



## The consequences of customer-oriented constructive deviance in luxury-hotel restaurants

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Customer-oriented constructive deviance  
Customer gratitude  
Employee guilt  
Service climate  
Ethical climate

### ABSTRACT

Prior research has illustrated the antecedents of customer-oriented constructive deviance. However, research on their consequences has been limited. To clarify the relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and its outcome, the present study is based on affective event theory and posits that customer-oriented constructive deviance predicts customer gratitude and employee guilt, which in turn lead to customer and employee satisfaction and loyalty, respectively. This research also investigates how service and ethical climates moderate these relationships. Based on a dataset comprising 223 matched employee–customer pairs collected from luxury hotel restaurants, we found that customer-oriented constructive deviance is positively related to customer loyalty, but negatively related to employee loyalty. Furthermore, service and ethical climates are found to have disparate impacts on these relationships. Our findings call attention to a potential risk that managers should be aware of when they manage customer-oriented constructive deviance to achieve greater customer service.

### 1. Introduction

Frontline service employees deviate from formal organizational rules to benefit customers with no benefit to themselves. For example, when a waiter encounters an angry customer, the waiter can choose to give the customer a free dessert to appease him or her, although giving away free food deviates from formal organizational rules (Dahling et al., 2012). Similarly, retail employees may grant extensions to customers requesting product returns that are a few days beyond the 15-day return policy if customers do so under special circumstances. Bank employees may waive bank fees that they believe unfairly penalize customers (Ambrose et al., 2015). The current study defines this behavior as customer-oriented constructive deviance, which involves voluntary behaviors that violate formal organizational rules to provide better customer service. With the increasing interest in the dynamics that lead to exceptional organizational performance, interest in constructive deviance has grown. For instance, Morrison (2006) revealed that employees are more likely to engage in constructive deviance when they have autonomy, observe coworkers engaging in constructive deviance, and are comfortable with the risk. Dahling et al. (2012) related employee conscientiousness to constructive deviance. Vardaman et al.

(2014) argued that ethical climate impacts constructive deviance both directly and by moderating the relationships between employee attributes (e.g., core self-evaluation) and constructive deviance. Ambrose et al. (2015) suggested that employees engage in customer-oriented constructive deviance when they believe their organizations' policies treat customers unfairly. Dahling and Gutworth (2017) posited that organizational identity drives constructive deviance only when employees perceive normative conflict with formal organizational rules.

Despite the recent interest in constructive deviance, research on its consequences has been limited, and a variety of contradictory findings have recently emerged in the literature. More specifically, Morrison (2006) only investigate the antecedents of customer-oriented constructive deviance and argues that future research should explore the effects of customer-oriented constructive deviance on employees and customers. In a similar manner, Dahling and Gutworth (2017) assert that future research should move beyond the study of antecedents to investigate the consequences of constructive deviance. Furthermore, Galperin (2012) only examines the individual and contextual factors that facilitate constructive deviance, although she admits that constructive deviance could be functional for one stakeholder (e.g., customers) and dysfunctional for another (e.g., managers) at the same time. Clearly, the

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majority of constructive deviance literature has heavily focused on predictors (e.g., Ghosh and Shum, 2019; Grabowski et al., 2019; Vardaman et al., 2014). More recently, however, researchers have begun to test empirically issue related to consequences of (customer-oriented) constructive deviance. To illustrate, Dahling et al. (2012) find that constructive deviance and employee performance is negatively related. In a similar vein, Ghosh and Shum (2019) identify negative links between constructive deviance and service performance. In contrast, Jung and Yoo (2019) confirm that customer-oriented constructive deviance is positively related to build good relationships with customers. Furthermore, Morrison (2006) suggest that customer-oriented constructive deviance should enhance performance. Additionally, Dahling and Gutworth (2017) propose that constructive deviance has the potential to yield a variety of desirable outcomes. Further, the literature points out that constructive deviance is positively related to the wellbeing and interests of the organization or its customers (Galperin, 2012; Morrison, 2006; Vardaman et al., 2014).

In sum, extant findings about the effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on the organizational outcomes (e.g., employee and customer outcomes) are, at best mixed and inconsistent.

To clarify the relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and its outcomes, the present study is based on the affective events theory (AET) (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). AET claims that specific work events (e.g., customer-oriented constructive deviance) have an impact on the arousal of emotions (e.g., feelings of gratitude and guilt), which, in turn, determine employee satisfaction and customer loyalty. AET also posits that the relationship between work events and emotions is driven by contextual or situational influences. Thus, the current research investigates the moderating effects of service climate (Bowen and Schneider, 2014) and ethical climate (Vardaman et al., 2014) on the relationship between customer-directed prosocial rule breaking and feelings of gratitude and guilt. In a strong customer service (ethical) climate, customer-oriented positive deviance could be perceived positively (negatively) in an organization. Dahling et al. (2012) has pointed out that these issues need further investigation.

This research makes several contributions. First, we propose and empirically demonstrate that feelings of gratitude and guilt mediate the relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and its outcomes. More specifically, we argue that customer-oriented positive deviance is positively related to customer satisfaction and loyalty through customer gratitude. However, we suggest that customer-

oriented positive deviance is negatively related to employee satisfaction and loyalty through employee guilt. By doing so, we aim to resolve the discrepancy of prior research on the consequence of customer-oriented constructive deviance. In brief, we expect that customer-oriented constructive deviance will enhance (worsen) organizational performance if customer gratitude is stronger (weaker) than employee guilt.

Second, we develop a theoretical framework that integrates feelings of gratitude and guilt into the nomological network of customer-oriented constructive deviance. We use a dyadic sample from a business-to-customer (B2C) context to link employee reports of customer-oriented constructive deviance to both customer and employee reports of feelings of gratitude and guilt, respectively. Our study provides an insight into the important role of feelings of gratitude and guilt in understanding how customer-oriented constructive deviance drives customer and employee performances. Third, we identify and empirically test contextual factors that leverage the impact of customer-oriented constructive deviance on feelings of gratitude and guilt and, ultimately, on customer and employee outcomes, while showing that these factors do not have equivalent effects on the relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and feelings of gratitude and guilt. Fig. 1 presents an overview of the conceptual framework.

## 2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

### 2.1. Customer-oriented constructive deviance

Employee deviance has been generally considered to be self-serving and deviant workplace behavior that causes harm to the organization (Galperin, 2012). For instance, Robinson and Bennett (1995) note that employee deviance threatens the well-being of an organization. Hollinger et al. (1992) posit that employee deviance includes both employee behaviors against the property of the organization and the violations of the norms regulating acceptable levels of production. Baskin et al. (2015) state that employee deviance is regarded as unethical and conducted as an expression of hostility toward the organization. Spector and Fox (2002) point out that employee deviance is a destructive or detrimental act that hurts the organizations. However, very few researchers have acknowledged the possibility that pro-socially motivated employees might choose to break rules to benefit customers with little or no

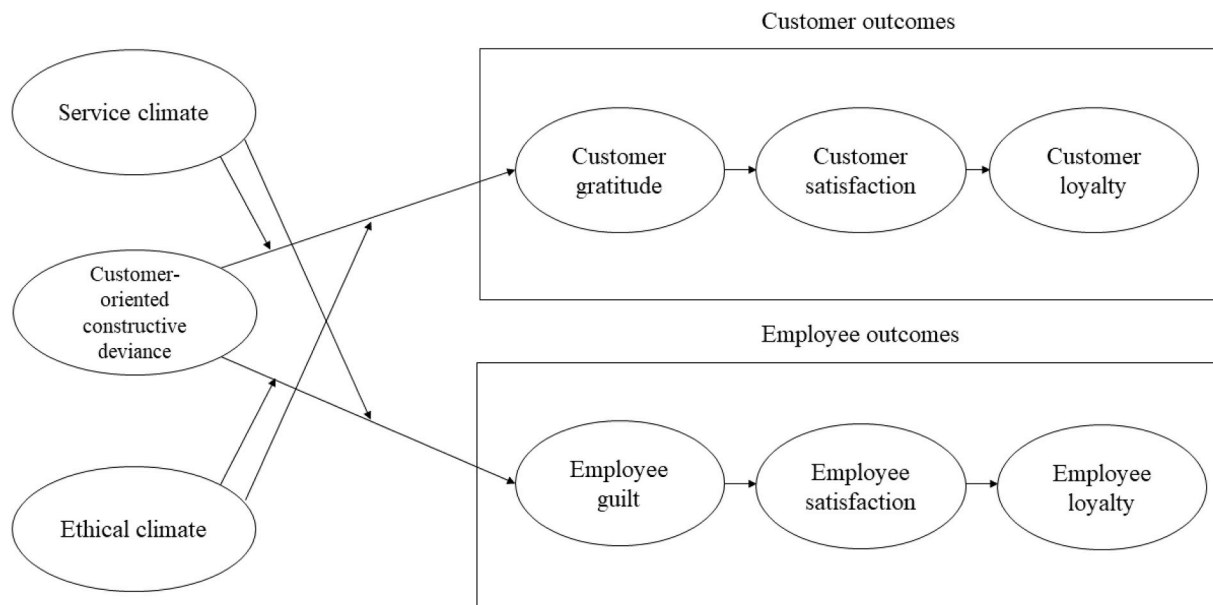


Fig. 1. Framework and constructs.

benefit to themselves.

We define customer-oriented constructive deviance as any instance where an frontline service employee intentionally violates a formal organizational policy, regulation, or prohibition with the primary intention of providing good customer service (Dahling and Gutworth, 2017; Morrison, 2006; Spreitzer and Sonenshein, 2004). Ambrose et al. (2015) argue that frontline service employees may feel trapped by a rule that is too rigid, which in turn creates tensions for frontline service employees, as they feel pulled between to be rule-abiding employees on one other hand and the desire to respond appropriately to situational demands on the other. In response, frontline service employees decide to disregard rules, which is motivated by the desire to do their job better (e.g., providing good customer service). In a similar vein, Morrison (2006) suggests that if rules, instructions, guidelines, or procedures are misdirected, it is good for customer service if frontline service employees disregards rather than follow them.

As such, organizational researchers have stated to investigate the causes of customer-oriented constructive deviance. Existing studies identified some individual personality, job characteristics, and social factors that can be related to customer-oriented constructive deviance (Ghosh and Shum, 2019). For instance, Morrison (2006) finds that customer-oriented constructive deviance is positively related to job autonomy, coworker behavior, and risk-taking propensity. Galperin (2012) confirms that Machiavellianism, role breadth, self-efficacy, and access to information within the organization is a central mechanism in understanding customer-oriented constructive deviance. Leo and Russell-Bennett (2014) show that empathy, perspective-taking, risk-taking propensity, role conflict, and job autonomy are key predictors of customer-oriented constructive deviance. Baskin et al. (2015) find that instrumental climate is positively associated with customer-oriented constructive deviance. Rules and caring climates, however, are negatively associated with customer-oriented constructive deviance. Dahling and Gutworth (2017) demonstrate that organizational identity drives customer-oriented constructive deviance only when frontline service employees perceive normative conflict with organizational rules.

Although, the majority of customer-oriented constructive deviance literature has heavily focused on predictors (e.g., Ghosh and Shum, 2019; Grabowski et al., 2019; Vardaman et al., 2014), researchers have begun to test empirically issue related to consequences of customer-oriented constructive deviance. However, the expected direction of the relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and performance is ambiguous. From one perspective, Dahling et al. (2012) show that customer-oriented constructive deviance has a negative relationship with task performance. In a similar manner, Ghosh and Shum (2019) demonstrate that constructive deviance is negatively related to service performance. In contrast, there is a conflicting literature that shows that frontline service employees who engage in customer-oriented constructive deviance are more likely to build good relationships with customers. Morrison (2006) also suggests that frontline service employees who engage in customer-oriented constructive deviance to satisfy customers will be rated as higher on customer service that they would be if they rigidly adhered to policy. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to clarify this ambivalence relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and its outcomes by investigating both customer and employee emotions simultaneously.

## 2.2. AET

AET (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996) suggests that service encounter events (e.g., customer-oriented deviance behavior) trigger affective responses (e.g., gratitude and guilt), which, after being accumulated over time, will influence service encounter attitudes (e.g., customer and employee satisfaction). These attitudes will in turn impact service encounter behavior (e.g., customer and employee loyalty) (Wegge et al., 2006). More specifically, AET proposes that events are the proximal causes of affective reactions because they drive changes in emotional

states. In other words, customer-oriented deviance behavior occurs among employees and customers at service encounters and their reactions are emotional in nature (Weiss and Beal, 2005).

In addition, the basic assumption of AET is that satisfaction is conceptualized as an evaluative judgment about service encounter. This evaluative judgment should not be confused with real emotions that employees and customers experience during the service encounter (Wegge et al., 2006; Weiss and Beal, 2005), because emotions have causes and consequences that are distinguishable from the causes of evaluative judgments such as customer and employee satisfaction (Glasø et al., 2011). Furthermore, Wegge et al. (2006) argued that affective states comprise physiological components, which are not linked to satisfaction. Weiss et al. (1999) confirmed this argument by showing that affect is an antecedent of employee satisfaction. Prior research also asserted that affect and satisfaction are separate (Weiss and Beal, 2005). Thus, satisfaction is an overall evaluation of one's service encounter, and this evaluation is made by considering affective experiences (Weiss and Beal, 2005); satisfaction and affect are separate constructs, and emotions are not equal to satisfaction (Glasø et al., 2011; Wegge et al., 2006).

Furthermore, AET asserts that service encounter behaviors are attitudinal driven (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). In other words, evaluative judgments or attitudes are the proximal causes of these behaviors (Weiss and Beal, 2005). More specifically, AET suggests that satisfaction is an overall evaluative judgment that explains attitudinal-driven behavior because global evaluations are causally relevant in these kinds of conscious decisions (Wegge et al., 2006). Thus, satisfaction mediates the relationship between affect and attitude-driven behavior (Judge et al., 2006). Moreover, AET integrates contextual aspects with individual determinants of individuals' behavior. Contextual or situational features are believed to evoke affective reactions by rendering specific (positive or negative) work events more or less likely (Walter and Bruch, 2009; Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). In other words, AET proposes that certain features of the work environment may either increase or decrease the likelihood that a work event will induce an affective reaction (Gaddis et al., 2004).

## 2.3. Customer gratitude

Customer gratitude is defined as the positive emotion customers feel when employees have intentionally given them something of value (Bartlett and DeSteno, 2006). We propose that customer-oriented constructive deviance generates feelings of gratitude among customers. Palmatier et al. (2009) proposed that feelings of gratitude occur when the recipient recognizes that the benevolence directed toward him or her is intentional and attributes good intentions to the giver. More specifically, the researchers proposed four conditions during which customers' feelings of gratitude are generated. First, customers feel gratitude when they perceive that employees act on their own free will. Customer-oriented constructive deviance is characterized as showing an unexpected act of kindness for better customer service, even if it violates formal organizational rules. Customer-oriented constructive deviance is not contractually obligated. Second, customers feelings of gratitude are generated when they believe employees have benevolent motives. Customer-oriented constructive deviance is pro-socially motivated and benefits customers with no interest to the employee; thus it is deemed to generate feelings of gratitude (Morrison, 2006). Third, if customers perceive that employees undertake high levels of risk, they feel grateful toward the employees. As customer-oriented constructive deviance always carries a high level of risk to the employee (because employees could be punished for their violations of formal organizational regulations), customers feel grateful toward such employees (Dahling and Gutworth, 2017). Finally, when customers perceive the need for the received benefit, they feel a sense of gratitude. Most customers notice value and are grateful when they experience customer-oriented constructive deviance because it is intended to promote the welfare

and interests of customers (Dahling et al., 2012). Therefore, a customer's recognition of an employee's intentional rule breaking to benefit him/herself will generate customer gratitude.

This study defines customer satisfaction as an attitude toward the company (Niklas and Dormann, 2005). AET claims that affective experiences cause customer satisfaction and subsequent behavioral consequence (Judge and Ilies, 2004). Wood et al. (2008) argued that gratitude should be related to customer satisfaction as it has a positive valiance. They also argued that gratitude is integral to customer satisfaction because the emotion of gratitude acts as a moral barometer, drawing attention to acts of help, and thus is likely to lead to greater customer satisfaction over time. In a service context, as customers become aware of receiving extra effort, they feel satisfied and are more likely to buy from the company and spread positive reviews through word-of-mouth to friends and relatives (Palmatier et al., 2009). Morales (2005) also showed that consumers reward firms for extra effort. More specifically, when firms exert extra effort, consumers reciprocate the favor by increasing their loyalty. Consistent with AET, this rewarding process is mediated by feelings of gratitude and customer satisfaction. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

**H1.** The positive relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and customer loyalty is sequentially mediated by customer gratitude and customer satisfaction.

#### 2.4. Employee guilt

Employee guilt is defined as the negative emotional state in which employees hold the belief that they have violated some social custom, ethical or moral principle, or legal regulation (Basil et al., 2006). Employee guilt is felt when employees violate their own understanding of what they ought to do or when there is conflict about having done something they believe they should not have done (Basil et al., 2006; Pounders et al., 2018). Aquino and Becker (2005) also argued that when employees engage in behaviors that deviate from normative standards of right and wrong, they experience guilt because engaging in deviant behaviors threatens their self-perception of being moral. Employee guilt serves as a "moral barometer," informing employees that they have violated social standards and functions like (Dahl et al., 2005; Schaumberg and Flynn, 2017; Tangney et al., 1996). Employee guilt occurs in negative situations for which employees feel responsible (Soscia, 2007). For the current research, employee guilt is defined as the guilt employees feel when they violate or when there is a conflict about having violated formal organizational rules. In such cases, employees are expected to feel guilty.

Soscia (2007) asserted that guilt induces an antagonistic tendency toward the self and results in intrusive thoughts and self-blame. Tangney et al. (1996) argued that feelings of guilt are painful because they involve a sense of regret or remorse. When employees experience feelings of guilt, they become distressed and report feelings of unease (Mattila et al., 2013). According to AET (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996), the consequence of affective experience is attitudinal. Affective experience has a direct influence of employee satisfaction. Thus, we argue that employee guilt is negatively related to employee satisfaction. AET also claims that employee loyalty, which refers to the likelihood that an employee will remain at the company and recommend it as a good place to work, is directly influenced by overall evaluations of the company; consequently, the relationship between employee guilt and loyalty is mediated by employee satisfaction (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). Prior research has established that employee loyalty is a salient consequence of employee satisfaction (Gong et al., 2014). Thus, we hypothesize the following:

**H2.** The negative relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and employee loyalty is sequentially mediated by employee guilt and employee satisfaction.

#### 2.5. Service and ethical climates

Service climate refers to employees' perceptions of the practices and behaviors concerning customer service that management rewards, supports, and expects (Bowen and Schneider, 2014; Ehrhart et al., 2011; Mayer et al., 2009). When there is a climate for service, employees have come to understand that superior customer service is expected, desired, and rewarded; other things being equal, they are more likely to provide good service (Ambrose et al., 2015). Employees working in a service climate will receive stronger and more frequent demands that relate to attaining the goal of meeting customers' expectations, and they will work further to meet their customers' desires (Wang, 2009). Employees realize that reliance on organizational rules and regulations is ineffective in ensuring customer service (Ambrose et al., 2015) and thus decide to deviate from them to provide good service (Hui et al., 2004), which in turn leads to increased customer gratitude and employee guilt. That is, when service climate is favorable, employees are more likely to view customer-oriented constructive deviance as desirable, and the link between customer-oriented constructive deviance and outcomes is strengthened. In contrast, when service climate is unfavorable, employees are less motivated to engage in customer-oriented constructive deviance. In other words, customer-oriented constructive deviance is less likely to increase customer gratitude and employee guilt.

The theory of situational strength posits that implicit or explicit cues provided by external entities result in psychological pressure on the individual to engage in and/or refrain from particular courses of action (Meyer et al., 2010; Mischel, 1977). In demanding situations, expectations concerning desirable behavior are uniform and unambiguous. However, in easier situations, expectations concerning desirable behavior are varied and ambiguous (Liao and Chuang, 2004). If service climate is weak, employee behavior toward customers (e.g., customer-oriented constructive deviance) shows greater variability. In contrast, if it is strong, employee behavior toward customers is consistent (Jerger and Wirtz, 2017). Following this definition, we argue that service climate strengthens the positive link between customer-oriented constructive deviance and customer gratitude as well as employee guilt. More specifically, a strong service climate sends clear and consistent signals to employees that service performance is expected, desired, supported, and rewarded, thereby creating a strong customer-oriented situation (Liao and Chuang, 2004), which strengthens the effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on customer gratitude as well as employee guilt. In contrast, in a weak service climate, policies for good service and appropriate employee behavior are absent. In addition, employee behavior toward customers varies according to different perceptions of service climate, thereby creating a weak customer-oriented situation, which weakens the effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on customer gratitude as well as employee guilt (Jerger and Wirtz, 2017). The previous rationale identifies a positive relationship between customer gratitude and satisfaction, which is associated with customer loyalty. It also identifies a negative relationship between employee guilt and satisfaction, which is related to employee loyalty. Combined with such predictions, we hypothesize two important interactions:

**H3a.** The effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on customer gratitude and, satisfaction and, subsequently, customer loyalty, will be stronger when service climate is favorable.

**H3b.** The effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on employee guilt and satisfaction and, subsequently, employee loyalty will be weaker when service climate is favorable.

Ethical climate is defined as the perceptions of organizational practices that determine what constitutes ethical behavior at work (Aquino and Becker, 2005; Schwepker and Hartline, 2005). Employees' perception of ethical climate comes into play when they are faced with an ethical problem such as customer-oriented constructive deviance (Babin

et al., 2000; Fournier et al., 2010). Ethical climate can influence employee attitudes and behaviors by providing information about what constitutes appropriate behavior in the organization (Victor and Cullen, 1988). Ethical climate also provides guidance to employees by reinforcing the normative systems that guide ethical decision making and behavior (Arnaud and Schminke, 2012). In high levels of ethical climate, employees are expected to follow the rules, policies, and procedures set forth by the organization, thereby discouraging organizational rule breaking (Baskin et al., 2015). This suggests that ethical climate may suppress the relationship of customer-oriented constructive deviance on customer gratitude and employee guilt by creating an environment where breaking rules is unacceptable. Models of ethical decision-making in business emphasize the influence of ethical climate on employees' ethical judgments and behavioral intentions (Barnett and Vaicys, 2000). Trevino (1986) posited that ethical decision making is driven by situational components. More specifically, ethical climate could weaken the relationship between employee behavior (e.g., customer-oriented constructive deviance) and customer gratitude and employee guilt through the reinforcement of ethical behavior, organizational norms, and managerial responsibility (Trevino, 1986). The previous rationale identifies a positive relationship between customer gratitude and customer satisfaction, which is associated with customer loyalty. It also identifies a negative relationship between employee guilt and employee satisfaction, which is related to employee loyalty. Combined with such predictions, we hypothesize two important interactions:

**H4a.** The effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on customer gratitude and satisfaction and, subsequently, customer loyalty will be weaker when ethical climate is favorable.

**H4b.** The effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on employee guilt and satisfaction and, subsequently, employee loyalty will be stronger when ethical climate is favorable.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants and procedure

Data were collected from frontline service employees and customers of luxury hotel restaurants. This context was chosen because the high levels of employee–customer interaction facilitated the testing of the hypotheses. Moreover, the luxury hotel industry is characterized by meeting diversified consumer needs and giving consumers a good impression (Wu and Liang, 2009). Results revealed that frontline service employees are more likely to show customer-oriented constructive deviance. The senior manager of the luxury hotel restaurants gave their permission to conduct the survey among frontline service employees and customers. To reduce any inconvenience and enhance the response rate, research assistants visited the luxury hotel restaurants in person to distribute and collect the surveys.

The study is based on a paired dyads design, which is particularly useful when trying to test the relationship between two persons' (e.g., frontline service employees and customers) moods, attitudes, or behaviors (Kenny et al., 2006). As our study focuses on a phenomenon that occurs on a one-to-one basis, the unit of analysis was each specific restaurant service encounter. The procedures for collecting data were closely based on the prior work (Brach et al., 2015; Lin and Lin, 2011; Tsai and Huang, 2002). Customers, who had just been involved in a service encounter with the receptionist and were willing to respond via a self-administered customer questionnaire, were approached immediately after dining in restaurants by research assistants and were requested to complete the questionnaire. Specifically, customers were instructed to focus on the service encounter with the specific receptionist (employee) who provided service during dining, when filling out the survey. After that, the frontline service employees were immediately approached and asked to fill out the survey. When filling out the survey, the employee was instructed to focus on the service encounter with the

specific customer who was served by himself or herself in the restaurant. Thus, the unit of analysis is a distinct service interaction between one employee and one customer, rather than general, retrospective patterns of behavior (Brach et al., 2015). During the data collection process, employees were not aware that their service interactions would be evaluated by customers, and to that end, customers were approached only after the service interaction was completed (Zhao and Mattila, 2013).

During this process, the research assistants clearly explained the research objective and procedure of data collection, while guaranteeing the anonymity of the respondents. All frontline service employees and their customers agreed to participate in the study.<sup>1</sup> To correctly match frontline service employee and customer data, code numbers were used, and research assistants assigned the customers to the respective employee's code number.<sup>2</sup> We matched a randomly selected customer with the employee respondent to form an employee–customer pair. The final dataset comprised 223 matched employee–customer pairs. The mean age and mean tenure of the frontline service employee respondents was 28.3 years and 4.8 years, respectively; 62% of them were women. The mean age of the customer respondents was 35.7 years, 48% were women, and the mean relationship tenure with a luxury hotel restaurant was 1.2 years.

#### 3.2. Measurement

##### 3.2.1. Employee measures

Customer-oriented constructive deviance was assessed using the four-item prosocial rule breaking behavior for the customer service subscale developed by Dahling et al. (2012). This scale measures the extent to which frontline service employees break organizational rules to provide better customer service. Responses were made in terms of frequency on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "never" to 7 = "always". Employee guilt was assessed using three items developed by Ketelaar and Au (2003) that capture how frontline service employees felt guilty toward the company when violating organizational rules, based on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = "very slightly or not at all" to 7 = "very strongly.". An example of the items includes "I feel guilty toward the company." Employee satisfaction was assessed based on three items adapted from Homburg and Stock (2004) that capture frontline service employees' overall satisfaction. Employee loyalty was assessed based on three items adapted from Gong et al. (2014) that capture the intention to remain with the company and willingness to recommend the company as a good place to work. Service climate was measured based on four items from Dietz et al. (2004) that capture frontline service employees' perceptions of the importance of customer service in organization, such as the priority of delivering high-quality service. Ethical climate was assessed based on three items developed by Cullen et al. (1993) that capture frontline service employees' perceptions of the importance of following the organization's rules and procedures.

##### 3.2.2. Customer measures

Customer gratitude was measured based on three items adapted from Palmatier et al. (2009). Customers were asked to describe whether they

<sup>1</sup> We attribute this high response rate to several reasons. First, we received generous support from top managements of the restaurants, and we promised to a brief report to our findings on request. Second, all respondents were told that their participation was voluntary and essential for improving restaurant services. We assured them that their responses would be kept confidential, with only aggregated data used for the analyses. Third, we provided a cash voucher of US\$30 for each completed questionnaire.

<sup>2</sup> The employees were not aware of their assigned code numbers that would be used for matching with customers. Therefore, they could be honest to express that they broke the organizational rules.

felt grateful during interactions with frontline service employees, using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = “very slightly or not at all” to 7 = “very strongly.” An example of the items includes “I feel grateful to this employee.” Customer satisfaction was measured based on three items adapted from Bettencourt (1997). Customer loyalty was also measured based on three items adapted from Zeithaml et al. (1996).

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1. Measurement assessment

Table 1 presents the means, standards deviations, and correlations for the key constructs. Before averaging the items to form the scales for hypotheses testing, the measurement model was validated using SmartPLS 3 software (Ringle et al., 2015). The composite reliabilities for all variables exceeded the cutoff value of 0.70, and the average variance extracted for all focal variables exceeded the 0.50 benchmark, demonstrating that each construct had acceptable psychometric properties (Hair et al., 2017). In support of convergent validity of the scales, all indicators loaded significantly ( $p < .05$ ) and substantially ( $>0.70$ ) on their hypothesized factors (see Table 2). Furthermore, the square root of the average variance extracted for each construct exceeded the correlations of the construct with other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). All heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) values were lower than the threshold value of 0.85. In addition, neither of the 95% bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals (CIs) of the HTMT ratio of correlations statistics included the value of 1.00, thus supporting discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2015; Voorhees et al., 2016).

##### 4.2. Hypotheses testing

Our mediation and moderated mediation hypotheses were tested using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (version 3.3) (Hayes, 2018). In Tables 3 and 4, we provide estimates of the mediation and moderated mediation effects, along with 95% bias corrected bootstrapped CIs of our path estimates. As predicted in H1, the positive relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and customer loyalty is sequentially mediated by customer gratitude and customer satisfaction (95% CI [0.00, 0.04]). As predicted in H2, the negative relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and employee loyalty is sequentially mediated by employee guilt and employee satisfaction (95% CI [-0.02, -.00]). H3a states that the customer-oriented constructive deviance → customer gratitude → customer satisfaction → customer loyalty effect will be stronger when service climate is favorable higher. This hypothesis was also supported. The index of moderated mediation indicated that CI did not include zero (95% CI [0.00, 0.02]). The index of moderated mediation tests whether the indirect effect varies systematically as a function of the moderator and indicates whether any two conditional indirect effects defined by different values of the moderator are statistically significant when the bootstrapped CI of the index does not include zero (Hayes, 2015). The findings also showed that the indirect effects became stronger with increasing service climate. H3b states that the customer-oriented constructive deviance → employee

guilt → employee satisfaction → employee loyalty effect will be weaker when service climate is favorable. This hypothesis was supported. The index of moderated mediation indicated that CI did not include zero (95% CI [-0.02, -.00]). The findings also showed that the indirect effects became weaker with increasing service climate. H4a states that the customer-oriented constructive deviance → customer gratitude → customer satisfaction → customer loyalty effect will be weaker when ethical climate is favorable. This hypothesis was supported. The index of moderated mediation indicated that CI did not include zero (95% CI [-0.01, -.00]). The findings also showed that the indirect effects became weaker with increasing ethical climate. H4b states that the customer-oriented constructive deviance → employee guilt → employee satisfaction → employee loyalty effect will be stronger when ethical climate is favorable. This hypothesis was supported. The index of moderated mediation indicated that CI did not include zero (95% CI [0.00, 0.01]). The findings also showed that the indirect effects became stronger with increasing ethical climate.

##### 4.3. Supplementary analysis

Although we did not formulate direct effect hypotheses, which suggest that customer-oriented constructive deviance is related to customer satisfaction, customer-oriented constructive deviance is related to customer loyalty, customer-oriented constructive deviance is related to employee dissatisfaction, and customer-oriented constructive deviance is related to employee loyalty, nevertheless, we are not able to rule out these possible direct effects. Therefore, we have further tested these possible direct effects as a *post hoc* analysis. First, we did not find a direct effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on customer satisfaction ( $b = 0.01, p = .75$ ). Second, we found a direct effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on customer loyalty ( $b = 0.14, p < .05$ ). Third, we found a direct effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on employee satisfaction ( $b = 0.15, p < .01$ ). Fourth, we found a direct effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on employee loyalty ( $b = 0.25, p < .001$ ).

One might argue that the positive relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and customer gratitude could be negative when customer guilt happened at the same time. So, we have tested this possibility by including customer guilt. However, the overall patterns of the findings remain same.

#### 5. Discussion

Customer-oriented constructive deviance, by definition, entails behavior that benefits customers. However, to our knowledge, few studies have systematically examined when and how customer-oriented constructive deviance influences organizational outcomes (e.g., customer loyalty and employee loyalty). Our findings show that customer-oriented constructive deviance positively impacts the organization through greater customer satisfaction and loyalty. However, we also found that it negatively impacts the organization through decreased employee satisfaction and loyalty. Results also indicate that a strong service climate has two-sided effects: it intensifies the elicitation of both

**Table 1**  
Construct means, standard deviations, and correlations.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Constructive deviance	4.77	1.78	1								
2. Service climate	5.11	1.27	.51	1							
3. Ethical climate	5.63	1.10	-.11	.13	1						
4. Employee guilt	4.77	1.31	.27	.17	-.30	1					
5. Employee satisfaction	3.46	1.28	.25	.21	.24	-.26	1				
6. Employee loyalty	5.15	1.77	.26	.21	.15	-.27	.16	1			
7. Customer gratitude	4.67	1.36	.36	.35	-.14	.31	.26	.18	1		
8. Customer satisfaction	4.89	1.71	.18	.14	.20	.17	.18	.20	.25	1	
9. Customer loyalty	4.57	1.84	.12	.15	.18	.29	.15	.35	.13	.16	1

**Table 2**  
Measurement model.

Constructs and measurement items	CR	AVE	Loadings
<b>Employee ratings</b>			
<b>Customer-oriented constructive deviance</b>			
I break the rules that stand in the way of good customer service.	.85	.58	.81
I give good service to clients or customers by ignoring organizational policies that interfere with my job.			.88
I break organizational rules to provide better customer service.			.77
I bend organizational rules so that I can best assist customers.			.76
<b>Service climate</b>			
The company is doing a good job providing services to its external customers.	.86	.61	.78
The company's external customer problems get resolved quickly.			.77
Senior management is committed to providing quality service to the company's external customers.			.80
Senior management shows through its actions that quality is a top priority in the company.			.76
<b>Ethical climate</b>			
It is very important to strictly follow the company's rules and procedures.	.82	.61	.79
Everyone is expected to stick by the company rules and procedures.			.82
Successful people in this company strictly obey the company policies.			.83
<b>Employee guilt</b>			
I feel guilty toward the company.	.85	.65	.79
I feel ashamed of the company.			.76
I feel self-blaming to the company.			.90
<b>Employee satisfaction</b>			
All in all, I am satisfied with this company.	.81	.60	.79
In general, I am satisfied with working at this company.			.84
I am more satisfied with this company than many employees of other companies.			.86
<b>Employee loyalty</b>			
I intend to remain loyal to this company in the future.	.94	.88	.95
It is very likely that I will remain an employee of this company.			.93
I am willing to recommend the company as a good place to work.			.94
<b>Customer ratings</b>			
<b>Customer gratitude</b>			
I feel grateful to this employee.	.77	.53	.78
I feel thankful to this employee.			.76
I feel appreciative of this employee.			.73
<b>Customer satisfaction</b>			
Compared to other companies, I am very satisfied with this company.	.78	.55	.81
Based on all my experiences with this company, I am very satisfied.			.85
My service experiences at this company have always been satisfactory.			.87
<b>Customer loyalty</b>			
I will say positive things about this company to other people.	.87	.77	.84
I will encourage friends and relatives to do business with this company.			.88
I will do more business with this company in the next few years.			.87

**Table 3**  
Mediation effects model.

Path	Effect	95% bias-corrected bootstrapping confidence interval
COCD→CG→CS→CL	.02	.00, .04
COCD→EG→ES→EL	-.01	-.02, -.00

COCD: Customer-oriented constructive deviance.

EG: Employee guilt.

ES: Employee satisfaction.

EL: Employee loyalty.

CG: Customer gratitude.

CS: Customer satisfaction.

CL: Customer loyalty.

**Table 4**  
Moderated mediation effects model.

Moderator	Path	Effect	95% bias-corrected bootstrapping confidence interval
Service climate	COCD→CG→CS→CL		
	-1SD	.005	-.006, .021
	Mean	.016	.002, .039
	+1SD	.022	.002, .053
Service climate	COCD→EG→ES→EL		
	-1SD	-.003	-.014, .006
	Mean	-.015	-.034, -.003
	+1SD	-.021	-.048, -.004
Ethical climate	COCD→CG→CS→CL		
	-1SD	.021	.004, .044
	Mean	.017	.003, .036
	+1SD	.012	.002, .029
Ethical climate	COCD→EG→ES→EL		
	-1SD	-.014	-.027, -.004
	Mean	-.010	-.019, -.003
	+1SD	-.007	-.014, .000

COCD: Customer-oriented constructive deviance.

EG: Employee guilt.

ES: Employee satisfaction.

EL: Employee loyalty.

CG: Customer gratitude.

CS: Customer satisfaction.

CL: Customer loyalty.

customer gratitude and employee guilt in response to customer-oriented constructive deviance. Moreover, our findings reveal that a strong ethical climate also has two-sided effects: it weakens the elicitation of both customer gratitude and employee guilt in response to customer-oriented constructive deviance.

### 5.1. Theoretical implications

Our research has several theoretical implications. First, prior research has mainly focused on the antecedents of customer-oriented constructive deviance. As mentioned before, customer-oriented constructive deviance entails actions that benefit customers. However, to the best of our knowledge, few studies have empirically examined how engagement in customer-oriented constructive deviance influences

the organization as a whole, the constructively deviant actor (employee), and the organization's customers. Drawing from the AET (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996), we attempted to resolve ambiguities concerning the relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and its outcomes.

Second, the results of this study suggest that customer (employee) satisfaction is a function of affective experiences about the service encounter. In other words, when customers or employees are called on to make a judgment on satisfaction, they use their affective experiences (e.g., gratitude and guilt) to base their evaluation. Our study shows that customer (employee) affect could be evaluated independently of customer (employee) satisfaction. The results are consistent with AET (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). The current research reveals that customer gratitude and employee guilt deserve attention, as both influence satisfaction and behavior. The conventional service profit chain (SPC) proposes that organizational performance can be improved via a path that connects employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty (Homburg et al., 2009). Our study demonstrates the positive (negative) role of customer (employee) affect in developing strong customer relationships that lead to financial outcomes. Thus, customer (employee) affect provides an important avenue for building strong bonds with customers and employees, independent of the traditional focus on customer (employee) satisfaction. An important implication of our findings is that AET clearly deserves more attention in service research.

Third, the results clearly show that customer and employee loyalty depend significantly on the interactions between customer-oriented constructive deviance and service and ethical climates. These findings are in line with AET (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996), which argues that situational and organizational factors (e.g., service and ethical climates) are known to influence the attitudes and behaviors of customers and employees. The strategic management practice of promoting both service and ethical climates may be a double-edged sword and more complex than previously stated. More specifically, service climate bolsters the positive effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on customer loyalty via customer gratitude and satisfaction. Yet, it also weakens the negative effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on employee loyalty via employee guilt and satisfaction. Similarly, ethical climate alleviates the negative effect of customer-oriented constructive behavior on employee loyalty, but it also weakens the positive effect of customer-oriented constructive deviance on customer loyalty.

### 5.2. Managerial implications

Although employees might engage in customer-oriented constructive deviance to enhance customer service, our findings call attention to a potential risk, of which managers should be aware. We encourage managers to help employees who exhibit constructive deviance feel less guilty so that their satisfaction and loyalty is not damaged. Organizations can educate employees on the potential positive consequences of customer-oriented constructive deviance and encourage its exhibition. However, as discussed in prior studies (Morrison, 2006; Vadera et al., 2013), managers need to make employees aware of the acceptable degree and unintended negative effects of customer-oriented constructive deviance. Through appropriate training, we believe that customer-oriented constructive deviance can reap lasting benefits while minimizing the negative consequences. Indeed, compared to other structural policies, such as organizational adaptability and flexibility, customer-oriented constructive deviance could be a costless strategy in enhancing customer service.

Managers could leverage customer-oriented constructive deviance by increasing customers' perception of the employee's discretion to engage in customer-oriented constructive deviance. They could also increase customer gratitude by allowing employees more discretion in exhibiting constructive deviance within reasonable financial boundaries

when needed to solve a customer's problem. Palmatier et al. (2009) pointed out that the intention behind breaking rules is critical to the activation of gratitude. Thus, they proposed that managers should avoid benefits that appear to provide personal gain for the employee. In contrast, managers can leverage motive deliberately by demonstrating that an employee's intention to engage in positive deviance is to do whatever is best for the customer rather than to serve only the employee's own self-interests. Such efforts are much more likely to generate customer gratitude, satisfaction, and loyalty than efforts that seem to be designed only to increase sales.

Managers need to establish practices to balance service climate with ethical climate. We found that service and ethical climates have disparate moderating impacts on the relationship between customer-oriented constructive deviance and both customer and employee outcomes. Managers need to be aware that service and ethical climates are both indispensable (Jiang et al., 2016). The negative impact of service climate could be compensated by the positive impact of ethical climate. Similarly, the negative impact of ethical climate could be compensated by the positive impact of service climate. Therefore, managers should make every effort to simultaneously create service and ethical climates.

### 5.3. Limitations and future research avenues

Although the current study has several strengths, a few limitations warrant further discussion and future research. First, we focused on a single industry, luxury hotel restaurants, to reduce the potential influence of other extraneous factors on the studied relationships. Furthermore, in the luxury hotel service setting, frontline service employees usually do not have to break the rules to respond to customers' request because service climate is high and frontline service employees have empowerment to please guests at a certain point that customer satisfaction is warranted (Chan et al., 2019). Therefore, we encourage undertaking future replications of this study in other service settings.

Second, given the correlational nature of our field study, we were unable to definitely establish causal inference. We recommend that experimental investigations of our proposed mechanisms be conducted. For example, future research could create simulated employee-customer interactions and manipulate, rather than measure, customer-oriented constructive deviance.

Third, our measure of customer-oriented constructive deviance was a self-reported survey. Although we ensured anonymity and confidentiality of the survey to minimize social desirability bias that could likely create a floor effect of this measure (Arnold and Feldman, 1981), future studies can use third parties, such as supervisors or co-workers to report on employees' customer-oriented constructive deviance (Leo and Russell-Bennett, 2014).

Fourth, customer-oriented constructive deviance can be organizationally dysfunctional (Morrison, 2006). For instance, employees may engage in customer-oriented constructive deviance, but their actions may end up being unfair to other customers (Butori and De Bruyn, 2013). Thus, future research should investigate how customer-oriented constructive deviance gone wrong might be interpreted as customer-oriented destructive deviance.

Lastly, although we claim that the dataset is dyadic, but we are not able to rule out the possibility that the employee experience is not matched with the customer experience. This is because the measurement items of customer-oriented constructive deviance from employees' perspective are not based on their experiences on specific customer, although we explicitly asked employees to rate customer-oriented constructive deviance based on the specific experience of serving customer, who also participated in the customer survey. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution.

### Acknowledgement

Funding: This work was supported by the research fund of Hanyang



University(HY-2019-G).

## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102254>.

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