

SERVICE EMPLOYEES' REACTIONS TO MISTREATMENT BY CUSTOMERS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN NORTH AMERICA AND EAST ASIA

RUODAN SHAO

City University of Hong Kong

DANIEL P. SKARLICKI

University of British Columbia

The authors proposed that customer service employees' reactions to mistreatment by customers can vary between North American and East Asian employees due to differences in their cultural values. Customer mistreatment was predicted to be associated with direct, active, and target-specific reactions (i.e., sabotage directed toward the source of mistreatment) more so among North American employees as compared to East Asian employees. In contrast, customer mistreatment was predicted to relate to more indirect, passive, and target-general reactions (i.e., withdraw organizational citizenship behavior directed toward customers in general) among employees in East Asia as compared to employees in North America. A field study of customer service employees ($N = 213$) working in the same hotel chain in China and Canada found support for these predictions. Mediation analyses showed that individualism and collectivism accounted for these differences. Theoretical and practical implications are provided, and future directions are discussed.

Customer mistreatment, defined as employees' perceptions of "low-quality interpersonal treatment employees receive from their customers" (Wang, Liao, Zhan, & Shi, 2011, p. 312), can be an everyday occurrence

This research was conducted as part of Ruodan Shao's doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Daniel P. Skarlicki at the University of British Columbia. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2011 Academy of Management conference, San Antonio, Texas.

This research was supported by grants from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada awarded to both authors as well as the Inter-University Research Centre on Globalization and Work (CRIMT) Studentship and International Exchange Fund awarded to Ruodan Shao. The authors thank Maria L. Kraimer and the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments on the earlier versions of our manuscript. We appreciate the helpful suggestions from Kwok Leung, Mo Wang, and D. Lance Ferris on drafts of this paper.

Correspondence and requests for reprints should be addressed to Ruodan Shao, Department of Management, College of Business, City University of Hong Kong, 83 Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon, Hong Kong; ruodan.shao@cityu.edu.hk.

for service employees in many parts of the world (Glomb, 2002; Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004; Grandey, Kern, & Frone, 2007; Judge, Woolf, & Hurst, 2009; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1990). Although customer mistreatment has been shown to take an emotional toll on employees (Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Grandey et al., 2004; Kern & Grandey, 2009; van Jaarsveld, Walker, & Skarlicki, 2010), surprisingly few studies have explored how employees respond behaviorally to being mistreated by customers. In one study, Grandey et al. (2004) found that customer mistreatment was associated with employee absence. Other research has shown that customer mistreatment related positively to employees' customer-directed sabotage, defined as service employees' dysfunctional behaviors with the intention to harm the customers by creating delays in service process, destructing the customer-employee relationship, and potentially lowering customer service quality (e.g., hanging up the phone; purposefully transferring the customer to the wrong department; Skarlicki, van Jaarsveld, & Walker, 2008; Wang et al., 2011).

Scholars and practitioners, however, cannot assume that employees from different countries react similarly to customer mistreatment (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006; Tsui, Nifadkar, & Ou, 2007; Yang & Diefendorff, 2009). As globalization increases, more companies are managing employees in more than one country (Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007). East Asia in particular is an important region for study because the number of companies in East Asia that are running operations in North America and vice versa are growing rapidly (Chen & Miller, 2010; Poon & Thompson, 2003).

The primary contribution of this research is to expand understanding of how employees from different countries react behaviorally to customer mistreatment. We based our research on an integration of conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and cross-cultural theory (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Triandis, 1995). COR theory suggests that customer mistreatment can provide a source of stress for service employees, resulting in them experiencing resource loss. In response to such loss, employees take steps to replenish or conserve their resources, which have important implications for how they react to customer mistreatment. Cross-cultural theory proposes that individuals in North America and East Asia differ in terms of individualistic and collectivistic values (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Triandis, 1995). These differences can influence how employees behave in response to stressors such as customer mistreatment. Individualists (e.g., North Americans) emphasize uniqueness, self-expression, and self-autonomy, and are more likely to choose direct and active coping strategies to deal with workplace stress (Cross, 1995; Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984). Collectivists (e.g., East

Asians), in contrast, tend to use indirect and passive coping strategies to deal with stress at work and in life (Hwang, 1978; Yang, 1986).

Integrating COR theory and cross-cultural research, we theorized that North American employees are more likely to react to customer mistreatment in relatively direct, active, and target-specific ways (e.g., sabotage the customer who mistreated them) as compared to East Asian employees. East Asian employees, in contrast, are more likely to react to customer mistreatment in indirect, passive, and target-general ways (e.g., withdraw citizenship behavior directed toward customers in general) as compared to North American employees. Citizenship behavior toward the customer (OCBC) refers to the tendency for front-line employees to go above and beyond the call of duty to provide customer service (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997). To support our theoretical explanations for why East Asian and North American employees differ in their behavioral reactions to mistreatment by customers, we tested whether differences in employees' cultural values accounted for these differences.

This research has important implications for both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, by integrating COR theory with cross-cultural theory, we can potentially add greater precision in predicting how employees in different countries and cultures react behaviorally to customer mistreatment. This integration has not been explored in prior research. From a practical perspective, customer mistreatment appears to be on the rise in North America (Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Grandey et al., 2007; Rupp & Spencer, 2006) and Asia (Wang et al., 2011). The possibility that employees from different countries and cultures react differently to customer mistreatment has important implications for managers of multinational service companies and managers of service companies with a diverse workforce. Service sabotage (e.g., hanging up on a customer), for instance, tends to have an immediate and acute impact on the affected customer, resulting in him or her contacting management to complain and/or seek repair for the damage to service quality (Harris & Ogbonna, 2006). Withholding citizenship, in contrast, is not always or immediately detected by either the customer or management because employees often still perform their basic in-role duties but resist doing anything extra, which can significantly erode customer service (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997). Although both types of reactions can have negative implications for customer service, the latter is harder to detect, making it more difficult to manage and subsequently repair (Blancero, Johnson, & Lakshman, 1996). To the degree that differences exist in employees' reactions, it is important for scientists and managers to understand the factors that predict these reactions.

*Theoretical Background and Hypotheses**Customer Mistreatment and COR Theory*

We drew upon COR theory to explain reactions to customer mistreatment for at least two reasons. First, customer mistreatment can provide a considerable source of stress for service employees (Grandey et al., 2004). Second, COR theory provides an integrated theory of stress that, as we explain below, can be meaningfully integrated with cross-cultural theory to help explain employees' behavioral reactions to stress. According to COR theory, employees bring a host of resources with them to work, defined as "objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, and energies" (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). Resources can include such things as self-esteem, pride in one's work and oneself (personal characteristics resources), and energy, time, skills and knowledge (energy resources). Workplace stressors can contribute to resource loss or depletion (Hobfoll, 2001, 2002). Feelings of job insecurity, for instance, can threaten employees' personal characteristics resources (e.g., self-worth, self-esteem; Konig, Debus, Hausler, Lendenmann, & Kleinmann, 2010). A central tenet of COR theory is that the potential or actual loss of these valued resources can be highly threatening to individuals, and in response, people take efforts to replenish resources or minimize the potential loss of resources.

The employee–customer interaction offers numerous opportunities for resource gain or loss. Although customers' expressions of gratitude or acknowledgement of employees' good service can enhance service employees' self-esteem and sense of self-worth, mistreatment from customers (e.g., yelling at employees, unreasonable criticism to employees, inappropriate comments to employees) can significantly lower service employees' self-esteem and sense of self-worth (Dormann & Zapf, 2004). Consistent with empirical research showing that interpersonal mistreatment can negatively impact individuals' feelings of self-worth and self-esteem (e.g., Burton & Hoobler, 2006; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Oates, Forrest, & Peacock, 1985; Spratlen, 1995), we propose that customer mistreatment can reduce service employees' personal characteristic resources (i.e., self-esteem and sense of self-worth).

According to COR theory, when faced with possible resource loss, individuals tend to react in two primary ways: (a) by taking steps to compensate for the lost resources (resource replacement), and (b) by minimizing any potential or further loss of resources (resource protection) (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). We considered that these two reactions can be meaningfully represented by employees (a) engaging in sabotage toward

the customers who mistreated them to restore self-esteem and self-worth as a way to directly replace lost self-esteem and self-worth (i.e., resource replacement), and (b) withholding citizenship behavior from customers in general to conserve or prevent further loss of resources (resource protection), respectively. Employees' reactions to resource loss, however, can occur as a function of culture.

Cross-Cultural Theory

Culture has been defined as the commonly shared meanings and assumptions of the individuals with similar life experiences and education background (Hofstede, 2001). Numerous culture dimensions have emerged. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), for instance, proposed five dimensions: (a) *individualism–collectivism*, regarding whether individuals' identities are formed through individual accomplishments or through group identification; (b) *uncertainty avoidance*, referring to the extent that individuals are comfortable with ambiguity; (c) *power distance*, concerning the extent that individuals accept the unequal distribution of power in different hierarchical levels; (d) *masculinity–femininity*, concerning differing values pertaining to, for example, an emphasis on competition versus quality of life; and (e) *long- versus short-term orientation*, referring to a future perspective associated with four Confucian values (i.e., persistence, ordering relationships by status, thrift, and having a sense of shame).

Other cultural dimensions have also been proposed. Schwartz (2008), for example, presented seven cultural values on which individuals can vary: (a) *embeddedness*, (b) *intellectual autonomy*, (c) *affective autonomy*, (d) *hierarchy*, (e) *egalitarianism*, (f) *mastery*, and (g) *harmony* (Schwartz, 2008). The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) research team reported evidence of nine cultural dimensions: (a) *power distance*, (b) *uncertainty avoidance*, (c) *humane orientation*, (d) *institutional collectivism*, (e) *in-group collectivism*, (f) *assertiveness*, (g) *gender egalitarianism*, (h) *future orientation*, and (i) *performance orientation* (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). Considerable overlap exists across these three cultural value typologies. All three typologies include values related to individualism and individual autonomy, identification with groups, and respect for authority. These typologies also differ from one another and make unique contribution to the cross-cultural literature. Although Hofstede's typology serves as the basis of the prevailing cultural theories and typologies and has been widely adopted in prior cross-cultural research, Schwartz's typology further includes the relationships between human beings and the national and social environment, and GLOBE's typology is particularly relevant for studying leadership,

organizational effectiveness, and economic competitiveness of societies (Shi & Wang, 2011).

We focused on individualism and collectivism in this research because of their strong theoretical relevance with COR theory and our predictor and criterion variables of interest. Specifically, individualistic and collectivistic values can help explain why individuals in one country might react differently to workplace stressors as compared to those in another country. In the face of workplace stressors such as resource loss, people with more individualistic values will be more likely to directly, proactively, and target-specifically restore lost resources (resource replacement). In contrast, people with more collectivistic values are more likely to indirectly, passively, and target-generally cope with resource loss (resource protection). Consistent with prior research (Brockner, 2003; Brockner et al., 2001; Leung, 1989), our theoretical arguments, hypothesis development, and subsequent hypothesis testing all focus on the individual level of analysis (i.e., both country and cultural values were measured at the individual level). Taking this more fine-grained approach to studying cultural differences, we treat individualism and collectivism as two theoretically distinct constructs. Although some cross-cultural researchers have equated high collectivism with low individualism (e.g., Hui & Au, 2001), writers have argued that, at the individual level, individualism and collectivism should be conceptualized as two orthogonal dimensions of cultural values and that these two constructs should be examined separately (e.g., Triandis & Suh, 2002; Xie, Roy, & Chen, 2006).

Customer Mistreatment and Sabotage Toward the Customers Who Mistreated Employees

As discussed earlier, customer mistreatment can result in resource loss in terms of reduced self-esteem and self-worth among service employees (Dormann & Zapf, 2004). According to COR theory, when dealing with loss of self-esteem and self-worth, individuals can utilize remaining resources (e.g., time, energy, skills, knowledge) to restore self-esteem and self-worth to accomplish resource replacement. Hobfoll (1989, 2001) proposed that people tend to employ lower ordered resources (e.g., time, energy) to obtain higher ordered and more highly prized resources (e.g., self-esteem, social status, power). Thus, when faced with customer mistreatment and the resultant loss of self-esteem and self-worth, service employees are likely to invest time and energy to sabotage the customers who mistreated them as a way to replace and regain self-esteem and self-worth, which are of greater importance to them.

Considerable theory and research supports this contention. Crino (1994) argued that the primary aim of sabotage is to establish or enhance

feelings of self-worth. Through sabotage, self-esteem and self-worth can be defended, restored, and replenished because service employees make the transgressors get what they deserve: punishment for what they have committed (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Schreer, 2002). Bobocel and Zdaniuk (2010) found that interpersonal mistreatment threatened a victim's self-esteem, and the victim tends to retaliate toward the source of mistreatment to restore self-esteem. Harris and Ogbonna (2006) similarly reported that enhanced self-esteem was a consequence of service sabotage. Last, Ferris, Spence, Brown, and Heller (2012) found that self-esteem mediated the relationship between interpersonal mistreatment and the victim's deviant behaviors toward the source of mistreatment. Taken together, we proposed that in the face of customer mistreatment, service employees are likely to engage in sabotage toward the customers who mistreated them to directly replace lost self-esteem and self-worth.

Hypothesis 1: Customer mistreatment relates positively to service employees' sabotage toward the customers who mistreated them.

Sabotage Reaction as a Function of Country and Culture

We propose, however, that the relationship between customer mistreatment and sabotage can differ among employees from different countries due to differences in individuals' cultural values, namely, individualism. According to Hofstede (2001), people with high (vs. low) individualistic values prioritize personal rights and feelings over their duties or obligations toward others, and emphasize self-autonomy and self-fulfillment. Individualists tend to view themselves as relatively independent from the social collective and emphasize personal interests and goals over group interests and goals. Their behavior is determined largely by their own attitudes and feelings rather than the behavioral norms established in the group (Triandis, 2001). In addition, individualists emphasize uniqueness and self-expression, and they tend to utilize direct and active coping strategies to deal with workplace stress, including confronting another person or speaking up when one's opinion differs from others (Cross, 1995; Weisz et al., 1984). These direct and active coping strategies to stress can often be viewed as interpersonally aggressive and antisocial in nature (Dunahoo, Hobfoll, Monnier, Hulsizer, & Johnson, 1998).

Moreover, individualists tend to hold an analytic view of the world and they see objects, things, and people as separate and independent from each other rather than as connected and related entities (Choi, Koo, & Choi, 2007; Munro, 1985; Nakamura, 1985 [1964]; Needham, 1962). This perspective can impact individualists' attention, attribution, categorization,

and memory (Choi & Nisbett, 1998; Chua, Boland, & Nisbett, 2005; Masuda & Nisbett, 2001). In the face of customer mistreatment, service employees high (vs. low) on individualism are more likely to separate the customer who mistreated them from those customers who treated them well. Thus, their attention, attribution, and memory will be drawn toward an individual or a specific customer (e.g., a customer who mistreated them) rather than to customers in general.

Research also suggests that affect-laden events can trigger behaviors that reflect an individual's cultural norms (van den Bos, Poortvliet, Mass, Miedema, & van den Ham, 2005). Thus, when confronted with customer mistreatment and the resultant loss of self-esteem and self-worth, service employees high (vs. low) on individualism are likely to heighten their individualistic tendencies, which triggers more direct, active, and target-specific reactions (e.g., sabotage) to replace and regain self-esteem and self-worth (Bobocel & Zdaniuk, 2010; Crossley, 2009).

On the basis of these arguments, we expected that the strength of the association between customer mistreatment and sabotage toward the customers who mistreated employees is stronger among employees high versus low on individualism. According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), people in East Asia (e.g., China) in general are lower on individualism as compared to people in North America (e.g., Canada). Thus, we predicted that:

Hypothesis 2: Country moderates the positive relationship between customer mistreatment and sabotage such that the mistreatment–sabotage relationship is stronger among employees in Canada than among employees in China.

Our theory underlying Hypothesis 2 is that the mistreatment–sabotage linkage differs in terms of strength because individuals in Canada and China differ on individualistic values, and that people high (vs. low) on individualism tend to react to workplace stress in a more direct, active, and target-specific fashion. In statistical terms, this explanatory variable (i.e., mediator) is represented by the interaction term of customer mistreatment and individualism, which is proposed to account for the interaction of country and customer mistreatment on sabotage. In terms of a formal hypothesis, we predicted that:

Hypothesis 3: Individualism moderates the positive relationship between customer mistreatment and sabotage such that the relationship is stronger among employees high versus low on individualism (a) and the interaction of individualism and customer mistreatment accounts

for (i.e., mediates) the interaction effect of country and customer mistreatment on sabotage (b).

Customer Mistreatment and Citizenship Behavior Toward Customers in General

As discussed earlier, in order to deal with resource loss, employees can also look for ways to preserve and prevent further loss of their valued resources (resource protection; Hobfoll, 1989). One way to conserve resources is to withhold citizenship behaviors from customers (OCBC). Withholding OCBC refers to service employees choosing not to put extra efforts and time in providing exceptional service to customers, which is theoretically distinct from work withdrawal (i.e., reduce efforts in in-role duties; Hanisch & Hulin, 1991).

Researchers have long argued that in order for employees to engage in both in-role and extra-role behaviors at work, they often need to invest a sizable amount of resources (Binnewies, Sonnentag, & Mojza, 2009). According to Hobfoll (1989), individuals take efforts to minimize potential resource loss especially when their resource protection process is challenged. Thus, when employees face a threat of resource loss, they can become careful about how they use their remaining resources (Siegall & McDonald, 2004) and refrain from engaging in actions that expend further resources. Thus, in the face of customer mistreatment, service employees are likely to withdraw OCBC in order to prevent further expenses of resources.

König et al. (2010), for instance, found that when employees faced a threat of resource loss (i.e., job insecurity), they reduced their extra-role behaviors as a way to minimize any further resource loss. Similarly, Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) reported that, amid resource loss (i.e., emotional exhaustion), employees were less likely to engage in citizenship behavior toward the organization. Porath and Erez (2007) reported that when being mistreated by a transgressor, the victim tend to withdraw/reduce discretionary helping behaviors not only toward the transgressor but also to people who were not associated with the transgressor (see also Tepper, 2000; Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). Taken together, we expected that in the face of customer mistreatment service employees are likely to reduce their citizenship behaviors toward customers in general as a way to conserve resources and minimize resource loss.

Hypothesis 4: Customer mistreatment relates negatively to service employees' citizenship behavior toward customers in general.

OCBC Reaction as a Function of Country and Culture

We expected, however, that the negative relationship between customer mistreatment and OCBC occurs as a function of service employees' collectivistic values. According to Hofstede (2001), people with collectivistic values tend to prioritize group over personal interests and are willing to sacrifice their personal interest when there is a conflict between personal and group goals (Chen, Brockner, & Chen, 2002). In collectivistic cultures, "individual wishes and goals are subordinated to group goals, direct coping strategies can be viewed as immature or selfish and can threaten harmony in relationships" (Cross, 1995, p. 676; see also Bond, Wan, Leung, & Giacalone, 1985). Indeed, considerable empirical research shows that people high (vs. low) on collectivism emphasize harmony and close alignment in interpersonal relationships, and they instead tend to use indirect and passive coping strategies to deal with stress at work and in life (Hwang, 1978; Yang, 1986). Thus, when confronted with mistreatment by customers, service employees high (vs. low) on collectivism are more likely to use indirect and passive coping strategies because they value interpersonal harmony and try to avoid interpersonal conflicts.

In addition, research shows that collectivists hold a holistic assumption of the world, and they believe that all objects in the world are somehow connected with one another, as opposed to being independent elements (Choi et al., 2007; Munro, 1985; Nakamura, 1985 [1964]; Needham, 1962). Such holistic cognitive approach can determine collectivists' attention, attribution, and categorization (Chua et al., 2005; Choi & Nisbett, 1998). Thus, service employees high (vs. low) on collectivism are relatively more likely to consider customers as a group (vs. independent individuals) and, in the face of customer mistreatment, their reactions are more likely to target customers as a group rather than targeting an individual customer.

Taken together, in the face of customer mistreatment and the resultant resource loss, service employees high (vs. low) on collectivism are likely to take a more indirect, less confrontational, and target-general reaction. Thus, the association between customer mistreatment and OCBC is expected to be stronger among employees high (vs. low) on collectivism. Building on research showing that people in East Asia (e.g., China) in general are higher on collectivism as compared to people in North America (e.g., Canada), we proposed that:

Hypothesis 5: Country moderates the negative relationship between customer mistreatment and citizenship behavior toward customers in general such that the mistreatment–OCBC relationship is stronger among employees in China than among employees in Canada.

Our theory underlying Hypothesis 5 is that the mistreatment–OCBC linkage differs in terms of strength because individuals in China and Canada differ on collectivistic values, and people high (vs. low) on collectivism differ in their reactions to stress at work and in life. In statistical terms, this explanatory variable (i.e., mediator) is represented by the interaction term of customer mistreatment and collectivism, which accounts for the interactive effect of country and customer mistreatment on OCBC. In terms of a formal hypothesis, we predicted that:

Hypothesis 6: Collectivism moderates the negative relationship between customer mistreatment and OCBC such that the relationship is stronger among employees high versus low on collectivism (a), and the interaction of collectivism and customer mistreatment explains (i.e., mediates) the interaction effect of country and customer mistreatment on OCBC (b).

Method

Participants

We conducted a field study of 213 front-line employees working in two hotels operated by the same international hotel chain in two cities in China ($n = 132$) and Canada ($n = 81$). We selected China and Canada as the focal countries because they represent cultures in East Asia and North America respectively and have been shown to differ on individualism/collectivism (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Triandis, 1995). Both cities are relatively large metropolitan centers that attract national and international travelers. The hotel chain is categorized as a luxury brand catering to high-end business travelers and tourists (Kim & Kim, 2005) and aiming to provide high quality customer service.

Paper surveys were administered to customer service employees on site. We sampled only employees who dealt face-to-face with customers on a regular basis as part of their job, such as front desk receptionists and restaurant servers. The response rate in the hotel in China was 51% (132 out of a total of 259 service employees). The response rate in the hotel in Canada was 65% (81 out of a total of 125 service employees). Among the Chinese participants, 84 (64%) were female, their average age was 26.08 years ($SD = 4.46$), and their average tenure was 2.86 years ($SD = 3.76$). Of the Canadian participants, 42 (52%) were female, their average age was 36.85 years ($SD = 10.05$), and their average tenure was 5.70 years ($SD = 3.96$). We excluded eight respondents who were not born or who had not grown up in Canada from the Canadian sample. Thus, in the

final sample ($N = 213$) all the Chinese and Canadian participants were born and raised in their native country. The HR directors in both hotels confirmed that these demographics were representative of their customer service workforce.

Measures

Customer mistreatment. We used the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) to develop a behavioral measure of customer mistreatment because (a) no customer mistreatment scales existed that reflected the mistreatment from customers in a service setting involving face-to-face interactions with customers; and (b) research supports that this technique generates content-valid measures of behavior (Levine, Ash, Hall, & Sistrunk, 1983).

First, we conducted two focus groups of four subject matter experts (i.e., front desk receptionists and restaurant servers) in both hotels. We asked focus group participants to provide us with specific examples of customer mistreatment. This process generated 15 incidents in total (see Appendix A). We eliminated duplicate incidents as well as incidents that were not reported by the focus group participants in both countries. One incident that emerged in Canada, for instance, customers “did not give you the chance to help,” was dropped because it was not reported in the Chinese focus groups. This process reduced the total to eight incidents. We rewrote the eight incidents into a behavioral scale and administered the scale in our survey. The responses ranged from 1 = *never* to 5 = *frequently*. We then analyzed the data using principle component analysis with a varimax rotation. We eliminated three items because they cross-loaded onto more than one factor. Following guidelines for item retention by Haire, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006), the remaining five items (see Appendix A) formed one factor in each cultural group (with an eigenvalue > 1) accounting for 62.24% of the variance among Canadian sample and 60.65% of the variance among Chinese sample. The items were averaged, with larger numbers indicating higher (vs. lower) levels of customer mistreatment.

Sabotage toward the customers who mistreated employees. We used the same technique described above to develop a behavioral measure of sabotage toward the customers who mistreated employees in a hotel context. The focus group participants were asked to describe specific behavioral examples of how they dealt with the customer mistreatment. This process generated 17 incidents in total (see Appendix B). We selected six items based on two criteria: (a) they fit our definition of service sabotage presented above and (b) they were reported by our subject matter experts in both hotels. We rewrote the six items into a behavioral scale

and administered the measure in our survey. The responses ranged from 1 = *never* to 5 = *frequently*. Principle component analysis with a varimax rotation resulted in two items being eliminated because they cross-loaded onto more than one factor. We removed one additional item ("asked your colleagues to withdraw from providing high quality service to the guest [who mistreated you]") because it captured both the focal employee and coworker sabotage. The screen plot revealed that the remaining three items (see Appendix B) loaded on one factor (eigenvalue > 1) in each cultural group and accounted for 67.10% of the variance in the Chinese sample and 70.66% of the variance in the Canadian sample (Haire et al., 2006). We averaged the three items to form the measure. Participants who served in focus groups did not participate in the survey.

Customer-oriented citizenship behavior (OCBC). We used an established five-item scale developed by Bettencourt and Brown (1997) to assess participants' OCBC. Sample items included "I voluntarily assist guests even if it means going beyond job requirements" and "I help guests with problems beyond what is expected or required." The responses ranged from 1 = *never* to 7 = *always*. We averaged the items to form the index of this variable.

We used established measures of cultural values with proven psychometric properties in North American and non-North American countries. For both cultural values, the items were averaged to form the measure.

Individualism. We used Triandis and Gelfand's (1998) eight-item scale to assess participants' individualism. Participants were asked to circle the extent to which they agree with the eight statements. Sample items included "I'd rather depend on myself than others" and "My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me." The responses ranged from 1 = *never or definitely no* to 9 = *always or definitely yes*.

Collectivism. Triandis and Gelfand's (1998) eight-item scale was used to assess participants' collectivism. Participants were asked to circle the extent to which they agree with the eight statements. Sample items included "It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups" and "It is my duty to take care of family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want." The responses ranged from 1 = *never or definitely no* to 9 = *always or definitely yes*.

Country. Country was coded as a dummy variable (China = 0, Canada = 1), and the dummy code for country was assigned to each participant.

Control variables. We controlled for participants' age, gender, tenure, workload, negative affectivity, and power distance in our study. Age has been shown to be negatively associated with sabotage behaviors (Skarlicki et al., 2008). Men tend to be more likely to engage in sabotage than female employees (Fry, 1998). Tenure has been found to relate negatively with sabotage (Sims, 2002). Workload has been shown to be positively related

to negative behaviors (Chen & Spector, 1992). Workload was assessed as employees' self-reported number of guests served per day. Employees high (vs. low) on negative affectivity are more likely to engage in negative behaviors at work (Penney & Spector, 2005). Moreover, multiple self-reported measures can raise concerns about common method bias. Following Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), to help address this concern, we controlled for negative affectivity in the analyses. We used the Multidimensional Personality Index (Agho, Price, & Mueller, 1992; Watson & Clark, 1984) to measure negative affectivity. Last, to ensure that our effects are not explained by cross-cultural differences in employees' deference to power, we controlled for employees' power distance values. We used Brockner et al.'s (2001) five-item scale to assess participants' power distance.

Procedures

We followed the translation and back translation techniques (Brislin, 1970) to translate the survey into Chinese and administered a paper version of the survey (i.e., Chinese version in China and English version in Canada) to front-line employees in both hotels with the assistance from the HR directors. Participants completed the survey during their work breaks in a designated conference room in the hotel. All participants were assured anonymity and that the data would be used for research purposes only. None of the hotel managers were present in the conference room during data collection.

Results

We first conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to examine whether customer mistreatment, sabotage, and OCBC were distinct constructs in each cultural group. As shown in Table 1, among Chinese participants the three-factor model fit the data better than the other alternative models. Similarly, among Canadian participants the three-factor model fit the data better than the other alternative models. These results revealed that customer mistreatment, sabotage, and OCBC were distinct constructs in each cultural group.

We next conducted multigroup CFA to check the measurement equivalence of the customer mistreatment, sabotage, and OCBC scales across two cultural groups. Following procedures recommended by Vandenberg and Lance (2000), we first tested the configural invariance (i.e., equivalent factor structure) of the measures between the Chinese and Canadian samples. The results showed a good fit to data ($\chi^2 = 207.32$, $df = 124$, CFI = .93, NFI = .89, GFI = .90, RMSEA = .04). We then checked for metric

TABLE 1
Baseline Models of Customer Mistreatment, Sabotage, and OCBC in Both Samples

Variables	χ^2	df	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Canadian sample					
3-factor model	100.56	62	.90	.89	.06
2-factor model (mistreatment as one factor, and sabotage and OCBC as another factor)	172.54	64	.82	.74	.15
2-factor model (mistreatment and sabotage as one factor, OCBC as another factor)	145.83	64	.86	.78	.13
1-factor model	240.23	65	.71	.64	.18
Chinese sample					
3-factor model	84.55	62	.97	.91	.04
2-factor model (mistreatment as one factor, and sabotage and OCBC as another factor)	230.14	64	.76	.70	.14
2-factor model (mistreatment and sabotage as one factor, OCBC as another factor)	159.61	64	.86	.79	.11
1-factor model	398.47	65	.51	.48	.20

Note. CFI = comparative fit index (CFI values greater than .90 indicate good fit). NFI = Bentler–Bonett normed fit index (NFI values greater than .90 indicate good fit). RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA values equal to or less than .05 indicate good fit. RMSEA values between .05 and .08 indicate fair fit; RMSEA values between .08 and .10 indicate mediocre fit). OCBC = Customer-oriented citizenship behavior.

invariance (i.e., equivalent factor loadings) across the two groups. The results similarly showed a good fit to data ($\chi^2 = 236.20$, $df = 134$, CFI = .92, NFI = .87, GFI = .88, RMSEA = .05). In short, all three measures demonstrated configural and metric equivalence between the Chinese and Canadian samples.

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and t -test results of between-country mean differences of the study variables in China versus Canada. As shown, employees in Canada scored relatively higher in individualism, and employees in China scored relatively higher in collectivism. Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability estimates of the study variables.

Hypothesis 1 stated that customer mistreatment relates positively to sabotage, and Hypothesis 2 stated that country moderates the customer mistreatment and sabotage relationship such that this relationship is stronger among employees in Canada than among employees in China. We conducted hierarchical regression analysis to simultaneously test these two hypotheses. We standardized all the continuous predictors before

TABLE 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test Results of Between-Country Mean Differences of All Study Variables Among Participants in Canada Versus China

Variables	Canada [<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)]	China [<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)]	<i>t</i> -test
Age	36.85 (10.05)	26.08 (4.46)	-10.72***
Tenure (months)	68.40 (47.58)	34.34 (45.14)	-5.24***
Workload	44.04 (40.50)	57.36 (47.43)	2.10*
Negative affectivity	3.02 (.75)	2.66 (.78)	-3.34**
Customer mistreatment	2.04 (.78)	1.93 (.71)	-1.09
Individualism	6.44 (1.21)	5.57 (1.33)	-4.80***
Collectivism	5.09 (2.01)	7.15 (1.32)	9.01***
Power distance	2.72 (.84)	3.20 (.69)	4.54***
OCBC	5.41 (.91)	5.05 (1.16)	-2.38*
Sabotage	2.01 (.90)	1.68 (.62)	-3.14**

Note. $n = 81$ in Canada, $n = 132$ in China. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, *SD* = standard deviation.

creating the interaction term. We first entered all control variables in the regression equation. In the second and third steps, we entered the main effects of customer mistreatment, individualism, and country and the two-way interaction of customer mistreatment and country, respectively (Aiken & West, 1991). As shown in Table 4, customer mistreatment related positively to sabotage (see Step 2, $\beta = .41$, $p < .001$), and the two-way interaction of country and customer mistreatment on sabotage was significant (see Step 3A, $\beta = .14$, $p < .05$). Simple slope analyses revealed that the mistreatment-sabotage relationship was stronger among employees in Canada ($\beta = .51$, $p < .001$) than among employees in China ($\beta = .30$, $p < .001$). Figure 1 presents this two-way interaction. The results support Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Hypothesis 3a proposed that individualism moderates the relationship between customer mistreatment and sabotage such that the relationship is stronger among employees high versus low on individualism. We followed the same procedures explained above to test this hypothesis. As shown in Table 4, the two-way interaction of customer mistreatment and individualism was significant (see Step 3B, $\beta = .19$, $p < .01$). Simple slope analyses revealed that the association between customer mistreatment and sabotage was stronger among employees high ($\beta = .61$, $p < .001$) versus low ($\beta = .20$, $p < .05$) on individualism. Figure 2 presents this two-way interaction. The results support Hypothesis 3a.

Hypothesis 3b stated that the two-way interaction between customer mistreatment and individualism mediates the interactive effect of customer mistreatment and country on sabotage. We followed guidance from Baron and Kenny (1986) and previous cross-cultural research (Brockner et al., 2001; Brockner, Chen, Mannix, Leung, & Skarlicki, 2000; Kim & Leung,

TABLE 3
Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliability Estimates of Study Variables

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	30.18	8.82												
2. Tenure (months)	47.29	48.87	.52**											
3. Gender	.41	.49	.13	.11										
4. Workload	52.30	45.29	-.11	-.06	.04									
5. Negative affectivity	2.80	.79	-.01	.11	.04	-.03	(.86)							
6. Customer mistreatment	1.97	.73	-.07	.03	.04	-.07	.25**	(.83)						
7. Country	.38	.49	.59**	.34**	.12	-.14*	.22**	.08						
8. Individualism	5.90	1.35	.24**	.15*	.02	-.14*	.21**	.18**	.31**	(.82)				
9. Collectivism	6.37	1.90	-.23**	-.24**	-.06	.07	-.27**	-.24**	-.53**	-.17*	(.91)			
10. Power distance	3.01	.78	-.09	-.10	-.05	.03	-.13	-.20**	-.30**	-.19**	.39**	(.79)		
11. OCBC	5.19	1.08	.13	-.05	-.01	.09	-.08	-.48**	.16*	-.06	.15*	.01	(.90)	
12. Sabotage	1.81	.75	.02	.14*	.16*	-.00	.27**	.52**	.21**	.33**	-.37**	-.38**	-.23**	(.80)

Note. $N = 213$.
Internal reliability coefficients (alphas) appear in parentheses along the diagonal.
Gender was coded as 0 = *female*, 1 = *male*.
Country was coded as 0 = *China*, 1 = *Canada*.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 4
Regression Results for Hypothesis Testing (H1, H2, H3)

Variables	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3A		Step 3B		Step 3C	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Age	-.08	.06	-.11	.06	-.10	.06	-.09	.06	-.09	.06
Gender	.13*	.09	.12*	.08	.12*	.08	.11*	.08	.11*	.08
Tenure (months)	.11	.05	.09	.05	.09	.05	.05	.05	.05	.05
Workload	.01	.05	.06	.04	.05	.04	.05	.04	.05	.04
Negative affectivity	.21**	.05	.07	.04	.08	.04	.09	.04	.09	.04
Power distance	-.35***	.05	-.24***	.04	-.22***	.04	-.17**	.04	-.17**	.04
Customer mistreatment			.41***	.04	.35***	.06	.40***	.04	.40***	.06
Individualism			.19**	.04	.19**	.04	.24***	.04	.24***	.04
Country			.06	.11	.06	.11	.06	.11	.06	.11
Customer mistreatment $\times$ country					.14*	.09			.01	.09
Customer mistreatment $\times$ individualism							.19**	.05	.19**	.05
F	9.93***		16.82***		15.38***		17.04***		15.42***	
R ²	.22		.43		.44		.46		.46	
Adjusted R ²	.20		.40		.41		.43		.43	
ΔR^2			.20***		.01*		.03**		.03**	

Note. N = 213.
Gender was coded as 0 = female, 1 = male.
Country was coded as 0 = China, 1 = Canada.
Criterion variable was sabotage toward the customers who mistreated employees.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

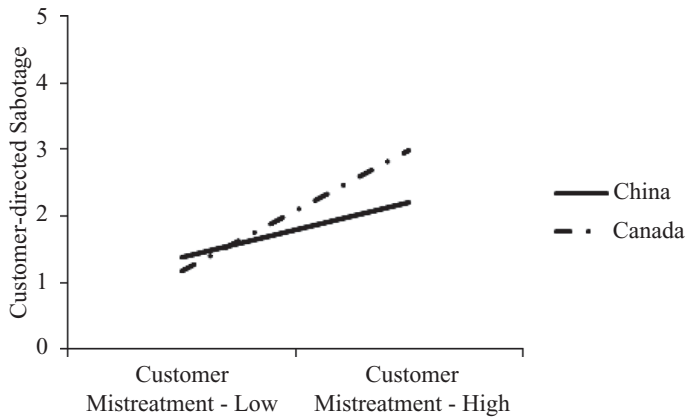


Figure 1: Two-Way Interaction of Country and Customer Mistreatment on Sabotage.

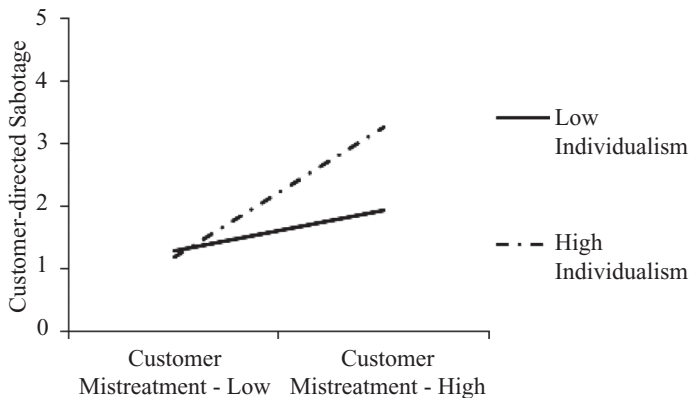


Figure 2: Two-Way Interaction of Individualism and Customer Mistreatment on Sabotage.

2007) to test for mediation effects. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), four criteria should be met to demonstrate mediation. First, employees in the two countries should differ in cultural values in theoretically expected ways. Second, country should interact with customer mistreatment to predict sabotage. Third, cultural values should interact with customer mistreatment in theorized ways to predict sabotage. Fourth, when entering the two-way interaction between country and customer mistreatment and the two-way interaction between cultural values and customer mistreatment simultaneously into the same regression equation, the former interaction term should become less or nonsignificant while the latter interaction

should remain significant. The first three criteria were met in the above analyses (see Tables 2 and 4 [Steps 3A and 3B]).

We tested the last criterion following the same procedures described earlier. As shown in Table 4, the two-way interaction of country and customer mistreatment became nonsignificant (see Step 3C, $\beta = .01$, $p > .05$) in the presence of the significant interaction between individualism and customer mistreatment (see Step 3C, $\beta = .19$, $p < .01$). Thus, all four criteria for mediation were met. To further test our hypothesis, we conducted indirect effect test using a bootstrapping technique developed by Preacher and colleagues (Hayes, 2009; Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008). We assessed the indirect effect and calculated the 95% bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap confidence interval around the indirect effect using 5,000 bootstrap resamples while controlling for all the control variables indicated above. Results revealed that the interaction of customer mistreatment and individualism mediated the interactive effect of customer mistreatment and country on sabotage (indirect effect = .10, 95% bias-corrected and accelerated CI = [.04, .21]). Taken together, the results support Hypothesis 3b.

Hypothesis 4 stated that customer mistreatment relates negatively to OCBC, and Hypothesis 5 proposed that country moderates this mistreatment–OCBC relationship such that this relationship is stronger among employees in China than among employees in Canada. We conducted hierarchical regression analysis to test these two hypotheses. As shown in Table 5, customer mistreatment related negatively to OCBC (see Step 2, $\beta = -.46$, $p < .001$), and the two-way interaction of country and customer mistreatment on OCBC was significant (see Step 3A, $\beta = .27$, $p < .01$). Simple slope analyses revealed that the mistreatment–OCBC relationship was stronger among employees in China ($\beta = -.63$, $p < .001$) than among employees in Canada ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .05$). Figure 3 presents this two-way interaction. Taken together, the results support Hypotheses 4 and 5.

Hypothesis 6a proposed that collectivism moderates the relationship between customer mistreatment and OCBC such that the relationship is stronger among employees high versus low on collectivism. We followed the same procedures described earlier to test this hypothesis. As shown in Table 5, the two-way interaction of customer mistreatment and collectivism on OCBC was significant (see Step 3B, $\beta = -.30$, $p < .001$). Simple slope analyses revealed that the association between customer mistreatment and OCBC was stronger among employees high ($\beta = -.83$, $p < .001$) versus low ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .01$) on collectivism. Figure 4 presents this two-way interaction. The results support Hypothesis 6a.

Hypothesis 6b stated that the two-way interaction between customer mistreatment and collectivism mediates the interactive effect of customer

TABLE 5
Regression Results for Hypothesis Testing (H4, H5, H6)

Variables	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3A		Step 3B		Step 3C	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Age	.23**	.09	.02	.09	.07	.09	.04	.08	.05	.09
Gender	-.02	.15	-.01	.13	.02	.13	.02	.12	.02	.12
Tenure (months)	-.16	.09	-.11	.08	-.12	.07	-.10	.07	-.10	.07
Workload	.10	.07	.08	.06	.06	.06	.06	.06	.06	.06
Negative affectivity	-.06	.08	.03	.07	.04	.07	.03	.06	.03	.06
Power distance	.01	.08	-.08	.07	-.03	.07	-.04	.07	-.03	.07
Customer mistreatment			-.46***	.07	-.63***	.08	-.54***	.07	-.57***	.08
Collectivism			.21**	.08	.22**	.08	.19**	.08	.19**	.08
Country			.31***	.19	.29**	.19	.26**	.18	.26**	.18
Customer mistreatment $\times$ country					.27**	.13			.06	.16
Customer mistreatment $\times$ collectivism							-.30***	.06	-.28***	.07
F	1.84		10.47***		11.10***		13.38***		12.17***	
R ²	.05		.32		.36		.40		.40	
Adjusted R ²	.02		.29		.32		.37		.37	
ΔR^2			.27***		.04**		.08***		.08***	

Note. N = 213.
Gender was coded as 0 = female, 1 = male.
Country was coded as 0 = China, 1 = Canada.
Criterion variable was citizenship behavior toward customers in general.
p < .01, *p < .001.

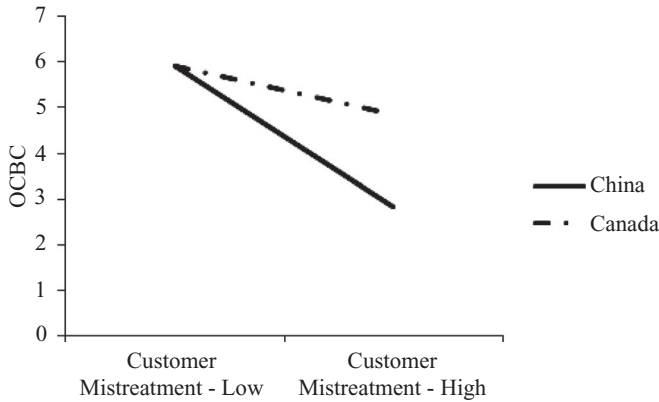


Figure 3: Two-Way Interaction of Country and Customer Mistreatment on OCBC.

Note. OCBC = Customer-oriented citizenship behavior.

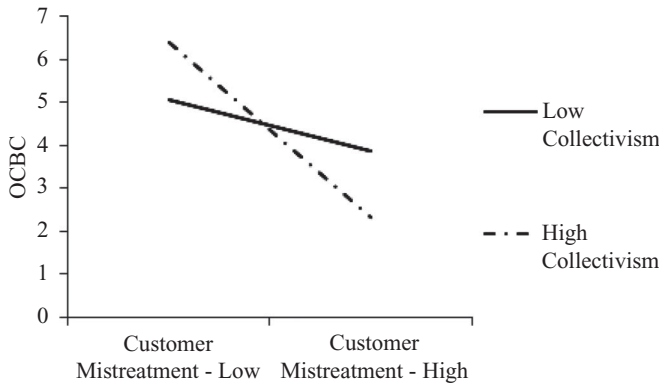


Figure 4: Two-Way Interaction of Collectivism and Customer Mistreatment on OCBC.

Note. OCBC = Customer-oriented citizenship behavior.

mistreatment and country on OCBC. We followed the same steps described above to test for this mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The first three criteria were met (see Tables 2 and 5 [Steps 3A and 3B]). In terms of the last criterion, as shown in Table 5, the two-way interaction of country and customer mistreatment became nonsignificant (see Step 3C, $\beta = .06$, $p > .05$) in the presence of the significant interaction between collectivism and customer mistreatment (see Step 3C, $\beta = -.28$, $p < .001$). Thus, all four criteria for mediation were met. Again we conducted indirect effect

test using the bootstrapping technique (Hayes, 2009; Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008) described earlier. The results showed that the interaction of customer mistreatment and collectivism mediated the interactive effect of customer mistreatment and country on citizenship behavior (indirect effect = .34, 95% bias-corrected and accelerated CI = [.20, .56]). Taken together, the results support Hypothesis 6b.

Supplemental Analyses

A potential threat to the study's internal validity is the possibility of reporting bias: Employees in China might be less likely to report their sabotage or citizenship behaviors in a survey as compared to employees in Canada. To address this concern, we ran supplemental analyses to test (a) whether individualism moderated the mistreatment–sabotage relationship and (b) whether collectivism moderated the mistreatment–OCBC relationship within each subsample. If underreporting indeed explained the differences, then individual-level cultural values would not moderate the mistreatment–sabotage/OCBC relationships among only Chinese participants or among only Canadian participants. The results showed, however, that (a) individualism moderated the mistreatment–sabotage relationship among Canadian employees ($\beta = .29, p < .01$) and among Chinese employees ($\beta = .16, p < .05$), and (b) collectivism moderated the mistreatment–OCBC relationship among Canadian participants ($\beta = -.48, p < .01$) and among Chinese participants ($\beta = -.22, p < .01$). These findings support our theory not only among the pooled sample but also within each subsample. These analyses also ruled out the possibility that reporting differences can explain our results.

In addition, as we discussed earlier, at the individual level of analysis, individualism and collectivism have independent implications for people's attitudes and behaviors, and thus should be examined separately. We performed additional regression analyses to test the two-way interaction of customer mistreatment and collectivism on sabotage and the two-way interaction of customer mistreatment and individualism on OCBC. The results revealed that both interaction terms were not significant ($\beta = -.09, p > .05, \beta = .03, p > .05$, respectively). These findings support the notion that individualism and collectivism are theoretically distinct constructs and they interacted with customer mistreatment in predicting two theoretically distinct employee reactions, namely, sabotage versus OCBC, respectively.

Discussion

Although globalization continues to increase, scientists and practitioners lag behind in understanding its implications for organizations (Chen &

Miller, 2010). Evidence also suggests that customer mistreatment of employees is on the rise (Grandey et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2011). It is overly simplistic to assume, however, that employees in different countries with different cultural values react in similar ways to customer mistreatment. On the basis of COR theory, we found that customer mistreatment was positively related to service employees' sabotage toward the customers who mistreated them and negatively associated with employees' citizenship behaviors toward customers in general. Integrating COR and cultural theories, we found that the relationship between customer mistreatment and sabotage was stronger among individuals in Canada than among individuals in China, whereas the association between customer mistreatment and OCBC was more pronounced among individuals in China than among individuals in Canada. The results also showed that individual level individualism and collectivism accounted for the differences in the mistreatment-sabotage/OCBC relationships between employees from China and those from Canada, respectively.

From a theoretical perspective, our findings are important because the association between customer mistreatment and citizenship behavior toward customers *in general* has not been empirically explored in prior research. This link goes beyond what social exchange theory (Blau, 1964)—with an emphasis on targeting the specific transgressor (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007)—can predict. Specifically, although prior research on customer mistreatment documents that employees' reactions are directed at the source of mistreatment, our study reveals that employees sometimes can also react in a target-general fashion (Porath & Erez, 2007; Tepper, 2000; Zellars et al., 2002) and that the target of employees' reactions can sometimes be "misaligned" with the source of mistreatment. This is a theoretical contribution because, by using COR theory, we broaden understanding of how employees can respond to customer mistreatment (i.e., beyond targeting the specific source of mistreatment).

Second, by integrating COR and cross-cultural theories, we gain greater precision in understanding how employees' reactions to customer mistreatment can vary among individuals from different cultures. Our findings suggest that individualists and collectivists can adopt different coping strategies to deal with the stress of customer mistreatment and the resultant resource loss (Cross, 1995). Whereas individualists are more likely to directly, actively, target specifically react to resource loss through punishing the source of mistreatment to replace or regain valued resources (i.e., self-esteem and self-worth), collectivists are more likely to cope with the resource loss indirectly, passively, and target generally by withdrawing OCB from customers in general to prevent further resource loss.

In terms of effect size (Cohen, 1988), our results showed that the full model including control variables, customer mistreatment, individualism,

country, and interaction of individualism and customer mistreatment explained 43% of the total variance of sabotage (Cohen's $f^2 = \frac{R^2}{1-R^2} = .75$), and the interaction effect accounted for an additional 3% of the total variance of sabotage above and beyond the main effects of predictors and control variables. Similarly, the full model including control variables, customer mistreatment, collectivism, country, and interaction of collectivism and customer mistreatment explained 37% of the total variance of OCBC (Cohen's $f^2 = .59$), and the interaction effect accounted for an additional 8% of the total variance of OCBC above and beyond the main effects of predictors and control variables. In short, our models explained significant proportion of the total variance in our criterion variables, contributing to a better understanding of these customer service behaviors (sabotage and OCBC).

Third, we focused on individual level of analysis as recommended by prior cross-cultural research (Brockner, 2003; Gelfand et al., 2007; Kirkman et al., 2006; Tsui et al., 2007). Our mediation analyses support that individual-level cultural values (i.e., individualism and collectivism) provide the theoretical mechanisms that account for the differences in employees' reactions to customer mistreatment among individuals from different countries. Moreover, our findings support the contention that at the individual level of analysis, individualism and collectivism are theoretically distinct concepts in that they interacted differently with customer mistreatment in predicting two different behaviors (sabotage vs. OCBC, respectively) in theoretically expected ways.

Last, previous research on employees' reactions to customer mistreatment has been conducted primarily among call center employees where interactions with customers occur in voice-to-voice medium. Grandey et al. (2004) proposed that customer mistreatment in voice-to-voice interactions could be more common because of the absence of visual signals. Similarly, the duration of these voice-to-voice interactions is relatively short. Longer term or repeated face-to-face interactions can create different dynamics and different opportunities for sabotage and OCBC. Our research extends previous work by showing that employees' negative reactions to customer mistreatment can occur in a different context (hotel) and medium (face-to-face).

Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, companies need to recognize that customer mistreatment can trigger employee behaviors that can erode service quality. This issue is highly relevant for companies like the one in this study, whose mission is to deliver high quality customer service. One strategy would be to take steps to prevent customer mistreatment from

occurring in the first place. Companies might, for example, institute a zero-tolerance policy toward customers' mistreatment of employees. This step might not only help reduce customer mistreatment but also symbolize that the company cares about treating employees with dignity and respect, potentially contributing to employees' personal characteristics resources. Airports and hospitals, for example, are increasingly using signs to remind travelers or patients to treat staff with dignity and respect.

A second strategy concerns understanding the challenges that can accompany globalization and the increase in workplace diversity. Our data showed that the customer mistreatment–sabotage association was significantly stronger among employees in Canada than among employees in China. Thus, as Chinese companies increasingly buy North American firms (Chen & Miller, 2010), their managers might find that North American employees react more directly to customer mistreatment than Chinese employees, potentially eroding customer service quality and firm performance. Similarly, customer mistreatment relates to decreased OCBC, in particular among Chinese service employees. This can occur even though, as in this study, the company has uniform management programs and customer service standards. Unlike sabotage, which is often brought to a manager's attention (Harris & Ogbonna, 2006), withdrawing OCBC can be harder to detect and subsequently manage. Thus, companies need to ensure they are soliciting continual feedback from customers as a way to detect service failures.

A third strategy concerns helping employees deal with customer mistreatment and the associated resource loss. Given that empirical evidence shows that employees' perceived social support at work can buffer the effect of customer mistreatment (Wang et al., 2011), managers might provide further support (e.g., supervisory support, organizational support) to service employees in helping them gain resources (e.g., social resources) to cope functionally with the stress of dealing with difficult customers.

Strengths and Limitations

This research has several strengths that warrant mention. First, comparability of participants from different cultural backgrounds can be a challenge in cross-cultural research. We studied service employees in one hotel chain in China and Canada. We verified with the HR directors that both hotels strictly followed the same standardized HR programs and had common corporate policies and service standards that endeavored to provide the same corporate culture. This enhanced the comparability of participants from China and Canada. Second, we incorporated cultural values into our theoretical and statistical model. In a review of cross-cultural research, Kirkman et al. (2006) argued that “studies that test specifically

for cultural value mediation (showing that cultural values explain country effects) are analytically superior to those that test only for country or cultural value effects" (p. 312).

Third, we took several steps to enhance the quality of the customer mistreatment and sabotage measures in terms of (a) content validity—we used the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) with front-line employees to develop our scales; (b) construct validity—confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses revealed that the items assessing sabotage loaded on one factor and the items assessing customer mistreatment loaded on a different factor in each cultural group; (c) the customer mistreatment and sabotage scales demonstrated configural and metric invariance across the Chinese and Canadian participants; and (d) predictive validity—customer mistreatment predicted sabotage above and beyond multiple control variables. The reliability estimates for our developed scales were high (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$ and $.80$). We concluded that our measures demonstrated desirable psychometric properties and served us well. Fourth, we controlled for numerous factors that differed between employees in Canada and China, and which potentially could confound our results, including age, tenure, workload, and power distance. Our results held after controlling for these factors.

In terms of potential limitations, because our research was cross-sectional, we cannot make causal inferences. To explore whether the association between mistreatment and sabotage could flow in the reverse direction, we conducted post hoc analysis to test whether individualism interacts with sabotage in predicting customer mistreatment. The results revealed that the two-way interaction between individualism and sabotage on customer mistreatment was not significant ($\beta = .07, p > .05$). This finding weakens the likelihood that the relationship was in the reverse direction (i.e., sabotage leads to mistreatment).

Second, our measures were self-reported, thus our results could be affected by common method bias. Self-reported measures, however, can be justified in this study for several reasons. Self-reported customer mistreatment is appropriate because it is defined in terms of employees' perception. Mistreatment is likely to be stressful for employees to the degree it is *perceived* as mistreatment. Similarly, self-rating is appropriate for the sabotage measure because, by definition, sabotage represents service employees' intentional behaviors to detract from customer service. Alternative sources of ratings are unlikely to have knowledge of the focal employees' intention. Regarding the measure of OCBC, although customer ratings would be ideal, we could not get permission from the hotels to collect data from customers. In addition, alternative raters, such as coworkers or supervisors, might not have knowledge of the focal employee's sabotage or lowered OCBC. In terms of statistical perspective, we

controlled for negative affectivity in our analyses, which can help reduce common method effects (see Podsakoff et al., 2003). This study focused on the interactive effects between cultural values and customer mistreatment on sabotage and OCBC. As argued by Siemsen, Roth, and Oliveira (2010), common method variance is unlikely to bias interactive effects. Moreover, the two-way interactions between country and customer mistreatment on sabotage and OCBC were different in nature: The effect of customer mistreatment on sabotage was larger among employees in Canada whereas the effect of customer mistreatment on OCBC was larger among employees in China. It is not likely that common method variance can explain these results. In short, although common method effects cannot be completely ruled out, they are unlikely to bias our findings.

Third, we collected data from only one country in East Asia and North America, respectively. Because culture can vary within these regions, the generalizability of our findings requires additional studies in other countries from these two regions. Similarly, we studied employees in one luxury hotel in which customer service, and the accompanying service norms, were highly valued. The effect of customer mistreatment on sabotage or OCBC might be even stronger among companies where service is less highly regarded as part of the corporate culture.

Fourth, the sample size of Canadian participants was relatively small. We compared the means and standard deviations of cultural values in our study with those in prior cross-cultural research conducted in the same regions and found that the distributions of key cultural variables in our study are similar to those in prior studies with larger sample sizes (e.g., Kim & Leung, 2007; Lian, Ferris, & Brown, 2012). In addition, we adopted the Preacher and Hayes' (2008) bootstrapping technique to assess indirect effects (i.e., mediation). This technique also helps to address issues pertaining to small sample size. Taken together, we consider that the small sample size did not significantly bias our results.

Fifth, although our results support COR theory in explaining service employees' reactions to customer mistreatment, we did not provide direct evidence of resource loss during customer–employee interactions. Given that previous research shows that customer mistreatment indeed leads to emotional exhaustion (van Jaarsveld et al., 2010), lowered self-esteem, and a net loss of employee resources (Dormann & Zapf, 2004), the lack of direct evidence in our study should not invalidate our study's contribution.

Future Research Directions

In this study, we explored the effects of customer mistreatment on target-specific sabotage and OCB toward customers in general as proxies for reactions that reflect COR theory and cultural values (i.e.,

individualism and collectivism, respectively). Indeed other reactions (e.g., sabotaging customers in general and withholding OCB from a specific customer) have the potential to occur. To extend our research, it would be interesting to explore whether cross-cultural differences exist with respect to sabotage (specific vs. general) and OCBC (specific vs. general).

COR theory proposes that workplace stressors (e.g., mistreatment) can result in potential or actual loss of resources. In response to the actual or potential loss of resources, individuals employ remaining resources to replace lost resources or prevent further resource loss. Given that psychological detachment after work can help employees cope better with the stress at work (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005), future research can explore whether work–life balance, psychological detachment at home, or family support can offer employees resources (e.g., social resources), which might buffer the effect of customer mistreatment on employees' sabotage and citizenship behaviors.

Third, to draw a causal inference, future research could adopt experimental or longitudinal design to investigate the nature of the customer mistreatment and sabotage/OCBC associations. This line of inquiry would benefit from examining event-level customer–employee interactions (i.e., event level of analysis), which could help to demonstrate the causal linkage. Last, organizational cultures and/or climate and some HR programs or policies might also determine employees' reactions to customer mistreatment and the affiliated resource loss. Future research might incorporate both macro- and microlevel factors in the theoretical model that explains employees' reactions to customer mistreatment.

Last, our analysis showed that country was still a significant predictor of OCBC even after the interaction terms were entered into the regression equation (see Table 5, Step 3C). Although this finding does not invalidate our theory, future research might explore additional factors that differ between employees in Canada and China, such as other cultural differences, or religious or political differences that might account for differences in employees' reactions to mistreatment by customers. For example, employees in Canada and China are also likely to differ on uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, or long- versus short-term orientation (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005), and they might have different religious beliefs (Buddhists vs. Christians). These various values and beliefs warrant exploring in future cross-cultural comparative research on employee–customer interaction.

Conclusion

On the basis of an integration of COR and cross-cultural theories, we found that customer mistreatment related positively to sabotage and

negatively to OCBC. In addition, the mistreatment–sabotage relationship was stronger among employees in Canada than among employees in China, and the mistreatment–OCBC relationship was stronger among employees in China than among employees in Canada. Individualism and collectivism accounted for these differences in effect sizes, respectively.

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APPENDIX A

Customer Mistreatment Measure

The 15 incidents (i.e., behavioral examples of *perceived* customer mistreatment) provided by focus group participants are listed below:

1. Made demanding requests.
2. Made unreasonable requests.
3. Said inappropriate things.
4. Yelled at you.
5. Refused to provide information (e.g., photo ID) necessary for you to do your job.
6. Used inappropriate gesture/body language.
7. Stared at you angrily.
8. Criticized you in front of your colleagues.
9. Criticized you in front of your supervisors.
10. Blamed you for things beyond your control.
11. Complained to other guests about your service.
12. Depreciated you in front of your coworkers.
13. Depreciated you in front of your managers.
14. Was uncooperative with you.
15. Did not give you the chance to help.

We eliminated duplicate incidents and incidents that did not conform to the definition of customer mistreatment, and we selected items that emerged in both Canada and China. This exercise reduced the total to eight incidents (listed below), which were rewritten into a behavioral scale and were administered in our survey. Participants were asked, “*How often over the past 6 months have you had the following occur from a guest?*” The responses ranged from 1 = *never* to 5 = *frequently*.

1. Made demanding or unreasonable requests.
2. **Said inappropriate things.**
3. **Yelled at you.**
4. **Refused to provide information (e.g., photo ID) necessary for you to do your job.**
5. **Used inappropriate gesture/body language.**
6. **Criticized you in front of your colleagues or supervisors.**
7. Blamed you for things beyond your control.
8. Complained to other guests about your service.

The final scale consists of five items (in bold).

APPENDIX B

Sabotage Toward the Customers Who Mistreated Employees Measure

The 17 incidents provided by focus group participants regarding how service employees behaviorally react to customer mistreatment are listed below:

1. ***Intentionally slowed your service to the guest (who mistreated you).***
2. Complained about the guest (who mistreated you) to your colleagues.
3. Complained about the guest (who mistreated you) to your supervisors.
4. Refused to provide exceptional service to the guest (who mistreated you).
5. Called on supervisors to intervene (or help you).
6. Called on senior colleagues to intervene (or help you).
7. Withdrew from paying attention to the guest's (who mistreated you) requests/concerns/needs.
8. Avoided the direct contact with the guest (who mistreated you).
9. Withdrew from providing extra help/effort in serving the guest (who mistreated you).
10. ***Intentionally withheld some information from the guest (who mistreated you).***
11. ***Got even with the guest (who mistreated you).***
12. *Tried to get even with the guest (who mistreated you) during his/her next visit.*
13. *Asked your colleagues to withdraw from providing high quality service to the guest (who mistreated you).*
14. Reduced the effort to serve the guest (who mistreated you) during the following interactions with him/her.
15. *Purposely adhered to rules excessively to delay the service to the guest (who mistreated you).*
16. Escalated your tone of voice to the guest (who mistreated you).
17. Took long lunch/dinner breaks after dealing with a guest (who mistreated you).

We selected items based on two criteria: (a) the items fit our definition of service sabotage and (b) the items were reported by our subject matter experts in both hotels. The six items in *italic* made that cut, which were rewritten into a behavioral scale and were administered in our survey.

Participants were asked “*Please indicate the frequency over the past 6 months, as a result of dealing with a guest who mistreated you, that you. . .*” The responses ranged from 1 = *never* to 5 = *frequently*.

Our final sabotage scale contains three items (in bold and italic): 1, 10, and 11.

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