

# **INSIGHTS INTO CONSUMER-TO-CONSUMER PUNISHMENT DECISIONS**

by

Pei-Shiuan Lily Lin

B.A., University of British Columbia, 2004  
M.Sc., University of Western Ontario, 2008

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## Abstract

Social norms are common in our daily lives, and violations of these norms are just as prevalent. While the topics of norm violations and punishment have been studied in disciplines outside of consumer research (e.g., sociology, psychology), research efforts have not examined consumers' reactions toward another consumer who violates well-established norms in consumption contexts. The present research seeks to fill this void by introducing and investigating the concept of *consumer-to-consumer punishment*.

Across seven experimental studies, this dissertation first provides insight into how consumers make punishment decisions toward fellow consumers. It then sets out to understand the downstream effects of norm violations and consumer punishment decisions. Based on the conceptualization that violations disrupt social order, and that social order can be restored through the punishment of norm violators, the first four studies of the dissertation highlight three factors that are critical in consumers' punishment decisions. First, when a third party in the consumption environment restores social order through punishment, consumers will refrain from punishing further (study 1). Second, punishment is mitigated when the norm violator faces an unjustified adversity, as punishment would create a further imbalance in social order (studies 2a and 2b). Third, the level of punishment required to achieve social order is reduced for a higher status norm violator (study 3).

The next three studies explore how norm violations and punishment decisions can negatively impact consumers' consumption experience. Not only do norm violations

result in an increase in punishment behavior, they also result in more negative ratings of the products (study 4). Interestingly, the normative nature of the store policy in place (norm reinforcing vs. norm licensing) was not shown to effectively mitigate these negative consumption evaluations (study 5). The last study demonstrates how the negative ramifications from norm violations can be offset by the punisher. Specifically, evaluations of consumption experience improved when a third party (i.e., store employee) took on the role of the punisher (study 6).

Finally, the dissertation discusses the theoretical contributions of the current work, identifies important managerial implications, and suggests multiple avenues for future research.

## **Preface**

I am the primary author of the work presented in this Ph.D. dissertation. I was responsible for conducting the literature review, developing the hypotheses, designing the experiments, collecting the data, analyzing the data and preparing the manuscript. Additional contributions for each chapter are described below.

### **1 Introduction**

I am the primary author of this chapter. A portion of this chapter has been published. Lin, Lily, Darren W. Dahl, and Jennifer J. Argo, “Do the Crime, Always Do the Time? Insights into Consumer-to-Consumer Punishment Decisions,” © 2012 by JOURNAL OF CONSUMER RESEARCH, Inc., DOI: 10.1086/668641, I was the first author of this publication, with intellectual contributions from Darren W. Dahl and Jennifer J. Argo.

### **2 Factors that Influence Consumer-to-Consumer Decisions**

A version of this chapter has been published. Lin, Lily, Darren W. Dahl, and Jennifer J. Argo, “Do the Crime, Always Do the Time? Insights into Consumer-to-Consumer Punishment Decisions,” © 2012 by JOURNAL OF CONSUMER RESEARCH, Inc., DOI: 10.1086/668641. I was the first author of this publication. I designed the experiments, supervised data collection, conducted the analyses and prepared the manuscript. Darren W. Dahl and Jennifer J. Argo assisted in designing the experiments, and provided intellectual contributions.

### **3        Effects of Consumption Norm Violations and Punishment on Consumption Experience**

I am the primary author of this chapter. I designed the experiments, supervised data collection, and conducted the analyses. Darren W. Dahl and Jennifer J. Argo assisted in designing the experiments and provided intellectual contributions.

### **4        Conclusion**

I am the primary author of this chapter. A portion of this chapter has been published. Lin, Lily, Darren W. Dahl, and Jennifer J. Argo, “Do the Crime, Always Do the Time? Insights into Consumer-to-Consumer Punishment Decisions,” © 2012 by JOURNAL OF CONSUMER RESEARCH, Inc., DOI: 10.1086/668641. I was the first author of this publication, with intellectual contributions from Darren W. Dahl and Jennifer J. Argo.

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my dad, Frank Lin.

# 1 Introduction

In everyday life, people are expected to adhere to numerous social norms (i.e., rules of behavior). Failure to comply with these norms is viewed negatively. For instance, when waiting for a bank machine or a fitting room, consumers are expected to wait in line in the order of their arrival; cutting in front of others is perceived to be a norm violation. As another example, in many societies there is an implicit norm that one's personal space should be respected; thus, a consumer who intentionally invades the space of another consumer (i.e., hovers) who is eating his/her meal or browsing for books, is often seen as engaging in inappropriate behavior. Although these consumer-oriented examples of norm violations may not be as severe as those that are deemed unlawful or criminal in the court of law (e.g., theft), I argue that they can still result in consumers' punishment of norm violators who are fellow consumers (i.e., *consumer-to-consumer punishment*).

To date, much of the work on punishment can be found in the fields of psychology, philosophy, sociology, criminology, law, and behavioral economics. Essentially, punishment occurs when a violator breaks a rule in society (e.g., Banner 1981; Fehr and Gächter 2002; Garland 1990; Golash 2005; Horne 2009; Miethe and Meier 1994). Given the violator's actions will typically have an impact on another individual, the presence of a victim or bystander is also necessary for punishment to arise (Bernhard, Fischbacher, and Fehr 2006; Dawes et al. 2007). Previous research in behavioral economics shows that when one player in an economic payoff game breaks

the norm of fairness (i.e., distributes less money to the group than to the rest of the players), other players will sometimes punish this norm violator even at a cost to their own monetary payoffs (Fehr and Fischbacher 2004; Fehr and Gächter 2002). The current dissertation seeks to make contributions in both the punishment and consumer behavior literature by examining consumers' (i.e., as victims or bystanders) punishment decisions toward another consumer (i.e., norm violator) who violates consumer-oriented social norms.

## **1.1 Overview of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is composed of seven studies, and serves to explore the dynamics of norm violations and punishment in consumption environments through two main avenues. In the first part of the dissertation (studies 1-3), I introduce the concept of consumer-to-consumer punishment and identify three factors that can have important impact on consumers' punishment decisions toward fellow consumers. Based on the conceptualization that the punishment decision can be utilized to restore the balance to social order, I examine whether consumers are less likely to punish the norm violator if a third party in the consumption environment (e.g., store employee) has already restored social order through punishment (study 1). Furthermore, I explore whether a consumer who encountered unjustified adversities in the forms of a negative consumption experience (i.e., product failure) (study 2a) or a negative physical attribute that is beyond personal control (i.e., obesity due to medical condition) (study 2b) would face less punishment for violating a social norm in a subsequent context. Finally, I examine

whether a positive social attribute possessed by the norm violator (i.e., status) would also have an impact on consumers' likelihood to excuse the norm violator (study 3).

Because the social environment can have important influences on consumers' consumption or retail experience, and consumption experience can be indicative of repurchasing intent (and thus has crucial managerial implications) (Vázquez-Casielles, Suárez-Álvarez, and Del Río-Lanza 2009), the second part of the dissertation (studies 4-6) will focus on providing insight on the downstream effects of norm violations and punishment in consumption environments. Specifically, this set of studies will examine how norm violations and punishment decisions can impact consumers' product evaluations and overall consumption experience (i.e., how positive consumers found the experience to be). I first examine on the basic level, how consumers' ratings of the food products they are consuming can be influenced by the presence of a norm violation (study 4). Since cues in the social environment (e.g., store policies displayed) and the severity of a violation can both have profound influences on consumer behavior and evaluations (Aarts and Dijksterhuis 2003; Golash 2005), I also examine whether the severity of the norm violation and the institutional norm in place (i.e., whether the store policy is norm reinforcing or norm licensing) interact to influence punishment and consumption experience (study 5). Finally, I examine whether the punishment decision can be utilized to improve consumption experience. Specifically, I test whether the nature of the norm violation (i.e., accidental or explicit) and the role of the punisher (i.e., victimized consumer vs. store employee) could result in different evaluations of the consumption experience (study 6).

In a general sense, this work brings an important and overlooked phenomenon to the attention of the field of consumer research; a phenomenon, which has important and challenging implications for both marketers and consumers. This dissertation will demonstrate that punishment is a complex decision to make as it is both difficult to punish someone and to look the other way when a violation has taken place. Additionally, it will demonstrate how the bad behaviors of other consumers can impact consumption experience, and thus offer thoughts on practical implications for managers. Hence, this work provides a first step in providing an understanding into this important consumption decision and in doing so identifies future research avenues that can continue to illuminate the roles of norm violations and punishment in the consumption context.

The rest of the dissertation is structured as follows. I first provide the relevant conceptual background and develop my hypotheses for the above-mentioned studies. Specifically, I review previous work on the relationship between social order and punishment. I next hypothesize how, due to their influence on the balance of social order, factors such as third party order restoration, unjustified adversity and the norm violator, and status of the norm violator can impact consumers' punishment decisions. I then review previous work on the relationship between business norm violations and consumer behavior and experience, and hypothesize how factors such as institutional norms and the role of the punishing party may influence people's consumption experiences when they are in the presence of a norm violation. I end this dissertation with a conclusion section that summarizes and integrates the findings from the studies,



identifies the theoretical and substantive contributions, comments on the managerial implications of this work, and provides recommendations for future research.

## **1.2 Conceptual Background and Hypotheses Development**

The current research utilizes literature from multiple disciplines (e.g., sociology, criminology, service marketing). The first part of the dissertation, which examines the factors that influence consumer-to-consumer punishment, is based on the conceptualization that consumers use their decision to punish (i.e., the level of punishment delivered) to ensure a balance of social order when a norm violation has occurred in the consumption context. Social order, the effective and efficient functioning of a society, is achieved through adherence to norms and laws that exist within that society (Hechter and Horne 2003). Given the importance of social order, individuals seek to restore it if it has been disrupted by social norm violations. A common way people respond to these violations is by punishing the individual who breaks a societal norm (i.e., norm violator; Banner 1981; Fehr and Gächter 2002; Garland 1990; Helweg-Larsen and LoMonaco 2008; Smith and Knowles 1979). For example, if a consumer cuts in line at a supermarket checkout, other consumers may restore social order by giving this norm violator a dirty look or verbally scolding this individual. But do norm violations always require punishment to achieve social order, or are there instances in which social order is realized by letting the offenders go unpunished?

To answer this question, I examine three factors that impact the balance of social order and thus are critical in determining a consumer's punishment decisions with respect to a norm violation. I first demonstrate that when a *third party* (i.e., an employee in the retail context) responds to a norm violation by punishing the norm violator, the likelihood that consumers will punish is mitigated because social order has already been restored. Second, I find that when a consumer is aware that a norm violator already faces an *unjustified adversity*, the level of punishment that a consumer will deliver is reduced because punishing the norm violator will create further imbalance in social order. The two types of adversity I explore are an unjustified negative consumption event (i.e., service failure that precedes the norm violation) and a negative physical attribute the norm violator lives with that is beyond his/her control (i.e., obesity due to a medical condition). Third, I find that when a norm violator is in a *higher status position* relative to the consumer, the consumer will excuse the violation (i.e., will mitigate the level of punishment delivered). Because a norm violator of higher status is held to a different standard than a norm violator of lower status, less punishment is required to restore social order in this instance. Noteworthy, the choice of these three factors is in line with previous research that has shown that punishment decisions that seek to achieve social order can be influenced by both characteristics specific to the context of the norm violation and the norm violator (Hardin 2001; Rastogi 2010).

The second part of the dissertation, which examines the downstream effects of norm violations and punishment decisions, is based on the conceptualization that violations committed by businesses (e.g., breaking contracts, service failure) can result in

the punishment of businesses within business-to-business and business-to-consumer relationships (e.g., negative word of mouth, Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). Furthermore, based on the idea that the violation of norms can have a negative implication on consumption experience (Kim and Ulgado 2012), the second part of this research seeks to explore the conditions under which consumer norm violations will have a negative impact on consumption experience. While it makes sense that consumers will evaluate businesses more negatively when businesses are the norm violators, it is unclear whether the same outcome would be observed when fellow consumers are the norm violators.

I first demonstrate that when a consumption norm violation occurs, consumers will not only engage in more punishment, but will also evaluate the products consumed as more negative. Second, while the *severity* of the *norm violation* and the *store policy* both influence punishment decisions, consumption experience is equally negative irrespective of their severity. The type of store policy in place also does not appear to impact consumption experience. Third, I find that when a third party (e.g., store employee) takes on the *role of the punisher*, the consumer evaluates their consumption experience less negatively. Interestingly, this is observed irrespective of the *nature* of the *norm violation*.

The current research makes a number of theoretical contributions. Foremost, this research provides insights into an important behavior previously overlooked in the consumer literature. As noted above, I explore the complexities of punishment decisions

by identifying a number of consumption specific factors that impact the calibration in the balance of social order. These factors can predict when punishment is and is *not* normatively appropriate and should or should not be delivered. Importantly, it adds to the broader social sciences by investigating the nuances associated with when and how these factors influence the punishment decisions. For example, I show that these sources of influence can be related to the norm violator him/herself (e.g., a personal characteristic of the violator), but can also be realized from aspects of the consumption environment that are not specific to the norm violator (e.g., action of the store employee). As a second example, I demonstrate that factors that influence a punishment decision need not be context congruent with the norm violation that occurs (e.g., an individual difference unrelated to the norm violation). Lastly, I show that norm violations (even when they are not committed by businesses), can have negative downstream effects on consumption experience. However, there are factors in the consumption environment (e.g., the punishing party) that can be utilized to mitigate these negative experiences. In the next section, I provide the conceptual overview of this work and the rationale for the hypotheses I forward. I then report results from seven experimental studies that address these predictions.

### **1.3 Social Order and Punishment**

Social order has been studied across a wide variety of disciplines within the social sciences such as philosophy, law, and sociology. While theorists in some of these disciplines focus on the idea that social order is naturally guided by forces in the cosmos,

others theorize that social order is created and shaped by the social norms, laws, or common beliefs that exist within a society (Durkheim 1925/1976; Frank 1944; Hayek 1976; Laczniaak and Michie 1979). These norms and laws, often arising from social institutions such as government and religion, provide people with guidelines or directions of how they themselves should behave in various social contexts and also how other people ought to behave in the same situations. While social order is achieved when people follow and behave in accordance to the social norms in place, it is disrupted (i.e., social disorder emerges) when people violate these social norms (Keizer, Lindenberg, and Steg 2008; Rastogi 2010).

Previous research has suggested that people generally have a preference for equilibrium in social order (Kay et al. 2009; Pope 1975); hence, they will seek to maintain social order at its balanced state whenever possible and restore disrupted social order when needed (Hechter and Horne 2003). For instance, when signs of social disorder are visually evident (e.g., broken windows, litter), people may seek to restore social order by cleaning up the neighborhood or enforcing a neighborhood watch program (Sampson 2009). Punishment has also been identified as a key means to restore social order (e.g., receiving a jail sentence for breaking the law; Fischer et al. 2007). Simply defined, punishment is the removal of a desirable stimulus (i.e., *negative punishment* – e.g., withholding assistance or a reward) or the presentation of an undesirable stimulus (i.e., *positive punishment* - e.g., scolding or a physically demanding task; Skinner 1953) in response to another entity's behavior that is deemed inappropriate (Zaibert 2006). In this research I investigate both positive and negative punishment in an effort to generalize

consumer punishment decisions. Further, this research examines punishment as serving a punitive and not a reparative purpose in the sense that the punishment behavior I assess responds to the norm violation directly rather than to rehabilitate the norm violator. That is, since the norm violation causes a disruption in social order, the punishment I study looks to resolve the imbalance in social order.

While prior research has indicated that punishment of norm violators is important in meeting the need for social order, this work suggests that in some instances individuals will vary the level of punishment delivered to a norm violator (i.e., punish less or choose not to punish) in an effort to achieve order. In other words, I examine the conditions under which consumers will decide to mitigate the level of punishment delivered to a consumer who violates a consumption norm. The decision to punish thus becomes a behavioral outcome for assessing whether social order has been achieved in the consumption contexts I study. Such a perspective on the relationship between social order and punishment decisions is consistent with previous research that has utilized the incident of punishment to conclude that social order has been restored (Banner 1981; Murphy 1985; Fehr and Gächter 2002; Ward and Salmon 2009).

In the next section, I discuss how a consumer's punishment decision centers on three potential sources of influence (i.e., third party order restoration, existence of an unjustified adversity, and status of the norm violator) and forward predictions with respect to their impact on the punishment decision.

### ***1.3.1 Third Party Order Restoration***

Prior work suggests that the behaviors of other parties in a consumption environment (e.g., other shoppers, store personnel) can have a significant influence on how consumers behave and make decisions (e.g., product choices, Argo, Dahl, and Manchanda 2005; eating behavior, Christakis and Fowler 2007). How, then, would the incidence of punishment against norm violators by a third party in the consumption environment affect a consumer's decision to restore social order through punishment?

People engage in social learning by observing the behaviors of other actors in the same environment (Gino, Ayal, and Ariely 2009; Tanner et al. 2008) because others' actions can reinforce the standard or normative behavior in the given context (Bandura 1965; Cialdini and Trost 1998; Goldstein, Cialdini and Giskevicius 2008; Keizer et al. 2008). Based on this line of thinking, observing the delivery of punishment by a third party in the consumption environment could augment the incident of punishment toward the norm violator if consumers were to copy the behaviors of others. However, given my thesis that an individual's tendency to punish norm violators is to restore social order that has been disrupted by the norm violation (Darley and Pittman 2003; Dawes et al. 2007; Piazza and Bering 2008), I predict punishment by a third party will satisfy this requirement. That is, if a third party in the consumption context (e.g., store employee) punishes the norm violator first and thereby restores social order (i.e., shifts social order back to a balanced state), a consumer will endorse this restored social order by choosing inaction with respect to his/her punishment decision. Thus, I hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 1:** Consumers in the presence of a norm violation will be less likely to punish the norm violator if the norm violator has (vs. has not) been punished by a third party in the consumption environment.

### ***1.3.2 Unjustified Adversity and the Norm Violator***

According to the previous literature in law and criminology, defense counsel sometimes utilizes the argument that an accused should not be punished for his or her behavior because of an earlier life experience (Kadish 1987). For example, the defense might argue that their clients suffered from extreme poverty, parental abuse, or domestic violence and thus they should receive no or less punishment if they broke the law at a later point in life (Heath et al. 2001). In the courtroom a norm violator's previous acts and experiences weigh in on the calculation of the punishment required to achieve social order (Hardin 2001). Similar to this stream of research, I argue that a decision to punish a norm violator who has already suffered an unjustified adversity creates a further imbalance in social order. Therefore, a decision to mitigate the level of punishment delivered to the norm violator better facilitates the achievement of social order. Two forms of unjustified adversity that impact the balance in social order and are relevant in the consumption contexts I investigate are: 1) unjustified adversity derived from a previous negative consumption event, and 2) unjustified adversity related to a negative physical attribute the norm violator lives with.



*Unjustified Adversity From a Previous Negative Consumption Event.* Negative consumption experiences can include product failures, interpersonal conflicts, and service breakdowns. By definition these experiences are upsetting to the consumer (Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998), and if unjustified, consumers typically expect compensation or some form of restitution to a proper social order (Folkes 1984; Kalamas, Laroche, and Makdessian 2008). If compensation or restitution does not arise, the negative consumption experience becomes an unjustified adversity endured by the consumer and an imbalance to social order. Hence, as a way to restore social order, a consumer should reduce the level of punishment delivered to the norm violator if the consumer is aware that the violator has already experienced an unjustified negative consumption event.

*Unjustified Adversity Related to a Negative Physical Attribute.* To date, research has been relatively silent on how a norm violator's possession of a negative physical attribute impacts a punishment decision. Thus, to provide insight for my predictions I draw from literature on stigmas. The work on stigmas has repetitively shown that the possession of negative physical attributes (e.g., obesity, physical disabilities) increases the likelihood that people will be stigmatized and in turn treated unjustly and discriminated against (Goldberg 2011; Holub, Tan, and Patel 2011; Pingitore et al. 1994). Parallel to the findings in law, stigmatized individuals would thus have experienced undue hardships that would render a potential imbalance in social order. As such, I expect that unjustified adversity related to a negative physical attribute possessed by a norm violator will also mitigate the level of punishment needed to restore social order. It is important to note that in this instance, the adversity will only attenuate the level of

punishment required if the experienced adversity is due to factors beyond the violator's control and is thus unjustified. For example, a negative physical attribute such as obesity would argue for leniency in punishment if the obesity was due to a medical condition (as compared to a sedentary lifestyle chosen by the individual). In this case, only obesity due to a medical condition would constitute a shift in social order because it is not within the individual's personal control. In sum, I expect that unjustified adversity (whether situated in the consumption context or carried as a physical attribute) will attenuate a consumer's decision to punish a norm violator. More formally, I hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 2:** Consumers in the presence of a norm violation will be less likely to punish the norm violator if the norm violator has (vs. has not) experienced an unjustified adversity.

### ***1.3.3 Status and the Norm Violator***

As discussed earlier, a norm violator's possession of a negative physical attribute can influence the decision to punish or not punish in achieving social order. But what about positive attributes? Interestingly, previous literature has shown that the possession of positive physical attributes can decrease the likelihood that a norm violator will be punished. For example, criminals who are physically attractive have been shown to receive less severe sentences (Sigall and Ostrove 1975) and CEOs with babyface-like features are more likely to be excused for their company's transgressions (Gorn, Jiang,

and Johar 2008). Does this positive halo extend to other attributes that are social in nature such as the norm violator's position or status?

On the one hand, norm violators holding a positive position may be judged more harshly and punished more because society holds them to a different standard. For example, research has shown that individuals with more responsibilities (such as managers) are more likely to be held accountable and punished for organizational accidents and mistakes (Zemba, Young, and Morris 2006). However, in contrast, research has also shown that in mock juror scenarios, people tend to indicate less severe sentencing for individuals with more ability, talent, and/or status (e.g., socioeconomic status [SES], Mazzella and Feingold 1994) because they are perceived as more attractive (Bray et al. 1978). Likewise, the leniencies often shown to figures with higher standing in society (e.g., celebrities) are also well-documented in the popular media (Hamilton 2007). The distinction between the two opposing viewpoints mentioned (i.e., manager vs. higher SES individual) is that while the context of the status and the norm violation are congruent in the initial example (i.e., manager of organization and organizational mistake), they are not congruent in the latter example (i.e., SES and assault). Indeed, it has been suggested that when people perceive that the status of the violator and the crime itself are related, they are less likely to be lenient on the violator, whereas the opposite is true when there is no relationship between the two (Bray et al. 1978). Since there is no congruency between the norm violator's status and the norm violation in the context I study, I predict that when a norm violator is of higher status, the level of punishment

required to achieve social order will be attenuated as people will be more willing to excuse the violating behavior. Formally:

**Hypothesis 3:** Consumers in the presence of a norm violation will be less likely to punish a higher status (vs. lower status) norm violator.

#### **1.4 Norm Violations and Consumption Experience**

As the sections above indicate, various factors in the consumption environment and characteristics related to the norm violator could impact consumers' punishment decisions. While the examination of these factors are useful in shedding light on the dynamics of consumer-to-consumer punishment, whether norm violations and punishment decisions will also influence consumers' evaluations of their consumption experiences remains an open question. It is important to study the implications these violations and punishment decisions could have on these downstream variables as previous research has indicated that consumers' evaluations of their consumption experience could affect the likelihood they would return for future purchases (Seiders, Voss, Grewal, and Godfrey 2005). Hence, this is a relevant question for managers to consider.

When it comes to the topic of punishment in marketing, prior research in business-to-business relationships has examined how the violation of corporate contracts or a company's engagement in unfair or unethical practices results in different types of

punishment including lawsuits, fines, stricter restrictions, or avoidance of future interactions with violators (e.g., Antia and Frazier 2001; Brown, Cobb, and Lusch 2005; Gundlach and Murphy 1993; Kumar, Scheer, and Steenkamp 1995; Samaha, Palmatier, and Dant 2011). For example, researchers have examined the role of punishment in gray markets (i.e., markets where dealers resell trademarked products without proper authorization from their manufacturers). In this context, deterrence of gray market transactions is found to be most effective when the manufacturers enforce policies that involve severe penalties, but are also high in certainty and are implemented in a timely manner (Antia et al. 2006).

Punishment within the business-to-consumer relationship has also been examined in marketing research. Businesses are well-aware of the negative ramifications of faltering products and failure to appease dissatisfied consumers in recovery efforts (e.g., Luo 2007; Ringberg, Odekerken-Schröder, and Christensen 2007; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998). For instance, consumer complaints can detrimentally affect businesses' finances as a "negative voice" from customers reduces firms' idiosyncratic stock returns in the long run (Luo 2007). It has also been shown that consumers who hold strong (vs. weak) relationships with businesses that fail to meet their expectations are more likely to hold grudges against these firms and punish them through revenge and avoidance (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). Because consumers' punishment of businesses often involves spreading negative word-of-mouth, complaining, switching loyalty to competitors, and boycotting (Bechwati and Morrin 2003; Grégoire, Tripp, and

Legoux 2009; McGregor 2008), companies are often motivated to find ways to repair damaged relationships with their consumers.

While the topic of punishment in marketing has focused on the business-to-business and business-to-consumer relationships, no work to date has examined the downstream effects of violations and punishment with respect to consumer-to-consumer relationships. The present investigation seeks to fill this void by demonstrating that consumers will not only engage in more punishment behavior, but will also evaluate their consumption experience differently in the presence of a norm violation. Formally:

**Hypothesis 4a:** Consumers in the presence of a norm violation will be more likely to punish the norm violator.

**Hypothesis 4b:** Consumers in the presence of a norm violation will be more likely to rate the products consumed negatively.

#### ***1.4.1 Severity of Norm Violation and Store Policy***

As mentioned above, consumers in the presence of a norm violation are hypothesized to engage in more punishment behavior and will rate the products consumed more negatively. But what are some of the factors that may also have additional effects on punishment decisions and consumption experience? Thus far, this dissertation has not discussed whether the severity of the norm violation (e.g., norm violation is lower in severity vs. norm violation is higher in severity for the consumer),

and the presence of different store policies would also play influential roles in consumers' punishment decisions and evaluations of their consumption experience. Since prior research in the marketing literature has provided separate insight into how the severity of the norm violation (on the part of the business) and the policies set by the businesses may impact consumers' shopping experience and repurchasing intentions (Van Vaerenbergh, Larivière, and Vermeir 2012), it makes sense to explore these factors further in the context of norm violations committed by consumers.

The purpose of the next hypotheses is three-fold. First, it tests whether the severity of the norm violation would impact consumption experience. Arguably, if the norm violation is perceived to be more severe, this should have a more negative impact on consumers' consumption experience (Kim and Ulgado 2012; Roehm and Brady 2007). At the same time, it is possible that the consumption experience would be rated more negatively regardless of the severity of the norm violation, as any degree of violation could be perceived as a disruption to social order and could thus have negative impact on the overall experience. Second, it will further explore the factors that can impact consumer punishment decisions and consumption experience by examining whether the type of institutional norm (i.e., store policy) in place would also have important downstream effects. Third, based on previous research indicating that people's attitudes and behaviors are more likely to be influenced by the institutional norm in place when the situation in question is low (as opposed to high) in personal relevance, this study will also study whether the severity of the norm violation and the store policy in place will interact to influence both punishment behavior and the consumption experience.

*Severity of Norm Violation.* According to previous literature in law and criminology, the violation of laws can result in a victim incurring financial (e.g., theft), psychological (e.g., fear), and physical harm (e.g., pain; Cohen 1975). As such, the level of severity associated with a violation is an important factor in determining the likelihood of punishment. For example, with respect to crimes processed through the judicial system, victim impact statements are often read in court before a sentence is imposed. The information provided on the financial, physical and/or psychological harm associated with the crime allows both the court and the perpetrator to have an understanding of how the crime committed has impacted the victim and/or the victim's families (Chalmers, Duff and Leverick 2007; Hellerstein 1989). As a result, the court system seeks to link the punishment imposed (e.g., the length of jail term given to the violator and the amount of compensation distributed to the victim) such that it fits the severity associated with the crime (Banner 1981; Cohen 1975; Golash 2005); the greater the severity, the more likely punishment will be meted.

*Store Policy.* Research has also examined how situational cues such as messages displayed in a social environment can promote and create norm appropriate behaviors (e.g., Aarts and Dijksterhuis 2003; Borsari and Carey 2003; Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren 1990; Schultz et al. 2007). For example, placing a "Do Not Litter" sign in a park, or priming the concept of silence while in a library (Aarts and Dijksterhuis 2003; Cialdini 2003; Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren 1990) can make salient the relevant societal social norm and enhance the likelihood that people's behaviors will be consistent with the norm (i.e., not litter, speak quietly, respectively). Thus, when a situational cue in a retail or



service context (e.g., signage of store policy, employee actions) reinforces an appropriate societal norm or creates an institutional norm (vs. no reinforcement), violation of this norm should elicit more punishment.

At the same time, previous research has also shown that situational cues can license people to behave in ways that are inconsistent with more general societal norms. For example, classic work by Milgram (1963) and Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo (1973) finds that the presence of authority figures (e.g., experimenter) or the influence of the environment (e.g., mock prison) can enable individuals to engage in behaviors that are normally deemed as inappropriate or unjustified (e.g., shocking a fellow participant or abusing participants who are not actually prisoners, respectively). Further, recent work has shown that when participants are in an environment where a permissive (as opposed to conservative) sexual norm is promoted, their responses about sexual behavior are more liberal and they are more likely to report incidences of cheating behavior (Fisher 2009). In sum, I expect the institutional norms created by situational cues (i.e., store policy) can either amplify or reduce the likelihood of punishment arising, depending on their reinforcing or licensing nature, respectively.

Importantly, the influence of institutional norms on punishment and consumption experience is likely to be impacted by the severity of the norm violation. Indeed, previous research has shown that when an issue or situation at hand has a higher (vs. lower) impact on individuals, people are much more (vs. less) likely to ignore influences in the external environment, such as instructions and advice from salespersons and other experts.

Instead, they are more likely to make decisions based on their own judgments of what is correct and incorrect (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983; Slater 1999). Therefore, I expect that consumers' punishment tendencies are more likely to be guided by the institutional norm in place when the violation is lower in severity. That is, if the norm violation does not have a high impact on them, their tendency to punish the norm violator will be influenced by the norms communicated by the business or store. However, consumers' punishment tendencies are less likely to be guided by influences in the environment (e.g., store policies) when the severity of the norm violation is high. Formally, I hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 5a:** Consumers in the presence of a norm violation that is of lower severity will be less likely to punish the norm violator if the store policy is norm licensing (vs. norm reinforcing).

**Hypothesis 5b:** Consumers in the presence of a norm violation that is of higher severity will be equally likely to punish the norm violator, irrespective of whether the store policy is norm reinforcing or norm licensing.

According to research in service marketing, the severity of the violation committed by businesses (i.e., service failure) can often have an effect on consumer satisfaction and expectation of the recovery strategies utilized (Kim and Ulgado 2012; Roehm and Brady 2007). Specifically, the more severe the failure committed by the business, the less satisfied consumers will be. Therefore, similarly to the predictions made for punishment behavior, it appears that evaluation of consumption experience may

also become more negative as the severity of the norm violation increases. The effect of store policy on consumption experience is less clear, however. On the one hand, consumers may evaluate their experience more positively when the store policy is norm reinforcing because the message displayed by the business is consistent with the societal social norm. On the other hand, it is possible consumers' experience will be rated more positively when the store policy is norm licensing because consumers may prefer to shop in a less restrictive retail environment (Kivetz 2005). Finally, similar to the conceptualization offered earlier on how the severity of the norm violation and store policy could affect punishment decisions, research in marketing also suggests that when failures occur for products with higher severity and consequences for consumers (i.e., failure on the part of the organization that involves high personal cost), recovery efforts that utilize institutional norms and routines (e.g., standard scripts of apology) are less effective and meaningful to consumers (Ringberg, Odekerken-Schröder, and Christensen 2007). Based on this research, I predict that the severity of the norm violation and the store policy in place may both have an effect on consumption experience. While the type of store policy in place may not improve consumption experience when the norm violation is of higher severity, it could have an impact on experience when the norm violation is of lower severity for the consumer. Formally:

**Hypothesis 5c:** Consumers in the presence of a norm violation that is of lower severity will be less likely to rate their consumption experience negatively when the store policy is norm licensing (vs. norm reinforcing).

**Hypothesis 5d:** Consumers in the presence of a norm violation that is of higher severity will be equally likely to rate their consumption experience negatively, irrespective of whether the store policy is norm reinforcing or norm licensing.

#### ***1.4.2 Role of Punisher and Nature of Norm Violation***

The dissertation thus far has hypothesized on a number of factors that could have an impact on consumers' punishment decisions and consumption experiences. For instance, it has proposed that the behavior of a third party, the adversity experienced by the norm violator, and the severity of the norm violation could differentially influence people's punishment decisions and experiences. Based on these predictions, it appears that in many circumstances, the presence of a norm violation results in negative ramifications for managers as consumers are likely to evaluate their consumption experience more negatively. What has yet to be examined, however, is whether there are conditions under which the punishment decision can be utilized to impact people's evaluations of their consumption experience. For instance, whether consumers would evaluate their experience less negatively if a third party in the consumption environment (e.g., store employee) were to take on the role of the punisher (i.e., the individual delivering the punishment to the norm violator). As stated in the first hypothesis, people's tendency to punish will likely be mitigated when a third party restores the social order that has been disrupted by the norm violator. Could the actions taken by a third party also have an impact on the overall consumption experience? Furthermore, while the previous hypotheses state that the severity of the norm violation likely affects consumption

experience, the nature of the norm violation (i.e., whether it was accidental or committed after the norm was reinforced) is also likely to play a role. Although consumers are likely to rate their experience less negatively when a third party delivers the punishment, this evaluation could vary depending on the nature of the norm violation.

*Role of Punisher.* Previous research in altruistic punishment has indicated that witnesses of a norm violation (i.e., a third party) are just as likely to punish norm violators as the victimized parties. Indeed, they will sometimes sacrifice some of their own payoffs in order to impose punishment upon those who have failed to cooperate with the group norm (Fehr and Gächter 2002). What has not been considered extensively when it comes to the role of the punisher, is whether people would prefer it when a third party makes the punishment decision on their behalf when they are the victimized parties. Based on previous literature, it appears that people in general may prefer punishment to be served by an institutionalized third party (e.g., the court system) than having to take the law into their own hands (e.g., Traulsen, Röhl, and Milinski 2012). In their work, Traulsen, Röhl, and Milinski (2012) make the distinction between “peer” and “pool” punishment, in which peer punishment is delivered by peers while pool punishment is delivered by a third party. This work suggests that under some conditions, participants preferred the pool punishment mechanism, in which punishment is essentially “outsourced” to a “tax-paid organization” (e.g., police; p. 3716). The researchers suggest that the pool punishment mechanism is more preventative in nature as it is established in anticipation of individuals who may defect in the future. While this work does not indicate whether choosing a pool punishment mechanism makes participants feel better

about their overall experience, I predict that in general, consumers will evaluate their consumption experience less negatively if a third party (e.g., store employee) took on the role of the punisher so they would not need to do so themselves. In other words, their consumption experience should be improved when a third party played the role of the punisher.

*Nature of Norm Violation.* Previous research has also shown that perceived intention associated with a norm violation is critical in determining people's punishment decisions (Monterosso, Royzman, and Schwartz 2005; Tetlock, Self, and Singh 2010). Therefore, if an individual committed an innocent violation (i.e., accidentally violated a norm), then punishment should be mitigated. In contrast, an individual who violates a norm that has been clearly reinforced through the actions of the store (i.e., explicitly violating a norm after being reminded of the appropriate behavior) or through the actions of fellow consumers (i.e., implicitly violating a norm after other individuals behaved in the normative way) should be punished more for their actions. While the literature has suggested how the nature of norm violation could impact punishment decisions, it is unclear how consumers would evaluate their consumption experience when the nature of the norm violation alters. That is, would a norm violation still negatively impact consumption experience if the violation was innocent in nature? On the one hand, it is possible that consumption experience would be rated just as negatively irrespective of the nature of the norm violation because the consumer is the victimized party even if the violation occurred innocently (Samaha, Palmatier, and Dant 2011). On the other hand, consumers may view an innocent violation as less severe and thus would be less likely to view the overall experience as negative.

What is of particular interest is how the role of the punisher and the nature of the norm violation could both affect consumption experience. Specifically, while consumption experience may improve when the store employee takes on the role of the punisher, this may not be the case if the violation was perceived to be accidental in nature. That is, consumption experience may not improve when a store employee punishes a fellow consumer for accidentally violating a social norm since such an action could be perceived unfairly harsh. At the same time, consumption experience could be enhanced when a store employee who punishes a fellow consumer for violating a norm that was already reinforced by other consumers or by the store/business as punishment would be a fair and consistent reaction. Formally, I hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 6a:** Consumers in the presence of a norm violation that is implicit or explicit (vs. innocent) in nature will be less likely rate their consumption experience negatively if the store employee (vs. the victimized consumer) was the punisher.

**Hypothesis 6b:** Consumers in the presence of a norm violation that is innocent (vs. implicit or explicit) in nature will not be less likely to rate their consumption experience negatively if the store employee (vs. the victimized consumer) was the punisher.

In sum, the first chapter of this dissertation introduced the conceptualization and theoretical background behind the hypotheses proposed. In the second chapter, I present and discuss the results from four empirical studies that provide insight into the factors that influence the balance in social order and thus consumers' punishment decisions. The third chapter will then present and discuss the results from three empirical studies that

focus mainly on understanding how norm violations, punishment decisions, and other factors in the consumption environment influence consumption experience. This dissertation will conclude with an overall summary of the findings from the empirical studies presented, discuss the contributions, limitations, and offer several ideas on future avenues of research based on the current work.



## **2 Factors That Influence Consumer-to-Consumer Punishment Decisions<sup>1</sup>**

In the next four empirical studies, I test how consumers' punishment decisions toward fellow consumers could be influenced by factors that affect the balance in social order. Specifically, this set of studies will consider how factors that are associated with the consumption environment (i.e., store employee's actions, product failure), and factors that are associated with the norm violator (i.e., negative physical characteristic, social status) influence the punishment decision. As mentioned in the introduction, the following studies consider both negative (i.e., the removal of a desirable stimulus, such as withholding assistance [studies 1 and 2a/b], from a norm violator) and positive (i.e., the presentation of an undesirable stimulus, such as a physically demanding task [study 3], to a norm violator) forms of punishment. In study 1, consumers refrain from punishing a norm violator if a third party has already done so (H1). In studies 2a and 2b, consumers mitigate the level of punishment delivered to a norm violator who has experienced an unjustified adversity (i.e., negative consumption experience, or possession of a negative physical attribute that is beyond personal control) (H2). Finally, in study 3 a norm violator in a position of higher status attenuates the level of punishment received (H3). In

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this chapter has been published. Lin, Lily, Darren W. Dahl, and Jennifer J. Argo, "Do the Crime, Always Do the Time? Insights into Consumer-to-Consumer Punishment Decisions," © 2012 by JOURNAL OF CONSUMER RESEARCH, Inc., DOI: 10.1086/668641

each of these studies, I contrast the norm violation conditions with non-violation conditions (i.e., an absence of a norm violation in the consumption context), thereby enabling a test of the directionality of the hypothesized relationships.

## **2.1 Study 1: Third Party Order Restoration**

In study 1, I test H1 which predicts that consumers will be less likely to punish another person who violates a norm (i.e., messing up a store display) if social order has already been restored through the delivery of punishment by a third party (i.e., store employee). In this study, I explore the negative form of punishment of refusing to provide assistance to the norm violator.

### **2.1.1 Method**

*Participants and Design.* Sixty-seven undergraduates from a large Canadian university (68.7% female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 21.86$ ) participated in this study in exchange for \$10 compensation. The study was a 2 (norm violation: present vs. absent) x 2 (third party order restoration: action vs. inaction) + (control) between-subjects design. The context of the study was a product evaluation task, in which participants were asked to evaluate a shirt at a display table.

*Procedure.* Prior to the study, a display table with five neatly folded sweatshirts was set-up in a student lounge area. The study involved a participant and a confederate posing as a participant. One female and one male confederate of the same ethnicity were trained for the study, and the gender of the confederate was randomized across sessions. Upon arrival, participants were told that the study was interested in examining how consumers perceive and evaluate clothing items without having to try them on. They were then given an envelope which contained the photo of the sweatshirt they would need to find at the display table and evaluate using the survey provided. To maintain consistency, the photo of the same sweatshirt was given to all participants. The confederate was asked to complete this task before the participant, and the set-up of the room allowed the participant to witness the confederate's behaviors at the display table.

For those in the *norm violation present* condition, the confederate picked up and unfolded three out of the five sweatshirts on the table, thus creating a mess. For those in the *norm violation absent* condition, the confederate picked up and unfolded one of the sweatshirts on the table. To confirm that creating a mess at the store display was a norm violation, a pretest was conducted with a separate sample of undergraduate students ( $n = 42$ ) prior to the main study. In a one factor (behavior: 0 shirts vs. 1 shirt vs. 3 shirts) between-subjects design, participants were asked to read the statement, "a person walked up to a display table with neatly folded shirts and unfolded 0 (vs. 1 vs. 3) of the 5 shirts (and did not refold it vs. them)". Participants were then asked to rate the extent to which they thought the behavior of the person in the scenario was a norm violation ( $-3 =$  "not at all a norm violation",  $+3 =$  "very much a norm violation") and the extent to which the

person's behavior was appropriate ( $-3 = \text{"very appropriate"}$ ,  $+3 = \text{"not at all appropriate"}$ ). From these two measures, a behavior index was created ( $r = .61$ ), and a t-test showed that participants in the three shirts condition rated the behavior as more inappropriate and a norm violation ( $M_{3\text{shirt}} = .82$ ) than the other two conditions (vs.  $M_{1\text{shirt}} = -1.39$ ,  $t(39) = -4.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ; vs.  $M_{0\text{shirt}} = -1.10$ ,  $t(39) = 3.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

In the *action* condition, the experimenter said to the confederate, "I should deduct some of your payment for making a mess" while the experimenter in the *inaction* condition did not say anything to the confederate. A pretest with a separate sample of undergraduates ( $n = 28$ ) indicated the behavior of the store employee in the *action* condition was seen to be a form of punishment compared to the behavior exhibited in the *inaction* condition ( $-3 = \text{"not at all"}$ ,  $+3 = \text{"very much so"}$ ,  $M_{\text{action}} = 1.86$  vs.  $M_{\text{inaction}} = -1.71$ ,  $t(26) = -6.30$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Further, a pretest ( $n = 31$ ) showed that balance was restored to social order more in the action as compared to the inaction condition ( $-3 = \text{"not at all"}$ ,  $+3 = \text{"very much so"}$ ,  $M_{\text{action}} = .36$  vs.  $M_{\text{inaction}} = -.94$ ,  $t(29) = 2.04$ ,  $p = .05$ ). In both conditions the experimenter then proceeded to refold the shirt(s) that was (were) unfolded by the confederate. For those in the control group, the confederate did not unfold any of the shirts and the experimenter did not say anything to him/her.

The experimenter then instructed the participant to come up to the display table so s/he could also complete the shirt evaluation task. While the participant evaluated the shirt at the display table, the experimenter stepped out of the room so the dependent measure could be achieved. During this time, the confederate who sat down to complete

additional surveys at a desk next to the display table reached for a pen and “accidentally” knocked over a pile of papers. The measure of punishment was whether or not the participant helped the confederate pick the papers up off the floor. After the main punishment measure was assessed, the experimenter returned to the room and took the participant and confederate to separate rooms so they could complete secondary measures in a follow-up survey.

In the follow-up survey participants completed a number of items related to potential alternative explanations for the main findings. First, to determine whether consumers were more likely to punish the norm violator because the negative emotions experienced during the study carried over to their behavior, participants indicated on three items using seven-point scales (1 = “not at all”, 7 = “very”) the extent to which they felt annoyed, frustrated, and angry when they were completing the clothing evaluation task. These items were averaged together to create a negative emotions index ( $\alpha = .79$ ). Second, to assess if the participants’ likelihood to punish differed because they were more distracted (and thus not as mindful of their behaviors) in certain conditions, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they were distracted by the presence of the person who was completing the clothing evaluation task with them (1 = “not at all distracted”, 7 = “very distracted”). Finally, participants answered demographic questions (e.g., gender, age) and then completed an open-ended suspicion probe question that asked them to indicate what they thought was the purpose of the study.

### 2.1.2 Results and Discussion

*Punishment: Refusing to Assist the Norm Violator.* Because the main dependent measure was a dichotomous variable (1 = did not help, 0 = helped), results for this study were analyzed using binary logistic regression. A significant 2 (norm violation) x 2 (third party order restoration) interaction was found (Wald  $\chi^2(1) = 4.41, p < .05$ ; see figure 1). The main effects for norm violation and third party order restoration were nonsignificant ( $p$ 's  $> .20$ ). Supporting H1, for those in the norm violation present condition, the frequency of punishment was significantly higher in the inaction (93.33%) as compared to the action (53.33%,  $\chi^2(1) = 6.14, p < .05$ ) condition. The results showed that the percentage of participants who punished in the norm violation present/inaction cell (93.33%) was significantly higher than in the two norm violation absent conditions ( $M_{\text{action}} = 64.29\%, M_{\text{inaction}} = 53.85\%$ ) and the control condition (66.67%; all  $p$ 's  $< .05$ ). Importantly, the percentage of participants who punished was not significantly different between the norm violation present/action cell (53.33%) and the two norm violation absent ( $M_{\text{action}} = 64.29\%, M_{\text{inaction}} = 53.85\%$ ) and control conditions (66.67%; all  $p$ 's  $> .50$ ; see table 1 for summary of results). Finally, the frequency of punishment for those in the norm violation absent condition did not differ regardless of the third party's actions ( $\chi^2(1) = .30, p > .10$ ). Thus, participants who witnessed a norm violation were most likely to engage in punishment when social order had not (vs. had) already been restored (i.e., a third party did not punish the offender).

*Alternative Explanations.* A series of analyses were conducted to assess potential alternative explanations. Results revealed that none of the alternative accounts for the findings were supported as the results were not significant for either negative emotions ( $p > .30$ ) or distraction ( $p > .90$ ). Examination of the open-ended responses to the suspicion probe revealed that participants believed the cover story, were unable to identify the hypothesis of the study, and had no awareness of the connection between the independent variables and the dependent variable of interest. Responses to the suspicion probe in subsequent studies showed similar results and are thus not discussed further. I found no evidence of hypothesis guessing, demand, or social desirability effects across these measures. Further, demographic measures did not interact with the key factors in this study or subsequent studies and are not discussed further.

Results from study 1 showed that participants were significantly less likely to punish the norm violator (i.e., a confederate who messed up 3 shirts at the display table) if the store employee restored social order by punishing the confederate. In this instance, the decision to not punish the norm violator supported the notion that social order had already been restored by the store employee. In this study I viewed the actions of the third party (i.e., the store employee's behavior) as a binary outcome, such that the third party's decision to punish either restored social order or their decision not to punish failed to restore social order. The context studied effectively facilitated an all or none interpretation of the third party's actions. However, there is likely to be variability in the punishment meted out by the actions of a third party, and the restoration of social order

(and the subsequent punishment decision of the consumer) would be dependent on the punishment level realized. I return to this issue in the final chapter of the dissertation.

While this study examined a factor that impacts social order, and in effect punishment, that is specific to the norm violation in question (i.e., the store employee's punishment behavior), I shift focus in the next study to examine factors that are either directly or indirectly related to the norm violation at hand.

## **2.2 Study 2: Unjustified Adversity and the Norm Violator**

Study 2 examines how a norm violator's experience of an unjustified adversity influences a consumer's punishment decision. Two studies test the impact of two different types of unjustified adversities related to the norm violator: service failure in the consumption environment (study 2a) and obesity due to a medical condition (study 2b). I argue that a decision to punish a norm violator who has already suffered an unjustified adversity creates a further imbalance in the social order. Therefore, a decision to mitigate the level of punishment delivered to a norm violator better facilitates a balance in achieving social order. Furthermore, this behavioral outcome is also likely to be observed regardless of whether there is context congruency between the unjustified adversity and the norm violation in question. This is consistent with prior research that suggests that judgments of social order are not contextually bound, as they can be influenced by factors outside of the context in which the social disorder is realized (Fischer et al. 2007). In both



of these studies, I again explore a negative form of punishment whereby individuals refuse to provide assistance to the norm violator.

### **2.3 Study 2a: Unjustified Adversity from a Previous Negative Consumption Experience**

In this study, I examine how the unjustified adversity from a previous negative consumption experience (i.e., product failure) affects consumers' punishment decisions. Like the previous study, this study also considers a negative form of punishment.

#### **2.3.1 Method**

*Participants and Design.* One hundred and eighteen undergraduates from a large Canadian university (61.0% female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 19.97$ ) participated in exchange for course credit. This study used a scenario to employ a 2 (norm violation: present vs. absent) x 2 (unjustified adversity: present vs. absent) between-subjects design. The context of the scenario involved checking in for a flight at an airline counter and standing in line at the airport security check.

*Procedure.* Participants were instructed to carefully read the scenario and to imagine themselves in the situation. They were asked to imagine that while their luggage was being placed on the conveyer belt at the airline check-in counter, they overheard an airline employee talking to a passenger at the counter next to them. In the *unjustified*

*adversity present* condition, the airline employee indicated to the other passenger that because there was a failure with the computer system, this passenger unfortunately would have to restart the check-in process again once the system was back online. In the *unjustified adversity absent* condition, the other passenger was informed that the check-in process was successful (no computer failure was noted). A pretest with a separate sample of undergraduates ( $n = 30$ ) indicated that the computer failure scenario described in the *unjustified adversity present* condition resulted in more adversity for the passenger compared to the scenario in the *unjustified adversity absent* condition ( $-3 = \text{"not at all"}$ ,  $+3 = \text{"very much so"}$ ,  $M_{\text{computer failure}} = .38$  vs.  $M_{\text{no computer failure}} = -1.38$ ,  $t(28) = -2.85$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Further, a pretest ( $n = 46$ ) showed that the *unjustified adversity present* condition was perceived as creating more imbalance to social order than the *unjustified adversity absent* condition ( $-3 = \text{"not at all"}$ ,  $+3 = \text{"very much so"}$ ,  $M_{\text{unjustified adversity present}} = .43$  vs.  $M_{\text{unjustified adversity absent}} = -2.13$ ,  $t(44) = 5.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Next, norm violation was manipulated by the behavior of the other passenger as the participant imagined moving on after checking into the security screening area. The norm violation of interest was cutting the line at the airport security check. A pretest conducted with a separate sample of undergraduate students ( $n = 29$ ) showed that the behavior of someone who "moved in front of (vs. lined up behind) a person who was waiting in an airport security line" was more inappropriate and a norm violation (using the same 7-point scales and index as the study 1 pretest,  $r = .81$ ;  $M_{\text{moved in front}} = 1.75$  vs.  $M_{\text{lined up behind}} = -.90$ ,  $t(27) = -3.81$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In the *norm violation present* condition, the participants read that while they were waiting in line to go through security, the

passenger they encountered earlier cut in front of them and went through another lane. In the *norm violation absent* condition, the passenger the participants encountered earlier in the scenario lined up normally behind them (see Appendix A for detailed information).

After participants read and thought about the scenario, they were asked to complete the punishment and secondary measures. First, participants indicated on seven-point scales (1 = “not at all likely”, 7 = “very likely”) the likelihood that they would “return the gloves this passenger left at the security check”, “hold the door as this passenger is trying to catch the elevator with his luggage”, “make this passenger aware that he dropped his cellphone on the floor”, and “point it out to the passenger that he has a piece of toilet paper stuck to his foot” (reversed-coded). A punishment index was created by averaging these items together ( $\alpha = .82$ ). Finally, participants indicated the extent to which they felt annoyed, frustrated, and angry during their experience in the airport (1 = “not at all”, 7 = “very”). These items were averaged together to create a negative emotions index ( $\alpha = .88$ ) and did not produce significant results ( $p > .70$ ).

### **2.3.2 Results**

*Punishment Index.* A 2 (norm violation) x 2 (unjustified adversity) ANOVA utilizing the punishment index as a dependent variable showed a significant main effect for norm violation ( $F(1, 117) = 4.20, p < .05$ ) and a significant two-way interaction for norm violation and unjustified adversity ( $F(1, 117) = 4.61, p < .05$ , see figure 2). The main effect for unjustified adversity did not reach significance ( $p > .20$ ). Supporting H2,

when a norm violation was present, participants mitigated the level of punishment delivered to the norm violator if the violator had experienced unjustified adversity earlier in the consumption environment than if no unjustified adversity was experienced ( $M_{\text{unjustified adversity present}} = 3.16$  vs.  $M_{\text{unjustified adversity absent}} = 4.06$ ,  $t(117) = 2.40$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The level of punishment for those in the norm violation present/unjustified adversity absent cell ( $M = 4.06$ ) was significantly higher than the two norm violation absent conditions ( $M_{\text{unjustified adversity present}} = 3.19$ :  $t(117) = 2.54$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $M_{\text{unjustified adversity absent}} = 2.96$ :  $t(114) = 2.88$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Importantly, the level of punishment for those in the norm violation present/unjustified adversity present cell ( $M = 3.16$ ) was not significantly different from the two norm violation absent conditions ( $M_{\text{unjustified adversity present}} = 3.19$ :  $t(117) = .07$ ,  $p > .90$ ;  $M_{\text{unjustified adversity absent}} = 2.96$ :  $t(117) = .52$ ,  $p > .60$ ). Finally, when a norm violation was absent, the level of punishment was equally low across the unjustified adversity conditions ( $M_{\text{unjustified adversity present}} = 3.19$  vs.  $M_{\text{unjustified adversity absent}} = 2.96$ ,  $t(117) = .63$ ,  $p > .50$ ; see table 2 for summary of results).

## 2.4 Study 2b: Unjustified Adversity Related to a Negative Physical Attribute

As study 2a demonstrated, an unjustified adversity in the form of a previous negative consumption experience resulted in the mitigation of punishment. To further understand the relationship between unjustified adversity and punishment, study 2b examines whether an unjustified adversity related to a negative physical attribute (i.e., obesity) also has an impact consumers' punishment decisions toward the norm violator.

### 2.4.1 Method

*Participants and Design.* One hundred and sixty female undergraduates from a large Canadian university ( $M_{\text{age}} = 19.79$ ) participated in this study in exchange for course credit. The study was scenario-based and employed a 2 (norm violation: present vs. absent) x 3 (adversity: adversity present – unjustified vs. adversity present – justified vs. adversity absent) between-participants design. The context of the scenario involved the participant witnessing a norm violation at a post office.

*Procedure.* In the scenario, participants imagined that they were in line to mail a package at the post office, when they saw a woman enter the post office with a baby in a stroller. Norm violation was manipulated by the action of another female consumer who arrived at the same time as the woman with the baby stroller. In the *norm violation present* condition, the female consumer cut in front of the woman with the stroller as the woman was making her way through the door. In the *norm violation absent* condition the female consumer waited for the woman with the stroller to make her way through the door before entering. A pretest conducted with a separate sample of undergraduates ( $n = 38$ ) showed that a scenario describing the behavior of someone who “cuts in front of (vs. waits for) a woman who is making her way through a door with a baby in a stroller” was rated as more inappropriate and a norm violation (using the same 7-point scales and index as the previous pretests,  $r = .80$ ;  $M_{\text{cuts in front}} = 1.63$  vs.  $M_{\text{waits for}} = -1.95$ ,  $t(36) = 8.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Adversity was manipulated by a photo and brief description of the female customer. In the photo the female customer was either of average weight (*adversity absent*), or made to look obese by wearing an obesity prosthesis (*adversity present – unjustified*, *adversity present – justified*; McFerran et al. 2010). A short description of the target was also attached to the photo. Along with neutral background information (e.g., age, education), the obese target in the *adversity present – justified* condition was described as someone who lives a sedentary lifestyle (i.e., enjoys eating fast food and watching TV). For those in the *adversity present – unjustified* condition, the obese target was described as someone who lives an active lifestyle (i.e., enjoys eating healthy food and exercising), but has a medical condition that causes weight gain. A neutral description was attached for the target in the *adversity absent* condition (i.e., enjoys reading and going to the beach; see Appendix A for detailed information). A pretest with a separate sample of undergraduates ( $n = 53$ ) indicated the target was perceived as having more adversity in life ( $-3 = \text{“not at all”}$ ,  $+3 = \text{“very much so”}$ ) in the *adversity present – unjustified* ( $M_{\text{adversity present- unjustified}} = 1.32$ ) as compared to the *adversity present – justified* ( $M_{\text{adversity present-justified}} = .06$ ,  $t(50) = -2.60$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and the *adversity absent* ( $M_{\text{adversity absent}} = -1.12$ ,  $t(50) = 4.88$ ,  $p < .01$ ) conditions. The level of perceived adversity for the target was also significantly higher in the *adversity present – justified* versus the *adversity absent* condition ( $t(50) = -2.33$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Further, a pretest ( $n = 57$ ) showed that the *adversity present – unjustified* condition was perceived as creating more imbalance to social order ( $-3 = \text{“not at all”}$ ,  $+3 = \text{“very much so”}$ ;  $M_{\text{adversity present - unjustified}} = .35$ ) than the *adversity present – justified* ( $M_{\text{adversity present-justified}} = -1.11$ ,  $t(54) = 2.74$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and *adversity absent* conditions ( $M_{\text{adversity absent}} = -2.50$ ,  $t(54) = 5.28$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The level of

perceived imbalance to social order was also significantly higher in the adversity present – justified versus the adversity absent condition ( $t(54) = 2.55, p < .05$ ). Because females are more sensitive to the body shapes of others (Dahl, Argo, and Morales 2012), and the nature of the norm violation was more relevant to women (i.e., a mother pushing a baby in a stroller), I recruited female participants for this study.

Across conditions, the target female consumer who arrived at the same time as the woman with the stroller ended up waiting in line behind the participant for the counter, and the woman with the stroller went to the other side of the post office. Thus, it was clear that the participant's actions would only affect the female consumer waiting behind them and no one else in the post office. After participants read and thought about the scenario and the photo, they were asked to complete the punishment and secondary measures. Punishment was measured by the likelihood consumers would “pick up letters the person waiting behind them dropped on the floor”, “warn the person waiting behind them if they noticed this person's car was being ticketed”, and “hold the door for the person that was waiting behind them if they were heading out of the post office at the same time” (1 = “not at all likely”, 7 = “very likely”; reverse-coded). A punishment index was created by averaging these items together ( $\alpha = .75$ ). Participants were again asked to indicate the extent to which they experienced negative emotions (annoyed, frustrated, angry;  $\alpha = .90$ ). As in the earlier studies negative emotions were not differentially impacted by the manipulated factors ( $p > .50$ ).

### 2.4.2 Results

*Punishment Index.* A 2 (norm violation) x 3 (adversity) ANOVA was conducted with the punishment index included as the dependent variable. Results revealed a significant main effect for norm violation ( $F(1, 159) = 39.23, p < .05$ ) and a significant two-way interaction between the predictor variables ( $F(2, 159) = 3.75, p < .05$ , see figure 3). The main effect for adversity did not reach significance ( $t < 1$ ). Supporting H2, when a norm violation was present, participants punished the female consumer less in the adversity present – unjustified condition ( $M = 3.99$ ) as compared to the adversity absent ( $M = 4.77, t(159) = 2.06, p < .05$ ) and adversity present – justified ( $M = 4.82, t(159) = 2.25, p < .05$ ) conditions. The level of punishment delivered to the female consumer differed significantly between the norm violation present vs. absent conditions for the two adversity absent ( $M_{\text{violation present}} = 4.77$  vs.  $M_{\text{violation absent}} = 3.06, t(159) = 5.52, p < .001$ ) conditions and the two adversity present – justified ( $M_{\text{violation present}} = 4.82$  vs.  $M_{\text{violation absent}} = 3.00, t(159) = 4.81, p < .001$ ) conditions. Importantly, this difference was not significant between the two adversity present – unjustified conditions ( $M_{\text{violation present}} = 3.99$  vs.  $M_{\text{violation absent}} = 3.47, t(159) = 1.23, p > .20$ ). Finally, the level of punishment delivered to the female consumer did not differ significantly across the three groups in the norm violation absent condition ( $M_{\text{adversity absent}} = 3.06$  vs.  $M_{\text{adversity present – justified}} = 3.00$  vs.  $M_{\text{adversity present–unjustified}} = 3.47$ , all  $p$ 's  $> .20$ ; see table 3 for summary of results).



### **2.4.3 Discussion**

Results from study 2a and 2b show that the level of punishment delivered by participants is significantly lower if the norm violator had already experienced an unjustified adversity in the form of a negative consumption event (i.e., failure in the airline's computer system), or due to a negative physical attribute that was beyond her personal control (i.e., obesity due to a medical condition). This provides support for the postulation that when individuals experience adversity through no fault of their own, consumers punish them less for committing a subsequent norm violation. Interestingly, the norm violator in study 2b was "excused" for violating the norm, even though the adversity had no causal links to the norm violation studied. Taken together, results from these studies support the notion that individuals will vary the level of punishment delivered (i.e., mitigate punishment) in an effort to find the appropriate balance in social order. In the next study I examine a situation where social order is achieved through a mitigation of the punishment decision; however, in this study I examine how the status of the norm violator influences the punishment decision.

### **2.5 Study 3: Status and the Norm Violator**

In this study, I examine whether the status of a norm violator could have an attenuating effect on the level of punishment realized. I predict that consumers will be more likely to excuse a norm violator who is of higher status, as less punishment would be required to balance social order for the norm violator in such a position. This study

also utilizes a positive form of punishment whereby a negative stimulus is given to the norm violator.

### **2.5.1 Method**

*Participants and Design.* Forty-five first year business students from a large Canadian university (62.2% female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 20.31$ ) participated in this study for extra credit. This study employed a one factor (violation-higher status vs. violation-lower status vs. control) between-subjects design. The context of the study was the evaluation of a personal training service whereby the participants were asked to design a physical exercise routine for another individual.

*Procedure.* Participants were run individually, and a male confederate posing as a fellow participant was present for each session. Two male confederates of the same ethnicity and physical build were trained for the study, and were randomly assigned across sessions. Norm violation was held at a constant for those who received the status manipulation, so the confederate arrived 5 minutes late for the study session. A pretest conducted with a separate sample of undergraduates ( $n = 20$ ) showed that the behavior of someone who “showed up late (vs. did not show up late) for an appointment” was rated as more inappropriate and a norm violation (using the same 7-point scales and behavior index as previous pretests;  $r = .59$ ;  $M_{\text{late}} = .55$  vs.  $M_{\text{on time}} = -.70$ ;  $t(18) = 2.07$ ,  $p = .05$ ). Once the confederate and participant were in the lab, they were told that the purpose of the study was to understand how consumers evaluate personal training programs. In order

to do so, they were asked to engage in a role playing exercise, in which one person would be randomly chosen to play the role of a “trainer”, and the other person would play the role of the “trainee”. In actuality, participants were always assigned to be the trainer, and the confederate was always assigned to be the trainee.

After the roles were assigned, the confederate asked the experimenter (in front of the participant) whether the study would be done on time, as he had a job interview later in the day. In the *violation-higher status* condition, the confederate casually mentioned that the job interview was with Procter & Gamble, while the confederate in the *violation-lower status* condition mentioned that the job interview was with Omni Café, a little coffee shop on campus. To maintain consistency, the confederate dressed the same across the conditions.

I used a job opportunity with a major marketing company in the manipulation since individuals of higher status are most likely to have an impact on people's evaluations of the individuals when the context is relevant to the observers (Lockwood and Kunda 1997). In this context, the confederate was perceived as having higher status (and not someone who was threatening) because the participants were first year business students who were not actively seeking employment and were still in the early stages of their education. A pretest with a separate sample of undergraduate students ( $n = 32$ ) confirmed this postulation, as a scenario describing a student who had the opportunity to work at a large marketing company (vs. campus café) was viewed as having higher status ( $-3 = \text{“definitely disagree”}$ ,  $+3 = \text{“definitely agree”}$ ;  $M_{\text{campus café}} = -1.06$  vs.  $M_{\text{marketing company}}$

= .88;  $t(30) = 4.71, p < .001$ ) and someone who had higher standing in society ( $M_{\text{campus café}} = -1.25$  vs.  $M_{\text{marketing company}} = .81$ ;  $t(30) = 4.85, p < .001$ ). Further, a pretest ( $n = 36$ ) showed that someone of *higher status* would be held less accountable ( $-3 = \text{“not at all”}$ ,  $+3 = \text{“very much so”}$ ;  $M_{\text{higher status}} = -.72$ ) for their transgressions (when the transgression was not related to their status) than someone of *lower status* ( $M_{\text{lower status}} = .83, t(34) = 2.78, p < .01$ ). In the control condition, the confederate arrived on time and did not mention anything about a job interview.

After this casual exchange between the confederate and the experimenter, the confederate was taken to another room so the participant could complete the punishment measures in private and not be influenced by potential demand effects. To measure punishment, participants were told that their job as the trainer was to design a mock training routine for the trainee; therefore, they had to indicate the number of push-ups (range from 0-50 repetitions) the trainee would be asked to complete in the next ten minutes. Participants were also told that the trainee would not know who made the final decisions on the intensity of the mock training routine so they should feel free to answer honestly.

### **2.5.2 Results and Discussion**

Supporting H3, a significant main effect was found for the number of assigned push-ups ( $F(2, 44) = 3.39, p < .05$ ). Specifically, the level of punishment was greater in the violation-lower status condition ( $M_{\text{violation lower status}} = 24.75$ ) than the violation-higher

status condition ( $M_{\text{violation higher status}} = 15.75$ ,  $t(44) = -2.46$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = 17.31$ ,  $t(44) = -1.92$ ,  $p = .06$ ; see table 4 for summary of results). Importantly, punishment was not significantly different between the violation-higher status and control conditions ( $t(44) = .40$ ,  $p > .60$ ), which indicates that the tendency to punish was mitigated when the norm violator was in a position of higher standing in society.

Results from study 3 show that the level of punishment delivered to the norm violator (i.e., a consumer who was late for the appointment) is mitigated if the violator is in a position that is of higher status (i.e., desirable job interview with a large marketing company) vis-à-vis the participant. Clearly, the status of the norm violator changes the subsequent punishment required to restore social order. These findings lend support for the postulation that the status of the norm violator can influence punishment decisions that seek to achieve social order. In this instance, the mitigation of punishment was likely observed due to the incongruence between the status of the violator and the norm violation that occurred. Further, differing from study 2b where the norm violator does not face an unjustified adversity and is punished for violating a norm in an incongruent context, in study 3 the absence of adversity and a lack of congruency leads to reduced punishment. I believe the difference here is driven by the aspirational nature of status, not applicable in study 2, which alters the standard to which the norm violator is held. This discussion seeds future research efforts that continue to define the role of congruency with respect to judgement of balance in social order.

In the first set of studies, this dissertation identified the conditions under which consumers mitigated the level of punishment delivered to fellow consumers who violate social norms in various consumption contexts. In the next set of studies, I set out to further our understanding of consumer-to-consumer punishment decisions. Specifically, I investigate the implications of norm violations and punishment decisions by examining how factors such as store policy and the role of the punishers affect the level of punishment and evaluations of the consumption experience.

### **3 Effects of Norm Violations and Punishment Decisions on Consumption Experience**

As mentioned in the first chapter, previous research studying business-to-business relationships examined how the violation of corporate contracts or a company's engagement in unfair or unethical practices has been shown to result in different types of punishment behaviors such as lawsuits or avoidance of future interactions with violators (e.g., Antia and Frazier 2001; Brown, Cobb, and Lusch 2005; Gundlach and Murphy 1993; Kumar, Scheer, and Steenkamp 1995; Samaha, Palmatier, and Dant 2011). Likewise, product and service failures can have a number of negative ramifications on business-to-consumer relationships (e.g., negative word of mouth, complaining; Luo 2007; Ringberg, Odekerken-Schröder, and Christensen 2007; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998). The next set of studies seeks to examine the dynamics and implications of another type of relationship in marketing – consumer-to-consumer relationship – by demonstrating that in response to a norm violation, consumers will engage in a various levels of punishment and have different evaluations of their consumption experience.

Across three different types of consumption norm violations I show that consumers will punish a violator by engaging in territorial defense (i.e., a prolonged, yet unnecessary, occupation of one's established territory or space), withholding a financial incentive, and refusing to help. Importantly, just as violations in business-to-business and business-to-consumer relationships have a negative impact on the business organization, I

show that norm violations and punishment in consumer-to-consumer relationships can also impact the business by negatively influencing consumer' evaluations of their overall consumption experience. Specifically, study 4 finds that consumers in the presence of a norm violation engaged in more punishment (H4a) and rated the food products consumed more negatively (H4b). Study 5 also finds that consumers in the presence of a norm violation that is of lower severity punished the norm violator less when the store policy was norm licensing (vs. norm reinforcing) (H5a). However, punishment was equally high regardless of the store policy in place when the norm violation was higher in severity (H5b). Furthermore, consumers' evaluation of their consumption experience is found to be more negative irrespective of whether the norm violation is lower or higher in severity, and store policy did not appear to affect consumption experience (H5c/d). Finally, study 6 demonstrates that evaluation of one's consumption experience in the presence of a norm violation becomes less negative if the store employee (vs. consumer themselves) plays the role of the punisher. This is the case irrespective of the nature of the norm violation (H6a/b).

### **3.1 Study 4: Norm Violation on Punishment and Product Evaluations**

Study 4 seeks to demonstrate that a norm violation will result in punishment behavior (H4a), but also less positive ratings of the products consumed (H4b). This study examines consumers' tendency to punish a fellow consumer who has violated the norm of respecting other people's personal space. People often feel the need to protect their personal space, and thus the intrusion of this space can be viewed as a norm violation



(Middlemist, Knowles, and Matter 1976; Smith and Knowles 1979). The punishment against the norm violator in study 4 is operationalized through the extent to which the target consumer engages in territorial defense - i.e., tendency for people to occupy or defend a space or territory for a longer period of time than necessary (Ruback and Juieng 1997; Ruback, Pape, and Doriot 1989).

I predict that participants whose personal space is violated will punish the norm violator by taking more time than necessary in their established territory (i.e., engage in territorial defense). I also predict that participants who are in the presence of this norm violation will enjoy the food products consumed less than participants who are in the absence of the norm violation.

### **3.1.1 Method**

*Participants and Design.* Twenty-seven undergraduates from a large Canadian university (51.9% female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 20.37$ ) participated in this study in exchange for course credit. The study used a one factor (norm violation: present vs. absent) between-subjects design. The context of the study was a food sampling task whereby the participants were asked to taste and evaluate different samples of crackers and cheeses.

*Procedure.* Each study session consisted of one real participant and two confederates who played the role of study participants. Upon arrival, the three participants were informed that only one participant could use the study space that was

needed to complete the food tasting task at a time. Because the three participants arrived at the same time the experimenter conducted a “random” draw to determine the order in which the participants would complete the study. This draw was rigged such that confederate #1 was always assigned to complete the task first, the real participant was always assigned to complete the task second, and confederate #2 was always assigned to go last. The first confederate was utilized to maintain the cover story and alleviate suspicion on the part of the participant, whereas the second confederate was central to the norm violation manipulation.

The experimenter then asked both the participant and confederate #2 to sit and wait for their turn in a designated waiting area while confederate #1 completed the task. During the actual wait neither the confederate nor the seating arrangement facilitated communication. The research assistant noted that no communication arose between the participant and the confederate. Once confederate #1 was done with the task, the confederate was asked to complete the rest of the study in a separate room. The participant was then moved from the waiting area to the sampling section in order to begin the food tasting task. Once the participant was seated, confederate #2 inconspicuously began a stopwatch. Shortly after the participant began the actual task the norm violation manipulation was achieved. Specifically, in the *norm violation present* condition, confederate #2 moved from the waiting area to stand directly behind the participant in order to watch the amount of progress the participant was making. A pretest conducted with a separate sample of undergraduates ( $n = 29$ ) showed that the behavior of someone who is “standing 2 (vs. 20) feet away from another person while s/he consumed

a meal” was perceived to be a norm violation and more inappropriate (using the same 7-point scales and index as the previous pretests,  $r = .63$ ;  $M_{2 \text{ feet}} = 1.40$  vs.  $M_{20 \text{ feet}} = .39$ ,  $t(27) = 2.34$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In the *norm violation absent* condition, the confederate waited in the designated waiting area while the participant completed the task.

During the course of the food tasting task, participants were asked to sample a variety of cheeses and crackers and then rate on seven-point scales the extent to which they liked and the likelihood they would buy the cheese sample and the cracker sample (1 = “not at all”, 7 = “very”). A product evaluation index was then calculated by averaging these four items together ( $\alpha = .69$ ). After finishing the food tasting task, the participant was moved to another testing room. Confederate #2 recorded the amount of time the participant spent on the food tasting task (i.e., punishment measure).

Similar to study 1, in the follow-up survey participants were asked to complete a number of items related to alternative explanations for the findings. First, to determine whether negative emotions were contributing factors in the results obtained, participants indicated on three items using seven point scales the extent to which they felt annoyed, frustrated, and angry (1 = “not at all”, 7 = “very”) when they were completing the food tasting task. These items were averaged together to create a negative emotions index ( $\alpha = .83$ ). Second, to assess if differences in distraction influenced the findings, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they were distracted by the presence of the person who was waiting for them to complete the food tasting task (1 = “not at all

distracted”, 7 = “very distracted”). Finally, participants answered a number of basic demographic questions (i.e., gender, age, ethnic background).

### **3.1.2 Results and Discussion**

*Punishment: Territorial Defense.* A t-test was conducted with the amount of time the participants spent on the task (i.e., territorial defense) as the dependent variable. Supporting H4a, results revealed a significant main effect ( $t(25) = 3.16, p < .05$ ). That is, participants spent significantly more time at the food tasting station (i.e., engaged in more punishment) when confederate #2 invaded their personal space ( $M_{\text{violation present}} = 6.57$  minutes) as compared to when no invasion of personal space occurred ( $M_{\text{violation absent}} = 4.02$  minutes).

*Product Evaluation Index.* A t-test conducted on the product evaluation index showed a significant main effect. Supporting H4b, those in the norm violation present condition provided significantly lower evaluations for the food items than those in the norm violation absent condition ( $M_{\text{violation present}} = 4.02$  vs.  $M_{\text{violation absent}} = 4.67, t(25) = 3.89, p < .05$ ; see table 5 for summary of results).

*Alternative Explanations.* A series of t-tests were conducted to assess the potential alternative explanations. Results revealed that none of the explanations account for the findings, as negative emotions and distraction did not differ as a function of norm violation ( $p$ 's  $> .15$ ). Analysis of the demographic variables demonstrated they did not

influence the dependent variables of interest ( $p$ 's > .15). As this was again the case in the remaining studies, demographic variables are not discussed further.

The results from study 4 provided support for hypotheses 4a and 4b. Specifically, when the confederate invaded the participant's space (versus remained in the waiting area) the participant took longer to complete the food tasting task. Interestingly, participants chose to punish the norm violator even though it came at a cost to themselves (i.e., they spent more time completing the study). Further, participants who experienced a norm violation evaluated the products consumed (i.e., food items) more negatively than those in the violation absent condition. Therefore, not only did consumers sacrifice their own time in order to punish, they stayed in the territory for a longer period of time even though the products consumed were evaluated more negatively.

### **3.2 Study 5: Severity of Norm Violation and Store Policy on Punishment and Consumption Experience**

Study 5 tests how store policy and the severity of the norm violation can influence the likelihood of consumer-to-consumer punishment decisions (H5a/b) and consumption experience (H5c/d). In this study I investigate the norm violation of taking multiple free samples and a negative form of consumer punishment – withholding a financial incentive. Also, because consumers' tendency to punish (i.e., territorial defense) in study 4 took place in parallel to the product evaluations, in this study I measure consumer

evaluations of the consumption experience after the opportunity for punishment has taken place.

### **3.2.1 Method**

*Participants and Design.* Seventy-eight undergraduates from a large Canadian university (49.4% female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 20.05$ ) participated in this study in exchange for course credit. The study employed a 3 (norm violation: present – lower severity vs. present – higher severity vs. absent) x 2 (store policy: norm reinforcing vs. norm licensing) between-subjects design. The context of the study was a product evaluation task whereby the participants were asked to look at and evaluate a number of consumer products.

*Procedure.* Participants came to the lab individually, and were joined by a confederate who was posing as a fellow participant. As a cover story, they were told that the study was interested in examining how consumers perceive and evaluate various products; therefore, they were directed to three “product stations” that were set-up in the room. The stations were labeled as product station #1, product station #2, and product station #3, and each contained two mundane consumer products (i.e., sweater, scarf, notebook, white-out, body lotion, regular size toothpaste). At the last product station, there was a bowl containing ten travel size containers of toothpaste. These travel toothpastes were the “free samples” participants would be allowed to take. Participants were instructed to go to the stations sequentially, and to evaluate the products using the surveys provided.

Due to the set-up of the room, the confederate was placed closer to the first product station and was thus able to be a step ahead of the participant when the task began. This allowed the participants to clearly see how many of the free samples the confederate took. To prevent any social desirability or demand effects, the experimenter stepped out of the room while the participant and confederate completed the product evaluation task. Norm violation was manipulated by the number of free samples the confederate took before s/he left the last product station. The confederate in the *norm violation present – lower severity* condition took five of the ten free samples from the sample bowl, while the confederate in the *norm violation present – higher severity* condition took all ten of the free samples from the sample bowl. The confederate in the *norm violation absent* condition only took one of the ten free samples provided. Taking multiple samples was the norm violation of interest, and a pretest conducted with a separate sample of undergraduate students ( $n = 42$ ) found that the behavior of a “person who took 1 (vs. 5 vs. 10) of 10 free samples at a free sample stand” was rated more inappropriate and a norm violation when the person took more than 1 sample (using the same 7-point scales and index as the previous pretests,  $r = .79$ ;  $M_{1\text{sample}} = -2.70$  vs.  $M_{5\text{samples}} = 1.39$ ,  $t(39) = 8.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $M_{1\text{sample}} = -2.70$  vs.  $M_{10\text{samples}} = 1.04$ ,  $t(39) = 7.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The norm violation was of lower severity when the confederate took five of the ten samples because the participant was still left with samples to consume. In contrast, the norm violation was of higher severity when the confederate took all ten samples because the participant was left with no samples to consume.

To manipulate store policy, a sign with a message was attached to the free sample bowl. For those in the *norm reinforcing* condition, the sign read, “FREE SAMPLES!! PLEASE TAKE ONLY 1!”. For those in the *norm licensing* condition, the sign read, “FREE SAMPLES!! PLEASE TAKE AS MANY AS YOU WANT!”. When the participant was done with the product evaluation task, the experimenter returned and took the participant and confederate to separate rooms to complete the measures of interest.

To measure punishment, the experimenter told the participant that s/he had been randomly chosen to receive two raffle tickets for a cash prize draw while the other participant (i.e., the confederate) had not. To increase psychological realism, two raffle tickets were put into an envelope and given to the participants. The experimenter then left the room so the participant could give his/her responses in private. Participants were also informed that their response would remain private and unbeknownst to the confederate. In the survey the participants were asked to indicate the extent to which the person who completed the product evaluation task with them should be given one of the raffle tickets they received for the cash prize (1 = “definitely should not”, 7 = “definitely should”) (reversed-coded).

After the punishment measure was taken, participants answered questions about their overall consumption experience on seven-point bipolar scales that were adopted from Allen and Janiszewski (1989) (i.e., “bad-good”, “negative-positive”, “undesirable-desirable”, “unfavorable-favorable”, “dislike-like”). A consumption experience index was created by averaging these items together ( $\alpha = .93$ ).



### 3.2.2 Results and Discussion

*Punishment: Withholding a Financial Incentive.* A 3 (norm violation) x 2 (store policy) ANOVA was conducted with punishment included as the dependent variable. Results revealed a significant main effect for norm violation ( $F(2, 77) = 7.14, p < .05$ ) and a significant two-way interaction between norm violation and store policy ( $F(2, 77) = 3.89, p < .05$ , see figure 4). Supporting H5a, follow up contrasts showed that among those in the norm violation present – lower severity condition, participants in the norm reinforcing condition ( $M_{\text{norm reinforcing}} = 5.50$ ) were more likely to punish the norm violator than participants in the norm licensing condition ( $M_{\text{norm licensing}} = 3.92, t(77) = 2.64, p < .05$ ). Comparing these two conditions to the two norm violation absent conditions revealed that while participants were more likely to punish in the norm violation present – lower severity/norm reinforcing condition (vs.  $M_{\text{violation absent/norm reinforcing}} = 3.22, t(77) = 3.64, p < .05$ ; vs.  $M_{\text{violation absent/norm licensing}} = 4.00, t(77) = -2.46, p < .05$ ), they were not more likely to punish in the norm violation present – lower severity/norm licensing condition (vs. norm violation absent/norm reinforcing:  $t(77) = 1.15, p > .20$ ; vs. norm violation absent/norm licensing:  $t(77) = -.13, p > .20$ ).

Supporting H5b, punishment tendencies did not differ between the norm reinforcing and the norm licensing conditions among those in the norm violation present – higher severity condition ( $t < 1$ ). Further, both the norm reinforcing condition ( $M_{\text{norm reinforcing}} = 5.14$ ) and the norm licensing condition ( $M_{\text{norm licensing}} = 5.33$ ) were significantly higher than those in the two norm violation absent conditions (norm reinforcing: vs. norm

violation absent/norm reinforcing:  $t(77) = 3.19, p < .05$ ; vs. norm violation absent/norm licensing:  $t(77) = -1.95, p = .05$ ; norm licensing: vs. norm violation absent/norm reinforcing:  $t(77) = 3.10, p < .05$ ; vs. norm violation absent/norm licensing:  $t(77) = 2.00, p < .05$ ). Finally, participants in the two norm violation absent conditions indicated equally low punishment tendencies regardless of the store's policy ( $t < 1$ ).

*Consumption Experience Index.* A 3 (norm violation) x 2 (store policy) ANOVA conducted on the consumption experience index only revealed a significant main effect for norm violation ( $F(2, 77) = 3.14, p < .05$ ). Interestingly, the interaction effect for norm violation and store policy was nonsignificant ( $p > .30$ ). Consumption experience was not significantly different among those in the norm violation present – lower severity condition, irrespective of the store policy in place ( $M_{\text{norm reinforcing}} = 4.48$  vs.  $M_{\text{norm licensing}} = 4.17$ ;  $t < 1$ ; H5c unsupported). More consistent with H5d, consumption experience was equally negative irrespective of the store policy among those in the norm violation present – higher severity conditions ( $M_{\text{norm reinforcing}} = 3.87$  vs.  $M_{\text{norm licensing}} = 4.23$ ;  $t < 1$ ). Consumption experience was evaluated less negatively in the norm violation absent condition ( $M_{\text{violation absent}} = 4.83$ ) as compared to the norm violation present – lower severity ( $M_{\text{violation present – lower severity}} = 4.32, t(77) = -1.73, p = .09$ ) and violation present – higher severity conditions ( $M_{\text{violation present – higher severity}} = 4.08, t(77) = -2.53, p < .05$ ; see figure 5). Consumption evaluation was not significantly different between the lower severity and higher severity conditions ( $t < 1$ ). Because the main effect for store policy was nonsignificant ( $p > .50$ ), it appears that consumers' evaluation of their consumption experience was not affected by the store policy displayed ( $M_{\text{norm reinforcing}} = 4.47$  vs.  $M_{\text{norm licensing}} = 4.34$ ; see table 6 for summary of results).

Results from study 5 revealed a number of interesting things about the factors that can influence consumers' punishment decisions and consumption experience. Supporting H5a, when the norm violation was of lower severity (because the confederate only took five of the ten samples available), the tendency to punish the norm violator was greater when the violator's behavior was inconsistent with a norm reinforcing store policy as compared to when the store policy provided "permission" for the consumer to violate the societal social norm (i.e., norm licensing condition). The results also showed that when the norm violation was of higher severity, consumers' tendency to punish the norm violator did not differ as a function of the expressed store policy. That is, when a norm violation had a higher severity for the participants (i.e., confederate took all 10 samples and left the participants none), participants were equally likely to punish the norm violator regardless of whether the store's policy reinforced or licensed the social norm.

Study 5 also provided an interesting insight into how punishment behavior can be guided by either consumers' beliefs about behaviors that constitute norm violations, versus what organizations or institutions deem as inappropriate. The interaction effects in this study demonstrated that when the norm violation has a severe impact on consumers, their punishment tendencies are likely directed by the lay beliefs they hold (i.e., what people believe how others are expected to behave) even if the institutional norm states otherwise. However, when the norm violation has a less severe impact on consumers, the institutional norm imposed can override consumers' beliefs about societal social norm violations, and result in either punishment or no punishment.

Like study 4, consumption experience in this study was also found to be negatively impacted by the presence of a norm violation. Interestingly, consumption experience was equally negative when comparing the lower and higher severity conditions, thus indicating that consumers are likely to evaluate their experience negatively whenever a norm violation is present. It is also interesting that the measure for consumption experience in this study was taken after the study task had been completed and the opportunity for punishment was provided to the consumer. It appears that a norm violation has a negative influence on the consumption experience of the consumer regardless of the context and the incidence of punishment. Finally, it is worth noting that the store policy did not influence consumers' experience. Therefore, whether the store promotes a norm reinforcing or norm licensing message did not impact people's evaluation of their overall experience. Although somewhat surprising, it is possible that while consumers may be aware of the store's endorsed message, this factor alone is not powerful enough to change people's feelings about their experience. Perhaps these feelings about their experience will only be altered if the store were to endorse a message that is consistent with the normative way of behaving, then reacting to inconsistent behavior from consumers by punishing these norm violations. This is one of the possibilities I test in the next study.

### **3.3 Study 6: Role of Punisher and Nature of Norm Violation on Consumption Experience**

Study 5 demonstrated that while store policy had an impact on punishment behavior when norm violation was lower in severity, it did not have an influence on overall consumption experience. One interesting observation from the previous study is that evaluation of the consumption experience in that instance did not improve after consumers were given the opportunity to punish the norm violator. It is possible that while consumers feel the need to take action against the norm violator when a norm violation occurs, their overall consumption experience is still negatively impacted because consumers do not prefer to be situations where they need to punish fellow consumers. Therefore, to further explore how the punishment decision may be related to consumption experience, this study will test whether the role of the punisher (i.e., store employee vs. victimized consumer) will affect consumers' evaluation of their consumption experience. It is predicted that consumption experience could improve when the store employee delivers punishment toward the norm violator.

Furthermore, in order to examine whether the store employee's decision to punish the norm violator will affect the consumption experience regardless of the nature of the norm violation, this study will also examine scenarios involving norm violations that are either innocent (i.e., violation that is accidental and unintentional), implicit (i.e., violation that occurs when the norm is not explicitly reinforced), and explicit (i.e., violation that occurs after the norm is reinforced) in nature. While consumption experience may

improve when a store employee imposes punishment upon a consumer for committing violations that are implicit and explicit in nature, it is possible it may actually become more negative if the violation was innocent because the store employee's reaction may be perceived as unnecessarily harsh.

### **3.3.1 Method**

*Participants and Design.* Three hundred and thirty-three participants from a national online survey panel (Mechanical Turk) participated (33.0% female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 29.19$ ) in exchange for \$.36. This study used a scenario to employ a 3 (norm violation: present – innocent vs. present – implicit vs. present – explicit) x 2 (punisher: store employee vs. consumer) + 2 (controls: norm violation absent; norm violation present – no punishment) between-subjects design. The context of the scenario involved waiting at the gate to board a flight at the airport.

*Procedure.* Participants were instructed to carefully read the scenario and to imagine themselves in the situation. They were asked to imagine that they were waiting to board a plane at the airport when another consumer cut in front of them. In the *norm violation present - innocent* condition, the norm violator was described as accidentally cutting in line without realizing that he had done so. In the *norm violation present – implicit* condition, the norm violator cut in a line after it was described that a line had been formed by fellow passengers. In the *norm violation present - explicit* condition, the

norm violator cut in line after an airline staff member explicitly reinforced the norm of waiting in line by asking passengers to form and wait their turn in line.

Next, the punisher was manipulated by asking participants to imagine either an airline *employee* (vs. they themselves, the *consumer*) punished this norm violator by verbally scolding this person for cutting in line. To create baseline comparisons, two control conditions were also included. One of the *control* conditions described a scenario in which the *norm violation* was *absent* at the airport (i.e., no one cut in line), while the other control condition described a scenario in which the norm violator cut in line, but *no punishment* occurred. Across the conditions, the scenario concluded by describing the participants getting on the plane, finding their seat, and putting their luggage away (see Appendix A for detailed information).

After participants read and thought about the scenario, they were asked to complete the consumption experience and secondary measures. First, participants evaluated their overall consumption experience with the airline on seven-point bipolar scales (i.e., “bad-good”, “negative-positive”, “undesirable-desirable”, “unfavorable-favorable”, “dislike-like”). A consumption experience index was created by averaging these items together ( $\alpha = .97$ ). Although not formally hypothesized, I also included punishment measures in order to provide additional insight on how participants would subsequently behave toward the norm violator after punishment had taken place following the norm violation of cutting in line. Participants indicated on seven-point scales (1 = “not at all likely”, 7 = “very likely”) the likelihood that they would “pick up

the jacket for this person if he had dropped it on the floor”, “help this person out if he was having trouble storing his luggage on the plane”, and “let this passenger off the plane before them if this person was late for a connection flight” (reversed-coded). A punishment index was created by averaging these items together ( $\alpha = .88$ ). Finally, because participants’ own travelling experiences could influence their attitudes toward the travel experience described, participants were also asked to indicate how often they encounter problems (e.g., delays, lost luggage, etc.) when they travel (1 = “never”, 5 = “all the time”).

### **3.3.2 Results and Discussion**

*Consumption Experience Index.* A 3 (norm violation) x 2 (punisher) ANCOVA utilizing the consumption experience index as a dependent variable and the frequency in which participants encounter problems when travelling showed a significant main effect for norm violation ( $F(2, 243) = 8.12, p < .01$ ), a significant main effect for punisher ( $F(1, 243) = 73.19, p < .001$ ), and a significant two-way interaction for norm violation and punisher ( $F(2, 243) = 3.45, p < .05$ , see figure 6). The two-way interaction for norm violation and punisher remained significant without the inclusion of the covariate ( $F(2, 243) = 3.06, p < .05$ ). Consistent with H6a, results showed that across the different forms of norm violations, consumption experience was rated less negatively when the store employee was the punisher than when the consumer was the punisher (norm violation present - innocent:  $M_{\text{employee}} = 4.54$  vs.  $M_{\text{consumer}} = 3.76, t(332) = 2.90, p < .01$ ); norm violation present - implicit:  $M_{\text{employee}} = 5.46$  vs.  $M_{\text{consumer}} = 3.92, t(332) = 5.69, p < .001$ );



norm violation present - explicit:  $M_{\text{employee}} = 5.71$  vs.  $M_{\text{consumer}} = 4.02$ ,  $t(332) = 6.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Based on these results, consumption experience was rated least negatively when the airline employee punished the norm violator for violating a social norm after it was explicitly reinforced by the employee (i.e., asked to wait in line). Furthermore, consumption experience was not significantly different between those in the norm violation absent, norm violation present - explicit/employee punisher ( $M_{\text{violation absent}} = 5.38$  vs.  $M_{\text{violation present - explicit/employee}} = 5.71$ ;  $t(332) = 1.25$ ,  $p > .20$ ) and norm violation present - implicit/employee punisher conditions ( $M_{\text{violation absent}} = 5.38$  vs.  $M_{\text{violation present - implicit/employee}} = 5.46$ ;  $t < 1$ ), thus demonstrating that consumption experience in the presence of the implicit and explicit norm violation *improved* when employees took action against the norm violator. While consumption experience was also less negative when the employee punished in the norm violation present – innocent condition (thus H6b was not supported), it was rated more negatively in comparison to the norm violation absent condition ( $M_{\text{violation absent}} = 5.38$  vs.  $M_{\text{violation present - innocent/employee}} = 4.54$ ;  $t(332) = 3.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and was not significantly different from the violation without punishment condition ( $M_{\text{violation present - no punishment}} = 4.41$  vs.  $M_{\text{violation present - innocent/employee}} = 4.54$ ;  $t < 1$ ). This indicates that consumers do not feel less negatively about their consumption experience when a consumer who accidentally violates a norm is punished.

*Punishment Index.* A 3 (violation) x 2 (punisher) ANCOVA utilizing the punishment index as the dependent variable and frequency in which they encounter problems while travelling as the covariate showed significant main effects for norm violation ( $F(2, 243) = 10.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and punisher ( $F(1, 243) = 11.47$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The

interaction effect was nonsignificant ( $p > .60$ ). Specifically, in comparison to those in the norm violation present – innocent condition ( $M = 4.00$ ), consumers in the violation present – implicit ( $M = 5.04$ ;  $t(243) = 3.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and violation present – explicit ( $M = 5.06$ ;  $t(243) = 3.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ; see figure 7) conditions were more likely to punish the norm violator. Punishment level was not significantly different between the implicit and explicit conditions ( $t < 1$ ). The results also showed that consumers were more likely to punish the norm violator in subsequent encounters if they took on the role of the punisher earlier in the scenario ( $M_{\text{consumer}} = 5.08$  vs.  $M_{\text{employee}} = 4.33$ ; see table 7 for summary of results).

Results from study 6 showed that although the presence of a norm violation can have detrimental effects on people's consumption experience, there are actions that can be taken by businesses to rectify these negative ramifications. Interestingly, even though the action of the norm violator was perceived to be equally costly to the consumer in this study (i.e., they were cut in front of regardless of whether the violation was innocent or not), the nature of the violation committed and the action taken by the employee still had an influence on consumers' evaluation of their experience with the airline.

Specifically, when a third party such as an airline employee took on the role of the punisher, consumption experience improved. In other words, consumers felt especially negative about their experience when a norm violation occurs and they had to take on the role of the punisher. This is an indication that consumers do not prefer to be put into the position in which they need to punish another consumer, even if this other consumer has clearly violated a social norm. Interestingly, this study also found that consumption

experience was evaluated more negatively when the norm violation was innocent as opposed to implicit or explicit. This is likely because consumers tend to place more blame on the business' policies or the staff members when a consumer commits a norm violation by accident. It is also important to point out that consumers rated their experience as the least negative when an employee punished a consumer for committing an explicit norm violation. Therefore, it appears that consumers prefer it when store employees remind their consumers of the expected behavior, then further reinforce this behavior by punishing those who violate the norm. Although it would be ideal for businesses to prevent norm violations from occurring in the first place, this result shows that there are actions that can be taken by businesses to offset the negative implications from norm violations.

Lastly, it is also important to acknowledge the parallels between the final study and the first study reported in the dissertation. In both studies, a third party (i.e., store employee) either punished or did not punish the norm violator. Because the focus of the first study was to understand how third party order restoration would affect consumers' punishment decisions, examination of people's consumption experience was not the priority in that instance. Nevertheless, I did ask participants to evaluate the sweatshirt at the store display and rate their overall experience with the product evaluation task, but no significant results emerged on those variables. A main reason why I believe consumption experience was affected by the behavior of the third party in study 6 but not in study 1 was because the norm violation in the final study (i.e., cutting in line) was more direct and costly for the consumers than the violation in the first study (i.e., creating a mess).

Hence, the norm violation utilized in the final experiment likely elicited a stronger reaction and resulted in a more pronounced effect on people's evaluations of their consumption experience.

In this chapter, I examined the downstream effects of norm violations and consumer punishment. Specifically, studies 4-6 provided insight into how violations and punishment decisions can influence people's evaluations of the products they are consuming and their overall consumption experience. Overall, these studies demonstrated that the presence of a consumption norm violation (i.e., invasion of personal space, taking multiple free samples, cutting in line) has negative implications for businesses as consumers rated their experience less positively. In addition to showing that norm violations negatively influenced consumption experience, the studies also set out to explore factors that can attenuate these negative ramifications. I found that while factors such as the store policy may not be effective in improving consumption experience, the role of the punisher can be helpful. Indeed, when the store employee decides to punish the norm violating consumer, people evaluated their experience less negatively. The next chapter of the dissertation summarizes and provides concluding thoughts on the research presented.

## **4 Conclusion**

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I summarize the findings from the seven studies presented, and discuss how these findings integrate and contribute to our understanding of social norm violations and punishment decisions in consumption contexts. I also discuss some of the limitations, and implications from the current research. Finally, I suggest a number of future avenues of research and offer my concluding thoughts.

### **4.1 Summary of Results**

Norm violations are commonplace in consumption environments, yet little is known about how consumers react when these violations occur. The purpose of this dissertation was to provide insight into consumers' punishment decisions toward fellow consumers who commit norm violations in various consumption contexts. This dissertation also set out to demonstrate how norm violations and punishment decisions affect people's consumption experience. Through the conceptualization that punishment is an effective means to achieve social order when individuals disrupt order through the violation of a social norm, the first four studies offered new insight into how consumers use the level of punishment delivered as a means to ensure social order is realized (Banner 1981; Fehr and Gächter 2002; Garland 1990; Helweg-Larsen and LoMonaco 2008; Smith and Knowles 1979). Importantly, these studies identified three factors linked to social order that influence consumers' punishment decisions. Namely, I found that when a third party responded to a norm violation through punishment (i.e., restores social

order), consumers decided not to punish the norm violator (study 1). Further, I demonstrated that when a norm violator faced an unjustified adversity, the level of punishment that a consumer delivered was reduced because punishment would create a further imbalance to social order. Here, the mitigation of punishment was observed when the norm violation had faced either an unjustified adversity from a previous negative consumption event (study 2a) or an unjustified adversity related to a negative physical attribute (study 2b). Finally, I showed that when a norm violator was in a higher status position, punishment was mitigated because less punishment was required to restore social order (study 3).

The next three studies of the dissertation looked at the effects of norm violations and other important factors on punishment decisions and consumption experience. Based on previous evidence from the marketing literature which showed that violations by businesses (e.g., product failure) can have negative ramifications (e.g., negative word of mouth, Ringberg et al. 2007), these studies examined whether violations that are committed by fellow consumers could also have similar negative effects. Importantly, I investigated a number of factors operating in the consumption environment that could potentially enhance or attenuate people's evaluations of their consumption experience when a consumption norm violation has occurred. I found that at the basic level, the presence of a norm violation not only led to more punishment behavior, it also resulted in more negative evaluations of the food products consumed (study 4). Further, I examined the roles the severity of the norm violation and store policy played in punishment and consumption experience (study 5). I found that these factors had an interactive effect on

punishment behavior, such that punishment was lower when the store policy was norm licensing (provided that the severity of the norm violation was low). While there was no interactive effect on consumption experience, it was found to be equally negative irrespective of the severity of the norm violation. Interestingly, store policy in this instance was also found to have no significant effect on consumption experience. Since studies 4 and 5 found that the presence of norm violations had negative effects on consumption experience, the goal of final study was to explore whether consumption experience could be improved by factors such as the role of the punisher and the nature of the norm violation (study 6). The results from this study revealed that consumption experience in the presence of a norm violation improved when a third party (i.e., store employee), as opposed to the victimized consumer, delivered the punishment. The results also found that the consumption experience was the most positive when the store employee punished a consumer for violating a norm that was already explicitly reinforced by the business. Here, consumption experience was not rated as positively when the store employee punished the consumer for accidentally committing a violation.

## **4.2 Integration**

While the main purposes of the first (studies 1-3) and second (studies 4-6) sets of studies differed in this dissertation, they effectively contribute to our understanding of how social interactions between individuals influence consumer behavior, and how these interactions influence important downstream effects such as product evaluations and consumption experience. Because this is the first work to examine punishment between

consumers within the marketing literature, it was imperative to first understand the dynamics of consumer-to-consumer punishment through the examination of when consumers do and do not punish fellow consumers for committing norm violations. To accomplish this goal, it was also necessary to utilize theoretical conceptualization that had been established in disciplines outside of marketing (i.e., sociology, psychology). Since it is also important to understand how interactions between consumers have marketing implications and consequences for businesses, the second set of studies extended upon and further contributed to the first set of studies. Together, these studies provide a broad picture of the phenomenon of consumer-to-consumer punishment.

#### **4.3 Theoretical Contributions**

This dissertation provides significant theoretical contributions to the punishment, consumer behavior, and marketing literatures. As mentioned, the present research provides insights into an important, yet overlooked behavior in the consumer literature. Punishment decisions are complex, requiring individuals to not consider norm violations in isolation but rather in conjunction with context specific information. Indeed, this dissertation demonstrated that various factors related to both the norm violator and the environment in which the violation transpires have implications on the balance in social order and consumers' punishment decisions. While punishment acts have traditionally been utilized in restoring social order (Banner 1981; Hechter and Horne 2003; Murphy 1985; Ward and Salmon 2009), this dissertation work also showed reducing the level of punishment can be a means to achieve social order.



These findings also indicate the dynamic nature of punishment in the consumption context. In the instance studied, the consumer is shown to be an active judge in measuring the appropriate level of punishment required to ensure social order is in balance. This demonstrates that the consumer does not appear to take the punishment decision lightly, as each decision likely involves thought and consideration about the implications of punishing a fellow consumer. By establishing the nuanced nature of the punishment decision and providing insight into the challenges that may be involved in this type of decision-making, this work opens the possibility for additional influences to be identified and leave it to future research to build on this initial work.

The studies also demonstrated that factors that influence social order and punishment decisions can either be related to the norm violator (e.g., a personal characteristic possessed by the violator, study 2b, 3) or realized from aspects of the consumption environment (e.g., action of the store employee, product failure, study 1, 2a). Further, I found that a factor impacting a punishment decision need not be directly tied to the norm violation itself (e.g., the individual difference noted in study 2b). It appears that the scope of social order may be fairly broad with respect to the history experienced by the individual. Based on this research, it would be interesting to examine how far the scope of social order extends. For example, how time-sensitive events (e.g., adversity experienced years ago) or adversity shared with social others (e.g., adversity experienced by a spousal partner) impact a punishment decision.

Finally, the current research makes a contribution to the marketing literature by showing how violations committed by consumers can also have negative ramifications for businesses (even though the businesses were not responsible for these violations). The examination of factors such as store policy and the role of the punisher also furthered our understanding of the consumer punishment behavior and contributed to the literature as previous work had not extensively considered the roles these factors may have played in business-to-business and business-to-consumer relationships. Furthermore, the findings revealed steps that can be taken to offset these negative ramifications (i.e., selecting proper parties to deliver the punishment), which contributes to current knowledge in the marketing literature. In turn, these findings also raise questions about the managerial implications of the current work, which I discuss in the next section.

#### **4.4 Implications**

This dissertation has a number of important managerial implications. First, the current research brings forth questions about crisis prevention in consumer-to-consumer relationships. Just as product failures on the part of businesses can have negative implications for consumers' evaluations of their consumption experiences, consumers' failures to follow social norms can also negatively impact fellow consumers' evaluations of the products consumed and their overall consumption experience. This finding points to the serious consequences of norm violations occurring in the consumption environment – i.e., norm violation equals unhappy consumers – and therefore demands managerial attention. Because managers are likely unaware of the negative implications

norm violations and consumer-to-consumer punishment could have on their consumers' consumption experience, it would be worthwhile for them to consider how norm violations could be prevented from occurring in the first place. For example, it may be advantageous for companies to consider their consumption environment (e.g., store layout) and see if they could prevent consumers from violating norms such as hovering over others and cutting in line. If the shopping environment makes it difficult for consumers to violate norms, this would mitigate the need for fellow consumers to restore social order, and prevent the negative impact on consumers' retail or service experience.

Another managerial implication of the current work is for managers to consider the importance of managing the social interactions between their consumers. As I demonstrated in this research, consumer-to-consumer relationships can be complex, so being proactive in defining how these relationships should be managed in the case of norm violations makes sense. In some situations, it may be important for managers to demonstrate their willingness to restore social order by following the rules set by their own organizations; therefore, it may be necessary for them to punish norm violators in front of other consumers, even if it means losing the norm violator as a future consumer. As shown in the first study, since the purpose of punishment is to restore social order that was disrupted by the norm violator, consumers would no longer feel the desire to punish the norm violator themselves if punishment was already delivered by someone belonging to the organization. And as shown in the final study, the actions taken by a third party can also be helpful in improving consumers' experience.

In other circumstances, however, it may also be important for managers to take the perspective that every customer is right (even when they are wrong), and try to appease both the norm violator and the consumers who were either victims or witnesses of the violation. In this case, it may be crucial for managers to step in between consumers in conflict and act as the “referees” by deciding whether a solution could be implemented without upsetting both parties.

The decision to punish can also be, under certain circumstances, influenced by institutional norms or store policy. I showed that in the consumption context, stated store policy can either encourage or diminish punishment by the consumer, provided that the norm violation is lower in severity. Interestingly, I found that the influences of institutional norms can override the beliefs people have about how others should behave. Therefore, this indicates that the rules and regulations set in place by businesses can sometimes have a significant influence on their consumers’ reactions toward norm violators. If it is the businesses’ prerogative for their consumers to mitigate the likelihood of punishment, perhaps they could reiterate store policies that include norm licensing (rather than reinforcing) messages. However, if businesses want to encourage actions from consumer vigilantes, it may be beneficial for them to display policies with norm reinforcing messages in their establishments. How managers choose to communicate their store policies may also be another important question to consider. In study 5, the institutional norms in place were communicated through somewhat subtle means, as the store policy was written on a sign that was posted on the free sample bowl. Perhaps the null results for consumption experience would not be observed if the institutional norms

were communicated through more explicit means, such as asking store employees to verbally tell the consumers how many samples they should take. Based on previous work on psychological reactance (Fitzsimons and Lehmann 2004), it is possible that this alternative form of communication would backfire on the organization as more consumers may end up violating norms due to the perception that the organization is impeding their freedom by dictating how they should behave.

Finally, managers need to consider how (or if) they should repair damages that could have been done to their company's image when it is impossible to prevent or avoid norm violations and consumer-to-consumer punishment. As seen in the past with cases involving product failures or unethical behaviors by companies, CEO's of these companies will sometimes make public apologies to their consumers as a way to repair damages that have been done to their reputation (Gorn, Jiang, and Johar 2008). The question that follows is whether the same form of crisis management is required in incidences involving conflicts between consumers. That is, if the business is ultimately blamed for allowing the norm violation to take place, it may be worthwhile for managers to consider if potential damages done to the business' image need to be corrected in the same way as they would handle other types of public relations crises.

#### **4.5 Limitations**

As discussed earlier, examination of the responses in the suspicion probes for all of the studies gave me assurance that not only were the participants in the studies unaware of the true purpose and hypotheses in this research, they were also unaware of

the connections between the manipulations they were given (e.g., norm violations), and the dependent measures of interest (e.g., punishment, consumption experience). Hence, I do not perceive social desirability and demand effects as potential limitations that qualify these findings. I do, however, acknowledge that in order to increase the external validity of this work, it would be important to examine consumer punishment in other consumption settings in future research. In other words, it would be ideal to study and replicate these research questions in more realistic retail settings outside of the laboratory.

Another potential limitation relates to the role emotions may have played in the effects found. Although I found null results for the emotion measures in the studies conducted, it is possible the emotions experienced by the participants were not fully captured by the self-report measures utilized. As such, an affective reaction on the part of the consumer making a punishment decision may still exist (both before making the decision and also after the punishment has been delivered). Thus, subsequent investigation could take a more comprehensive approach to better understand how emotions fit into the picture. One method could involve manipulating the valence of consumers' mood before their encounters with the norm violator. If people were primed to be in a negative mood before their interactions with the norm violator, perhaps the likelihood to excuse the violator would be mitigated.

#### **4.6 Future Directions**

One of the avenues for future research is to further investigate how the actions of third parties can influence punishment decisions. For example, how would the level of punishment delivered by third parties influence consumers' tendency to punish? If it was perceived that the level of punishment delivered was too extreme for the transgression committed, this could actually backfire on the parties delivering the punishment and result in negative reactions. At the same time, if the level of punishment delivered was insufficient given the norm violation committed, then people's tendency to punish might be augmented. In this situation, the competing possibility of a social learning effect for punishment may be observed.

Additionally, the experiments in this dissertation utilized both negative and positive forms of punishment and found both to be viable means in achieving social order. In some instances the decision to punish (e.g., study 3) was more overt and direct in nature, whereas in other instances (e.g., studies 1 and 2) it was shown to be more subtle and indirect. Stated differently, consumers were willing to embrace both forms of punishment in the contexts studied; subsequent work could examine whether the different forms of punishment chosen by the consumer could be reflective of the nature of the punishment decision required.

As previously mentioned, when signs of social disorder are visually evident (e.g., graffiti, litter), social order could be restored by cleaning up the neighborhood. In this instance, the restoration of social order essentially removed the consequences or

ramifications of the norm violation. It would be interesting to examine in future research whether people would be more motivated to restore social order in situations in which the norm violations have visually evident (vs. not visually evident – e.g., cutting in line) consequences because those types of norm violations are more salient reminders that social disorders can and do take place.

Future research could also explore how characteristics of the consumer carrying out the punishment (i.e., the punisher) could impact the punishment decision. For example, if the punisher also faced an unjustified adversity in life, how would this influence the level of punishment delivered? That is, if the punisher also possessed a negative attribute that is beyond personal control (e.g., physical disability), how would they react toward a norm violator with the same attribute? In this case, would the level of punishment delivered be mitigated further because the punisher sees similarities and a sense of connection between him/her and the violator? Or, would the level of punishment actually enhance because the punisher would judge the norm violator more harshly because they would think that someone who is similar to them should “know better”? These would be interesting questions to investigate.

While the latter studies of this dissertation investigated how norm violations and punishment decisions affected consumption experience, it may also be interesting to better understand the attitudes of the norm violator and store personnel. For instance, how does the norm violator view the shopping experience after being punished by another consumer? How do store personnel feel about consumers punishing other consumers?



Furthermore, future research could examine how consumers' attachment with brands may influence their consumption experience if the violations occurred in the context that is related to the brand they have a close attachment with. For example, if a consumer with a close attachment with Apple witnessed a norm violation at an Apple store (e.g., consumer hovering over others at the demo display), would they actually feel better about their consumption experience if they (vs. the Apple employee) were the punisher? That is, would a loyal Apple consumer who gets the opportunity to punish a fellow consumer for violating a norm at an Apple store feel more positive about their consumption experience because they are essentially "protecting" their brand (i.e., brand that is a part of their identity) from negative behavior? This would be an interesting and relevant question to pursue.

Finally, given today's globalized world of commerce and with people being more connected to each other through advances in technology, it may be imperative for consumers to be aware of the norms in other cultures so they do not unintentionally commit a norm violation. They may also need to become more aware of what constitutes appropriate punishment behavior when dealing with different cultures. Perhaps verbally scolding a fellow consumer and thus causing public embarrassment could be perceived in some cultures as more of a norm violation than the violation that was committed in the first place. In this case, consumption experience may actually become more negative if a store employee decides to punish the norm violating consumer publicly. This is another topic that could be explored further in future work.

## **4.7 Final Conclusions**

In sum, this dissertation provides insight in consumer-to-consumer punishment decisions and the marketing implications of norm violations and punishment. Through seven empirical studies, the current research highlights that it is important to study norm violations and punishment decisions in the consumption domain. It also makes a number of theoretical contributions to the existing literatures. The discussion of future research possibilities also shows there are a number of avenues of research that can be pursued and demonstrates there is potential to make further contributions to this domain of research. Subsequent research also needs to provide additional understanding on other possible outcome issues that may accompany punishment in the consumption context. I hope this dissertation provides the sufficient first steps for such subsequent research.

## 5 Tables and Figures

### 5.1 Tables

**Table 1. Summary of results (Study 1)**

	Norm Violation Present		Norm Violation Absent		Control
	Inaction	Action	Inaction	Action	
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
<b>Punishment (%)</b>	93.33%	53.33%	53.85%	64.29%	66.67%

$N = 67$ ; 68.7% female, 31.3% male;  $M_{\text{age}} = 21.86$

**Table 2. Summary of results (Study 2a)**

	Norm Violation Present		Norm Violation Absent	
	Unjustified Adversity Absent	Unjustified Adversity Present	Unjustified Adversity Absent	Unjustified Adversity Present
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
<b>Punishment Index</b>	4.06	3.16	2.96	3.19

$N = 118$ ; 61.0% female, 39.0% male;  $M_{\text{age}} = 19.97$

**Table 3. Summary of results (Study 2b)**

	Norm Violation Present			Norm Violation Absent		
	Adversity Absent	Adversity Present - Justified	Adversity Present - Unjustified	Adversity Absent	Adversity Present - Justified	Adversity Present - Justified
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
<b>Punishment Index</b>	4.77	4.82	3.99	3.06	3.00	3.47

$N = 160$ ; 100% female, 0% male;  $M_{\text{age}} = 19.79$

**Table 4. Summary of results (Study 3)**

	Norm Violation Present		Control
	Lower Status	Higher Status	<i>M</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	
<b>Punishment (# of Push-Ups)</b>	24.75	15.75	17.31

$N = 45$ ; 62.2% female, 37.8% male;  $M_{\text{age}} = 20.31$

**Table 5. Summary of results (Study 4)**

	Norm Violation Present	Norm Violation Absent
<b>Punishment (minutes)</b>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
	6.57	4.02
<b>Product Evaluation Index</b>	4.02	4.67

$N = 27$ ; 51.9% female, 48.1% male;  $M_{\text{age}} = 20.37$

**Table 6. Summary of results (Study 5)**

	Violation Present – Lower		Violation Present – Higher		Violation Absent	
	Norm Reinforcing	Norm Licensing	Norm Reinforcing	Norm Licensing	Norm Reinforcing	Norm Licensing
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
<b>Punishment</b>	5.50	3.92	5.14	5.33	3.22	4.00
<b>Consumption Experience Index</b>	4.48	4.17	3.87	4.23	5.05	4.61

$N = 78$ ; 49.4% female, 50.6% male;  $M_{\text{age}} = 20.05$

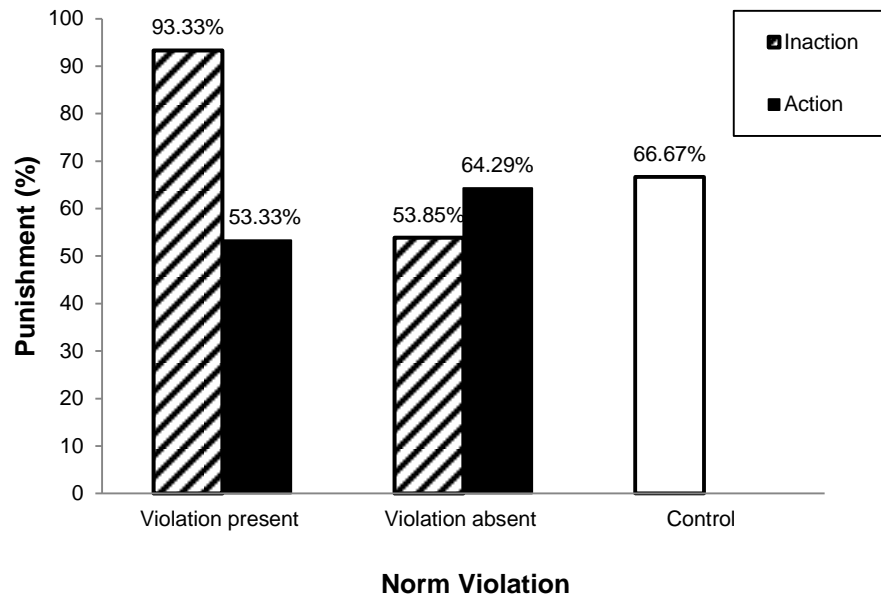
**Table 7. Summary of results (Study 6)**

	Present - Innocent		Present - Implicit		Present - Explicit		Absent	No Punishment
	Consumer Punisher	Employee Punisher	Consumer Punisher	Employee Punisher	Consumer Punisher	Employee Punisher		
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
<b>Consumption Experience Index</b>	3.76	4.54	3.92	5.46	4.02	5.71	5.38	4.41
<b>Punishment Index</b>	4.25	3.76	5.51	4.59	5.47	4.64	-----	5.34

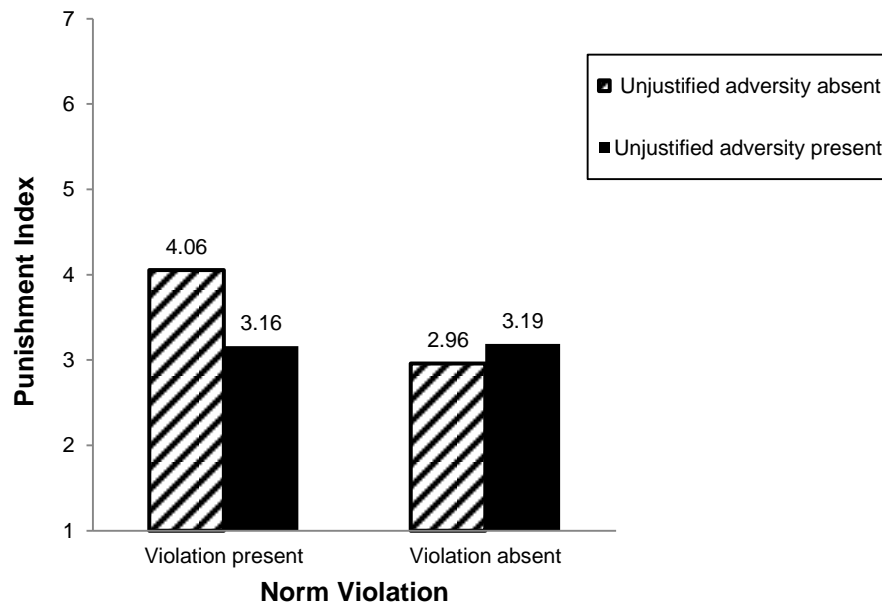
$N = 333$ ; 33.0% female, 67.0% male;  $M_{\text{age}} = 29.19$

## 5.2 Figures

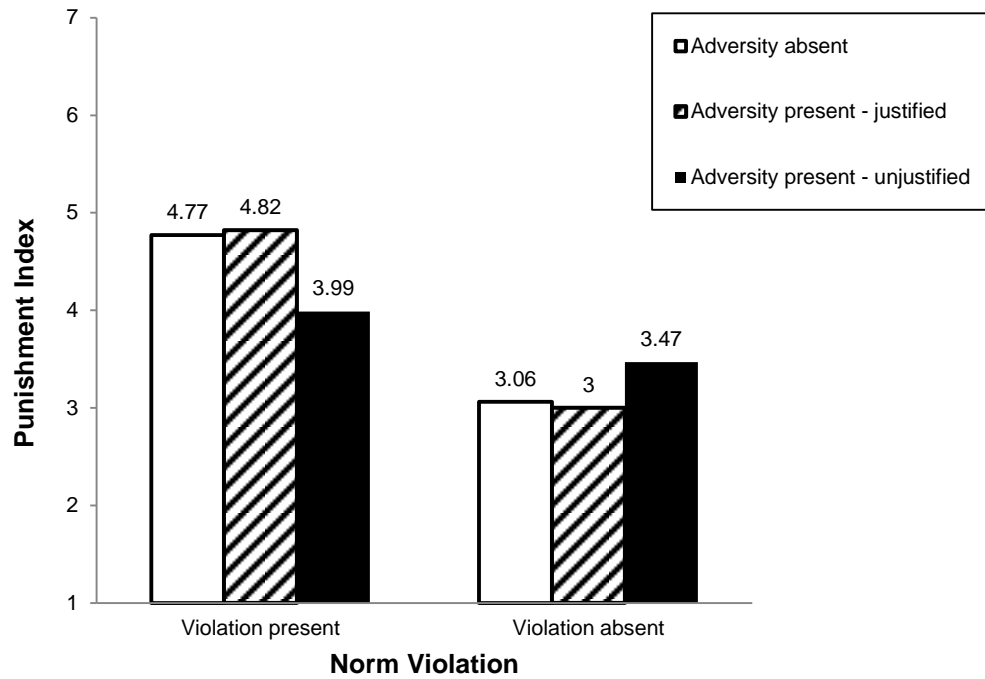
**Figure 1. Effects of norm violation and third party order restoration on percentage of participants who punished the confederate.**



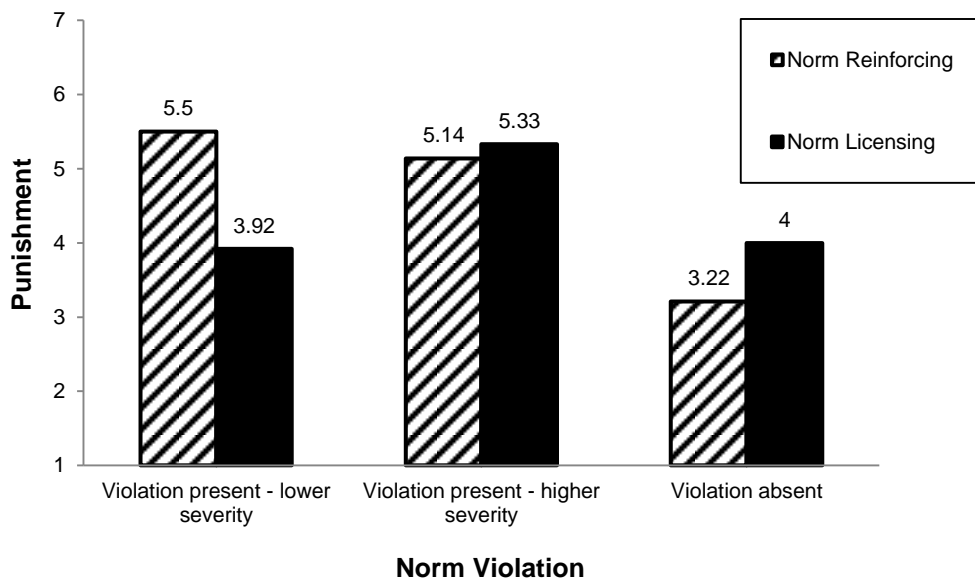
**Figure 2. Effects of norm violation and unjustified adversity on punishment**



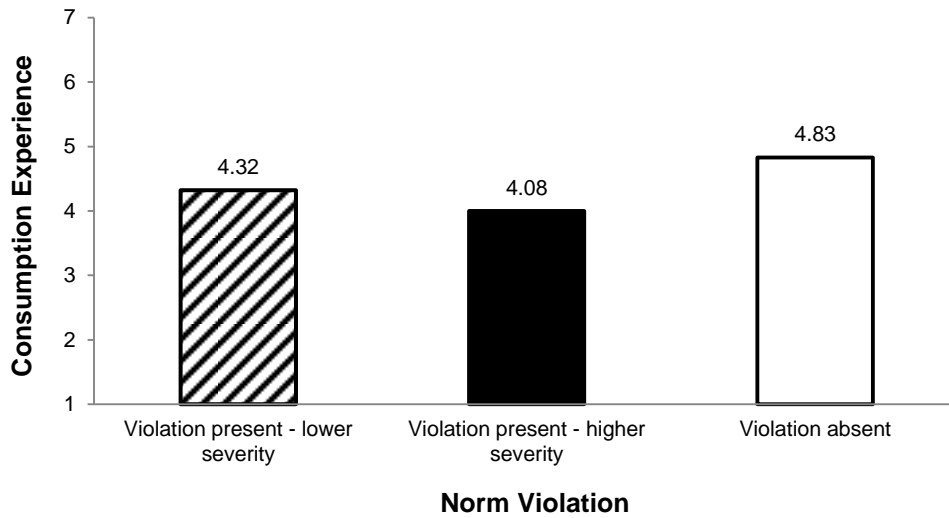
**Figure 3. Effects of norm violation and adversity on punishment**



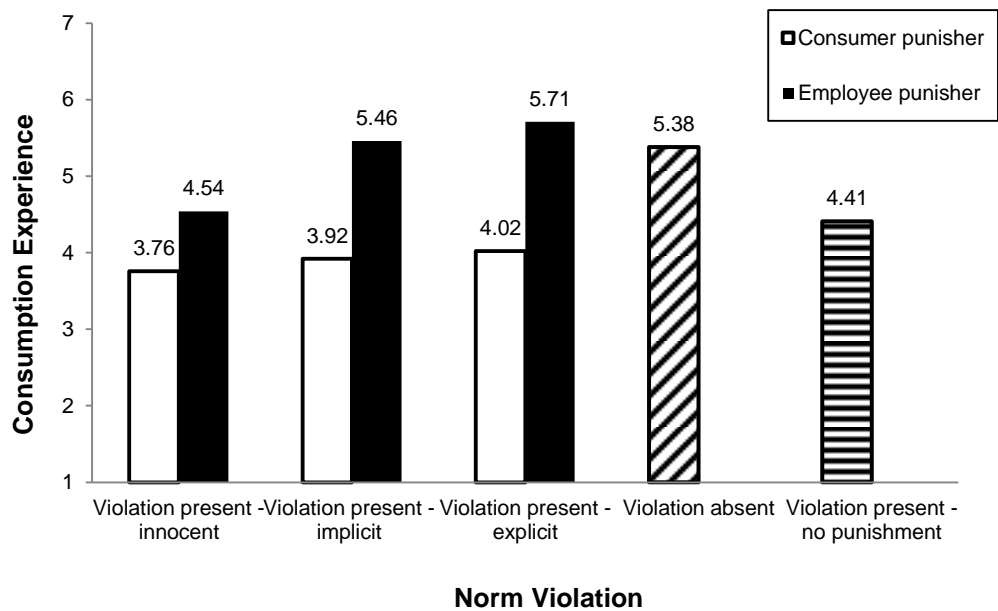
**Figure 4. Effects of norm violation and store policy on punishment**



**Figure 5. Effects of norm violation on consumption experience**

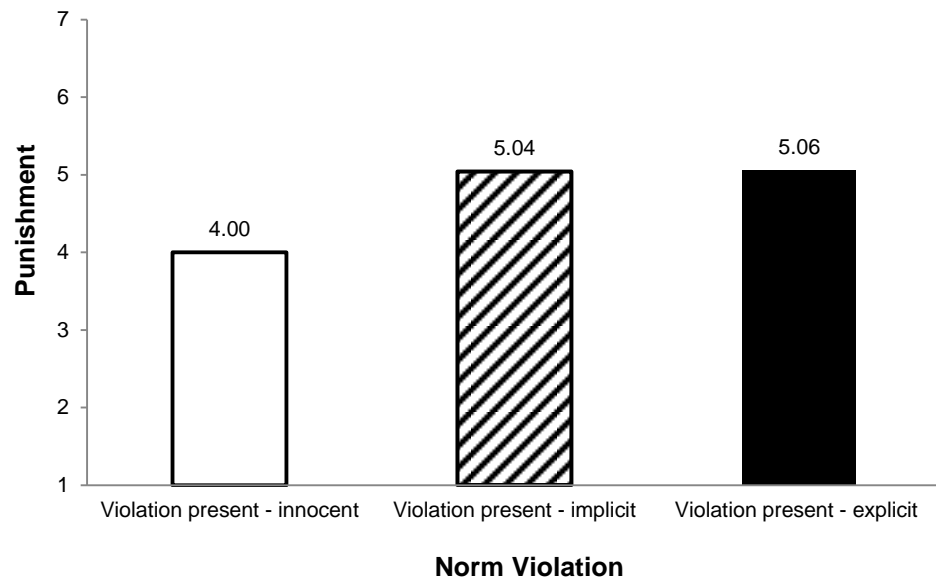


**Figure 6. Effects of norm violation and punisher on consumption experience**





**Figure 7. Effects of norm violation on punishment**



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## Appendix A: Experimental Materials

### Study 2a: Scenarios

**Instructions:** Please read the scenario below very carefully. After you have read the scenario, please close your eyes and take a few minutes to imagine yourself in this situation. Think about what you would do, what you would think and how you would feel.

#### **Unjustified Adversity Present x Norm Violation Present condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you have just finished checking your luggage at the airline counter. While your luggage is being placed on the conveyer belt, you overhear the airline personnel telling the passenger at the counter next to you that there was a failure with the computer system at the air transport security authority, so this passenger unfortunately will be inconvenienced and will need to wait a bit. Once the system goes back online they will have to completely restart the check-in process. After browsing in the airport bookstore for a few minutes, you make your way to the lineup of fellow passengers at the security check. While you wait in line for your turn to go through security, you notice that the passenger you encountered at the airline counter earlier is standing in line behind you. You then notice this passenger leaving your line and going up to the express lane reserved for those with special passes. Even though you are certain that this passenger does not hold a special pass, this person uses the express lane to move in front of you so he can go through security first.*

#### **Unjustified Adversity Present x Norm Violation Absent condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you have just finished checking your luggage at the airline counter. While your luggage is being placed on the conveyer belt, you overhear the airline personnel telling the passenger at the counter next to you that there was a failure with the computer system at the air transport security authority, so this passenger unfortunately will be inconvenienced and will need to wait a bit. Once the system goes back online they will have to completely restart the check-in process. After browsing in the airport bookstore for a few minutes, you make your way to the lineup of fellow passengers at the security check. While you wait in line for your turn to go through security, you notice that the passenger you encountered at the airline counter earlier is standing in line behind you. You both wait your turn and go through security in order.*

**Unjustified Adversity Absent x Norm Violation Present condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you have just finished checking your luggage at the airline counter. While your luggage is being placed on the conveyer belt, you overhear the airline personnel telling the passenger at the counter next to you that that he has successfully checked in without any problems. After browsing in the airport bookstore for a few minutes you make your way to the lineup of fellow passengers at the security check. While you wait in line for your turn to go through security, you notice that the passenger you encountered at the airline counter earlier is standing in line behind you. You then notice this passenger leaving your line and going up to the express lane reserved for those with special passes. Even though you are certain that this passenger does not hold a special pass, this person uses the express lane to move in front of you so he can go through security first.*

**Unjustified Adversity Absent x Norm Violation Absent condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you have just finished checking your luggage at the airline counter. While your luggage is being placed on the conveyer belt, you overhear the airline personnel telling the passenger at the counter next to you that that he has successfully checked in without any problems. After browsing in the airport bookstore for a few minutes you make your way to the lineup of fellow passengers at the security check. While you wait in line for your turn to go through security, you notice that the passenger you encountered at the airline counter earlier is standing in line behind you. You both wait your turn and go through security in order.*

## Study 2b: Scenarios

**Instructions:** Please read the scenario below very carefully. After you have read the scenario, please close your eyes and take a few minutes to imagine yourself in this situation. Think about what you would do, what you would think and how you would feel.

### **Norm Violation Present x Adversity Absent condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting in line to mail a parcel at the post office. While you wait, you notice a customer heading out of the post office holding the door open for a woman who is coming into the post office with a baby in a stroller. You also notice that another customer (shown below) who arrived at the same time as the woman decides to cut in front of her while she is making her way through the door with the stroller. This customer then proceeds to line up behind you. Meanwhile, the person in front of you finishes with the post office staff and you go up to the counter to mail your parcel. In addition to getting the proper postage, you will need to fill out some paperwork for the parcel (e.g., contents and value of goods shipped, mailing address, etc.).*



**This is Sarah, a 22 years old female. She enjoys reading and going to the beach.**

**Norm Violation Absent x Adversity Absent condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting in line to mail a parcel at the post office. While you wait, you notice a customer heading out of the post office holding the door open for a woman who is coming into the post office with a baby in stroller. You also notice that another customer (shown below) who arrived at the same time as the woman waits for her to make her way through the door with the stroller before entering the post office. This customer then proceeds to line up behind you. Meanwhile, the person in front of you finishes with the post office staff and you go up to the counter to mail your parcel. In addition to getting the proper postage, you will need to fill out some paperwork for the parcel (e.g., contents and value of goods shipped, mailing address, etc.).*

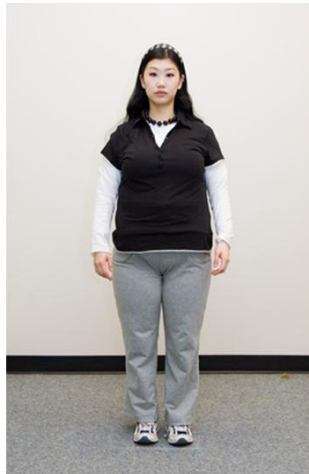


**This is Sarah, a 22 years old female. She enjoys reading and going to the beach.**



**Norm Violation Present x Adversity Present – Justified condition:**

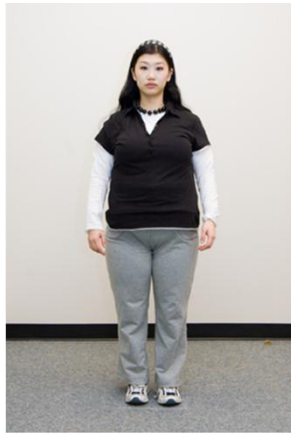
*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting in line to mail a parcel at the post office. While you wait, you notice a customer heading out of the post office holding the door open for a woman who is coming into the post office with a baby in stroller. You also notice that another customer (shown below) who arrived at the same time as the woman decides to cut in front of her while she is making her way through the door with the stroller. This customer then proceeds to line up behind you. Meanwhile, the person in front of you finishes with the post office staff and you go up to the counter to mail your parcel. In addition to getting the proper postage, you will need to fill out some paperwork for the parcel (e.g., contents and value of goods shipped, mailing address, etc.).*



**This is Sarah, a 22 years old female. She enjoys watching TV and eating fast food.**

**Norm Violation Absent x Adversity Present – Justified condition:**

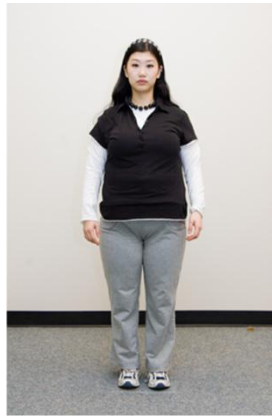
*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting in line to mail a parcel at the post office. While you wait, you notice a customer heading out of the post office holding the door open for a woman who is coming into the post office with a baby in stroller. You also notice that another customer (shown below) who arrived at the same time as the woman waits for her to make her way through the door with the stroller before entering the post office. This customer then proceeds to line up behind you. Meanwhile, the person in front of you finishes with the post office staff and you go up to the counter to mail your parcel. In addition to getting the proper postage, you will need to fill out some paperwork for the parcel (e.g., contents and value of goods shipped, mailing address, etc.).*



**This is Sarah, a 22 years old female. She enjoys watching TV and eating fast food.**

**Norm Violation Present x Adversity Present – Unjustified condition:**

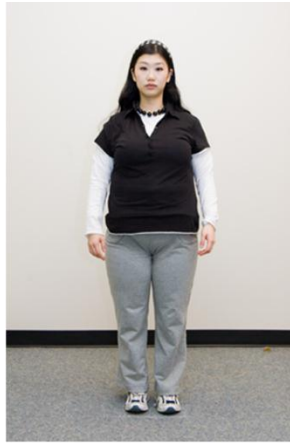
*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting in line to mail a parcel at the post office. While you wait, you notice a customer heading out of the post office holding the door open for a woman who is coming into the post office with a baby in stroller. You also notice that another customer (shown below) who arrived at the same time as the woman decides to cut in front of her while she is making her way through the door with the stroller. This customer then proceeds to line up behind you. Meanwhile, the person in front of you finishes with the post office staff and you go up to the counter to mail your parcel. In addition to getting the proper postage, you will need to fill out some paperwork for the parcel (e.g., contents and value of goods shipped, mailing address, etc.).*



**This is Sarah, a 22 years old female. She enjoys exercising and eating healthy food. She has a medical disorder that causes weight gain.**

**Norm Violation Absent x Adversity Present – Unjustified condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting in line to mail a parcel at the post office. While you wait, you notice a customer heading out of the post office holding the door open for a woman who is coming into the post office with a baby in stroller. You also notice that another customer (shown below) who arrived at the same time as the woman waits for her to make her way through the door with the stroller before entering the post office. This customer then proceeds to line up behind you. Meanwhile, the person in front of you finishes with the post office staff and you go up to the counter to mail your parcel. In addition to getting the proper postage, you will need to fill out some paperwork for the parcel (e.g., contents and value of goods shipped, mailing address, etc.).*



**This is Sarah, a 22 years old female. She enjoys exercising and eating healthy food. She has a medical disorder that causes weight gain.**

## Study 6: Scenarios

**Instructions:** Please read the scenario below very carefully. After you have read the scenario, please close your eyes and take a few minutes to imagine yourself in this situation. Think about what you would do, what you would think and how you would feel.

### **Norm Violation Present – Innocent x Consumer Punisher condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting to board a flight at the airport. The airline staff begins the boarding process and passengers gather around the gate. Because there were no clearly formed lines, a fellow passenger accidentally cuts in front of you without realizing it. You verbally scold the passenger for cutting in line. You then go onto the plane, find your seat, and put your carry-on luggage away.*

### **Norm Violation Present – Innocent x Employee Punisher condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting to board a flight at the airport. The airline staff begins the boarding process and passengers gather around the gate. Because there are no clearly formed lines, a fellow passenger accidentally cuts in front of you without realizing it. An airline staff sees this and verbally scolds the passenger for cutting in line. You then go onto the plane, find your seat, and put your carry-on luggage away.*

### **Norm Violation Present – Implicit x Consumer Punisher condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting to board a flight at the airport. The airline staff begins the boarding process and passengers gather around the gate. A line is formed but a fellow passenger decides to cut in front of you. You verbally scold the passenger for cutting in line. You then go onto the plane, find your seat, and put your carry-on luggage away.*

### **Norm Violation Present – Implicit x Employee Punisher condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting to board a flight at the airport. The airline staff begins the boarding process and passengers gather around the gate. A line is formed but a fellow passenger decides to cut in front of you. An airline staff sees this and verbally scolds the passenger for cutting in line. You then go onto the plane, find your seat, and put your carry-on luggage away.*

**Norm Violation Present – Explicit x Consumer Punisher condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting to board a flight at the airport. The airline staff begins the boarding process and passengers gather around the gate. The airline staff asks the passengers to wait in line, a line is formed, but a fellow passenger decides to cut in front of you. You verbally scold the passenger for cutting in line. You then go onto the plane, find your seat, and put your carry-on luggage away.*

**Norm Violation Present – Explicit x Employee Punisher condition:**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting to board a flight at the airport. The airline staff begins the boarding process and passengers gather around the gate. The airline staff asks the passengers to wait in line, a line is formed, but a fellow passenger decides to cut in front of you. An airline staff sees this and verbally scolds the passenger for cutting in line. You then go onto the plane, find your seat, and put your carry-on luggage away.*

**Control – Norm Violation Absent**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting to board a flight at the airport. The airline staff begins the boarding process and passengers gather around the gate. The passengers lined up normally. You then go onto the plane, find your seat, and put your carry-on luggage away.*

**Control – Norm Violation Present No Punishment**

*Imagine it is a weekday afternoon and you are waiting to board a flight at the airport. The airline staff begins the boarding process and passengers gather around the gate. A line is formed, but a fellow passenger decides to cut in front of you. You then go onto the plane, find your seat, and put your carry-on luggage away.*

## Examples of Survey Questions

**Instructions:** The following questions refer to your thoughts and feelings about the scenario you just read. There are no right or wrong answers so please answer as honestly as possible.

If the passenger you encountered left his gloves at the security check, how likely are you to return them to this person?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NOT AT ALL LIKELY						VERY LIKELY

If you see this passenger was trying to catch the elevator with his luggage, how likely are you to hold the elevator for this person?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NOT AT ALL LIKELY						VERY LIKELY

If you see this passenger drop his cellphone on the floor, how likely are you to let him know?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NOT AT ALL LIKELY						VERY LIKELY

If you see this passenger later walking around with a piece of toilet paper stuck to his foot, how likely are you to point this out to him?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NOT AT ALL LIKELY						VERY LIKELY

**Thinking about the scenario you just read, please circle the appropriate number on the scales below to indicate how you would feel while you stood in line at the airport security check:**

Not at all annoyed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very annoyed
Not at all frustrated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very frustrated
Not at all angry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very angry



Please tell us a bit more about yourself by answering the following questions:

What is your gender?        F \_\_\_\_\_        M \_\_\_\_\_

How old are you?        \_\_\_\_\_

What country were you born in?: \_\_\_\_\_.

If you were not born in Canada, how old were you when you moved to Canada? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_

What language is most commonly spoken at home with your family? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think the purpose of this study was?

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