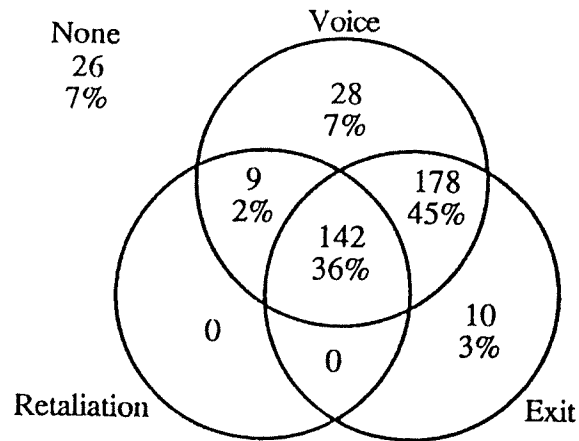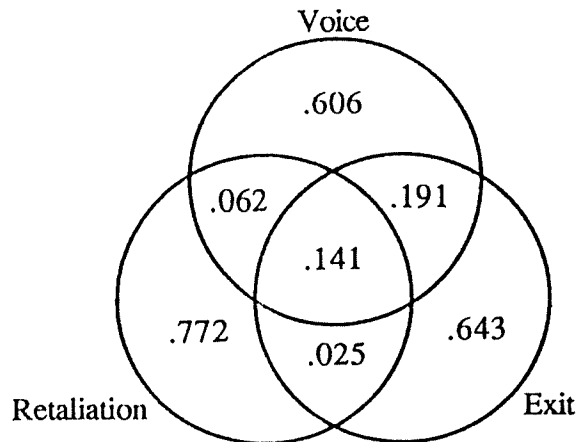

Figure 3
The Percent of Variance in Each of the Subscales that is Independent of or Predicted by One Other or All Three of the Subscales Based on Adjusted R^2

prediction of exit. The multiple correlation coefficient for these two variables was .23. Age was negatively correlated with exit, indicating that as people get older they are less likely to exit in response to consumer dissatisfaction. Marital status was positively correlated with exit. This indicated that as people go from single to married to previously married, there is an increasing chance of using exit in response to consumer dissatisfaction.

Sex and education contributed significantly to the prediction of voice. The multiple correlation coefficient for these variables was .18. Sex was negatively correlated with voice, indicating that men were more likely than women to use voice in response to consumer dissatisfaction. Education was positively correlated with voice, indicating that people with higher levels of education were more likely to use voice in response to consumer dissatisfaction.

Sex and age were the only significant contributors to the prediction of retaliation. The multiple correlation coefficient for these two variables was .22. Both sex and age were negatively correlated with retaliation. This indicated that males more than females, and the young more than the old, were more likely to use retaliation in response to consumer dissatisfaction.

Discussion

The frequencies for the individual questionnaire items are given in Table 4. The two most frequently reported items deal with dissatisfied consumers: 1) warning people they know about either a store or a product and 2) complaining to a store clerk. These two items were combined with the other voice items (complaining to a manager or regional headquarters, and threatening to complain) into a single subscale. In terms of greatest frequency, the voice behaviors were the most common response to dissatisfaction. The fact that the voice items were the most frequent responses to consumer dissatisfaction supports Hirschman's observation that voice behaviors are a more frequent response to dissatisfaction than he had originally supposed (Hirschman 1974). This is especially noteworthy because of the ready availability of competing sources and the so called "ease" and "low cost" of exit (e.g., loose monopolies) (Andreasen 1985).

The third through eighth most frequently occurring items all dealt with consumers exiting their relationship with a store or product due to an unsatisfactory experience. These items were added together to create an exit subscale. It is interesting to note that all of the exit items were grouped together in the frequency distribution. The frequencies for the exit behaviors indicate that they are a significant group of reactions to consumer dissatisfaction, although not as common as voice. Of interest to businesses should be the fourth and fifth items: "I have stopped buying at that business (or that brand) and have never gone back." These items are different from the rest of the exit items and represent a permanent loss of

business. The rest of the exit items seem to fall more in line with the way consumers are theorized to act in a market economy, that is, taking their business to whichever business offers the best deal. The fourth and fifth items, however, are closer to what has been termed grudgeholding behavior (Hunt, Hunt, and Hunt 1988).

With the exception of the eleventh and eighteenth items (both voice), the remaining items deal with instances when consumers' behaviors attempt to "get back at" the store or product because of a dissatisfactory experience. These items were summed into a retaliation subscale. The most frequently occurring retaliation item involved telling others about the problem in order to hurt business. This type of story formed a separate class of retaliation behaviors in Study 1: "negative word of mouth." Negative word of mouth was done by 25.7% of our sample at least once within the last six months. The least frequently occurring retaliatory behavior involved striking an employee--only one person reported having done so in the last six months.

One indication of the behavior pattern dissatisfied consumers engage in is shown in Figure 2. It is clear from this diagram that the single largest pattern of behaviors in response to dissatisfaction involved some combination of both exit and voice. What cannot be discerned from this, however, is an individual's pattern of voice versus exit behaviors. The same is true for the next largest group, which were those who had performed at least one voice, exit, and retaliation behavior during the last six months. This group includes both the individual who did many voice behaviors, but only one exit and one retaliation, and the individual who retaliated many times, but only voiced and exited once. From this diagram it is probably most important to note that the large majority of people used more than one behavioral response to dissatisfaction, and that no one relied on retaliation behaviors alone.

An indication of the relative frequency of and relationship between exit, voice, and retaliation behaviors is shown in Figure 3. This diagram shows that the majority of the variance for voice, exit, and retaliation was independent of the other

subscales. This is true even for retaliation, for which no one performed retaliation behaviors alone, and yet for which 77% of the variance is independent of the other scales. This suggests that for the last six months, most consumers used a basic behavioral pattern when responding to unsatisfactory consumer experiences. People who reported the highest frequency of voice behaviors in response to dissatisfaction were less likely to have also reported the highest frequency of retaliation behaviors. The same is true for the relationship between voice and exit, and exit and retaliation. It appears that for most people there is a preferred behavioral response of choice, either exit, voice, or retaliation.

The notion that people use a basic response set when reacting to dissatisfaction is also supported by research done with Rusbult's EVLN model. A study that looked at people over the six-month period found that the within-behavior correlations from time 1 to time 2 in the sample of graduates were .61, .47, .56, and .57 for the measures of exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect (Withey and Cooper 1989). People who did one thing at time one tended to do the same thing at time two.

Part of the original research question was the degree to which sex of respondent, marital status, age, level of income, and yearly income were predictive of the three subscales. Stepwise multiple regression was used to determine the demographic variables that significantly contributed to the prediction of each of the subscales. Sex and level of education were significant predictors of the voice subscale, with a multiple correlation of .18 (accounting for 3% of the variance). Men with higher levels of education were more likely to report voicing their consumer complaints. Age and marital status were significant predictors of the exit subscale, with a multiple correlation of .23 (accounting for 5% of the variance). This means that young marrieds or divorcees were more likely to report leaving the store in reaction to consumer complaints. Sex of respondent and age were significant predictors of the retaliation subscale, with a multiple correlation of .22 (accounting for

5% of the variance). Young men were more likely to report having retaliated in response to consumer dissatisfaction. It is important to point out that none of these predictions is very strong, with at least 95% of the variance in each of the subscales unaccounted for by these variables. This indicates that these standard demographic variables were not very predictive of exit, voice, and retaliation. This, of course, raises the question of what is predictive of exit, voice, and retaliation responses to dissatisfaction. Do individuals have a response to dissatisfaction that feels "more natural" to them, or in other words, forms their basic response set? What are the conditions under which one versus another of these types of behavior is expressed?

CONCLUSION

In the best of all worlds, perhaps there would be no dissatisfaction. But, in the world as we know it, dissatisfaction will always exist. Most providers (sellers, employers, governments, intimates, etc.) have to deal with dissatisfaction caused by themselves or by receivers, or by an interaction of the two. Of the three options to dissatisfaction dealt with in this paper, voice is the most desirable in all contexts. Voice makes the source of dissatisfaction explicit. It allows the provider the opportunity to ameliorate the problem or to ignore it. Voice is empowerment to the customer, but even more important is the critical information needed by business to heal current dissatisfaction and forestall future dissatisfaction. It may even allow the business, in correcting the problem, to create a sense of loyalty in the customer and to offer all customers a higher level of service. Without voice, the business is virtually helpless in improving the situation.

Exit, while it may imply a problem, does nothing to identify the nature of the problem itself. How can a business differentiate between those who leave satisfied versus dissatisfied? Except in personal exchanges, the business doesn't even know who its end customers are, and therefore has no way to recognize their exit or contacting those who exit to find out why. Only when the number of exits reaches a critical level and business gets

very bad does the business recognize that something is wrong. Even at this point the business still has to figure out what is wrong and correct it. But by then, many customers have exited and are gone forever - resulting in lost revenue and potential negative word of mouth. If the dissatisfaction develops rapidly and too many customers exit, the business may be lost before the problem is recognized and solved. Voice is clearly more desirable because it allows identification of the problem where exit leaves a mystery.

Retaliation is the worst dissatisfaction outcome of all. Not only does it not tell the business what the problem is, it creates additional problems and costs. While most retaliators were open with us about the problem and what they did, none indicated that they went back to the business to confess actions and explain the problem. Many of the retaliation behaviors were illegal, and would have opened the actors to criminal prosecution (the only exception to this pattern being negative word of mouth and suing). While retaliation brought emotional release to the retaliator, it gave no information to the business about the nature of the problem. From the business person's perspective, retaliation has all the disadvantages of exit with the addition of varying degrees of cost.

Most of the retaliatory stories given involved illegal behaviors. It has been observed that much crime is moralistic and involves the pursuit of justice, retaliation being recognized as a form of social control (Baumgartner 1984; Black 1984). Less powerful individuals consistently respond with higher levels of retaliation than do individuals who possess power equal to or greater than their target (Richardson, Vandenberg, and Humphries 1986). Baumgartner (1984) states that covert retaliation is a way of secretly confronting a powerful antagonist through the use of pranks, harassment, theft, property destruction, etc. The retaliation stories in Study 1 clearly fit this pattern.

The retaliation stories were intrinsically interesting. The creativity and anger that went into many of the retaliations were amazing. But each instance of retaliation seems to have occurred only because voice was not perceived as a viable option (or desirable if there is a retaliatory response set), or where voice failed to produce satisfactory results. We believe that as society's organizations become more open and facilitative of voice, it is reasonable to expect that retaliation will decrease. An indication for knowing that a business' mechanisms for voice are working adequately occurs when retaliation frequencies approach zero. "Exit of customers serves as a signal...that something is amiss... and is a powerful but indirect and somewhat blunt way of alerting management to its failings....The direct and more informative way of alerting management is to alert it: this is voice" (Hirschman 1986, p. 78-79). Voice is superior to retaliation for the same reasons. We propose that just as voice negates the need for exit, voice also negates the need for retaliation.

It remains likely, however, that many business people are unaware of the use of retaliation to express consumer dissatisfaction. Much retaliation may appear to be random violence. This is not the case. There may be little damage to businesses that is not the result of some dissatisfaction, creating a double burden for the business, since retaliation does not communicate the exact nature of the complaint, while at the same time creating some type of additional cost. One direction for future research is to study the extent to which business people are aware of consumer retaliation.

Consumers need to recognize that exit and retaliation have no potential to improve their well-being or other consumers' well-being. Only voice allows them to explain dissatisfaction to the seller and suggest possibilities to remove the current dissatisfaction and avoid future dissatisfaction.

Sellers also need to recognize that exit and retaliation have no potential to reduce consumer dissatisfaction. Only voice allows sellers to become aware of consumer dissatisfaction, to understand the roots of that dissatisfaction, and to avoid such dissatisfaction in the future.

Society is best served when dissatisfied customers voice their dissatisfaction, and sellers

listen and respond to that voice.

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