CUSTOMER MISTREAMENT, THIRD PARTY OBSERVERS, AND EMOTIONAL LABOR:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE PHENOMENON OF BREAKING CHARACTER

By
NICOLINA TAYLOR

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Supervising Committee:
James Lavelle, Supervising Professor
Wayne Crawford
Deborah Rupp (George Mason University)

Abstract

The emotional labor literature is vast and complex. Overwhelmingly, most studies focus on surface acting and deep acting. Breaking character, expressing true, negative emotions to a customer, is understudied, despite evidence of occurring frequently. Despite conceptual work stating that breaking character produces negative outcomes, empirical work is scant. Further, the impact that breaking character has on employees is unknown. In summary, researchers know very little regarding what leads to breaking character, how employees feel about breaking character, and the aftermath of breaking character. Thus, the purpose of this dissertation is to explore the phenomenon of breaking character. First, I qualitatively explore breaking character through interviews with 19 flight attendants. Findings support previous work suggesting that customer mistreatment prompts breaking character. I also provide a comprehensive model of the act of breaking character from an employee perspective. Then, across two experiments I build upon my qualitative findings by empirically examining the phenomenon of breaking character from a third-party perspective. Specifically, I use a 2X3 factorial design in which customer mistreatment and employee emotional response are manipulated and customer intent to return and willingness to tip are assessed as dependent variables. Then, I test the mediating effects of empathy and moral anger in this relationship. In study three, I examine another 2 X 3 factorial design where I manipulate attribution of blame and employee emotional response to investigate whether third-party observer reactions are impacted by a sense of justified versus unjustified mistreatment. Implications and future research are discussed.

Keywords: Emotional labor, breaking character, customer mistreatment, third-party observers

Dedication

To my husband, Austin Taylor, my family, and my friends. Thank you for always entertaining

my ramblings and providing me with the support I needed to finish my degree. And to my

beloved dog, Wrangler – thank you for being the best companion I could have had throughout

my bachelor's, master's, and now my Ph. D.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Every job has emotional demands (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989), but some jobs, such as those

that are customer facing, are more emotionally laborious than other jobs (Humphrey et al., 2008).

By 2026, over 26 million employees in the United States will work in customer facing jobs

(Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). As such, understanding the process of emotional labor, the

regulation and modification of emotion for a wage (Hochschild, 1983), is of interest to

researchers and practitioners alike. The emotional labor of customer-facing employees is

important for several reasons: (1) the employees represent the organization; (2) the employees'

emotional labor impacts customer outcomes such as satisfaction; and (3) the employee-customer

interaction can serve as a way to gauge customer perceived quality (Ashforth & Humphrey,

1993). In other words, employee behaviors drive customer satisfaction (Schneider et al., 2005).

As such, employee emotional labor drive customer satisfaction as well. Satisfied customers

reward organizations and employees with repeat business, tips, loyalty, and more (Parasuraman

et al., 1985; Pugh, 2001; Rupp et al., 2008). Thus, organizations are interested in how their

employees can be more effective in their emotional labor. Given how employee emotional

performance can impact many organizational outcomes, it is important for researchers and

practitioners to understand all potential employee and customer emotional labor experiences.

Indeed, essentially every study in the emotional labor literature is dedicated to unpacking the

ways in which employees acting relates to various employee, organizational, and customer

outcomes. Seemingly every day the public is inundated with examples of customers and

employees engaging in emotional encounters with one another. Specifically, negative emotional

exchanges seem increasingly common. Yet, little is known about these encounters from an

emotional labor lens. Instead, researchers and practitioners continue to rely on the status quo of

exploring surface acting and deep acting and their respective outcomes. While this research is

certainly important and furthers the development of the emotional labor literature, the exclusion

of studying negative emotional expression, or breaking character leaves us somewhat in the dark

– never truly understanding all the potential processes employees engaging in emotional labor

experience.

When going through the emotional labor process, employees look to display rules as a

road map. This "map" dictates which emotions should be expressed, to what intensity they

should be expressed, and when they should be expressed (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Typically, employees in customer-facing roles have display rules that encourage the expression

of positive emotions and the suppression of negative emotions (integrative display rules;

Wharton & Erikson, 1993). Employees may not always be able to naturally adhere to display

rules. In this case, employees deploy one of two acting strategies – surface acting or deep acting.

In other words, in line with the dramaturgical perspective (Grove & Fisk, 1989; Hochschild,

1983; Grandey, 2003), employees must put on a good performance and "act" in order to be

effective in their roles.

Surface acting involves employees faking the required emotions for the encounter and is

often referred to as 'faking in bad faith' (Grandey, 2003). Surface acting generally results in

negative outcomes, such as turnover (Chau et al., 2009; Goodwin et al., 2011), decreased

affective delivery (Goodwin et al., 2011; Grandey, 2003), decreased perceived service quality

and decreased customer loyalty intentions (Groth et al., 2009). The negative outcomes associated

with surface acting are usually attributed to a loss of resources on the employee's behalf.

According to conservation of resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989), employees engaging in

surface acting drains resources, and thus, leads to negative outcomes. Deep acting on the other

hand, involves genuine effort from the employee and generally results in positive outcomes such

as increased service performance (Van Gelderen, Konjin, & Bakker, 2017), increased tips (Grandey et al., 2013; Chi et al., 2011), and increased affective delivery (Chi & Grandey, 2019). In line with COR, deep acting helps replenish or maintain employee resources, which results in more positive outcomes. Although, recent work suggests that even deep acting may ultimately harm the employee (Humphrey et al., 2015). Thus, although the original thought in the emotional labor literature was that surface acting was bad and deep acting was good, the research now paints a more complex picture.

Although customers desire a positive performance that is seemingly authentic, they do not wish authenticity to extend to the expression of negative emotions (Grandey, 2003). Despite not desiring employees express negative true emotion to customers, it happens, nonetheless. For example, over a two-week period, 50% of employees in both management and non-management positions indicate that events occurred in which they felt angry (Booth et al., 2017). Of the employees who felt anger, over 40% expressed their anger to various parties, including to customers (Booth et al., 2017). In situations such as these, employee behavior fits the description of breaking character – showing true, negative emotions to customers (Grandey, 2003: 89). Even though there is some theorizing on breaking character, empirical work remains overwhelmingly absent. Thus, the purpose of this research is to comprehensively how, when, and why employees break character, and the outcomes of breaking character. Despite some theorizing on how breaking character can lead to negative organizational outcomes, researchers have not yet asked themselves what goes on within an individual who is breaking character. For example, when employees show true, negative emotion to a customer, do they sometimes feel better? Perhaps justified by their emotional expression? These questions are echoed in other streams of literature that focus on looking at the bright side of negative constructs, such as

expressing sadness (Herter et al., 2021), engaging in CWBs (Krischer et al., 2010), and engaging in emotional regulation (Alam et al., 2019).

Of course, breaking character may not always occur in a vacuum, absent of provocation. Customer mistreatment, a form of interpersonal mistreatment that is rooted in deontological theories of justice, which emphasizes the importance of respect and fair treatment (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Folger, 2001) has some connections to breaking character (Rupp & Spencer, 2006; Nguyen & Besson, 2021). Customer mistreatment can vary in type and intensity. For example, mistreatment can range from simple rudeness to full on verbal aggression (Amarnani et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2011; Van Jaarsveld et al., 2010; Walker et al., 2014). When employees are mistreated, they can respond in various ways. The mechanisms driving these responses pertain to resource depletion. For example, following customer mistreatment, employees experience resource depletion and subsequently, stress, emotional exhaustion, or cognitive rumination (Hobfoll, 1989; Cropanzano et al., 2003). Following resource depletion, employees may respond with behaviors such as sabotage or withdrawal (Shao & Skarlicki, 2014; Sliter et al., 2012). When employees engage in behaviors such as sabotage, they may act or speak in ways that make the negative construct come to light. For example, a customer may see a customer service representative purposely show a customer in the wrong direction. Negative interactions, such as the one previously described, draw outsider attention and influence outsider behavior (Skarlick & Kulik, 2004; Skarlicki et al., 1998). Thus, customer mistreatment should attract the attention of others. Given the nature of public customer facing jobs, studying breaking character in response to mistreatment from a third-party perspective is especially important since the interaction can capture how third parties respond to a public display of negative emotions. In fact, third parties are the most appropriate party to examine because their perceptions may be the

only ones that are actively changing, whereas a disgruntled customer may have already made up

their mind to sever the tie they had to the organization before mistreating an employee.

When third parties witness mistreatment, they may want to aid the victim (Priesemuth,

2013) perhaps because third parties experience the same, albeit less intense reaction than the

victim (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004). Third parties may also side with or extend help to the victim if

they possess similar qualities or perceive signals of needing help or a lack of resources (Skarlicki

& Kulik, 2004). On the other hand, third parties may not side with the victim and may even side

with the transgressor if they perceive that blame should be attributed to the victim or if the victim

is signaling aggression (Skarlick & Kulik, 2004). The research on third party perceptions

suggests that breaking character may be forgiven if it occurs in response to injustice. However,

as the research also suggests, this forgiveness may be conditional based on third-party

perceptions. Also, according to the cognitive appraisal of emotions framework (Smith &

Ellsworth, 1985), the type of negative emotion expressed by employees when breaking character

may be another aspect that can alter third-party perceptions.

Generally, there is a lack of attention to negative emotions in organizational research

(Glomb & Hulin, 1997). Of the research in the emotional labor and justice literature investigating

negative emotions, anger is usually the focus. The emphasis on anger is appropriate since anger

is common – one of the most often experienced emotions by individuals in the United States

(Singh et al., 2018; Lerner & Tiedens, 2006). However, not all negative emotions impact

employees and thus, impact observers in the same way (Lerner & Keltner, 2000; Smith &

Ellsworth, 1985). Emotions can send different signals regarding characteristics such as

uncertainty, control, etc. Two negative emotions, anger, and sadness, differ greatly in their

signals. For example, anger signals certainty and control whereas sadness signals submission and

a lack of power (Tiedens, 2001; Timmers et al., 1998). Thus, breaking character and expressing anger versus breaking character and expressing sadness may differentially impact outcomes as well. Taken together, these streams of literature pose an interesting, timely, and important question for researchers to explore: is breaking character entirely a negative occurrence?

Purpose and Contributions

The broad purpose of this dissertation is to provide a comprehensive view of the phenomenon of breaking character at work. To do this, I use a mixed-methods study design, which capitalizes on the advantages of detailed qualitative analysis and generalizability of empirical analysis (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). I first show what breaking character is like from an employee perspective – showing how and under what conditions breaking character occurs and how employees respond to negative emotional expression. Through my study of breaking character, the literature will be able to further explore what happens when employees do not adhere to display rules. Evidence suggests that customer mistreatment can prompt employee negative emotions (Rupp & Spencer, 2008; Nguyen & Besson, 2021). Thus, we can expect that breaking character increases in tandem with customer mistreatment. However, current research predominantly ignores the possibility or occurrence of breaking character. Instead, the current focus is on how employees adhere to display rules – either through surface acting or deep acting. As previously stated, the moments leading up to negative emotional expression are highly understudied. Further, there is little to no evidence describing what employees think of after breaking character. For example, scholars have not asked the question: could breaking character provide any benefit to employees? Nor have scholars confirmed that breaking character always occurs following customer mistreatment. Thus, my first contribution is regarding the employee experience of breaking character. That is, I will provide a detailed

picture of what employees experience, think, and feel in the moments before, during, and after breaking character. The literature overwhelmingly states that breaking character will result in negative outcomes via a damaged customer relationship. Despite the theoretical catastrophizing of breaking character, empirical research assessing the outcomes of breaking character is, to my knowledge, non-existent. Thus, my next contribution is regarding the empirical testing of the outcomes of breaking character to confirm or deny theoretical arguments stating that breaking character always results in negative outcomes Further, I extend upon this theorizing and support my empirical work by investigating breaking character from a third-party perspective.

The emotional labor literature does not include third-party perceptions to a great extent. This is surprising, given how public customer facing jobs are. Thus, researchers are mainly investigating emotional labor from a dyadic or bi-lateral approach. When researchers include third-party perceptions in emotional labor research, they will be able to fully describe how wide the net is cast when employees go through the emotional labor process. Further, studying customers as a third party witnessing an interaction between an employee and another customer is important since power dynamics come into play. To date, much of the third-party justice literature focuses on observer reactions to encounters in which the victim is of the same power level as the third party (i.e., coworkers) (Bigelow & Priesemuth, 2016). However, power differentials impact how third parties perceive justice encounters. There is little indication as to how customers react to employee-customer encounters, specifically in instances in which a customer mistreats an employee and is met with a negative response (See: Hershcovis & Bhatnagar, 2017 for an exception).

I also contribute to defining the impact breaking character such that I explore the effects of breaking character with two different negative emotions – anger and sadness. The current

definition of breaking character only defines breaking character as expressing negative emotions.

However, since different negative emotions send different signals, the exploration of

differentiating effects is warranted. Finally, I empirically test parts of the third-party perceptions

of justice model such as the impact of blame attribution (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004).

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The emotional labor process

Generally, the emotional labor process involves employees modifying, regulating, and

expressing emotions for their job (Hochschild, 1983). The process employees go through is

complex, and its outcomes are vast. Typically, the process starts with person or event

characteristics such as personality traits and moods (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). Following these

focal antecedents, there is an intrapsychic effort on the employee's behalf (Barry et al., 2018).

This effort involves an assessment of emotional requirements (i.e., display rules), emotional

regulation, and subsequent emotional performance. In other words, prior to deploying an acting

strategy, employees perceive implicit or explicit rules that indicate which emotions are required

by the encounter – display rules (Matsumoto, 1990; 1993).

Display rules stem from societal, occupational, and organizational norms (Rafaeli &

Sutton, 1989). Further, they signal the intensity, duration, range, and object of emotions to be

expressed (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Both organizational and societal display rules

reinforce the dramaturgical perspective. Both societal and organizational display rules generally

indicate that the customer-employee encounter is a performance of sorts, in which employees act

in order to complete the performance for the encounter. Societal norms indicate adherence to

concepts like 'the golden rule'. The expectation of societal norms closely relates to interpersonal

justice in that societal norms suggest that people should treat others in a friendly way, and with

respect. Organizational and occupational norms vary more than societal norms regarding display

rules. Although, organizational norms are generally similar to societal norms. Many display rules researchers focus on are described as integrative– the organization encourages the suppression of negative emotions and the expression of positive emotions (Wharton & Erikson, 1993; Diefendorff et al., 2006). Integrative display rules are put into place and encouraged in order to signal that groups are cohesive; they encourage the expression of emotions that should bring people together (Wharton & Erickson, 1993).

Although it is important to study all types of display rules in a wide variety of jobs, studying the emotional labor process through the lens of integrative display rules in jobs that are customer facing is important due to the number of people that occupy these roles and how far-reaching the consequences of their emotional labor are. As previously mentioned, the number of employees that occupy customer-facing positions or use customer service skills is vast. Jobs that require customer service skills make up about one-fourth of jobs in the United States (BLS, 2018). In fact, these jobs are growing and should account for around 27 million jobs by 2026 (BLS, 2018). Customer facing employees can occupy a wide variety of jobs. In fact, jobs that require customer service are employed in nearly every industry in the United States (BLS, 2018). Employees in customer facing jobs have a substantial impact on the organization because they are the liaison for the company-customer relationship and influence customer perceptions that can result in positive or negative outcomes for the organization. Thus, studying employees in beneficial in uncovering the distal impact on firm performance and revenue (Amarnani et al., 2019). As a result of perceiving display rules, employees then recognize the congruence (or lack of) between their felt emotions and the emotions required by the encounter. After this perception, employees may deploy one of three acting strategies – surface acting, deep acting, or natural emotional expression. Below, I will detail and discuss the antecedents and consequences of each

strategy. Specifically, I will note employee outcomes, organizational outcomes, and customer outcomes.

Surface acting and deep acting
From the employee's perspective, surface acting is known for being draining and categorized as a discongruent emotional labor strategy (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). The notion that surface acting is draining connects one of the most prominent theoretical mechanisms in emotional labor literature – conservation of resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989). The central tenet of COR is that individuals seek to protect or maintain their resources (objects, characteristics, anything that people value; Malik & Garg, 2020). When individuals do not have resources, negative outcomes accrue. Since surface acting is draining, negative outcomes accrue due to a lack of resources that comes with surface acting.

Some of the most studied negative outcomes of surface acting involve burnout or variables related to burnout such as depersonalization (Beal et al., 2006), decreased personal accomplishment (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011), and emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2003; Goodwin et al., 2011). Other negative outcomes may occur such as absenteeism, decreased job satisfaction, and decreased performance (Aw et al., 2020). Over time, the negative outcomes of surface acting can lead to turnover intentions (Chau et al., 2009) and turnover (Goodwin et al., 2011). In fact, the relationship between surface acting and negative outcomes is seemingly the most studied emotional labor relationship, with four recent meta-analyses detailing surface acting and various negative employee outcomes (Bono & Vey, 2005; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2011). These meta-analyses underscore the negative impact of surface acting. As a result of surface acting, employees face psychological strain and psychosomatic complaints (Hülsheger & Shewe, 2011). Employees may also feel general stress or exhaustion (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). In short, surface acting is draining

for employees. However, recent research suggests that employees may surface act as a result of being emotionally exhausted (Lavelle et al., 2021). In a time-lagged study, Lavelle and colleagues determined that previous research indicating that surface acting leads to emotional labor should be re-examined. Through two studies the authors sought to understand if emotional exhaustion could prompt surface acting. This is directly opposite of previous theoretical and empirical findings that suggest that surface acting leads to emotional exhaustion. In their first study, the authors investigated the effects of customer injustice on employee performance, using emotional exhaustion and then surface acting as mediators. Findings of study one suggested that emotional exhaustion indeed led to surface acting. To strengthen and extend these findings, the authors conducted another, time lagged study across four time points to test the relationship again. The second study also included a different sample and focused on customer oriented counterproductive work behaviors rather than employee performance. Ultimately, their findings suggest that emotional exhaustion is an antecedent to surface acting, and not just an outcome. Taken together, the stream of research on surface acting and employee outcomes depicts a spiral of resource loss. Employees face numerous factors such as emotional exhaustion or perceived misfit that leaves them without resources to engage in a beneficial acting strategy. As a result of engaging in surface acting, resources are continuously drained. In the short term, employees face negative outcomes, such as those related to burnout. In the long run, employees may face more negative, chronic, outcomes such as turnover or turnover intentions.

Deep acting is conceptualized as an antecedent-focused form of emotional regulation (Gross, 1998). Deep acting involves genuine effort on the employee's behalf to display and actually feel the emotions required by the interaction. In other words, deep acting involves regulation occurring before the naturally felt emotion can develop (Hülsheger & Shewe, 2011).

According to COR, employees who have an ample number of resources will deep act. As a result, deep acting sustains resources. Thus, when employees deep act, positive outcomes generally accrue. For example, deep acting positively impacts affective delivery, which is defined as the expression of desired emotions (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Chi & Grandey, 2019). Deep acting also negatively impacts turnover intentions (Chau et al., 2009). Deep acting is also associated with less stress and exhaustion than surface acting (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Although deep acting is preferable to surface acting, it is not the most ideal acting strategy. Indeed, deep acting still requires the use of employee resources, which is taxing to employees (Humphrey et al., 2015). Evidence of deep acting not being as positive as previously theorized can be found in a few studies. For example, deep acting has been found to be unrelated to depersonalization and negatively related to a sense of personal accomplishment (Wang et al., 2011). Similarly, deep acting has been found to be nearly unrelated to impaired well-being and job attitudes (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). Thus, some studies indicate that the link between deep acting and positive outcomes is not as clear cut as theorized. Despite the recent work indicating that the relationships between deep acting and positive employee outcomes are more nuanced, there is little work investigating this. Thus, future work in emotional labor literature could address the downside of deep acting and focus on the mechanisms driving these relationships.

Breaking character

Generally, researchers interested in emotion often disregard negative emotions (Glomb & Hulin, 1998). This is unfortunate since negative emotions are commonly experienced in the workplace. In other words, current emotional labor literature does not fully investigate a variety of negative emotions. As previously stated, when employees cannot deploy an acting strategy, they may break character. In other words, when employees expose their true, negative feelings to

customers, they break character (Grandey, 2003). The research on breaking character is scant. The current investigation aligns with the root of the definition of breaking character and will frame the exploration of breaking character only in a role in which integrative display rules are present. In other words, this investigation focuses on breaking character in customer facing roles in which employees are encouraged to express positive emotion and suppress negative emotions.

To theorize about the impact that breaking character may have on an individual, it is important to consider similar variables, such as: customer sabotage, CWBs, and deviance. The literature focusing on these constructs can lead us to believe that, perhaps, breaking character may be a complex within-person phenomenon worthy of further investigation. For example, employees who respond to customer mistreatment with CWBs may see positive outcomes, despite organizations desiring employees to not engage in any form of CWBs. Specifically, multiple studies note the paradoxical act of employees engaging in CWBs or venting as a form of coping with customer mistreatment (Yang & Diefendorff, 2009; Krischer et al., 2010; Rosen et al., 2021). Subsequently, employees may be able to reduce their emotional exhaustion (Krischer et al., 2010). These examples underscore the potential for breaking character to be more of a paradoxical act for employees in organizations who are attempting to effectively cope with customer mistreatment.

The performance of customer facing employees is often said to be contingent upon adherence to display rules (Grandey & Diamond, 2010). Thus, breaking character should result in negative outcomes for all parties. The theoretical mechanism driving this relationship has roots in the dramaturgical perspective (Grove & Fisk, 1989). According to this perspective, an employee-customer encounter is like that of a performance. When employees break character and expose their true negative emotions, they expose to the customer that the performance was

fake all along (Grandey, 2003). As a result of a ruined performance, the customer-organization relationship may be damaged. A damaged relationship may result in negative perceptions about the organization, and potential future interactions with the organization (Porath et al., 2010). Although researchers have theorized negative outcomes to be associated with breaking character, little empirical research confirms these propositions. To date, only a handful of investigations focus on breaking character specifically. There are also some, however, that focus on the expression of negative emotion without the explicit mentioning of breaking character. These studies overwhelmingly focus on the expression of anger. This is not surprising, since anger is commonly experienced (Fitness, 2000; Moura et al., 2015). In fact, as previously stated, in a two-week study, 40-50% of people experience anger causing events (Grandey et al., 2002; Booth et al., 2017). Of the people that experience anger causing events, 42% express their anger and only 9% controlled their anger (Booth et al., 2017). These findings suggest that breaking character may occur more frequently than researchers consider. Unfortunately, Booth and colleagues did not consider expressing anger at a customer. The authors report that of those who expressed anger, individuals targeted their anger at managers, coworkers, and subordinates fairly equally (32%, 43%, and 21%, respectively). This finding underscores the need for researchers to explicitly focus on negative emotional expression at different parties. To my knowledge, only one study (Hershcovis & Bhatnagar, 2017) exists that examines the perceptions of third parties that witness customer mistreatment, specifically incorporating how the employee responds. Out of three studies the authors conducted, study three explored how employee responses to customer mistreatment impact perceptions of third parties. The authors found that, when employees respond uncivilly (e.g., having more aggressive behaviors, such as snatching money away from the customer), they are less likely to see an increase in tips of receive supportive behaviors or

positive evaluations from the third party (Hershcovis & Bhatnagar, 2017). Although Hershcovis and Bhatnagar (2017) begin to unpack the dynamics at play in third party perceptions, their research does not explore some key factors that are potentially present and result-altering. First, the authors do not explicitly frame their argumentation through a lens of emotional labor. Instead, their argument only has roots in injustice. Second, the authors do not explicitly define and name the incivility of the employee. The vignette describing the employee's response could be identified as sabotage, breaking character, or incivility. Finally, the authors do not explore the differential effects that negative emotions could have. As previously stated, one of the major contributions of this dissertation directly addresses the shortcoming of not exploring differential effects of negative emotions.

Of the investigations explicitly about breaking character, the focus is on the antecedents of breaking character rather than the outcomes. For example, breaking character may occur in response to employee exhaustion (Grandey, 2003). Another study indicates that breaking character (or in this case, trouble adhering with display rules) can also occur as a result of dealing with difficult customers (Rupp & Spencer, 2006), or blatant customer mistreatment (Nguyen & Besson, 2021). This seems intuitive, since a main cause of anger is unjust treatment (Fitness, 2000). Rupp and Spencer (2006) use AET to combine the multifoci model of justice and emotional labor literature. The authors hypothesized that customer interpersonal injustice, undeserved, irrational mistreatment (Bies, 2001), impacts justice perceptions, followed by emotions, and then emotional labor. Specifically, the authors found that when customers treat employees unfairly, employees perceive injustice, followed by more anger or less happiness. Subsequently, in some instances, employees can continue acting. For example, although customer mistreatment leads employees to feel angry, they may respond by faking their emotions

during the encounter (Grandey et al., 2002). In other instances, however, employees who are

mistreated by customers may have trouble adhering to display rules (Rupp & Spencer, 2006).

Thus, to empirically examine the effects of breaking character, customer mistreatment should be

included as a critical contextual variable.

Customer Mistreatment

Customer mistreatment is a type of interpersonal mistreatment, ranging in type and

intensity, in which customers treat employees unfairly (Amarnani et al., 2019). Customer

mistreatment is common among customer facing employees and ever-increasing (Harris &

Ogbonna, 2006). In fact, customer mistreatment occurs more frequently than coworker

mistreatment (Grandey, Kern, & Frone, 2007), often occurring several times a day for customer

facing employees (Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004).

There are multiple factors driving the occurrence of customer mistreatment. Customers

may mistreat employees when they are dissatisfied or perceive that there has been a service

failure (Ferguson & Johnson, 2011; Sliter & Jones, 2016). Customers may also treat employees

unfairly simply due to a foul mood or sense of entitlement (Sliter & Jones, 2016). Customer

mistreatment conveys certain messages to victims. For example, customer mistreatment implies

incompetence, dislike, and disrespect (Armani et al., 2019). Due to the interpersonal aspects of

customer mistreatment, employees often feel negative or moral-related responses. These

responses are rooted in deontological theories of justice (Folger, 2001; Bies & Tripp, 1996,

2001). This theory places an emphasis on justice being important simply because people deserve

to be treated with respect and dignity. In other words, deontology focuses on fairness in

accordance with moral rules of society (Folger, 2001; Bies & Tripp, 2001). According to

deontological theories of justice, all people have a sense of what is right and wrong. Thus,

treatment does not need to threaten economic interest or self-interest to be deemed unfair.

Instead, deontology suggests that everyone should be treated in a fair, just way (Folger, 2001; Bernerth & Walker, 2012). The findings on deontology are vast and indicate that a moral sense of right and wrong is powerful. The sense of moral justice is so strong that some people engage in self-sacrificing behaviors for the sake of doing what is deemed right (Turillo et al., 2002). Thus, in response to customer mistreatment, employees have deontological responses. For example, employees may feel increased anger or decreased happiness (Rupp & Spencer, 2006). Similarly, employees may feel moral outrage and loss of resources (Hobfoll, 1989; Cropanzano et al., 2003; Amarnani et al., 2019).

Some employees react to customer mistreatment by offering restitution (Jerger & Wirtz, 2017). A response such as offering restitution is desirable by the organization, since the encounter may resolve in a healthy, productive way. Other employees, however, respond in more undesirable ways such as reducing their performance (Sliter et al., 2010; Rafaeli et al., 2012). When employees reduce their performance in response to customer mistreatment, it hurts the organization and the employee. Further, a reduction in performance may extend into the next customer encounter, which will lead to negative customer outcomes such as decreased satisfaction or loyalty intentions. Other employees may react by withdrawing from their work (Sliter et al., 2012; Shao & Skarlicki, 2014). Much like reduced performance, employees who withdrawal in response to customer mistreatment may hurt the organization in the short and long run.

Finally, employees may respond to customer mistreatment with customer sabotage. In fact, customer sabotage is seemingly one of the most common responses to customer mistreatment, with many investigations focusing on sabotage (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Rupp & Spencer, 2006; Skarlicki et al., 2008; Groth & Grandey, 2012; Skarlicki et al., 2016). When

employees respond to customer mistreatment with customer sabotage, they are aligning the

target of their injustice response to the source of the injustice (Lavelle et al., 2007).

Unfortunately, when employees respond to customer mistreatment with customer sabotage, they

are engaging in a tit for tat downward spiral of incivility that can prompt conflict escalation

(Groth & Grandey, 2012; Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Although employees responding to

mistreatment with decreased performance, increased withdrawal, and customer sabotage is

realistic and certainly practical, much of the current research does not investigate emotional

responses to mistreatment. This is unfortunate since reactions to mistreatment can be emotional

(Amarnani et al., 2019). While the research on how customer mistreatment influences employees

is vast, less is known about the outcomes of witnessing these encounters. Further, even less

attention has been paid to how third parties view employee responses to customer mistreatment.

Third-Party Observers Perceptions and Emotional Appraisal

The interest in third party reactions to injustice is a newer development in the justice

literature (Blader et al., 2013). Although this stream of research is relatively new, investigating

third party reactions to justice is known as having broad implications to the literature (O'Reilly

& Aquino, 2011; Rupp & Bell, 2010; Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004; Turillo et al., 2002; Zhu et al.,

2012). When third parties witness mistreatment, incivility, or negative encounters they first

become aware of mistreatment (O'reilly & Aquino, 2011). Then, they feel a sense of moral

wrongdoing (O'Reilly & Aquino, 2011). When third parties become aware of mistreatment and

feel that there has been moral wrongdoing, they may go through cognitive or emotional

appraisals (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004). Then, third parties will feel motivated to avoid or approach

the situation, and finally, they will act (O'Reilly & Aquino, 2011). In summary, when third-party

observers witness mistreatment, they go through a process that starts with the recognition that

mistreatment has occurred and ends with potential action. Because the process of third-party

observations has several steps, various investigations focus on different parts of the process or different attributes of the third-party observer that may impact perceptions. Below, I will provide an overview of the third-party observation literature – starting with the roles of third-party observers, then typical responses, then common mediators, and finally, moderators.

The notion that third parties feel a sense of moral wrongdoing relates again back to deontic theories of justice. In other words, third parties who witness customer mistreatment may play the role of a deontic agent, acting in the name of fairness (Beugre, 2010; Hershcovis & Bhatnagar, 2017). Witnessing mistreatment can lead to a variety of outcomes. For example, people who are insiders may feel drained (Totterdell et qal., 2012), whereas outsiders may generate negative generalizations about the parties (Porath et al., 2010). Specifically, when customers witness incivility among two employees, customers create negative perceptions surrounding the people who work at the organization, the organization itself, and potential future encounters with the organization (Porath et al., 2010). Third parties form perceptions of other types of injustice as well (Skarlicki et al., 1998), and may try to protect coworkers in response to witnessing injustice (Priesemuth & Schminke, 2019). Similar outcomes occur when third-party observers witness customer mistreatment. For example, some third-party observers may confront perpetrators (customers) or support victims (employees) (Hershcovis et al., 2017). Studying third-party observers who are customers is critical for several reasons. First, third-party observers who are customers are of the same power level as another customer. As such, power can initiate a need to behave in a prosocial way, or make the third-party observer feel responsible to act as a deontic agent (Magee & Langer, 2008; Hershcovis et al., 2017).

Research indicates numerous mediating mechanisms in the relationship between third-party observer's witnessing mistreatment and subsequent outcomes. Like employees who are

targets of mistreatment, third-party observers may feel emotions that mediate the relationship

between witnessed mistreatment and subsequent outcomes. For example, Hershcovis and

Bhatnagar (2017) found that empathy mediates the relationship between witnessed mistreatment

and victim support, evaluations, and tips. The authors also found that moral anger mediated the

relationship between witnessed mistreatment and transgressor treatment intentions. The

transgressor intentions the authors measured were related to how the third party would treat the

customer who mistreated the employee. For example, the third parties indicated if they would

treat the transgressor kindly or if they would scowl at the customer.

Another study by Hershcovis and colleagues (2017) focused on third-party observer's

perceptions of customer mistreatment. However, the authors sought to uncover the mechanisms

at play pertaining to power and responsibility. Across three studies, the authors found that third-

party observers being on the same power-level as other customers may serve as a motivating

factor in their responses to witnessing customer mistreatment. The authors found that the

perceived power the third-party observers felt led to a sense of felt responsibility. The authors

found that felt responsibility mediated the relationship between power and subsequent outcomes,

which included increased likelihood of confronting the perpetrator and decreased avoidance of

the customer mistreatment encounter (Hershcovis et al., 2017).

There are multiple moderating factors that may impact the relationship between third

party perceptions and outcomes. Generally, these factors relate back to the third party's need for

information. Since third parties are not getting their information firsthand, third parties act based

on certain cues of the encounter. First, the power dynamics between the transgressor and victim

are important. Third parties are more likely to intervene when they perceive that the victim is not

able to do so (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004). In other words, when victims do not have power, third

parties are more likely to step in. In fact, third parties that are in a higher position of power than victims are likely to intervene (Hershcovis et al., 2017). The notion of power dynamics impacting third-party observer perceptions also relates to resources. Much like a lack of power, a lack of resources on a victim's behalf potentially causes third parties to intervene (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004).

Second, victim attributes impact third party perceptions and outcomes. In other words, there is a type of ideal victim from a third party's perspective (Bosma et al., 2018). The ideal victim may express certain emotions. For example, when victims are sad, they are seen more positively than when they are angry (Bosma et al., 2018). Also, women are typically viewed more positively as victims than men are (Bosma et al., 2018). According to the similarity attraction paradigm, third parties may also be more motivated to help victims if they share similarities with them (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004) For example, third parties may side with victims that they like, share traits with, share experiences with, or share work roles with (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004). People tend to punish people who deserve to be punished (Heuer et al., 1999). Thus, third parties may side with the victim or transgressor depending on the attribution of blame (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004). Taken together, these suggestions indicate the following: (1) emotions expressed by victims; (2) power dynamics; and (4) contextual factors, such as attribution of blame can all impact the relationship between third party perceptions and outcomes.

Study 1: A within-employee investigation of breaking character
Customer mistreatment

I first explore the process of breaking character from the employee's perspective with a qualitative study. Customer mistreatment is common and ever-increasing (Harris & Ogbonna, 2006). Customer-facing employees such as bank tellers, retail workers, or restaurant servers as more likely to be victims of customer mistreatment, given their exposure to customers. Thus, it is

not surprising that most studies to date frame customer mistreatment as a key antecedent to employees breaking character. As previously stated, there are many types of customer mistreatment. Customer facing positions often have many short encounters with customers – this may range from several minutes, as is the case for cashiers or bank tellers, or potentially hours, as is the case for call center representatives or flight attendants. Thus, the duration of mistreatment can certainly vary in duration. Although, the duration should not exceed hours, as may be the case for employees who are not customer facing and face mistreatment from their peers or bosses all day every day. The type of mistreatment is likely to vary between verbal and physical. Of course, for jobs in which there is physical distance, customer mistreatment is likely to manifest as verbal attacks. However, many customer facing jobs do involve physical interaction. Thus, although verbal mistreatment may be the most common, physical mistreatment (i.e., throwing objects, shoving, etc.) may still occur. In summary, scholars have an idea as to what can cause breaking character, but beyond customer mistreatment, little is known. Further, with numerous types of customer mistreatment being studied, it is important to understand if a specific type of mistreatment prompts breaking character. Thus, I propose the following questions. First, I would like to ask if customer mistreatment causes breaking character, or if there are other antecedents? Second, I would like to know more about the specifics of the customer mistreatment that employees endure prior to breaking character.

Research Question 1: What causes breaking character?

Research Question 2: What kind of customer mistreatment do employees endure?

Types of negative emotional expression

The definition of breaking character does not specify the type of the negative emotion that is expressed. Anger is positioned as being the most likely negative emotion to be expressed

for two reasons: (1) anger is common, especially in the United States (Fitness, 2000; Moura et al., 2015); (2) anger is a common response to mistreatment (Fitness, 2000). However, it is conceivable that employees may break character with other negative emotions, such as sadness (Taylor et al., 2022) or frustration. Sadness can be felt in times that there is a perceived failure of a goal (Lench et al., 2011; Lench et al., 2016). The customer-employee interaction has been conceptualized from a goal approach. Thus, since customer disappointment can be seen as failure of a goal, employees feeling or expressing sadness as a result seems logical. This lack of achieving goals may also manifest in employee frustration. Much like sadness, frustration is categorized as a more "uncertain" emotion to experience (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). However, frustration seems nestled between sadness and anger regarding the perception of control (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). While this framework may provide us with an idea as to which negative emotions are expressed, it does not necessarily tell us what breaking character can look like. Emotional expressions can be both verbal and non-verbal. Consider the image of an angry person – you may think of someone with a scouring face and someone who is yelling or speaking in an intense, stern tone. The definition of breaking character as well as the measure do not provide evidence of what breaking character looks like in practice. Thus, I propose the following research question:

Research Question 3: What does breaking character look like?

When individuals experience mistreatment, a variety of psychological processes can ensue. For example, people may feel drained of their energy, they may feel incompetent (Amarnani et al., 2019; Tiedens, 2001), or ruminate, ultimately making internal attributions about themselves (Baranik et al.,2017). When employees break character, this may very well amplify these feelings, as the employees are only compounding an already undesirable situation.

Again, recall notion that customer interactions are goals to be achieved, perhaps breaking character will also feel like a failure of a goal to an employee, especially since they are so aware of display rules and the organization's desire to adhere to those display rules. This potential process is similar to the findings suggesting that venting makes individuals stew in their anger longer, rather than feeling relief from their emotional release (Bushman, 2002; Xia et al., 2015)

However, there is also a chance that breaking character may lead to positive employee outcomes. For example, employees who cope by engaging in behaviors such as deviance and withdrawal experience resource restoration in the form of halting increasing emotional exhaustion (Krischer et al., 2010). Similarly, employees who vent in response to customer mistreatment may feel better (Barclay & Skarlicki, 2009; McCance et al., 2013; Stickney & Geddes, 2014). These findings can be summed up in the following way: employees sometimes see a benefit from engaging in undesirable behaviors in response to customer mistreatment. Specifically, employees may find a way to stop resource drain or even restore resources through these paradoxical acts. Thus, the same could be said for breaking character. For employees, the current status quo is to experience a drain of resources via customer mistreatment as well as through acting. However, when employees break character, there may be a sense of restored justice, autonomy, and healthy coping that ultimately benefits the employee and makes the subsequent customer interactions more likely to be positive. In fact, a recent book chapter posits a similar logic in which breaking character can lead to resilience for employees who face customer mistreatment (Taylor et al., 2022). In summary, it seems that employees may or may not benefit from breaking character. Thus, it is important to understand when employees feel justified and perhaps, positively about their breaking character as opposed to ashamed, or feeling as if they did not meet their 'goal' of a successful customer encounter.

Research Question 4: How do employees feel about breaking character?

The role of external parties

As mentioned previously, customer-employee encounters do not happen in a vacuum. In fact, numerous studies factor in the role of coworkers, supervisors, and other external parties to the emotional labor process. For example, McCance et al., (2013) underscore the importance of social sharing after an experience of customer mistreatment. In their study, participants found relief when they shared about the facts of the occurrence, their subsequent feelings, or the potential positives of the situation. Another recent study by DiCicco-Bloom & Dicicco-Bloom (2018) investigated the role of supervisors in emotional labor. Their qualitative study results echo McCance et al., (2013): external parties to the employee-customer interaction (in this case, supervisors), can significantly impact the emotional labor of employees. Spencer and Rupp (2009) also provide evidence of the impact of coworkers on each other's emotional labor. Specifically, the authors find that employees respond with increased emotional labor even in cases in which their coworkers, and not themselves, are the target of customer mistreatment. Taken together, these findings suggest that coworkers and supervisors will likely also play a role in the employee experience of breaking character. Perhaps employees will protect or defend someone who just broke character or will be a "shoulder to cry on" after the fact.

Research Question 5: What other elements/parties matter in this phenomenon?

Study 2: Exploring the impact of breaking character on third parties

As previously stated, the idea that customer-employee interactions can be witnessed by others is logical. In fact, it seems that, based on the evidence above, it is common for coworkers or supervisors to bear witness to these encounters. However, other customers may also be present

as well. Customer mistreatment encounters can be emotional and have the potential to draw outsider attention and become a very public encounter. Thus, the notion of customer mistreatment spawning a public encounter and garnering outsider attention, suggests that third-party observers are important when researching the effects of customer mistreatment. Indeed, third-party observers are instrumental in amending mistreatment (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004) and have been found to engage, behave, or feel a certain way in response to witnessing mistreatment. The role of third-party observers can be attributed to deonance. According to deonance theory, stemming from the Greek word for "duty", people react to injustice simply because injustice violates social and moral norms or rules (Folger, 2001; Bies & Tripp, 2001). In the current context, third-party observers are motivated by deontic justice – they are acting or behaving in a way that is just, regardless of their involvement, or lack thereof in the encounter. When third-party observers amend mistreatment, they can respond by aiding the victim through positive service evaluations or through larger tips (Priesemuth, 2013; Hershcovis & Bhatnagar, 2017). Following this logic, I hypothesize the following:

H1: Participants who witness customers mistreat employees will report higher (a) Intent to Return and (b) willingness to tip compared to participants who do not witness customers mistreat employees.

According to the dramaturgical perspective, the customer-employee encounter is a performance of sorts, in which employees put on a show to have a successful customer interaction (Grove & Fisk, 1989; Hochschild, 1983; Grandey, 2003). Employees who are customer facing often engage in an acting strategy to adhere to display rules, which are explicit or implicit rules indicating which emotions are to be expressed or suppressed in customer encounters (Matsumoto, 1990, 1993). When employees are effective in their performance,

positive outcomes such as repeat business or positive service perceptions accrue (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Pugh, 2001). A customer's intention to return is of critical importance for organizations. For example, repeat customers bring in more revenue than first time customers (BIA Advisory Services, 2014), and repeat customers are easier to sell to (Brown, 2014). Thus, organizations have great interest in understanding what keeps customer intention to return high. Customers who hold high intentions to return are signaling that they have a relationship with the organization (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Similarly, a customer's positive service experiences may take the form of tips (Chi et al., 2011). Tips are an important factor in customer facing jobs, since they provide financial gain for the employee, and they serve as a proxy for service effectiveness (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). For example, people generally tip more when they feel their server has been effective at their job. When employees break character, however, negative outcomes may accrue. For example, employees breaking character or, expressing negative emotions, may damage the customer-organization relationship (Bailey & McCollough, 2000) due to customers being aware that the "performance" is ruined. Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

H2: Participants who witness their server break character with anger or sadness will report lower (a) ITR and (b) willingness to tip compared to participants who witness their server adhere to display rules

There is only one study that I know of that addresses third-party observers witnessing mistreatment, taking into account how the employee responds. In instances in which employees respond to mistreatment with civility, positive outcomes, such as increased tips accrue (Hershcovis & Bhatnagar, 2017). When employees respond to mistreatment in an uncivil way, however, positive outcomes do not accrue (Hershcovis & Bhatnagar, 2017). Although an uncivil response is not identical to breaking character, the idea that responding to mistreatment in a

negative way positively reinforces the dramaturgical perspective. In the context of Hershcovis and Bhatnagar's (2017) work, results indicate that employees responding in an uncivil way ruins the "performance". Another study by Kundro and colleagues (2021) looks at customer sexual harassment, which can be conceptualized as a type of mistreatment and employee emotional labor response. Although, the article by Kundro and colleagues (2021) does not investigate this relationship through a third-party perspective. Further, Kundro and colleagues explore a high and low emotional labor condition in which participants were shown one of two pictures – an employee smiling, or an employee with a neutral face. Ultimately, the authors found that there is an interaction between structural power and emotional labor such that when employees are more dependent on tips and expressively deferent to customers, the more likely customers are to engage in sexual harassment. Kundro and colleagues note that deference is signaled when employees engage in adhering to positive display rules, since deference reinforces the notion that the customer is always right. Thus, Kundro and colleagues' findings indicate that adhering to display rules is seemingly detrimental to employee's well-being in that deference can lead to sexual harassment.

In the current context, in line with the dramaturgical perspective, adhering to display rules should be the ideal response for third-party observers. When third-party observers witness an encounter in which an employee was mistreated followed by employee adherence to display rules, positive outcomes should be maximized. Specifically, in such an instance, third-party observers will seek to (1) reward adherence to the dramaturgical perspective and (2) rectify mistreatment that has roots in deontology. The two reasons lead to two outcomes. First, third-party observers who witness a customer mistreat an employee followed by an employee adhering to display rules should have an increased intent to return. In the current context, it is expected

that employees reacting to mistreatment in a way that adheres to the dramaturgical perspective will lead third-party observers to maintain their established bond with the organization. Customers may also respond by increasing their tips given to the employee. When third-party observers witness customer mistreatment, they may want to aid the victim in the form of a discretionary behavior such as tipping (Hershcovis & Bhatnagar, 2017). The act of aiding the victim taps into deontic justice, in which the third-party observer acts as an agent to restore justice. In the current context, I hypothesize a similar relationship in which employees who adhere to display rules following mistreatment are rewarded by third-party observers via increased tips.

When people express negative emotions, they are seen as being less effective in their role. For example, when leaders express negative emotions, observers rate their effectiveness as a leader lower (Lewis, 2000). Similarly, customers may view the employee as being ineffective. According to the dramaturgical perspective, breaking character ruins the performance between the employee and the customer. Thus, breaking character, should consistently result in negative outcomes due to a damaged customer relationship. Specifically, after a third-party observer witnesses an employee break character in response to being mistreated, they will have lower intent to return, perceptions of service performance, and tips, because they will perceive a ruined performance and subsequently, ruined customer-organization relationship.

H3a: Witnessing customer mistreatment followed by display rule adherence results in greater (a) intent to return and (b) willingness to tip compared to witnessing customer mistreatment followed by expressing anger or sadness

H3b: Observers will respond more favorably (i.e., greater (a) ITR and (b) willingness to tip) to breaking character with anger (sadness) when the employee has been mistreated compared to when the employee has not been mistreated

When third-party observers witness an interaction, they seek out information. Thus, the emotions being expressed can serve as an informational mechanism, sending signals to third parties. More specifically, the type of negative emotion expressed may differ in the signals it sends. The definition of breaking character is simple - only stating that breaking character occurs when employees express true, negative emotion. However, there are many negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, frustration, guilt, etc. Thus, the specific emotion a victim expresses may impact third party perceptions. Emotional stimuli garner more attention than natural stimuli (Derryberry & Tucker, 1994; Pratto & John, 1991). As such, there are emotion-specific frameworks that may explain the outcomes of such stimuli. The cognitive appraisal of emotions framework suggests that emotions vary along multiple continuums (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Anger, for example, provides signals of certainty and control. Smith and Ellsworth's (1985) work notes that the negative emotional feelings and signals are from the perspective of the individual feeling those emotions. However, other research indicates that the signals associated with negative emotions extend to observers as well. For example, angry people are seen as powerful, dominant, and threatening (Clark et al., 1996; Knutson, 1996; Tiedens, 2001). In other words, anger can signal that an individual is ready to attack (Esteves et al., 1994). Sadness, on the other hand, signals a lack of certainty and control. People who express sadness are perceived as submissive and in need of help (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Clark et al., 1996; Knutson, 1996; Tiedens, 2001). The cognitive appraisal of emotions framework holds up in various studies exploring how emotions send signals and impact perceptions of observers. For example, victims

who express anger are viewed more negatively by observers than those who express sadness (Bosma et al., 2017). In a study of over 300 participants, Bosma and colleagues concluded that, victim impact statements in which victims expressed sadness were rated more positively by participants than victim impact statements in which victims expressed anger. A similar study conducted by Wrede and colleagues (2015) shows similar findings. Across two experiments, the authors found that victims who expressed sadness were perceived as needing more support than those who expressed anger. Further, these findings applied in various contexts, including audio, video, and text. Thus, the impact of victim emotions in response to a transgression seemingly impacts third-party perceptions even through mediums that are not happening live.

Again, since sadness signals vulnerability, victims do not face the same outcomes as victims that express anger, mainly because signals of powerlessness, passivity, and vulnerability help victims (Dunn, 2008; Lamb, 1999). The finding that sadness produces less intense negative outcomes and potentially positive outcomes can be attributed to sadness being aligned with the ideal victim. According to Christie (1986), ideal victims are those that are weak. Since sadness signals powerlessness, observers should rate sadness more positively than they rate anger. Thus, when employees break character in response to customer mistreatment with sadness as opposed to anger, they may not face as negative of an outcome.

When third parties witness mistreatment, there are mediating mechanisms present as well that explain the processes linking perceptions to subsequent outcomes. For example, as previously explained, third parties may be driven by a sense of felt responsibility to respond to incivility (Hershovis et al., 2017). The sense of felt obligation or responsibility may stem from power differences (Sassenberg et al., 2012). As a result of felt responsibility, third parties may take an active or passive approach – confronting the perpetrator, downplaying the incident, or

offering support to the target. There are two reasons why, for the sake of this study, I will not hypothesize or theorize about third party intervention. First, the main focus of the study is breaking character, not customer mistreatment. Thus, I am more interested in how third parties will punish or not punish employees and the organization when employees break character. Second, bystander intervention is seemingly an uncommon phenomenon (Hershcovis et al., 2017). Hershcovis and colleagues (2017) report that of 45 witnessed mistreatment interactions, only five participants actively intervened in the mistreatment, which suggests that intervention is an uncommon response for third-party observers. Instead, third parties are likely to respond by aiding the victim through acts such as increasing their tips (Hershcovis et al., 2017) Thus, studying third-party observer actions that are less intervention focused, such as tips or ratings of service seem more appropriate than studying a potential to act or intervene and confront a transgressor. Although that third-party observer research may benefit from further investigating why intervention is unlikely, again, the focus of the current dissertation is breaking character. Thus, I will only focus on third-party observer's actions that do not deal with intervening directly with the transgressor.

Empathy

When third parties act as a deontic agent, they feel other emotions aside from anger (O'Reilly & Aquino, 2011; Hershcovis & Bhatnagar, 2017). For example, it is possible for the third party to feel sympathy and compassion for a victim (Mitchell et al., 2015). Third- party observers also react to witnessed mistreatment with empathy (Hershcovis & Bhatnagar, 2017). Hershcovis and Bhatnagar (2017) suggest that empathy was more commonly experienced by witnesses than anger. Thus, I expect to find a similar relationship in which empathy plays mediating role in the relationship between employee's responses to customer mistreatment and

subsequent outcomes. Empathy emerges as a result of witnessing or perceiving another's distress (Batson et al., 1987; Batson et al., 1988). Customer empathy, the ability for a customer to take the perspective of an employee and react appropriately to an employee's thoughts and feelings (Wieseke et al., 2012), can mitigate negative thoughts or feelings in a bad employee-customer interaction (Wieseke et al., 2012). Empathy can be used as a mediating mechanism in this relationship for two reasons. First, as previously explained, empathy is likely to emerge in response to witnessing mistreatment. Second, empathy results in prosocial behaviors. Specifically, empathy results in helping behaviors or the desire to increase another individual's welfare (Batson et al., 1987; Batson & Shaw, 1991). Further, empathy can provide motivation to forgive another individual (Penner et al., 2005). In the current context, third parties should feel empathy in response to witnessing customer mistreatment regardless of employee emotional labor response. However, these relationships will vary in strength. In line with the dramaturgical perspective, third parties that witness mistreatment followed by employee adherence should feel the most empathy. When employees break character with anger, third parties may still feel empathy. However, due to the signals that expressing anger sends, third parties will not experience as much empathy as they would. More specifically, since empathy arises in response to perceiving another's suffering (Batson et al., 1987), and anger does not indicate suffering, a third-party observer's empathy should be dampened. Finally, if third parties witness mistreatment followed by an employee breaking character with sadness, they will feel more empathy than if the employee had broken character with anger. Much like the previously laid out arguments, the signals sadness sends should bolster the felt emotion of third-party observers. Thus, in the current context, employees who break character with sadness will be signaling

suffering, which should influence a third-party observer's empathy. Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

H4: Empathy mediates the relationship between third-party observers witnessing customer mistreatment and third-party ratings of (a) Intent to return and (b) willingness to tip

H5: Employee emotional response moderates the indirect effect of customer mistreatment on (a) ITR and (b) willingness to tip through empathy, such that the relationship is stronger (weaker) when employees adhere to display rules (break character with sadness or anger)

Moral Anger

Typically, third-party observers experience a similar reaction as the victim of mistreatment, only less intense (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004). Thus, third parties may experience anger in response to mistreatment, since mistreatment induces anger (Fitness, 2000; Moura et al., 2016). Third-party observers experiencing anger is logical, given that customer mistreatment is rooted in deontic justice (Folger, 2001; Hershcovis et al., 2017). Moral anger, a temporary emotion arising in response to perceived injustice (O'Reilly & Aquino, 2011) is the primary emotion felt in response to moral violations (Folger, 2001). In other words, moral anger arises as a result of perceived fairness violations (e.g., Gutierrez & Giner-Sorolla, 2007; Horberg, et al., 2009; Rozin et al., 1999), Indeed, Hershcovis and colleagues (2017) hypothesized and found that moral anger mediated the relationship between third-party observers' perceptions of witnessed mistreatment and subsequent outcomes. Moral anger occurs when individuals perceive that transgressors acts harm another, and that those transgressors acted intentionally (Russell & Giner-Sorolla, 2011). In the current context, when third-party observers witness mistreatment, they should feel moral anger since they will perceive intentionality and harm on behalf of the

transgressor. Moral anger is known for being more impacted by contextual elements (Russell & Giner-Sorolla, 2011). One contextual element, perceptions of strength or resources has been shown to influence moral anger (Mackie et al., 2000). In the current context, employees are perceived as having less strength and resources compared to other customers. Thus, third-party observers should be aware of the power differentials at play. As a result, they perceive that the victim (the employee) is unable to respond. Moral anger prompts individuals to engage in corrective behaviors that seek to improve enacted injustice (Lindebaum & Geddes, 2016). As such, moral anger should be a mediating mechanism between a third-party witnessing mistreatment and their subsequent outcomes. Specifically, third-party observers will attempt to rectify mistreatment by increasing their intent to return, tips, and ratings of service performance.

When employees break character in response to customer mistreatment, anger should still be present as a mediating mechanism. Although, the relationship should not be as strong. Specifically, when employees break character with anger, third parties will perceive signals of dominance and aggression. The signals of dominance and aggression will dampen the previously explained argument, suggesting that third-party observers will perceive a lack of strength and resources. Subsequently, third parties may still feel anger due to customer mistreatment, but less anger than if the employee had adhered to display rules. When employees break character with sadness, third parties will perceive a signal of weakness and vulnerability. The signals of weakness and vulnerability should bolster felt moral anger since third-party observers will still perceive an inability to act, a lack of strength, and a lack of resources. Subsequently, third parties should feel more anger than they would if the employee broke character with anger. Taken together, I hypothesize the following:

H6: Moral anger mediates the relationship between third-party observers witnessing customer mistreatment and third-party ratings of (a) Intent to return and (b) willingness to tip

H7: Employee emotional response moderates the indirect effect of customer mistreatment on (a) ITR and (b) willingness to tip through moral anger, such that the relationship is stronger (weaker) when employees adhere to display rules (break character with sadness or anger)

Study 3: Exploring the impact of attribution of blame

According to the third-party model of injustice (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004), attribution of blame plays a role in third party perceptions. As previously stated, third-party observers are obtaining information second-hand, through observation alone. Thus, the more information they are provided with, the more their perceptions will be swayed one way or another. Third parties seek to attribute responsibility of the encounter to one of the parties (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004). In other words, when third parties are able to attribute blame, they are given the information they need to form a judgement. Third parties want to know if the outcome of the encounter was somehow justified in order to assign responsibility for outcomes (Ross & Fletcher, 1985; Shaver, 1970; Walster, 1966). In other words, attribution alters perceptions because attribution can indicate that injustice was or was not deserved (e.g., Buchanan & Matheiu, 1986; Cohen, 1986; Lerner, 1977; Mikula, 2001). This notion can be attributed to theorizing by Mikula (2003), who suggests that "the experience of injustice is associated towards an agent who…lead to unjust consequences (p. 794)". The work of Mikula (2003) and attribution also relates to fairness theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001). According to fairness theory, people want to hold someone accountable for injustice. In instances in which no one can be held accountable, there is no social injustice. Take for example, a natural disaster; no one is to blame and although the event may be

horrific, blame is not attributed to anyone. Skarlicki and Kulik (2004) and O'Reilly and Aquino (2011) both theorize that attribution of blame will alter third-party observer's perceptions. However, to my knowledge, empirical testing of these claims is scant. Thus, for this dissertation, I will theorize and test a basic application of attribution of blame. Following previous theorizing, I hypothesize that when third-party observers witness mistreatment in which blame can be attributed to something outside of the employees' control, deontic justice may increase. For example, if a third-party were to witness an interaction in which a customer was mistreating an employee for an order being incorrect, and the employee explained that the order was put in correctly by them, but the kitchen got it wrong, a third-party observer should feel that there was a greater moral wrongdoing. On the other hand, if an employee is seemingly "deserving" of mistreatment, a third-party observer will not feel as if there was a greater moral shortcoming, since the mistreatment will be seen as deserving. Thus, I hypothesize the following:

H8: Witnessing customer mistreatment that is not justified (i.e., blame is attributed to an external factor) results in greater (a) ITR and (b) willingness to tip compared to witnessing customer mistreatment that is justified (i.e., blame is attributed to the employee who was mistreated).

H9a: Witnessing customer mistreatment that is not justified (i.e.., blame is attributed to an external factor) followed by display rule adherence results in greater (a) intent to return and (b) willingness to tip compared to witnessing customer mistreatment that is justified followed by expressing anger or sadness

H9b: Observers will respond more favorably (i.e., greater (a) ITR and (b) willingness to tip) to breaking character with anger (sadness) when the customer mistreatment is not justified compared to when the customer mistreated is justified

As with study 2, I am hypothesizing mediating effects in which empathy and moral anger serve as parallel mediators. Study 2 only found support for empathy mediating the relationship between customer mistreatment and (a) ITR and (b) willingness to tip. One reason why moral anger may not have been significant is that participants were not sure if the customer was "rightfully" mistreating the employee. Thus, given the inclusion of attribution, we may be able to see a significant impact on moral anger. Thus, I hypothesize the following:

H10: Empathy mediates the relationship between attribution and (a) ITR and (b)
willingness to tip

H11: Moral anger mediates the relationship between attribution and (a) ITR and (b)
willingness to tip.

As previously explained, an employee's response to mistreatment should impact the results of third-party observer perceptions as well. Taking into account previously noted research on attribution and the dramaturgical perspective, when blame is placed on an external factor and employees continue to adhere to display rules, third parties should feel an increased sense of moral wrongdoing than they would if blame were attributed to the victim. Regarding breaking character, sadness should again result in more positive outcomes than breaking character with anger. When third parties can attribute blame to an external agent and subsequently see the employee break character with anger, they should feel that the employee is justified in their response. In other words, they may see breaking character as being acceptable in an instance in which the employee was mistreated due to a problem that was not their responsibility. When third parties can attribute blame to an external agent and subsequently see the employee break character with sadness, they will again feel that the employee is justified in expressing their

negative emotion. However, due to the signals that sadness sends, third parties should be more

forgiving of this negative emotional response than they were with anger. When third parties can

attribute responsibility to an employee, they should not feel as much more anger or empathy. In

other words, if third parties can attribute blame to the victim, they will see the customer

mistreatment as being justified. Subsequently, they should feel less empathy and anger since

customer mistreatment would be perceived as less of a moral violation. When blame can be

attributed to the employee and the employee responds to mistreatment by breaking character,

negative outcomes should accrue. Third parties will perceive the employee breaking character as

unjustified. Further, the employee's emotional response will be punished more since the third

party has enough information to know that the employee could have accepted responsibility for

the infraction.

H12: Employee emotional response moderates the indirect effect of attribution on (a) ITR

and (b) willingness to tip through empathy, such that the relationship is stronger (weaker) when

employees adhere to display rules (break character with sadness or anger)

H13: Employee emotional response moderates the indirect effect of attribution on (a) ITR

and (b) willingness to tip through moral anger, such that the relationship is stronger (weaker)

when employees adhere to display rules (break character with sadness or anger)

Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODS
Overview of Studies
Across three studies, I will investigate my research questions and hypotheses

about the phenomenon of breaking character. First, I qualitatively explore breaking character

from an employee lens. To do this, I interview 19 flight attendants and ask them about their

experiences on the job. Then I transcribe, code, and discuss the results of my findings. Second, I

conduct a quantitative exploration of the phenomenon of breaking character from a third-party observer lens. Specifically, students from a large Southern University participate in a 2 (mistreatment vs no mistreatment) X3 (adherence vs breaking character with anger vs breaking character with sadness) experimental design in which they read vignettes and then responded to a series of questions. Finally, study 3 also utilizes quantitative methods and a 2 (internal vs. external blame) X3 (adherence vs breaking character with anger vs breaking character with sadness) experimental design. Participants are again, exposed to an experimental vignette, and then respond to a series of questions.

Study 1
Participants and Procedures

To investigate the research questions proposed in study 1, I interviewed 19 flight attendants from a large airline in the Southern United States. I was able to gain access to this sample via a personal relationship with a flight attendant at the local airline. I had my contact send out a scripted message on various platforms to attract participants to be a part of my research. Interested participants would then reach out to me via email and we would set up a time to talk. Prior to our interview, I received informed consent in accordance with my approved IRB protocol. The interviews were conducted during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, all interviews were done by phone and recorded. Prior to starting the interview, I again confirmed with the participants that they read the informed consent, confirmed that I received their informed consent, and let them know that I would be recording the conversation. After all the interview questions had been asked, I stopped recording and let the participant know they were done. I also informed them that if they had any questions or concerns after the fact, they could reach out to me at any time.

All the flight attendants had been employed for at least six months. Specifically, the tenure at the airline ranged from around 9 months – nearly 42 years. I asked each participant questions regarding topics that are common in the literature, such as display rules, surface acting and deep acting, and OCBs. I also asked about my constructs of interest: breaking character, customer mistreatment, and employee feelings. See Appendix A for the full list of questions and the coding guide. Each interview lasted about 34 minutes. All the interviews were then uploaded for transcription. I then used Trint, a transcription software for all 19 interviews. Once the transcription was complete, I listened to each interview to ensure that transcription was accurate.

Study 2

For study 2, I used a sample of college students. In this study, participants were randomly assigned to one of six conditions. All respondents read a customer-server interaction vignette with a 2X3 (mistreatment vs no mistreatment; adherence, breaking character with anger, and breaking character with sadness) factorial design. Customer treatment and employee response were manipulated, with customers treating the employee in a fair or unfair way. Employees responded to the customer mistreatment by adhering to display rules, breaking character with anger, or breaking character with sadness. Since race and gender can impact emotional labor encounters and perceptions (Hochschild, 1983; Scott & Barnes, 2011), following Herschcovis et al., (2017) I used a gender- and racially- neutral name for the employee: Taylor.

In every scenario, the vignette depicted a third party witnessing a customer interaction at a local restaurant between their server and another table the server is working at. The participants then witnessed an interaction in which Taylor brings another table their food. Then, the customers responded with a fair treatment or mistreatment response. Customers who respond with mistreatment are depicted as using a raised voice and stern look, following Lewis' (2000)

depiction of anger. Customers who responded with mistreatment looked at Taylor and said

"Aren't you smart enough to know that we need condiments for our burgers? Could you go get

some condiments for us?!". Following Skarlicki and colleagues (2008), this customer response

depicts lack of respect and politeness, indicating mistreatment.

Taylor then responds in one of three ways. In the adherence condition, Taylor responds

by smiling and completing the customer's request. Lewis' (2000) depictions of anger and

sadness serve as guidance for both breaking character conditions. In the anger condition,

employees raise their voice, look stern, and storm off to go complete the request. In the sadness

condition, Taylor responds in a quiet tone with tears in their eyes and slowly goes to complete

the customer request. See Appendix C for all scenarios.

Measures

 See Appendix B for all items.

Empathy[1]. Following Hershcovis et al., (2017) I used an adapted version of Baston and

colleagues' (1988) measure of empathy. Participants will be asked: "To what extent did the

interaction between the customer and the employee make you feel the following towards the

employee…". The original measure that Hershcovis and colleagues adapted is valid and used by

researchers. Further, the adaptation used by Hershcovis, and colleagues showed high reliability

(Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$)

Moral Anger. Following Hershcovis et al., (2017) participants responded to O'Reilly, Aquino,

and Skarlicki's (2016) 3-item measure of anger. An example item is "To what extent did the

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[1] The analysis I used to test my hypotheses reports unstandardized results. As such, I scaled any measures that did not use the same Likert Scale. This included re-scaling empathy, moral anger, and positive affect.

interaction between the customer and the employee make you feel the following…". O'Reilly

and colleague's measure of moral anger is reliable and valid. In fact, the original article in which

the scale was proposed has many citations. Further, Hershcovis and colleagues report high

reliability for this scale (Cronbach's α = .98).

Intent To Return. Participants responded to Cronin, Brady, and Hult's (2000) measure of intent

to return, was modified to match the scenarios. An example item is "The probability that I will

come to this facility again is…" (Cronbach's α = .96). The scale created by Cronin and

colleagues was found to be reliable and valid. To make the scale relevant to my study, I will need

to adapt the scale by changing "facility" to "restaurant" in the items.

Willingness to Tip. Participants responded to one item assessing tipping behavior based on the

encounter they just read. They were asked how much they would be willing to tip their server.

Controls. Social desirability (Reynolds,1982), positive affect[2] (Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998). Were

used as control variables. Social desirability is a bias that refers to participants responding to

research questions or survey items in socially desirable ways, rather than responding with how

they truly feel (Grimm, 2010). Social desirability has the potential to bias results, particularly

regarding research that pertains to sensitive topics such as politics or religion (Grimm, 2010).

Since my study looks at sensitive topics, I controlled for social desirability. I used a shortened

version of Crowne and Marlowe's (1960) social desirability scale. This scale was shortened and

validated by Reynolds (1982) and contains 13 dichotomous items. I also controlled for positive

affect. Positive affect, a propensity to experience life in a positive way may bias results as well.

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[2] The Cronbach's α for positive affect was .93 and reliability for social desirability was not computed since social desirability contains only dichotomous items.

People that are high in positive affect are less likely to experience negative emotions, which is a key part of my study. Indeed, affect plays a key role in the perceptions of injustice (Scher & Heise, 1993). Thus, I used Mroczek and Kolarz's (1998) 6-item measure of positive affect. This scale has shown to be reliable and reproducible.

Study 3

Study 3 used a sample of adults from MTurk as well as several students who missed the extra credit opportunity from the previous part. Participants were again assigned to one of six conditions. All respondents read a vignette in which there was a 2(Individual Vs. External blame) X3 (Adherence, breaking character with anger, breaking character with sadness) design. In every scenario, participants were again reading a vignette in which they were told to imagine themselves sitting at a restaurant when they overhear the following conversation between their server and the other table the server is attending to. Attribution of blame was manipulated by indicating that the customer's order was incorrect and that it was either the fault of the server (i.e., the server placed the order incorrectly) or the fault of the kitchen staff (i.e., the cooks did not make the dish the way the server said to). Employees then responded in one of the same three ways they did previously, taking guidance from Lewis (2000). After being exposed to the vignette, participants responded to the same measures used in the previous part of my dissertation. See Appendix C for study 3 vignettes.

<div align="center">Chapter 4: RESULTS</div>

Study 1

Interview Coding

Using previous emotional labor and justice literature, I created a set of codes for qualitative analysis. Two coders coded the same interview simultaneously, during which there was discussion to add/remove/or edit the coding guide. After discussion, the final coding guide

was considered by both coders to be sufficient. Each interview was then coded by both

researchers separately and compared for agreement. To assess reliability, I calculated simple

percent agreement. Overall, we achieved an average of 91.69% agreement after discussion,

which is above the acceptable rate (Miles & Huberman, 1994). See Table 1 for a breakdown of

each interview's calculated agreement and a summary of the average agreement.

Interview Results

Overall, I found answers to my research questions and more. Below, I detail the answers

to each research question as well as other findings that have extended my view of the

phenomenon of breaking character. The analysis process occurred as follows and can be seen in

figure 1: First, I searched the literature and prepared questions to ask the interviewees. After

recording the interviews, I again listened to them to become familiar with the content of each

interview. It was during this time that new themes emerged, such as the importance of

coworkers. After going through the interviews with the other coder, I then organized the codes

into broad categories. Then, I went through each category and detailed the similarities and

differences among each category. Ultimately, I organized the results and codes in a way that

responds to each of my research questions. I also used the qualitative software, Atlas.ti to aid in

my analysis. Using Atlas.ti, I generated a code co-occurrence report. This report generated an

excel sheet that noted which codes were frequently coded together. Many of the sub-categories

were coded with one another, and breaking character was frequently coded with negative

customer interactions and customer conflict events. See Table 2 for a breakdown of the most

frequent code co-occurrences.

What Causes Breaking Character?

Throughout my interviews, I concluded that breaking character occurs for a few reasons.

Previous work suggests that breaking character results from customer mistreatment. Indeed, the

only empirical study to explicitly study breaking character uses customer mistreatment as the only antecedent (Nguyen & Besson, 2021). Many of my interviewees confirmed this notion. Also, participants justified their breaking character as occurring due to safety reasons. Below I provide quotes for each of these breaking character justification or antecedent sub-categories. First, many participants told me stories about customer mistreatment that then led to breaking character. For example, one participant said:

"I guess just losing my patience…We just had a passenger that was very combative…And I finally got to the point where I shut him down and I told him, without the captain's approval, that we had no problem landing this plan and inconveniencing 200 people and letting the people around him hear, which they were kind of already aware he was crazy anyway."

Some of the other participants described mistreatment that led to breaking character in more simpler terms, such as *"It's hard for me to be happy when I've just been yelled at by ten people".* Participants also noted other events that lead to breaking character. Mostly, these events involve customers not listening to flight attendants' instructions that deal with safety or other rules that are in place on planes. For example, one interviewee said: *"they just don't want to listen to any instruction whatsoever. And…I have to repeatedly tell them things over and over again. That's when I lose my patience and get angry"*

In summary, participants note two major reasons for their negative emotional expression: customer mistreatment and disregard for safety. The importance of safety emerged throughout nearly every interview in a variety of ways and is brought up further in my results as a primary

driver of flight attendant's emotional labor process. Further, I discuss the uniqueness of my sample and how this may have contributed to my findings in my discussion.

Breaking character is only one potential outcome of employee response and surely, given the abundance of research on emotional labor, evidence of other emotions being expressed, either through surface acting or deep acting, was present. Indeed, other participants indicated that that there are many times when they do not break character. Frequently the participants described the display rules they perceived, their emotional labor process, and their reasons for emotional labor. In general, the descriptions the participants gave echo previous emotional labor research in many respects. First, it is clear that flight attendants still believe there are rules that govern their emotional expression. They said they needed to be "warm, inviting, approachable…have a smile". Clearly, Hochschild's (1983) findings that flight attendants are aware of the rule to display positive emotions is still very much alive. Similarly, the flight attendants understood that they needed to suppress their negative emotions. Several flight attendants said something along the lines of "checking your emotions at the door" and "being stoic".

Similarly, many of the flight attendants described both surface and deep acting. Deep acting was coded when participants mentioned making an intentional and thoughtful effort to act with their passengers. For example, the participant may have said they make "an extra effort to smile a little bit more" or that they try to "think about what it would be like to experience those emotions so that I can better respond". Alternatively, some of the flight attendants clearly resonated with the idea of putting on a show in general, such as the participant who explicitly said she "puts a mask on", or faking it specifically, stating things like "Oh yeah, we're definitely putting on a show now. Not only are we putting on a show, we're also putting on a persona". One participant in particular seems to sum up the emotional labor process perfectly, stating:

"I think like any other job, sometimes you do have to put on a show…anyone working in customer service, you know, before the customers board you may have things going on in your personal life or within the company itself. But when those customers come on board, you have a smile, you greet them and…make sure they're having a pleasant experience. Because at the end of the day, they chose you – Your airline to fly on. And because the of the revenues that are coming in, because of customers, you attract a customer to come back. So yes, I do believe that sometimes you put on a show". Finally, there was evidence that there were times in which employees would have *liked* to break character but did not for some reason. For example,

"I think when it comes to frustration, anger, I do not [express that] because I think that's when, you know, rash decisions are made and that's when the safety of everyone around you can kind of be jeopardized"

In this instance, the employee chooses not to express negative emotions primarily due to their concern for safety. Whereas another employee viewed negative emotional expression as being undesirable due to being on "center stage", not mentioning the notion of being in charge of passengers' safety. Finally, others adhere to display rules for the sake of maintaining professionalism or avoiding disciplinary action. As one participant put it:

"That question [is] always kind of sitting in the back of your mind…I'll say to myself: OK, I don't want to say anything to get me in trouble. I don't want to say anything that puts myself in a bad light, you know…personally or professionally. So, I think the thought of being in trouble sometimes…forces you to sometimes act or behave in a more professional manner….But it's always kind of in the back of your mind."

This participant's experience gives us an idea as to the balancing act that is going through employees' heads while they are at work regarding their emotional expression. It seems that there is a moment in which deliberate decisions are made to act or say something specific in response to some stimuli at work. Although, the desire to show anger or frustration is clearly still present, as heard from one participant who said "I want to call them all kinds of names. I haven't done that".

What customer mistreatment do these employees endure?

Overall, the participants described customer mistreatment that looked like simple disrespect, physical encounters, or extreme cussing. In fact, participants had no problem recollecting times that they were mistreated by customers. Similarly, customer mistreatment can be triggered by a variety of factors, from foul mood to perceived service failure. I found support for this, and I also found that customer mistreatment arose in response to substance use multiple times in the interviews.

Two participants mentioned disrespect specifically, telling me the following:

"And he proceeded to yell at me and just be really disrespectful…and then he had the audacity [to say] do you hear me talking to you? Do you hear me talking to you?...and when you have 140-200 people yelling at you…"

and

"And so a lot of times they're disrespectful…um – continuously ringing their call light or…just taking up your time in general so you don't have a lot of time for other people so, or they speak down to you or tend to lose their manners, which I find very disrespectful."

Sometimes the customers mistreated the employees for reasons outside of the employee's control. For example, one flight attendant spoke about the standards some employees have. They

said: *"So I've had people have absolute meltdowns in first class because they have to put their suitcase maybe two rows into the coach cabin, like real meltdown."*

As previously stated, there were several stories that involved substances – mostly alcohol. For example, one participant told me the following:

"This was on a flight about seven or eight years ago. Well, we had a flight, a passenger that was under the influence. We later found out [he] was under the influence of drugs and alcohol and kind of just lost his marbles, if you will, and assaulted four of us. And he actually ended up. We had to physically restrain him, and he actually got removed by law enforcement upon arrival. And that was quite a dramatic scene."

See Table 3 for examples of other codes depicting customer conflicts or negative customer interactions.

What does Breaking Character Look Like?

Although the definition of breaking character only mentions negative expression, there is not a clear idea as to what breaking character looks like. In my literature review, I proposed that breaking character may include anger, frustration, or sadness. Indeed, many participants noted that their negative emotional expression could vary between several negative emotions. Many of the emotional expressions were coded explicitly as the expression of anger. Although, this expression emerged as being verbal, non-verbal, physical, or some combination of the three. One participant described them "taking control" as using their voice and body language in a certain way. Similarly, one participant told me about a time they got physical with a passenger and proceeded to be vocal and stern with the unruly passenger:

"I was in the galley and the Chinese flight attendant was walking back into the galley and this man chasing her pushes her down [and] pushes her. And I pushed him back and I'm like what are you doing? Don't touch my flight attendants."

Another participant described their negative emotional expression in a way that many might describe as sassy or condescending. The statement reported below echoes previous guidance from emotional labor researchers and practitioners that encourages employees to view customers as children throwing a temper tantrum. In this case, the employee took it even further and explicitly told the customer *"you're embarrassing yourself. Everybody around in first class is looking at you right now acting like a three-year-old. So this conversation will end now and we're done."* Other participants also responded verbally, but explicitly described themselves as yelling at customers – going "0 to 10 on the emotional scale". Other examples of breaking character involve walking the line between negative and positive emotion in that they expressed instances in which they cussed or behaved in a snarky way. For example, one flight attendant provided two stories that exemplify this version of breaking character. She said "*And so I asked this guy, like, can I get you a drink? And he says what do you got? And I go well I got the same shit I served you two hours ago.*" She proceeded to describe another very similar instances in which a passenger asked for coffee and she replied by saying *"we obviously haven't (expletive) together…so can you tell me how you take that – with cream or sugar?"* Other negative emotional expression descriptions were about expressing sadness. Although, these moments differed greatly in many other ways compared to anger. See Table 4 for breaking character does. For example, a one interviewee mentioned that they have gone down the aisle crying. Another said:

"And I was crying. I was crying on the car. I would bend down and kind of hide my face behind the beverage cart…this guy said what's the matter? And I just said my husband left me, you know, or I just found out that my grandmother died."

How do employees feel about breaking character?

Uncovering how employees felt about breaking character required me going through several codes to piece together a story or theme. I also went back and looked at responses to my interview question that prompted participants to describe what would need to happen to get them to express their true, negative emotions. Much of the breaking character justification can be found in the previous section that details what causes breaking character. Overall, participants were very aware of what made them break character, their justification for breaking character, and the nuance that comes with balancing personal emotion and customer/organizational expectations. For example, one participant said:

"Eventually you kind of hit your tolerance and…then you kind of just can't really bring the negative feelings back in anymore…But just when it does [happen], it's like of like…hard to…go back to neutral, like happy, cheerful, glad to be at work feelings"

In this instance, it is clear that this flight attendant justifies their breaking character as being an acceptable response to customer mistreatment, or a drain coming from being a 'punching bag'. Other participants echoed this sentiment. Other participants justified their negative emotional expression due to their duty to keep passengers safe. As previously detailed in the results section, safety is a major part of flight attendants' emotional labor process. Thus, it

is logical that many participants will justify negative emotional expression for the sake of safety.

As one participant put it:

"So when it comes to safety, stuff like when people are putting their trays down and they

don't want to put it up, and I'm like, that's not just for your safety…it's a safety issues that

impacts them and he people sitting next to them. That's when they will see my negativity…I

didn't have a choice but to be firm to my true emotion at that time or else they wouldn't

listen…so sometimes I have to be firm and I don't want to be firm or to be stern, but in order to

get the job done, in order for a person to comply, sometimes I have to."

Some participants noted that they do not necessarily *want* to express negative emotions.

However, they also understand that it may be warranted at times. One participant worded it as

more of responding in a "human way", stating that there is no set procedure on how to respond to

every potential encounter. Instead, the flight attendants seem to rely on instinct. Similarly,

although the participants may say that they do not want to express negative emotions, they also

understand that it occurs regardless. As one participant put it: *"I don't think I feel comfortable*

doing that…I don't think I would do that consciously. I don't think id just be snarky to be

snarky…My emotions usually come out in the moment".

There was also an indication that employees did find some relief from breaking character.

One participant, for example, said that being passive aggressive helps verbalize feelings or

getting it all out, without feeling mean. Another participant described the experience as not

letting the passenger get under their skim after they have had a negative interaction with them

and they responded negatively. She described it as washing her hands and moving onto the next

flight or day. What was more prominent, however, was the rumination that occurred in response to customer mistreatment, regardless of subsequent breaking character. Many participants reported repeatedly thinking about negative customer interactions, even after their shift. One participant told me about how she ruminated on a negative customer interaction, saying:

"I did not sleep very well that night in Santiago because I kept replaying it over and over again in my brain, like, what could I have done differently? What did I do? What did I do?".

Another participant took their rumination even further, stating

"Oh, I think about it for at least two weeks to a month. I'm the worst at beating myself up. Like, how could it have been different? Or why did they treat me that way? Or what, you know, could I have done differently? I mean, I am very sensitive in that to those situations, and my husband will attest to it – I tend to beat myself up."

What other elements/parties matter?

From the previous literature, it is clear that external parties, whether it be coworkers or passengers, impact employee emotional labor. As I read the literature and created the questions to ask the participants, I considered the role that third parties could play. I thought, like previous research suggests, employees would lean on one another. And certainly, given how public and close a plan can be, that external parties could play a role in the phenomenon of breaking character. However, I found that coworkers were even more important to the phenomenon than I initially thought. Throughout the coding process, my coding partner and I ultimately determined that coworkers fell into several categories of helping one another. We found that employees helped each other via words, actions, and tasks.

Helping with words

Employees and their coworkers helped each other with their words in a few ways. One way employees felt helped via words is by their peers being there for them to vent to. Alternatively, some participants noted that they are the ones being vented to – so the action of venting goes both ways. One participant even noted that the action of venting or leaning on each other occurs after the flight is over. She said *"there's always a time where you just give each other a hug and say there's a glass of wine with our name on it at the layover."* In other instances across all forms of helping, the employee that was not the target of mistreatment jumped in to interfere with the customer who was being disrespectful and their coworker who was the target of mistreatment. One participant, for example, talked about a time her coworker *"jumped out in front of me and he's jumping off the plan yelling at her all of the way in the jet bridge, and [he] says, don't you dare talk to her that way!"*

Helping with actions

Other times, coworkers would help one another through their actions. For example, one employee may physically remove their coworker to get them out of the negative customer interaction. In fact, the majority of the helping with action codes exemplified this precisely. For example, one participant said when they see a coworker dealing with a "passenger who's maybe being rude, disrespectful, I kind of go up to them and try to like, just say, oh come with me." See Table 5 for a list of more similar example codes.

Helping with work-related tasks

Finally, employees would help one another with their work tasks. Given how tight of a space an aircraft is, I anticipated some instances of helping with work-related tasks. Indeed, I put a question into my interview protocol to address this. Generally, the flight attendants claimed that they help each other out with work related tasks regardless of what interactions with

customers are going on during the flight. This task sharing seemed to increase or be particularly important in times of conflict or strain. For example, one participant described a time she had a passenger pass away on the flight, and her coworker was

"so upset, and I was working the back galley. And after I finished my duties…she was supposed to cook, you know? Instead of going on my break like I normally would, I went and relieved her duties in that section so she could go and take time to herself."

Another participant described a similar sentiment where, if a coworker is getting "beat up", they will pick up their trash duties and encourage their coworker to get some space – maybe go read a book or just "chill out".

Study 2
Pilot Study

Prior to launching studies to test my formal hypotheses, I conducted pilot studies. For the hypotheses in which customer mistreatment and employee emotional response were manipulated, 84 students in the College of Business at a large southern university in the United States participated in the pilot study. Students attending multiple business classes were provided with a link to the survey from their respective professors. Students received 5 bonus points for their participation and were given an alternate assignment that could be completed if they did not want to participate in the survey. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of six conditions that manipulated customer treatment and employee responses. Participants then responded to a series of questions that included manipulation checks, questions about realism and personal experience. Across all six scenarios, 90.49% of participants indicated that the scenario they read was realistic. About half (53.69%) of the participants said that they had

previous experience with a situation like that of the one they read. The manipulation checks regarding customer treatment, negative emotional expression, and identification of anger and sadness indicated that the manipulations were successful. Specifically, 91% participants successfully identified a presence or lack of customer mistreatment. Regarding employee emotional response, 73%, 88% and 84% of participants successfully identified the presence or lack of negative emotions, anger, and sadness. See Table 6 for a full description of these results. Generally, the results of this pilot study indicate that my scenarios are realistic and are easily differentiated between one another.

Insert Table 6 about here

Participants and Procedures

Given the positive results from the pilot study, I proceeded to collect data to test my hypotheses. Again, students from a large University in the southern United States were randomly assigned to one of the same six vignettes from the pilot study. Students were given a link from their professors and were allowed to take the survey either during or outside of class. In return for their participation, students received 5 points of extra credit. If students chose not to participate, they were given an alternate assignment that could be completed to earn the extra credit. In total, 202 students participated. After removing the students who missed the manipulation checks and submitted their survey after the cut off, the final sample was 183. The age range of the sample was 18-53, with a mean of 23.78 years. The sample was 47.5%[3] female, 47% male, .5% preferred not to answer, and 4.9% did not respond. The sample was 37.7% White, 13.1% Black, 20.8% Asian, 14.21% Hispanic or Mexican, and 8.2% identifying as mixed

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[3] Reported descriptive statistics pertaining to sample characteristics are measured based on valid percent. In other words, the information presented is the percent that makes up the sample, after missing information is removed.

race. The students ranged in years in college from being a first year to being a graduate student, with about 68% being in their junior or senior year. Students varied in their major. Specifically, 23.5% were management majors, 8.2% were marketing majors, 7.1% were accounting majors, 12.6% were information systems majors, 13.7% were double majors, 6.6% were finance majors, 3.3% were I/O Psychology majors, and 19.1% were other majors, such as: nursing, university studies, or undeclared. About 9.3% of the participants identified themselves as full-time students, but much of the sample provided their job title and work status. Much of the sample worked part time (41.5%), followed by full-time (28.4%), and finally, about a quarter of the sample identified themselves as unemployed (24%). Of the job titles provided, 17.5% were in customer facing jobs, 4.9% were in sales, 2.7% were interns, 9.8% were unemployed, and 44.3% belonged to another job, such as administrative assistant or technical specialist. Similarly, the participants provided their tenure at their current organization. Of the participants, 12% indicated that organizational tenure was not applicable to them, 16.9% had been employed for 6 months or less, 6% had been at their organization for 6-12 months, 10.4% had been at their organization for 1-2 years, 30.6% had been at their organization for 2-5 years, 7.1% had been at their organization for 5-10 years, and 1.6% had been at their organization for 10+ years. Finally, a majority of the sample (76%) indicated that they had previous experience in a customer facing role.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Prior to testing my hypotheses, I ran a series of CFAs to assess the appropriateness of my scales and items. All results can be found in Table 7. To do this, I used MPlus version 8.5 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012. I first looked at the scales in my hypothesized model to assess model fit. Specifically, I tested a model in which my scales that had multiple items loaded onto the 4 factors of my model. I did not include social desirability, as that scale is dichotomous, nor did I

include my single item measures. MPlus does have the capability of measuring dichotomous

scales using the WLSMV estimator (as opposed to the ML or MLR estimator). However, to use

the WLSMV estimator, all measures must be dichotomous. Since I had no other measures that

were dichotomous, social desirability was left out of any confirmatory factor analyses. The

results indicated that my model achieved great fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 244.267$, df $= 113$, TLI $=$

.950, CFI $= .958$, RMSEA $= .081$). Next, I conducted a series of chi-square difference tests,

comparing my hypothesized model to three alternative models, to determine if my hypothesized

model was most appropriate. My first alternative model had positive affect and empathy loading

onto one factor, given the potential relationship between the variables. Results indicated that ,

compared to my hypothesized model, my alternative model fit significantly worse with the data

($\chi^2 = 984.92$, df $= 116$, TLI $= .675$, CFI $= .723$, RMSEA $= .206$). My second alternative model

had my two mediators loading onto one factor. Again, compared to my hypothesized model, the

alternative model fit the data significantly worse ($\chi^2 = 531.301$, df $= 116$, TLI $= .845$, CFI $=$

.867, RMSEA $= .143$). Finally, I tested an alternative model in which all my items loaded onto

one factor. Again, results indicated that, compared to my hypothesized model, the alternative

model fit the data significantly worse ($\chi^2 = 2438.76$, df $= 119$, TLI $= .154$, CFI $= .260$, RMSEA

$= .333$). Taken together, these results suggest that my hypothesized model is the most preferred

model for my data. See Table 7 for a breakdown of these results.

Insert Table 7 about here

Manipulation Checks

Before hypothesis testing, I assessed how successful my manipulation checks were. After

reading their assigned scenario, participants answered a series of questions that asked about the

presence of customer mistreatment, anger, and sadness. I conducted crosstabulations in SPSS with my conditions being listed as the rows and my manipulation categories being the columns. Results showed that, on average, 87.46% of participants correctly identified the presence or lack of customer mistreatment, an average of 89.72% of participants correctly identified the presence of lack of anger, and an average of 79.51% correctly identified the presence or lack of sadness in the scenario. I also ran an ANOVA with each of my variables (empathy, moral anger, ITR, and willingness to tip being differentiated based on which condition the participant was exposed to. All the results were significant. Taken together, these results suggest that my manipulations were successful.

Hypothesis testing

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are presented in Table 8. A 2 (no customer mistreatment vs. customer mistreatment) X3 (Employee adherence, breaking character with anger, and breaking character with sadness) MANOVA was conducted to test my first hypotheses. I also used Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons to analyze my data[4]. I chose to conduct a MANOVA since my dependent variables are conceptually and empirically related to one another. Multivariate test results revealed significant differences based on customer mistreatment (F (2, 158) = 11.19, $p < .001$; Wilk's Λ = 0.88, partial η^2 = .12) as well as employee emotional response F (4, 318) = 16.25, $p < .001$; Wilk's Λ = 0.69, partial η^2 = .17), but not based on the employee response X customer mistreatment interaction F (4, 316) = 1.14, $p =$

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[4] In SPSS, when you include covariates in a MANOVA, the only adjustment estimators available are LSD, Bonferroni, and Sidak. LSD is known for being too liberal (Maxwell, 1980) and thus, I chose to use Bonferroni to protect against any loss of power (Field, 2013).

.34; Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.97$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$. See Table 9 for a breakdown of these results as well as

between-subjects effects.

Insert Tables 8 & 9 about here

The impact of customer mistreatment

Between-subjects effects results revealed that customer mistreatment had a significant

effect on ITR ($F (1, 159 = 11.80, p < .001)$ and willingness to tip ($F (1, 159 = 19.04, p < .001)$.

Similarly, employee emotional response had a significant effect on ITR ($F (2, 159) = 22.87, p <$

$.001$) and willingness to tip ($F (2, 159) = 22.49, p < .001$). as well. The interaction between

customer mistreatment and employee emotional response was insignificant for ITR ($F (2, 159) =$

$1.97, p = .14$) and willingness to tip ($F (2, 159) = .86, p = .42$). Since the p-value is not less than

.05, I can conclude that there is no significant interaction effect between customer mistreatment

and employee emotional response[5]. Pairwise comparisons (Table 10) indicated that third party

observers who witness customer mistreatment reported significantly higher ITR ($M = 5.66, SE =$

$.15, p < .001$) compared to those who did not witness customer mistreatment ($M = 4.94, SD =$

$.15$).

Insert Table 10 about here
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[5] Although the interaction is not significant, I am still reporting and detailing the results for a few reasons. First, as suggested by Brambor et al., 2006, authors should keep the interaction term when they have conditional hypotheses. Second, as reported by Jobgen et al., 2009, it is still interesting and important to your story to look at and understand the results of an interaction, regardless of significance. Finally, removing my interaction from my analyses would respecify my model, which would alter results, and is not required since the interaction also makes sense theoretically.

Similarly, participants who witnessed customer mistreatment were significantly more willing to tip their server (M = 5.79, SE = .14, p < .001) than participants who did not witness mistreatment (M = 4.93, SE = .14). Both the multivariate and univariate tests indicated significant results in the dependent variables based on customer mistreatment. Taken together, these results provide support for H1. See Figures 3 and 4 for a visual representation of these results.

Insert Figures 3 and 4 about here

The impact of breaking character

Results indicate that participants reported significantly lower ITR when their server broke character with anger (M = 4.38, SE = .17, p < .001) compared to when their server adhered to display rules (M = 6.13, SE = .20) as well as when their server broke character with sadness (M = 5.39, SE = .18). Participants were also significantly less willing to tip their server when they broke character with anger (M = 4.45, SE = .16, p < .001), compared to when their server adhered to display rules (M = 5.79, SE = .18), as well as when their server broke character with sadness (M = 5.83, SE = .17). However, participants who witnessed their server adhere to display rules reported a similar ITR (M = 6.13, SE = .20) compared to those who witnessed their server break character with sadness (M = 5.39, SE = .18). See Table 11 for a breakdown of these results.

Insert Table 11 about here

Similarly, participants who witnessed their server adhere to display rules reported a similar willingness to tip (M = 5.79, SE = .18) compared to those who witnessed their server

break character with sadness (M = 5.83, SE = .17). Taken together, these results provide mixed support for H2. Specifically, it seems that adhering to display rules and breaking character with sadness produce similar results, whereas breaking character with anger produces consistently more negative results. See Figures 5 and 6 for visual representations of these results.

Insert Figures 5 and 6 about here

Customer mistreatment and Employee response

Pairwise comparisons of the interacting effect of customer mistreatment and employee emotional response indicated that participants reported significantly higher ITR in conditions in which employees broke character with anger after being mistreated (M = 5.00. SE = .26), compared to when employees broke character with anger without customer mistreatment occurring (M = 3.76, SE = 24). Similarly, participants were more willing to tip their server when the server broke character with anger after being mistreated (M = 4.97, SE = .24), compared to when the server broke character with anger without the provocation of customer mistreatment (M = 3.93, SE = .22). Participants who witnessed servers adhere to display rules reported very similar (not significantly different) ITR (M = 6.22, SE = .28) compared to participants who witnessed a server adhere to display rules after being mistreated by a customer (M = 6.03, SE = .27). Similarly, participants who witnessed servers adhere to display rules reported non-significantly different willingness to tip (M = 6.03, SE = .26) compared to participants who witnessed a server adhere to display rules after being mistreated by a customer (M = 5.55, SE = .25). Participants who witnessed their server break character with sadness without being mistreated reported significantly lower ITR (M = 5.02, SE = .28) compared to those who witnessed their server break character with sadness after being mistreated by a customer (M =

5.76, SE = .23). Finally, participants who witnessed their server break character with sadness

after being mistreated reported significantly higher willingness to tip (M = 6.36, SE = .22)

compared to those who witnessed their server break character with sadness without being

mistreated by a customer (M = 5.31, SE = .25). In conditions in which employees were

mistreated and responded with display rule adherence, participants reported significantly higher

ITR (M = 6.22, SE = .28) than those in conditions in which employees were mistreated and

broke character with anger (M = 5.00, SE = .26). Similarly, when employees were mistreated

and adhered to display rules, participants reported significantly higher willingness to tip (M =

6.03, SE = .26), as did participants who witnessed employees break character with sadness after

being mistreated (M = 6.36, SE = .22) compared to participants in conditions in which

employees were mistreated and then broke character with anger (M = 4.97, SE = .24). Taken

together, these results provide mixed support for H3a and support for H3b. See Figures 7 and 8

and Table 13 for a breakdown of these results and for a visual representation of these results. See

table 12 for a breakdown of these results.

Testing Mediation Hypotheses

Hypotheses 4 and 5 proposed that the relationship between customer mistreatment and

my dependent variables would be mediated by empathy and moral anger. In order to test these

hypotheses, I used SPSS PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) Model 4. Customer mistreatment was

input as the independent variable, empathy and moral anger were put in as mediators, and ITR

and willingness to tip were used as dependent variables. I also included the employee emotional

expression as a covariate. SPSS PROCESS does not allow for multiple dependent variables, so I

put one dependent variable in the selection box at a time, meaning I ran this PROCESS Model

twice. As seen in Table 13, which shows results from the analyses in which ITR was the

dependent variable, customer mistreatment was positively related to both empathy (t (5,161) = 8.21, p < .001) and moral anger (t (5,161) = 15.09, p < .001). Customer mistreatment did not significantly impact ITR (t (7, 159) = 1.12, p = .27). Neither empathy (t (7, 159) = 1.69, p = .06) nor moral anger (t (7, 159) = .45, p = .65) significantly impacted ITR, which suggests that mediation is not occurring. Indeed, indirect effects indicate that empathy does not significantly mediate the relationship between customer mistreatment and ITR (b = .27, 95% Cis [-.05, .59]. Similarly, moral anger did not significantly mediate the relationship between customer mistreatment and ITR (b = .13, 95% Cis [-.10, .15]). Thus, there is not support for H4a nor H5a. To test H4b and H5b, I ran the same model again, but used willingness to tip as my dependent variable. Again, customer mistreatment was positively related to both empathy (t (5, 161) = 8.21, p < .001) and moral anger (t (5, 161) = 15.10, , p < .001). Customer mistreatment was found to significantly impact willingness to tip (t (7,159) = 2.83, p < .01). Empathy was significantly related to willingness to tip (t (7,159) = 3.73, p < .001). Moral anger, however, was not significantly related.to willingness to tip (t (7, 159) = -1.84, p = .07). Indirect effects suggest that empathy significantly mediates the relationship between customer mistreatment and willingness to tip (b = .42, 95% Cis [.18, .68]). This result provides support for H4b. Moral anger, however, did not significantly mediate the relationship between customer mistreatment and willingness to tip (b = -.38, 95% Cis [.81, .08]. Thus, I cannot find support for H5b. See Table 13 for a breakdown of these results.

Insert Table 12 and 13 about here

Testing Moderated Mediation Hypotheses

      To test hypotheses 6 and 7, I again used SPSS PROCESS Macro. In this analysis, I used Model 7, which uses ordinary least squares to assess the direct and indirect effects of customer mistreatment on ITR and willingness to tip via empathy and moral anger, as moderated by employee emotional response. The results were evaluated by means of 5000 bootstrap samples and 95% confidence intervals. Generally, using model 7 allows researchers to understand the different mediation effects of a given independent variable on a dependent variable, based on multiple levels of a moderator. Results suggest that breaking character with anger does not significantly impact empathy (t (7, 159) = -1.05, , p = .29) nor moral anger (t (7, 159) = -.88, p = .38), nor does the interaction between customer mistreatment and breaking character with anger significantly impact empathy (t (7, 159) = -.50, p = .62) or moral anger (t (7, 159) = -.09, p = .93). Breaking character with sadness, however, does significantly relate to empathy (*t* (7, 159) = 3.14, p < .005). The interaction between customer mistreatment and breaking character with sadness does not significantly impact empathy (*t* (7, 159) = -1.82, p = .07). Breaking character with sadness does not significantly impact moral anger (t (7, 159) = .65, p = .51), nor does the interaction between customer mistreatment and breaking character with sadness (t (7, 159) = -.08, p = .93). The direct effect of customer mistreatment on ITR was not significant (t (5, 161) = .62, p = .54). Thus, I moved on to assessing the conditional indirect effects and the index of moderated mediation. As seen in Table 14 and Figure 9, the indirect effect of customer mistreatment on ITR via empathy does vary based on employee emotional response.

Insert Table 14 about here

Indirect effects results suggest that, in all three conditions, the confidence interval does not contain zero and the effect sizes are different from one another, which indicates that the moderation is occurring. Specifically, the effect sizes vary largest between adherence and sadness, and the effect of anger is similar to that of adherence. The 95% confidence interval for adherence does not contain zero (95% Cis [.07, .93], nor does the 95% confidence interval for breaking character with anger (95% Cis [.06, .83], nor breaking character with anger (95% Cis [.03, .59]. In other words, the results of the conditional indirect effects suggest that the relationship between customer mistreatment and ITR via empathy based on employee response is not zero. Thus, I moved on to the index of moderated mediation to determine if the effects are (1) different from one another and (2) different from the direct effects. Due to the way I coded my emotional response variable, employees adhering to display rules was the referent for SPSS. In other words, SPSS compared breaking character with anger to adherence and then breaking character with sadness to adherence. The index of moderated mediation indicates that breaking character with sadness and breaking character with anger are not significantly different from the direct effects or different from one another.

Insert Figure 9 and 10 about here

Taken together, these results suggest that moderation is occurring, and that employee emotional response does significantly impact empathy. However, there is not support for moderated mediation, since the index of moderated mediation is not significant (Abbu, 2017). Thus, hypothesis 6a is not supported. The moderating effect of employee emotional expression on the relationship between customer mistreatment and moral anger as well as the conditional indirect effects of customer mistreatment and ITR via moral anger were not significant. As seen

in Table 15 and 17, the indirect effects were nearly all similar and the confidence intervals

contained 0, with does not support moderation occurring. As seen in Figure 10, the impact of

customer mistreatment on moral anger does not vary as a function of the employee's response.

Insert Table 15 and 16 about here

Thus, hypothesis 7a is not supported. Analyses in which willingness to tip was the dependent

variable suggest that the direct effect of customer mistreatment on willingness to tip was

significant (p < .05), and indirect effects suggest that the relationship between customer

mistreatment and willingness to tip via empathy, varying by employee emotional expression, is

not 0. In other words, there is moderation occurring. The index of moderated mediation suggests,

again, that I cannot find support for moderated mediation. Thus, H6b is not supported. See Table

16 for a breakdown of these results. Regarding the moderating effects of employee emotional

response in the relationship between customer mistreatment and willingness to tip via moral

anger, again results are insignificant. As seen in Table 16, the indirect effects were nearly all

similar and the confidence intervals contained 0, with does not support moderation occurring.

Thus, hypothesis 7b is not supported.

Insert Table 17 about here

Study 3
Pilot Study

Prior to launching study 3, I conducted a pilot study, which examines attribution and

breaking character conditions, online via MTurk. Each condition had 19-31 participants, and

there were 150 participants in total. In all the conditions, an overwhelming number of

participants indicated that the scenario they read was realistic. Further, many indicated that they

had an experience similar to the one they had just read about. Specifically, 93.32% of the sample

said that scenario was realistic and 74.91% said they had an experience similar to the one they

read. In conditions 1, 2, and 3, participants read a scenario in which attribution was placed onto

the server. Of the participants who were exposed to the first three conditions, 79% of participants

got the manipulation check correct. Meaning, the participants answered that the server was in the

wrong in the scenario. Similarly, the first three conditions should have also made participants

place the blame onto the server. Across the three conditions, only 58% of the participants

answered that they placed the blame on the server. In conditions 4, 5, and 6, participants should

have answered "no" regarding attribution and blame. Results showed that around half of the

participants passed this manipulation check. Specifically, 47% and 54% of participants answered

that attribution and blame was not placed on the server.

Conditions 2, 3, 5, and 6 assessed negative emotional expression. Of these four

conditions, 70% positively identified negative emotions were present. Conditions 1 and 4 did not

contain negative emotional expression from the server. In these conditions, 59% of the

participants identified a lack of negative emotions from the server. Conditions 2 and 5 also

included anger as the negative emotional expression of the server. Of the participants who were

exposed to conditions in which the sever expressed anger, 75% passed the manipulation check.

Conditions 3 and 6 also included sadness as the negative emotion expressed by the server. Of the

participants who were exposed to conditions in which the server expressed sadness, 83%

positively identified the presence of sadness. See Table 18 for pilot study results.

Insert Table 18 about here

Participants and Procedures

The pilot study results indicated that the attribution manipulation was weak – only working about half of the time. So, prior to launching the full survey on MTurk, I made several changes to the vignettes. Specifically, I attempted to make it clearer that the fault was placed on the server or the kitchen staff. See Appendix D for the updated vignettes that were ultimately used to collect data on MTurk. After making those modifications and receiving updated IRB approval, I launched the survey on MTurk. I also required participants to be masters and have a 90% rating or higher to ensure data quality. I administered my survey to 197 participants on MTurk. Participants were paid $1 for their time, regardless of if they missed the attention checks or not. I also had 5 students at a large Southern University who took the survey. They were not able to take the survey for study 2, and so they were included for study 3. Like the students in study 2, the students received 5 points of extra credit for their participation. After removing participants who missed the manipulation checks, as well as those who never saw a condition due to ending the survey early, I was left with a sample of 179.The sample ranged in age from 18-52, with an average age of 40.54. The sample was 52.4% White, 5.4% Black or African American, 36.7% Asian, and 1.8% biracial. Of the total sample, 42.9% was female, 56% was male, and 1.1% did not disclose their gender. I asked participants to provide information regarding their work status and employment. In my sample, 74.4% identified as working full time, 15.5% worked part-time, and 6% were unemployed.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Prior to testing my hypotheses, I ran a series of CFAs to assess the appropriateness of my scales and items. All results can be found in Table 18. To do this, I used MPlus version 8.5 (Muthen & Muthen, 2017). I first looked at the scales in my hypothesized model to assess model

fit. Specifically, I tested a model in which my scales that had multiple items loaded onto the 4

factors of my model. Again, I did not include social desirability, as that scale is dichotomous, nor

did I include my single item measures. The results indicated that my model achieved great fit

with the data (χ^2 = 213.414, df = 113, TLI = .958, CFI = .965, RMSEA = .073). Next, I

conducted a series of chi-square difference tests, comparing my hypothesized model to three

alternative models, to determine if my hypothesized model was most appropriate. My first

alternative model had positive affect and empathy loading onto one factor, given the potential

relationship between the variables. Results indicated that , compared to my hypothesized model,

my alternative model fit significantly worse with the data (χ^2 = 952.255, df = 116, TLI = .657,

CFI = .708, RMSEA = .207). My second alternative model had my two mediators loading onto

one factor. Again, compared to my hypothesized model, the alternative model fit the data

significantly worse (χ^2 = 568.993, df = 116, TLI = .814, CFI = .842, RMSEA = .152). Finally, I

tested an alternative model in which all my items loaded onto one factor. Again, results indicated

that, compared to my hypothesized model, the alternative model fit the data significantly worse

(χ^2 = 2112.754, df = 130, TLI = .275, CFI = .307, RMSEA = .300). Taken together, these

results suggest that my hypothesized model is the most preferred model for my data. See Table

19 for a breakdown of these results.

Insert Table 19 about here

Manipulation Checks

Before hypothesis testing, I assessed how successful my manipulation checks were. After

reading their assigned scenario, participants answered a series of questions that asked about

whether the server placed the order correctly, whether the kitchen made the order the way the

server said to, if blame should be placed on the server, if the server smiled, if the server

expressed anger, and if the server expressed sadness. I conducted crosstabulations in SPSS with

my conditions being listed as the rows and my manipulation categories being the columns.

Results showed that, on average, 89% of participants correctly identified whether the server or

the kitchen was who made the customer's dish incorrect. Similarly, 80% and 79% of the sample

correctly attributed the wrong order to the server and the kitchen staff, respectively. Also, 81% of

the sample correctly blamed either the server or the kitchen staff for the customer's incorrect

dish. Regarding emotional expression, 84% of the sample correctly identified the presence or

lack of the server smiling. Similarly, 84% and 85% of the sample correctly identified the

presence or lack of the server expressing anger or the presence or lack of the server expressing

sadness, respectively. Finally, I ran a one-way ANOVA with my four variables (empathy, moral

anger, ITR, and willingness to tip) being the outcomes differentiated by the condition the

participant was in. The results were significant for every outcome. Taken together, these results

suggest that my manipulations were successful. See Table 20 for a breakdown of the

manipulation check results.

Insert Table 20 about here

Hypothesis testing

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are presented in Table 21. A 2 (individual

blame vs external blame) X3 (Employee adherence, breaking character with anger, and breaking

character with sadness) MANOVA was conducted to test my first hypothesis of this study.

Again, I chose to conduct a MANOVA since my dependent variables are conceptually and

empirically related to one another. Initial results revealed approaching significant differences

based on attribution (F (2, 156) = 3.01, p =.052; Wilk's Λ = 0.96, partial η^2 = .038) as well as

significant differences based on employee emotional response F (4, 312) = 6.8, p < .001; Wilk's

Λ = 0.85, partial η^2 = .08). The interaction between attribution and employee emotional response

was not significant (4, 312) = .49, p = 74; Wilk's Λ = 0.99, partial η^2 = .006. See Table 22 for a

breakdown of these results as well as between-subjects effects.

Insert Tables 21 & 22 about here

Between-subjects effects results revealed that attribution of blame had a significant effect

on ITR (F (1, 157) = 6.11, p < .05), but not willingness to tip (F (1, 157) = 1.96, p = .16).

Pairwise comparisons (Table 23) indicated that third party observers who witness mistreatment

that is unjustified (i.e., customers mistreat employees due to a problem outside of the employee's

control) reported significantly higher ITR (M = 5.87, SE = .17) compared to those who witness

mistreatment that is justified (i.e., the server made a mistake and is to blame for the incorrect

order; M = 5.28, SE = .17). Participants who witnessed unjustified mistreatment reported higher,

but not significantly higher willingness to tip (M = 4.49, SE = .14) compared to participants who

witnessed justified mistreatment (M = 4.22, SE = .13). Taken together, these results provide

mixed support for H8. See table 23 for a breakdown of these results.

Pairwise comparisons (Table 24) suggest that participants who witnessed employees

adhere to display rules in response to unjustified customer mistreatment reported higher (p <.05)

ITR (M = 6.80, SE = .31) compared to participants who witnessed employees break character

with sadness in response to unjustified customer mistreatment (M = 5.71, SE = .31), as well as

participants who witnessed employees break character with anger in response to unjustified

mistreatment (M = 5.11, SE = .28). Similarly, participants who witnessed employees adhere to

display rules following unjustified mistreatment reported significantly greater willingness to tip

(M = 4.97, SE = .25) compared to participants who witnessed employees break character with

anger (M = 3.93, SE = .22) as well as employees who broke character with sadness (M = 4.56,

SE = .25) following unjustified mistreatment. Taken together, these results provide support for

H9a. Hypothesis 9b proposed that breaking character would result in greater ITR and willingness

to tip in conditions in which mistreatment was not justified. Results indicate that third party

observers who witness their server break character with anger in response to unjustified

mistreatment reported higher, but not significantly higher ITR (M = 5.11, SE = .28) compared to

those who witnessed their server break character with anger in response to justified mistreatment

(M = 4.61, SE = .25). Similarly, third party observers who witness their server break character

with anger in response to unjustified mistreatment reported higher, but not significantly higher

willingness to tip (M = 3.93, SE = .22) compared to participants who witnessed their server

break character with anger in response to justified mistreatment (M = 3.79, SE = .20).

Insignificant results were also found regarding breaking character with sadness. Taken together,

these results do not provide support for H9b.

Insert Tables 23 & 24 about here

Testing Mediation Hypotheses

To test my mediation hypotheses, I again used Hayes PROCESS Macro Model 4 (Hayes,

2013). I used attribution as my independent variable, empathy and moral anger as my mediators,

emotional response as a covariate, and then ITR and willingness to tip as dependent variables.

Attribution of blame positively related to both empathy (t (5, 159) = 3.34, $p < .005$) and moral

anger (t (5, 159) = 2.11, *p* < .05). Empathy was found to significantly impact ITR (t (7, 157) =

3.57, p < .01, 95% Cis [.11, .40]). Similarly, moral anger was found to significantly impact ITR

(t (7, 157) = 2.02, p < .05, 95% Cis [.00, .25]. Attribution did not significantly impact ITR (t (7,

157) = 1.17, p = .24, 95% Cis [-.18, .69]). As shown in Table 25, indirect effects results suggest,

only empathy significantly mediated the relationship between attribution and ITR (b = .25, 95%

Cis [.08,.47]). These results provide support for H9a, but not H10a. I then ran the same model

again but replaced ITR with willingness to tip as my dependent variable. Empathy significantly

impacted willingness to tip (t (7, 157) = 3.13, p < .005, 95% Cis [.07, .31]), but moral anger was

not significantly related to willingness to tip (t (7, 157) = 1.34, p = .18, 95% Cis [-.03, .17]).

Attribution did not significantly impact willingness to tip (t (7, 157) = .19, p = .85, 95% Cis [-

.33, .40]). Indirect effects indicated that, again, only empathy was found to significantly

mediated the relationship between attribution and willingness to tip (b = .18, 95% Cis [.05, .34]).

Taken together, these results provide support for H9b, but not H10b.

Insert Table 25 about here

Testing Moderated Mediation Hypotheses

To test my moderated mediation hypotheses, I again used Hayes PROCESS Macro

Model 7 (Hayes, 2013). Results suggest that breaking character with anger significantly impacts

empathy (t (7, 157) = -3.01, p < .005, 95% Cis [-2.33, -.48]), but breaking character with sadness

does not (t (7, 157) = .89, p = .37, 95% Cis [-.57, 1.51])). Similarly, the interaction between

attribution and breaking character with anger (t (7, 157) = .76, p = .45, 95% Cis [-.84, 1.88]) as

well as the interaction between attribution and breaking character with sadness (t (7, 157) = -.46,

p = .64, 95% Cis [-1.83, 1.13]) does not significantly impact empathy. The direct effect of

attribution on ITR was not significant (p = .51). Thus, I moved on to assessing the conditional

indirect effects and the index of moderated mediation. As seen in Table 26, the indirect effect of

attribution on ITR via empathy only varies based on breaking character with anger only (b = .42,

95% Cis [.11, .78]). As the table and Figure 15 show, The effects between adherence and

breaking character with sadness were, again, very similar as they were in study 2. Further,

adherence and breaking character with sadness contained zero in their confidence intervals. As

with study 2, adhering to display rules was the referent category for SPSS. The index of

moderated mediation indicates that none of the employee responses are significantly moderating

the mediated relationship between attribution and ITR, via empathy. Taken together, these

results do not provide support for H11. Although, they do suggest that moderation is occurring in

the relationship between attribution and empathy.

Breaking character with anger does not significantly impact moral anger (t (7, 157) = -

.72, p = .47, 95% Cis [-1.42, .66]) nor does breaking character with sadness (t (7, 157) = 1.92, p

= .06, 95% Cis [-.03, 2.30]), nor does the interaction between attribution and breaking character

with anger (t (7, 157) = -.78, p = .43, 95% Cis [-2.13, .92]). The interaction between attribution

and breaking character with sadness, however, does significantly impact moral anger (t (7, 157)

= -2.59, p < .05, 95% Cis [-3.82, -.49]). As seen in Table 27 and Figure 16, conditional indirect

effects indicate that all three emotional response variables include 0 in their confidence intervals

and the index of moderated mediation indicates that moderated mediation is not occurring in the

relationship between attribution and ITR, via moral anger.

Insert Tables 26 & 27 about here

Analyses in which willingness to tip was the dependent variable suggest that the direct effect between attribution and willingness to tip was insignificant (t (5, 159) = .03, p = .97, 95% Cis [-.36, .37]). Thus, I moved on to assessing the conditional indirect effects and the index of moderated mediation. As seen in Table 28, the indirect effect of attribution on willingness to tip via empathy only varies based on breaking character with anger (b = .31, 95% Cis [.07, .61]). The effects between adherence and breaking character with sadness were, again, very similar as they were in study 2. Further, adherence and breaking character with sadness contained zero in their confidence intervals. As with study 2, adhering to display rules was the referent category for SPSS. The index of moderated mediation indicates that moderated mediation is not occurring in the relationship between attribution and willingness to tip, via empathy nor moral anger (see Table 29). Taken together, these results do not provide support for H12.

Insert Tables 28 & 29 about here

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this dissertation jump start a stream of research on breaking character. Generally, this dissertation provides an overview of the phenomenon of breaking character. First, from the employee perspective, my qualitative results suggest that some employees feel that breaking character can be justified based on certain circumstances The results of my interviews suggest that the phenomenon of breaking character can take a variety of forms. First, confirming previous research, breaking character occurs in response to customer mistreatment. However, breaking character may also occur in response to disregard for safety from the passengers. This finding may be specific to my sample – the airline industry, including flight attendants, pilots, and the FAA adhere to a strict set of rules. In fact, one participant even

brought this up, noting how much their job has changed since the terrorist attacks of September 11th. It is certainly possible that, given the extreme focus on safety, flight attendants feel justified in breaking character since they are still effectively doing their job by enforcing safety rules.

Participants described various forms of customer mistreatment that they tolerate. Specifically, I found evidence of customer mistreatment that comes in the form of simple disrespect, full on verbal aggression, and physical aggression. Similarly, participants recollected customers that mistreated them for seemingly no reason or due to a problem that was out of their control. For example, participants provide stories that indicate that customers will take their anger out on flight attendants when their flights or travel plans have been delayed or changed.

The realistic picture of breaking character is a bit more complex and specific than simply "expressing negative emotions". For the most part, breaking character emerged as stemming from frustration or anger, although there were times that flight attendants were only being sassy or even expressing sadness. Additionally, employees broke character verbally and non-verbally. Some changed their tone or said certain words when they broke character, whereas others simply rolled their eyes. Finally, the importance of coworkers emerged as being more important than I previously considered. Through my analysis I found that coworkers helped one another in various ways, regardless of the presence or absence of customer mistreatment. Theoretically, the phenomenon of breaking character can be explained by Conservation of Resources (Hobfoll, 1989) and affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). According to COR, employees may break character when they do not have the resources available to act. In fact, this idea was first proposed by Grandey (2003) as the logic behind breaking character. However, the results of this study suggest that employees may break character even when they have ample resources (in this case, breaking character was attributed to safety instead). Thus, using AET in conjunction

with COR may help us better understand the phenomenon of breaking character from the

employees' perspective. According to AET, employees respond affectively to events at work.

Indeed, numerous studies use AET either as the primary theory or secondary theory to COR

when researching emotional labor. In using AET, we can include the safety component as well as

customer mistreatment. As a result of breaking character, employee resources may be restored.

Alternatively, employees who are mistreated by customers and respond with emotional

adherence to display rules may see further drain of resources. In fact, this resource drain may last

hours, days, or weeks, via rumination as described by the participants. See Figure 2 for a

depiction of my full theoretical model based off the results of this study.

Although these findings do help uncover a bit more of the black box of breaking

character, they only provide one side of the story – the employees. Certainly, if we asked the

customers who witnessed these events for their opinion, the story may be different. Thus, my

next two studies explore the phenomenon of breaking character from a customer's perspective.

The idea that customers are a part of this phenomenon was present in the interviews as well.

Many participants noted how public the job is, and how many customers they deal with each day,

and, in some cases, how other customers responded to negative interactions with other

customers.

The results from study 2 indicate that the idea that breaking character is catastrophic from

an organizational perspective is not as clear cut as previously thought. The presence of customer

mistreatment as well as the presence of breaking character with sadness are key factors that alter

third party outcomes. Generally, my hypotheses received mixed support. In my first analyses, I

showed that customer mistreatment generally makes people more likely to return or engage in

repeat business and makes people more willing to tip their server. Next, I showed that ITR and

willingness to tip were generally the same when employees adhered to display rules compared to when employees broke character with sadness. I also showed that breaking character with anger lowered ITR and willingness to tip. In other words, my results indicate that the negative outcomes of breaking character may be dependent on the type of negative emotion expressed. Further, the interacting effects of customer mistreatment and employee emotional response indicate that, when customer mistreatment is present, the mean ITR and willingness to tip increases regardless of how the employee responds. Although not all of these increases are significant. Specifically, third party ITR and willingness to tip are significantly higher when employees break character with anger after being mistreated, compared to employees who broke character without being mistreated. Thus, these results indicate that, although breaking character with anger results in negative outcomes, third parties may be privy to the idea that employees can be "deservedly" expressing anger. Similarly, third party willingness to tip significantly increased for participants who witnessed employees break character with sadness following mistreatment compared to participants who witnessed employees break character with sadness without being mistreatment. The findings that show that breaking character with sadness, regardless of customer mistreatment, leads to similar ITR may indicate that, perhaps, the vulnerability that is conveyed when people express sadness may be what is driving customers to have a higher ITR. In other words, whereas breaking character with anger needs to be "justified" (i.e., the employee needs to be provoked by customer mistreatment), breaking character with sadness does not. Expanding upon this logic, I next explore the "justification" of customer mistreatment.

The results of study 3 indicate that the justification for customer mistreatment may play a role in subsequent third-party observer's perceptions. Generally, when blame can be attributed to

something outside of the server's control, third parties respond with increased ITR and

willingness to tip. Although, these differences are not consistently significant. As with study 2,

adherence and sadness result in more similar outcomes than anger and sadness as well as anger

and adherence. These consistent findings provide evidence that not all negative emotions are

equal in the eyes of third-party observers. I found that, again, adherence results in the most

positive outcomes, and that these positive outcomes are amplified when there is a moral

wrongdoing. Breaking character with sadness resulted in the second-best outcomes and those

outcomes also increased when there was moral wrongdoing. Finally, breaking character with

anger resulted in the least positive outcomes. Although, again, not all of these differences were

significantly different from one another or depending on attribution of blame. Study 3 also found

that empathy significantly mediates the relationship between attributions and both outcomes, but

moral anger did not. Although, moral anger was approaching significance in mediating the

relationship between attribution and willingness to tip (p = .07). This finding may suggest that

other mediating variables are at play, such as felt responsibility (Hershcovis et al., 2017). Finally,

the analyses testing my moderated mediation hypotheses were largely unsupported. As seen in

the respective figures and tables, the effects of employee emotional expression do not

significantly change the relationship between attribution and empathy and attribution and moral

anger. While these findings do not support my hypotheses, they do suggest that, perhaps,

negative emotional expression is not as damaging as previously theorized.

Practical Implications

Practically, the results of this dissertation can help managers and organizations

understand the phenomenon of breaking character. First, managers and other organizational

leaders may be more aware of what is going on within an employee's psyche when they break

character. Given the interviews from study 1, managers and organizations may consider

implementing training in which they advise employees on when and how to break character. In other words, although the general results of this dissertation suggest that negative emotional expression is a nuanced phenomenon, that does not mean that organizations should manually lift all societal and organizational expectations of positive emotional expression. Instead, organizations should be more aware of negative emotional expression and, perhaps, consider implementing organizational rules, protocols, or training, that helps sanction a type of negative emotional expression. Ultimately, the goal should be for organizations to prep their employees in such a way that employees and organizations are comfortable with a breaking character event when it occurs.

Practitioners will also be able to weigh the costs of breaking character regarding service performance, ITR, and tips. As shown in studies two and three – employees breaking character does not always result in a customer severing their relationship with an organization or having decreased desire or likeness toward that organization. With these findings in mind, organizations and managers can again consider how and under what conditions they may allow an employee breaking character. Specifically, managers may weigh the pros and cons of breaking character as follows: Con – the customer that the employee breaks character to may severe their relationship with the organization. Pro – the customers experiencing this breaking character may support the employee and organization through several actions, behaviors, or thoughts. In summary, the findings in this dissertation give managers and organizational leaders an introduction into the explicit sanctioning of breaking character at work.

Practitioners may also want to use this work as an initial exposure into what customer mistreatment looks like in the real world. So often, managers are separated from front line employees who are often the targets of customer mistreatment. Many times, managers may only

be brought in at the height of a customer complaint, when emotions and tensions are at a

pinnacle, and may try to simply do what they can to deescalate the situation and save the

customer-organization relationship. Through this dissertation, managers may have a better idea

of what their employees go through daily. Through this increased understanding, managers and

training personnel may have more empathy for people in these roles, and include this in their

modification of training, policies, and procedures.

Theoretical Implications

This dissertation makes several theoretical contributions. First, this dissertation explores

the phenomenon of breaking character. Although the dramaturgical perspective has been seminal

in emotional labor literature, no studies to date indicate the boundary conditions to this theory.

The phenomenon of breaking character suggests that there are limits to the dramaturgical

perspective from both the employee and the customer's point of view. The findings of this

dissertation suggest that breaking character, poses a very interesting question for those studying

the dramaturgical perspective. I find that there are instances in which employees are okay with

"pulling down their mask". Other researchers in this space should consider this question and

explore what other elements factor into an employee's justification for breaking character. The

mixed findings regarding my moderated mediation analyses specifically expose a very unique

theoretical angle to explore. Many of the moderated mediation analyses show no significant

difference in effect by employee emotional response. Although this does not confirm my

hypothesis, the results do indicate that, in at least some sense, employee emotional response does

not significantly increase or decrease positive or negative outcomes. When examined from this

lens, the dramaturgical perspective is, again, not full-proof. By contributing to emotional labor

literature through the investigation of breaking character, I also add to an ongoing conversation

stressing the downside of display rules and push for an eradication of formal display rules

(Grandey et al., 2015). Although Grandey and colleagues call for the eradication of explicit display rules, implicit display rules and other display rule proponents still exist. In other words, display rules come from organizations, society, and occupations, both explicitly and implicitly. Thus, although organizations may get rid of explicit organizational display rules, societal rules exist. For example, society will likely still generally support the notion of the golden rule. Similarly, occupations, such as those that are customer facing, are likely to maintain the expectancy of integrative display rules, regardless of organizational policies, procedures, or climates.

Second, this dissertation incorporates the cognitive appraisal of emotions framework (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), which has been largely absent in the literature. This lack of work incorporating this framework is unfortunate and adds to the shortcoming of the literature in which there is an over-emphasis on a select handful of emotions. As previously stated, researchers seem to have narrowed in on a handful of emotions, failing to fully understand the breadth and depth of the emotional labor process. The results of this dissertation, although generally mixed, do indicate that not all negative emotions are created equal. Indeed, expressing anger promotes signals of aggression and dominance, whereas sadness promotes signals of vulnerability and someone in need of help. As seen in the results, when we look at two negative emotions at once, we can see stark contrasts appear. Specifically, adherence to display rules and breaking character with sadness result in more similar outcomes than breaking character with anger and breaking character with sadness. This finding indicates that the signals that emotions send play a crucial role in subsequent outcomes.

Finally, this dissertation contributes to the third-party justice literature. Since many emotional labor encounters take place in public, incorporating third-party perceptions in the

literature is important. Despite the public nature of customer facing positions, much of the emotional labor research continues to focus on investigating emotional labor from the perspective of employees and how they do or do not surface act and deep act. By studying third-party observers, we are able to get a more well-rounded, and accurate picture of what the emotional labor process generally, and breaking character specifically looks like realistically. Many parts of the third-party model of injustice are untested. Thus, my application of this model took a basic approach, only including select variables under select circumstances. The third-party model of injustice indicates that distinguishing the third-party from the victim is of importance (e.g., not using a third party that is in the same position as the victim, such as two employees). Further, the model does not include customers as a source of injustice (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004). By including customers as a source of mistreatment, I am addressing both of these points simultaneously. Finally, through study 2 and study 3 I am individually testing certain components of the model (e.g., attribution) and how that component changes third-party perceptions.

Limitations and Future Research

Like any study, this dissertation has some limitations. First, the experimental methods used utilized written vignettes. Although written vignettes are common in the literature (Blodgett et al., 1997; Levesque & McDougall, 2000)), there are other ways to communicate a vignette, such as through photo (Surakka & Hietanen, 1998), video, or audio. Ultimately, I chose to apply a written vignette for several reasons. First, it is the most used method, based on my research. Second, a vignette seems more appropriate than an audio clip when trying to explain a restaurant-based scenario. Third, if I employed the use of video or photograph, I could no longer use a gender- or racially neutral server as my employee who broke character. Diversity characteristics such as, race, age, and gender certainly impact emotional labor perceptions. In

fact, recent research has just begun to explore this issue in the emotional labor literature (Grandey et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2022). Thus, including an employee of a specific age, race, or gender, would have simply introduced too many confounding variables into the scenario. Future researchers would benefit from the use of video or audio recordings. Through these methods, researchers could determine the impact of age, race, and gender on third-party observer perceptions. Further, researchers could shed more light on the differences (or similarities) that emerge when divergent methods are employed.

Second, although this dissertation included both qualitative and quantitative work, I did not include field data. Field data would serve as a compass for future work in this space and would help enrich the findings from this dissertation. Unfortunately, field data collection was not a viable option for this dissertation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of the data collection planning and execution was done during a time in the pandemic where field data collection would not have been possible due to in-store/restaurant occupancy mandates among other variables. Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic in itself may introduce confounding variables or create an environment in which any one of my variables may be minimized or even more pronounced at this time. For example, customer mistreatment may be at an all-time high due to labor shortages and general unhappiness about the pandemic. Similarly, employees may be on edge, and thus, more likely to break character due to the strain of having to work more because of the pandemic and labor shortage. Future researchers may consider how and when they can use field work to explore the phenomenon of breaking character more. Similarly, future researchers should thoroughly consider the implications of the organizational and societal environment in which they are conducting their study. It would likely be beneficial to conduct a set of studies

similar to this dissertation that either controls for factors that can be attributed to the pandemic or be conducted at a time where the COVID-19 pandemic is not as disruptive as it currently is.

Third, the variables studied in this dissertation can be considered narrow. Specifically, I only investigate two mediators and two dependent variables. Certainly, there are numerous variables that could also be mediators. For example, Hershcovis and colleagues (2017) note that third-party observers feel a sense of responsibility when they witness mistreatment. Future researchers could combine the results of this dissertation as well as Hershcovis' work to explore felt responsibility as a potential mediator in these relationships. In fact, the inclusion of more mediators is critical, given the mixed findings regarding my mediating variables. Future researchers could also include more dependent variables from the customer's point of view. Further, scholars may benefit from quantitatively exploring breaking character from the employee's perspective. The qualitative study in this dissertation suggests that the act of breaking character is complex for employees. Future researchers should empirically explore the process of breaking character to expand upon this dissertation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation sheds light on the phenomenon of breaking character in the workplace. Although the results presented in this dissertation are widespread and oftentimes complex, they are still important and worthy of further exploration. Seemingly every day there are customer mistreatment and employee emotional reactions. This dissertation pulls the curtain back on these encounters and gives researchers and practitioners a look into this everyday occurrence. Hopefully, with time, more research will uncover and explore the phenomenon of breaking character.

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Biographical Information

Nicolina Taylor received her Ph. D. from the University of Texas at Arlington in August 2022. She has an MS in management from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, and a BBA in Management with a concentration in Human Resource Management from Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. Her main research interests are emotional labor, diversity, and dark employee behaviors. In her free time, she enjoys listening to podcasts, playing video games, and hanging out with her husband and their German Shepherd, Wrangler.

Tables and Figures

Table 1

Qualitative Percent Agreement

Interview	Number of Codes	% Agreement
1	72	90.27%
2	18	100.00%
3	53	96.30%
4	83	87.95%
5	40	87.50%
6	104	100.00%
7	49	83.67%
8	26	96.15%
9	118	88.98%
10	53	86.79%
11	116	93.10%
12	70	92.84%
13	58	91.38%
14	102	93.13%
15	121	88.42%
16	38	89.47%
17	166	90.96%
18	74	93.24%
19	112	91.96%
Total and Average	1473	91.69%

Table 2

Code	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Breaking Character - Anger (1)		46					17					
Breaking Character - Justification (2)	46					19	22					
Coworkers Helping - Actions (3)						6						
Coworkers Helping - Tasks (4)										5	11	
Coworkers Helping - Words (5)			6									
Negative Customer Interaction (6)	11	19					46					
Conflict with a Customer (7)	17	22				46						
Display Rules - Expressing Positive (8)									13			
Display Rules - Suppressing Negative (9)								13				
Helping Coworkers - Actions (10)			5								12	15
Helping Coworkers - Tasks (11)				11						12		
Helping Coworkers - Words (12)										15		

Code Co-Occurrences

Table 3

Customer Mistreatment

Type	Representative Quote
Conflict with Customer	OK, well, so this is a completely anonymous. I mean, I know someone who had a passenger who was being noncompliant and they were violating our rules and they. They were taking pictures of a flight attendant, which is totally unacceptable. And for security purposes. And so this flight attendant was respectful but responded and said the passenger was unruly and verbally kind of attacking the flight attendants. He wasn't removed from the plane, but upon leaving the gate, the flight attendant accidentally got on the phone. And you could either do a public announcement or you can use the phone to call other flight attendants. Laughs So the question that actually accidentally made a public announcement and was like sorry, had to deal with that asshole. So I think that the person in question would have been the passenger should have experienced more consequences. But because of that mistake, laughs they didn't.

I did have an experience where a woman had a really large bag in her lap and it took three different flight attendants to get her to finally stow it. And she was very combative. But, you know, there were no physical altercations or anything. So it wasn't too bad.

Customers do kind of take a little bit too far. So just to kind of circle back to your specific question, like, I guess just like when people are. just rude. I guess it's the thing when they're having difficulty with their travel experience and they kinda take it out on whoever is closest and most visible. And once they're on the airplane, that is that us that is the flight attendants who are the most visible and therefore can be the punching bag sometimes for people with bad moods or bad experiences with the airline? |

And the flight attendant told him he couldn't smoke. And he said, the hell I can't. And she's like, Sir, you can't smoke. He decked her in the chin and knocked her out, like, out cold. One of the one of the flight attendants saw it and called the captain and flight attendants all came to her aid staff and they went ahead and called Europe. It was port authorities that met the flight, came on and handcuffed him and took them off the airplane. And his girlfriend was traveling with him, was just as drunk as he was. And she starts yelling at a flight attendant, calling her all kinds of names. And port authority said, you know, you need to quit talking like that before we arrest you as well.

[00:01:26] So I had a guy say to me, you're kidding.

[00:01:32] You don't have more meals. And I explained to him, no we have a limited number of meals. We start at the top of the cabin. And by the time we get to the end of the cabin, we usually run out.

[00:01:43] And he proceeded to yell at me and just be really disrespectful, so I started to ignore him.

Negative Customer Interaction	And as I was walking up towards the front of the aircraft, the lady stopped me and said, Can you take this? And I looked at it was a dirty diaper. And I said, Ma'am, there's a barf bag in your seat, back pocket. You can place that there. And then the lavatory is right here. And I pointed up toward the lab was well, she was upset that I didn't take it. And when I walked away, she threw it at me. She didn't she didn't hit me. But all the passenger side and they were all like, flabbergasted by her actions, you know, because was like, what?

So from the brain surgery, his left hand shakes a lot.

[00:13:26] It's not as bad as it was at first, but he's very conscious of it, you know, and one time.

[00:13:34] So he was working in business class and he was serving drinks to this gentleman. And as he's serving the gentleman umm his drink, the gentleman was really rude and said, what's wrong with you? Why are you shaking like that?

[00:13:50] And my friend just went off on him and said, because I had brain surgery and it's caused me to shake. You have a problem with it. Kind of like that.

The seat belt sign went off, but the flight attendant did not make an announcement. And I says, yeah, he goes, well, I'm an FAA a check airman and that and now that's an FAA violation. I go, oh, OK. Well I'll let her know, so I knew That was a bunch of bullshit. They knew it wasn't. And that's not a person, by the way, he presented themselves. He didn't show his I.D. badge when he boarded the plane. So I go back to the back galley where the galley person was loading up the cart with the next round meal. And they go through a strange about the FAA guy. He's claiming to be a FAA check airman. And I said there's something wrong with this situation. Said he went on more about, you know, he was going to talk to us at the end of the day, can give us the fine. So what I did is they called up to the captain and said there is a guy sittin in 16B who claims he's FAA and he's all upset about that. We didn't do the announcement. And he says can you call ahead and do SOC see if they would find out that this guy really is an FAA person. And cockpit called ahead. Then they go, you know, a few minutes for this all to transpire. So we finished up serving the lunch. We've kind of, you know, stayed away from the guy. And then the guy that they said, well, he's not F.A.A.. So at the end of the flight the captain told us because cause I was up towards the front of the airplane when they were deplane. So I had to point out the guy. And at the end of the jet bridge, there was the Dallas police, FAA and FBI. And about three or four (REDACTED) management people. And they grabbed the guy, took him off. And he was you could no longer fly (ORGANIZATION) ever again. And he actually had a job within the aerospace business. And I'm pretty sure he probably lost his job over it.

Table 4

Breaking Character	
Type	**Representative Quote**
Anger	And at that point, I just lost it. And I just said, you know what? This is not our fault. Stop blaming us for what's going on. We were not notified. This is not our job to move passengers to different seats. That's the gate agent's job. The gate agent knew. The plane was downsized. So they should have re rebooked your seats on this plane, but they didn't. And because they told the passengers oh the flight, attendants will take care of it when you get on the airplane. So I just, let everyone have it, you know. Don't blame me. I don't want to hear it. This is not my fault. This is not my problem.
	Well, I told you this like ten minutes ago to put your bag up. Now your bag has to go towards the back where there's more space than they're like. Well, I don't want to get my bag back there. Well, too bad.
	But now we're not. And I can't move you to any random seat because somebody else but the family could be sitting there. So I finally just said it is not our fault because I have nothing to do with it. You know what?
	You're going to have to wait and work it, work it out among yourselves right now, because there's no way we can reseat, you know, one hundred and like a hundred and some people ...

I guess just losing my patience, kind of showing me emotion. Ummm We just had a passenger that was very combative. Every single flight attendant on a large airplane, which he shouldn't really even have interaction with all of us. And I finally got to the point where I shut him down and I told him without the captain's approval, that we had no problem landing this plane and inconveniencing 200 people and letting the people around him hear, which they were kind of already aware he was crazy anyway. But he knew to shut off right then. He never gave us another word. But I like I could not take another second. Which as crazy. And now I guess he realized he was going to be in real trouble if he continued.

I have gone up to somebody and, you know, after they just beat me down, just turned around and said, I'm done. I'll just put my hand. I'll just give you what we call the international stop sign. Where You just put your hand straight out. That's what it is called. Technically, it is the international stop sign. We use that when we're evacuating an airplane. Hand goes up. That means stop. And it means stop in any language. And I'll put up my hand and say we're done You have insulted me for the last time. I'm not going to hear any more of this. I can't make you happy. You don't want to be happy. Go take your seat. We're done.

And so then I put on that mask or I put on that persona of their mother, like, I cannot believe you're acting like this. Check yourself.

Sadness   Yeah. There might be something that triggered on a flight in somebody that, you know, like, I recently lost my father. And there was a man on board and he said something. And it it just made me think of my father and my eyes teared up and he goes, I'm so sorry. Did I say something to offend you? I said, Now. And then I told them. And he is like, Oh, I'm so sorry. And I'm like, No, no, don't be sorry. It was just this really. It was fine to remember thinking my dad because of something, you know what he said or it was something my dad would have said. So no, I don't really have a problem sharing emotions with passengers because we're human, they're human. They you know. And it's it's a way of sharing something and intimate with a passenger.

when my grandmother passed away like three years and I was interacting with this woman and she was having a bad day. And I just I was I just I, I just started crying and so that my coworker came over and such.

[00:06:58] they helped the lady with, whatever issue she was having. And they just said, you know, are you okay? I said, I'm sorry. You know, I'm just going through something right now.

I've had I've had discussions with passengers. You know, I I've had, you know, personal discussions with passengers about grief and, you know, sadness and things like that, you know, depending on whatever conversation has come up with that interaction with the passenger.

Table 5

Helping One Another	
Type	**Representative Quote**
Helping with Actions	I see another coworker dealing with the passenger who's maybe being rude, disrespectful. I kind of go up to them and try to, like, just say, oh, come with me.
	Like, if somebody when a coworker is having a problem with the passenger. Then another flight attendant or myself will try to deal with that person and promote the other person from the situation.
	if it's gotten so bad and it has, you know, maybe only one time, I think, or twice in my career to where we removed that flight attendant from that section. And I'll say, you know, there's the times. I'll say, you know what? I'll go work that.
	So a lot of times, I mean, if we're showing emotion, usually the crew will jump right in. be like. What's going on? Are you OK? You know, they're usually very compassionate. And Helpful.
Helping with Tasks	
	That's what we do sometimes. So when we're doing our beverage service on a walk through. I was like, I'm not in a good place right now. I cannot handle being around those people. So I had to ask another flight attendant to kind of, you know, serve them the drinks instead of me because I really had to remove myself because they were just being so horrible that I just wasn't, you know, I know. I just I just felt like that was the best thing to do is to have another flight attendant take care of that couple.
	We're in a very closed environment so people people pitch in for work, you know, and if they are finished in the economy cabin they'll come up and work in the premium cabin till we finish.
	No, it's no service is bad until all service is bad. So no matter what cabin you're working in, if you can break away and go help in the other cabin because you're completed, then that's ideally what we do. It's yeah, it's not a. OK, well, you have to do this and you have to do that.

Yes. We always help each other out with work related task. Somebody may be dealing with a passenger and maybe they had something and maybe they didn't come, didn't armed your doors.

Helping with Words	So we kind of we have the term jumpseat therapy and the job. [00:10:26] And that's when you're sitting on the jump seat next to a crew member. You kind of like open up in a way that you wouldn't necessarily do normally. in another job
	Well, we make ourselves feel better by sitting in the back galley, you know, talking about her cause, you know, we got each other's back.
	So normally that person who just had that interaction that you're speaking about will come back to it and verbalize what happened. And usually that is, again, where you're talking about the flight attendants, would either validate it or, you know. Oh, my God, I can't believe that person did that to you. I mean,so… I think that's another aspect of the job that people, you know, I don't know, get validation from because they're coworkers or doesn't support them or get out. And again, if the passengers that out of hand then the purses steps in and will go back, listen to what's happened. Get involved. And, you know, normally, you know, nine out of 10 times support the flight attendant.
	Trying to think of, like, examples, I guess. Like, sometimes when I'm working with a friend, if I have a bad customer interaction, I can pull myself out of it faster because I know I have someone there who I guess you could say, like, support me or I could like vent and I'd be like, OK, I'm good.

Table 6

			Personal	Customer		
Condition	Sample	Realistic	Experience	Mistreatment	Anger	Sadness
1	12	100%	83.33%	92%	92%	100%
2	19	73.68%	36.84%	95%	89%	84%
3	10	100%	30.00%	90%	80%	90%
4	15	93.33%	80.00%	100%	80%	87%
5	11	81.82%	27.27%	82%	100%	64%
6	17	94.12%	64.71%	88%	88%	82%
	84	**90.49%**	**53.69%**	**91%**	**88%**	**84%**

Study 2 Pilot Study Results

Table 7

CFA Chi-Square Difference Tests and Fit Statistics

Models	$\chi 2$	p	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	p	Δdf	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
4-Factor Model	244.267	.000	113				.950	.958	.081
Model with Positive Affect and Empathy loading on one factor	984.92	.000	116	740.653	.000	3	.675	.723	.206
Model with Empathy and Moral Anger loading on one factor	531.301	.000	116	287.034	.000	3	.845	.867	.143
All items loading onto one factor	2438.76	.000	119	2194.493	.000	6	.154	.260	.333

Table 8
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gender(1)	1.53	.65										
Race(2)	2.72	1.86	.11									
Age(3)	23.78	5.87	.06	.07								
Organizational Tenure(4)	4.55	1.96	-.08	.04	.23**							
Customer Mistreatment(5)	.51	.50	-.05	-.05	-.03	.01						
Employee Emotional Expression(6)	1.07	.80	-.03	.07	-.01	-.16*	.09					
Empathy(7)	5.14	2.24	.02	.02	-.10	-.05	.53**	.22**				
Moral Anger(8)	4.81	2.89	.04	-.00	-.09	.02	.74**	.11	.71**			
Intent to Return(9)	5.22	1.60	-.01	-.05	.09	.10	.26**	-.12	.34**	.30**		
Willingness to Tip(10)	5.30	1.47	-.08	.05	-.11	-.02	.32**	.05	.46**	.31**	.54**	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 9

Multivariate and Between-Subjects Effects				
Multivariate Tests				
Variable		Sig.	partial η^2	Observed Power
Customer mistreatment		<.001	.12	.99
Emotional Expression		<.001	.17	1.00
Customer mistreatment X Employee emotional expression		.34	.01	.36
Between Subjects Effects				
Variable	Outcome	Sig.	partial η^2	Observed Power
Customer mistreatment	ITR	<.001	.07	.93
Emotional Expression	ITR	<.001	.22	1.00
Customer mistreatment X Employee Emotional Expression	ITR	.14	.02	.40
Emotional Expression	Willingness to Tip	<.001	.22	1.00
Customer mistreatment	Willingness to Tip	<.001	.11	.99
Customer mistreatment X Employee Emotional Expression	Willingness to Tip	.42	.01	.20

Table 10

Pairwise Comparisons - Customer Mistreatment			
Descriptive			
Condition	Outcome	Mean	Std. Error
No Customer Mistreatment	ITR	4.94	.15
Customer Mistreatment***	ITR	5.66	.15
No Customer Mistreatment	Willingness to Tip	4.93	.14
Customer Mistreatment***	Willingness to Tip	5.79	.14

*Note: *** = Significantly different from no customer mistreatment at the p < .001 level*

Table 11

Pairwise Comparisons - Employee Emotional Expression

Condition	Outcome	M	Std. Error
Adherence	ITR	6.13	.20
Anger***	ITR	4.38	.17
Sadness**+	ITR	5.40	.18
Adherence	Willingness to Tip	5.79	.18
Anger***	Willingness to Tip	4.45	.16
Sadness+	Willingness to Tip	5.83	.17

*Note: *** = significantly different from adherence at the p < .001 level*
*** = significantly different from adherence at the p < .05 level*
+ = significantly different from breaking character with anger at the p < .001 level

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics				
Customer Treatment	Employee Emotional Expression	Outcome	M	SD
Fair	Adherence	ITR	5.99	1.16
Fair	Anger	ITR	3.74	1.61
Fair	Sadness	ITR	5.06	1.02
Mistreatment	Adherence	ITR	6.14	1.33
Mistreatment	Anger	ITR	5.05	1.51
Mistreatment	Sadness	ITR	5.80	1.47
Fair	Adherence	Willingness to Tip	5.55	1.03
Fair	Anger	Willingness to Tip	3.94	1.24
Fair	Sadness	Willingness to Tip	5.30	1.09
Mistreatment	Adherence	Willingness to Tip	6.04	1.57
Mistreatment	Anger	Willingness to Tip	4.96	.97
Mistreatment	Sadness	Willingness to Tip	6.35	1.45

Table 13

Indirect effects

Outcome	Effect	BootSE	LLCI	ULCI
Intent to Return R^2 .33***				
Empathy	.27	.16	-.04	.60
Moral Anger	.13	.25	-.38	.63
Willingness to Tip R^2 .37***				
Empathy	.54	.16	.23	.86
Moral Anger	-.49	.29	-1.06	.12

*Note: * = p < .05*
*** = p < .01*
**** = p < .005*

Table 14

Conditional Indirect effects and Index of Moderated Mediation for Empathy and Intent to Return

Employee Emotional Expression	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Adherence	.48	.23	.06	.96
Anger	.42	.20	.05	.84
Sadness	.27	.15	.03	.59
Index of Moderated Mediation				
Employee Emotional Expression	Index	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Anger	-.06	.13	-.34	.21
Sadness	-.22	.16	-.57	.04

Table 15

Conditional Indirect effects and Index of Moderated Mediation for Moral Anger and Intent to Return

Employee Emotional Expression	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Adherence	.18	.27	-.38	.73
Anger	.18	.27	-.34	.73
Sadness	.18	.27	-.35	.70

Index of Moderated Mediation				
Employee Emotional Expression	Index	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Anger	-.00	.05	-.11	.13
Sadness	-.00	.06	-.13	.12

Table 16

Conditional Indirect effects and Index of Moderated Mediation for Empathy and Willingness to Tip

Employee Emotional Expression	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Adherence	.91	.25	.44	1.43
Anger	.80	.22	.41	1.25
Sadness	.50	.19	.17	.91
Index of Moderated Mediation				
Employee Emotional Expression	Index	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Anger	-.11	.23	-.57	.35
Sadness	-.40	.24	-.90	-.05

Table 17

Conditional Indirect effects and Index of Moderated Mediation for Moral Anger and Willingness to Tip

Employee Emotional Expression	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Adherence	-.48	.33	-1.13	.19
Anger	-.47	.32	-1.09	.19
Sadness	-.47	.32	-1.09	.19

Index of Moderated Mediation				
Employee Emotional Response	Index	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Anger	.01	.09	-.18	.22
Sadness	.01	.10	-.20	.22

Table 18

Study 3 Pilot Study Results

Condition	Sample Size	Realistic	Personal Experience	Attribution - Server	Attribution - Kitchen	Blame	Anger	Sadness
1	36	100.00%	87.50%	77.78%	27.78%	69.44%	55.56%	22.22%
2	38	77.27%	81.81%	76.32%	31.58%	68.42%	63.16%	39.47%
3	28	93.10%	67.86%	82.14%	35.71%	71.43%	60.71%	67.86%
4	40	93.55%	57.50%	45.00%	77.50%	51.28%	47.50%	50.00%
5	43	96.00%	41.86%	30.23%	62.79%	44.19%	52.38%	41.86%
6	44	100.00%	29.55%	15.91%	70.45%	36.36%	39.53%	74.42%
	229	**93.32%**	**61.01%**	**55%**	**51%**	**57%**	**53%**	**49%**

Table 19

CFA Chi-Square Difference Tests and Fit Statistics

Models	$\chi2$	p	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	p	Δdf	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
4-Factor Model	213.414	.000	113				.96	.97	.07
Positive Affect = Empathy	952.255	.000	116	738.841	.000	3	.66	.71	.21
Moral Anger = Empathy	568.993	.000	116	355.579	.000	3	.81	.84	.15
1-Factor Model	2112.754	.000	130	1899.340	.000	17	.28	.31	.30

Table 20

Study 3 Manipulation Check Results

Condition	Sample	Who made the mistake	The order	Kitchen Staff	Blame	Adherence	Anger	Sadness
1	27	85%	85%	78%	89%	93%	81%	85%
2	37	86%	76%	76%	78%	95%	86%	86%
3	23	87%	83%	83%	61%	65%	87%	87%
4	26	88%	81%	81%	88%	96%	85%	85%
5	32	94%	75%	75%	84%	81%	75%	75%
6	24	92%	83%	83%	83%	75%	92%	92%
	169	**89%**	**80%**	**79%**	**81%**	**84%**	**84%**	**85%**

Table 21
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Gender (1)	1.5	.78													
Race (2)	2.01	1.19	-.09												
Age (3)	40.54	11.97	.17*	-.34**											
Organizational Tenure (4)	6.39	1.64	-.04	.04	.13										
Work Status (5)	1.71	.49	.09	.26	.75	.00									
Positive Affect (6)	3.35	1	.01	.04	-.10	.29**	.28								
Social Desirability (7)	1.46	.27	.11	.21**	-.11	.08	.31	.28**							
Attribution of Blame (8)	.50	.50	-.01	.14	.03	.05	.40	.09	.07						
Employee Emotional Expression (9)	.97	.77	-.05	-.07	.09	.11	-.49	.02	-.06	-.01					
Empathy (10)	5.78	2.01	.07	-.03	.06	.00	.58	.16*	-.00	.27**	.04				
Moral Anger (11)	5.72	2.15	.12	-.22**	.25**	-.07	.75	.09	-.13	.18*	.01	.61**			
Intent to Return (12)	5.47	1.64	-.01	-.05	.14	-.03	.54	-.01	-.14	.18*	-.17*	.49**	.41**		
Willingness to Tip (13)	4.30	1.27	-.02	-.11	.02	-.12	.15	.04	-.12	.12	-.06	.42**	.35**	.68***	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 22

Multivariate and Between-Subjects Effects

Multivariate Tests			
Variable	Sig.	partial η^2	Observed Power
Attribution	.05	.04	.58
Emotional Expression	<.001	.08	.99
Attribution X Employee Emotional Expression	.74	.01	.17

Between Subjects Effects				
Variable	Outcome	Sig.	partial η^2	Observed Power
Attribution	ITR	<.05	.04	.69
Emotional Expression	ITR	<.001	.14	1.00
Attribution X Employee Emotional Expression	ITR	.42	.01	.20
Attribution	Willingness to Tip	.16	.11	.29
Emotional Expression	Willingness to Tip	<.001	.08	.94
Attribution X Employee Emotional Expression	Willingness to Tip	.56	.01	.15

Table 23

Descriptive Statistics

Condition	Outcome	Mean	Std. Error
Server blame	ITR	5.28	0.17
External Party Blame**	ITR	5.87	0.17
Server blame	Willingness to Tip	4.22	0.13
External Party Blame	Willingness to Tip	4.49	0.14

Note: ** = *Significantly different from server blame at the p < .005 level*

Table 24

		Descriptive Statistics		
Attribution of Blame	Employee Emotional Expression	Outcome	M	SD
Server	Adherence	ITR	5.77	1.22
Server	Anger	ITR	4.66	1.65
Server	Sadness	ITR	5.45	1.77
External Party	Adherence	ITR	6.77	1.47
External Party	Anger	ITR	5.01	1.43
External Party	Sadness	ITR	5.79	1.51
Server	Adherence	Willingness to Tip	4.41	1.01
Server	Anger	Willingness to Tip	3.81	1.20
Server	Sadness	Willingness to Tip	4.45	1.18
External Party	Adherence	Willingness to Tip	4.96	1.04
External Party	Anger	Willingness to Tip	3.87	1.34
External Party	Sadness	Willingness to Tip	4.63	1.44

Table 25

Indirect effects				
Outcome	Effect	BootSE	LLCI	ULCI
Intent to Return R^2 .34***				
Empathy	.25	.10	.08	.47
Moral Anger	.09	.07	-.01	.24
Willingness to Tip R^2 .23***				
Empathy	.18	.08	.05	.35
Moral Anger	.05	.05	-.03	.167

*Note: * = p < .05*
*** = p < .01*
**** = p < .005*

Table 26

Conditional Indirect effects and Index of Moderated Mediation for Empathy and Intent to Return

Employee Emotional Expression	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Adherence	.26	.17	-.03	.63
Anger	.42	.17	.11	.78
Sadness	.15	.16	-.13	.52

Index of Moderated Mediation				
Employee Emotional Expression	Index	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Anger	.16	.21	-.28	.59
Sadness	-.11	.21	-.54	.33

Table 27

Conditional Indirect effects and Index of Moderated Mediation for Moral Anger and Intent to Return				
Employee Emotional Expression	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Adherence	.19	.14	-.03	.51
Anger	.12	.09	-.03	.34
Sadness	-.08	.09	-.31	.07
Index of Moderated Mediation				
Employee Emotional Expression	Index	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Anger	-.08	.12	-.36	.11
Sadness	-.27	.20	-.73	.04

Table 28

Conditional Indirect effects and Index of Moderated Mediation for Empathy and Willingness to Tip				
Employee Emotional Expression	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Adherence	.19	.13	-.02	.47
Anger	.31	.14	.07	.61
Sadness	.11	.11	-.09	.35
Index of Moderated Mediation				
Employee Emotional Expression	Index	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Anger	.12	.16	-.20	.45
Sadness	-.08	.16	-.41	.22

Table 29

Conditional Indirect effects and Index of Moderated Mediation for Moral Anger and Willingness to Tip

Employee Emotional Expression	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Adherence	.10	.11	-.06	.36
Anger	.06	.07	-.04	.23
Sadness	-.04	.06	-.17	.06
Index of Moderated Mediation				
Employee Emotional Response	Index	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Anger	-.04	.08	-.24	.08
Sadness	-.14	.14	-.45	.10

Figure 1

- Customer mistreatment
- Disregard for occupational rules

Work Event

Emotional response

- Breaking Character
- Emotional adherence

- Release
- Rumination

Resource gain or loss

Figure 2

Figure 3

Intent to Return
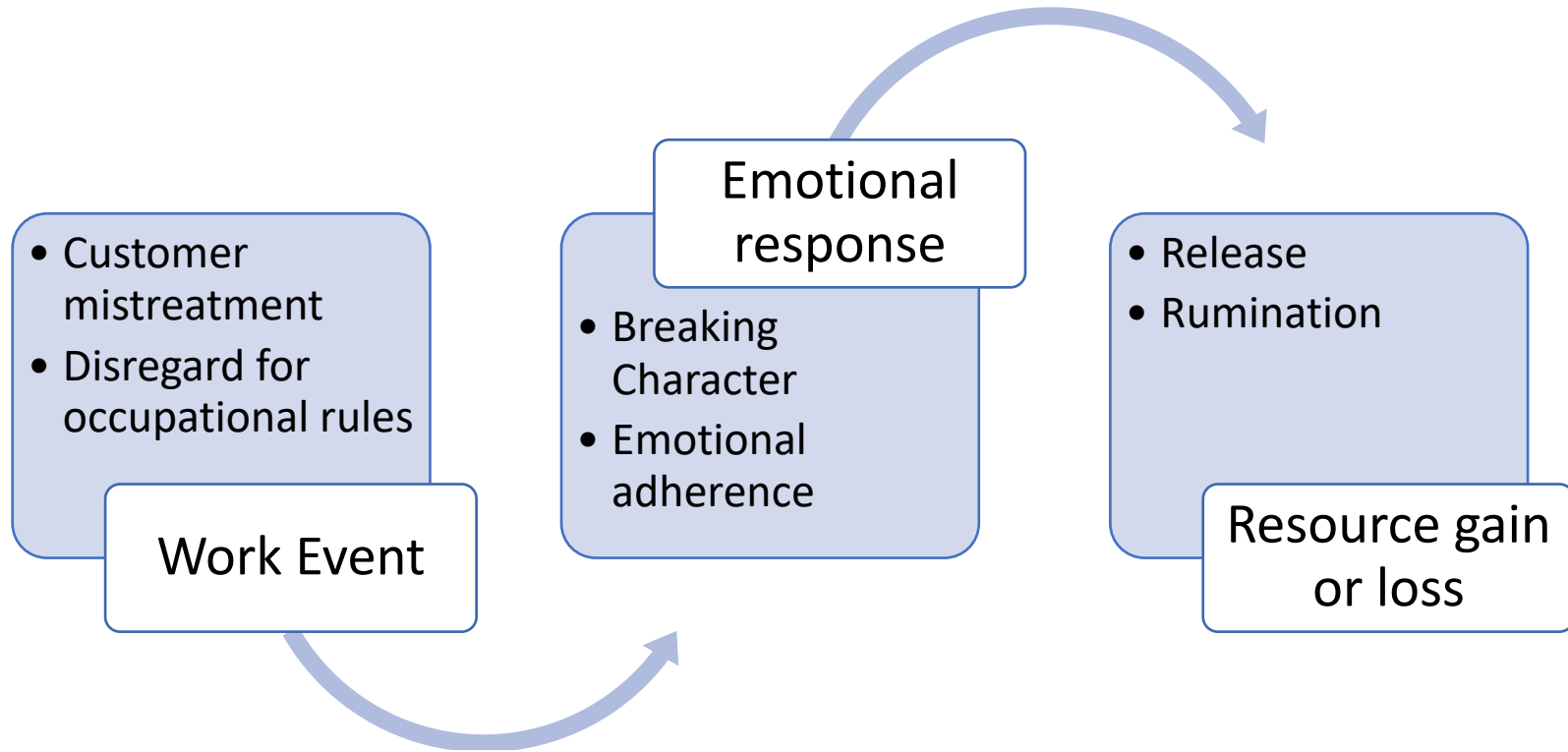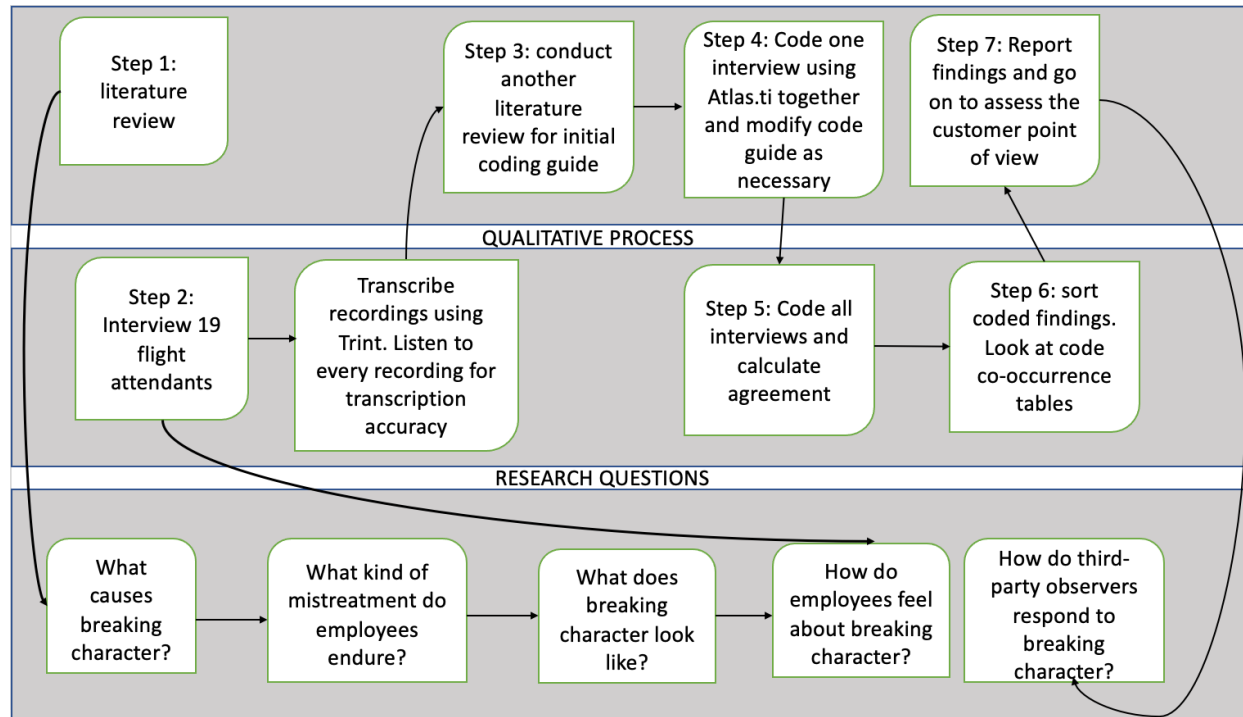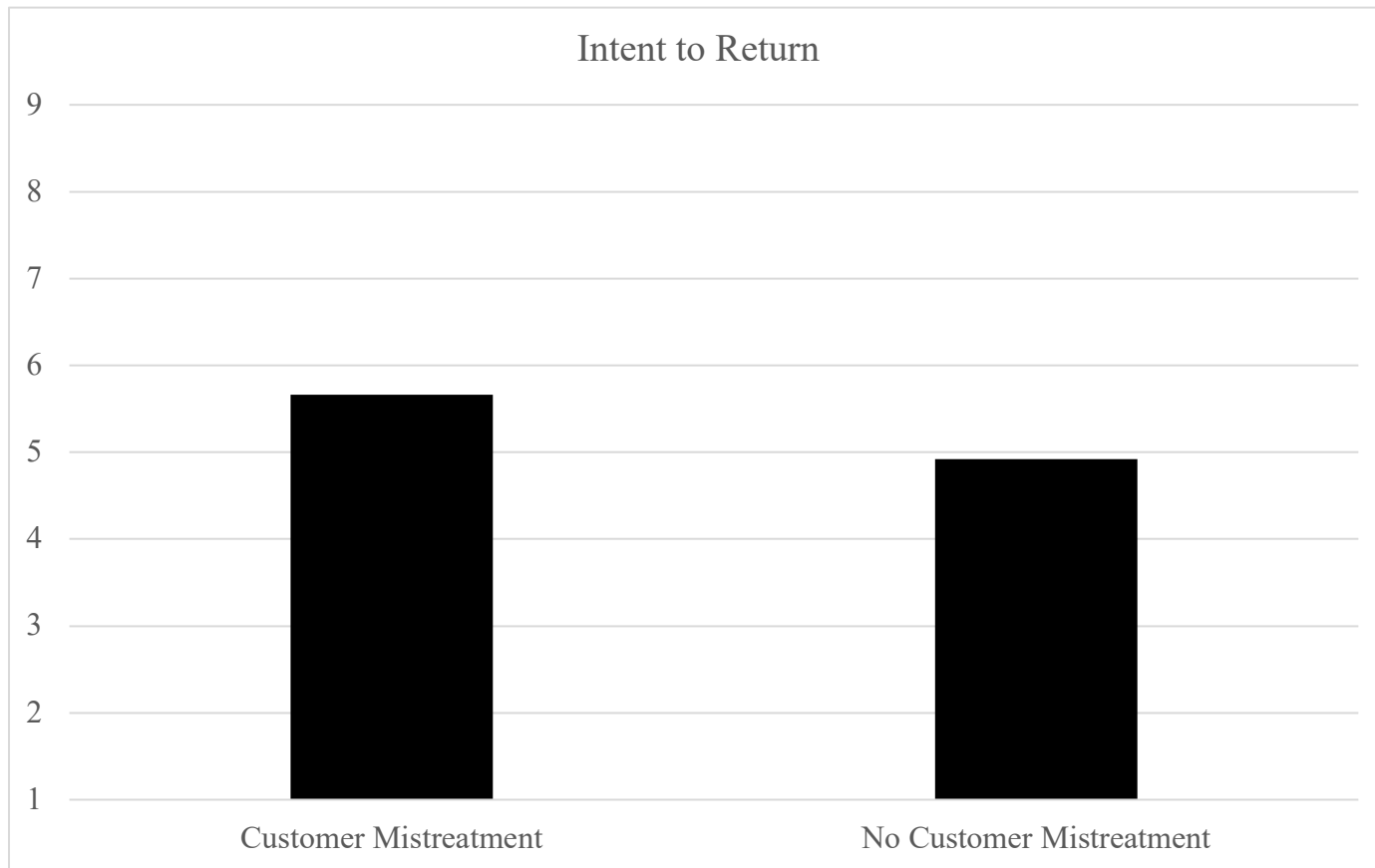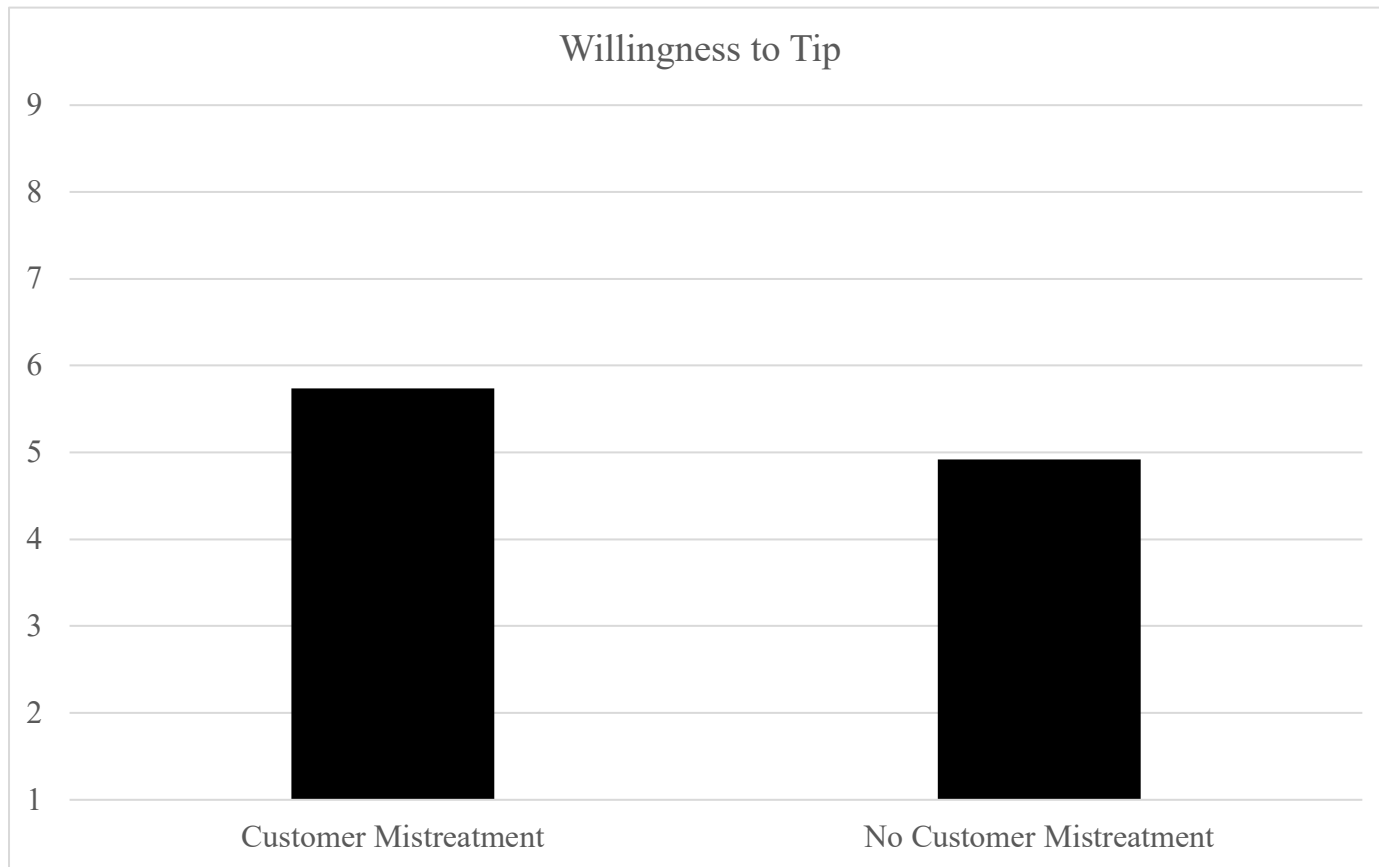
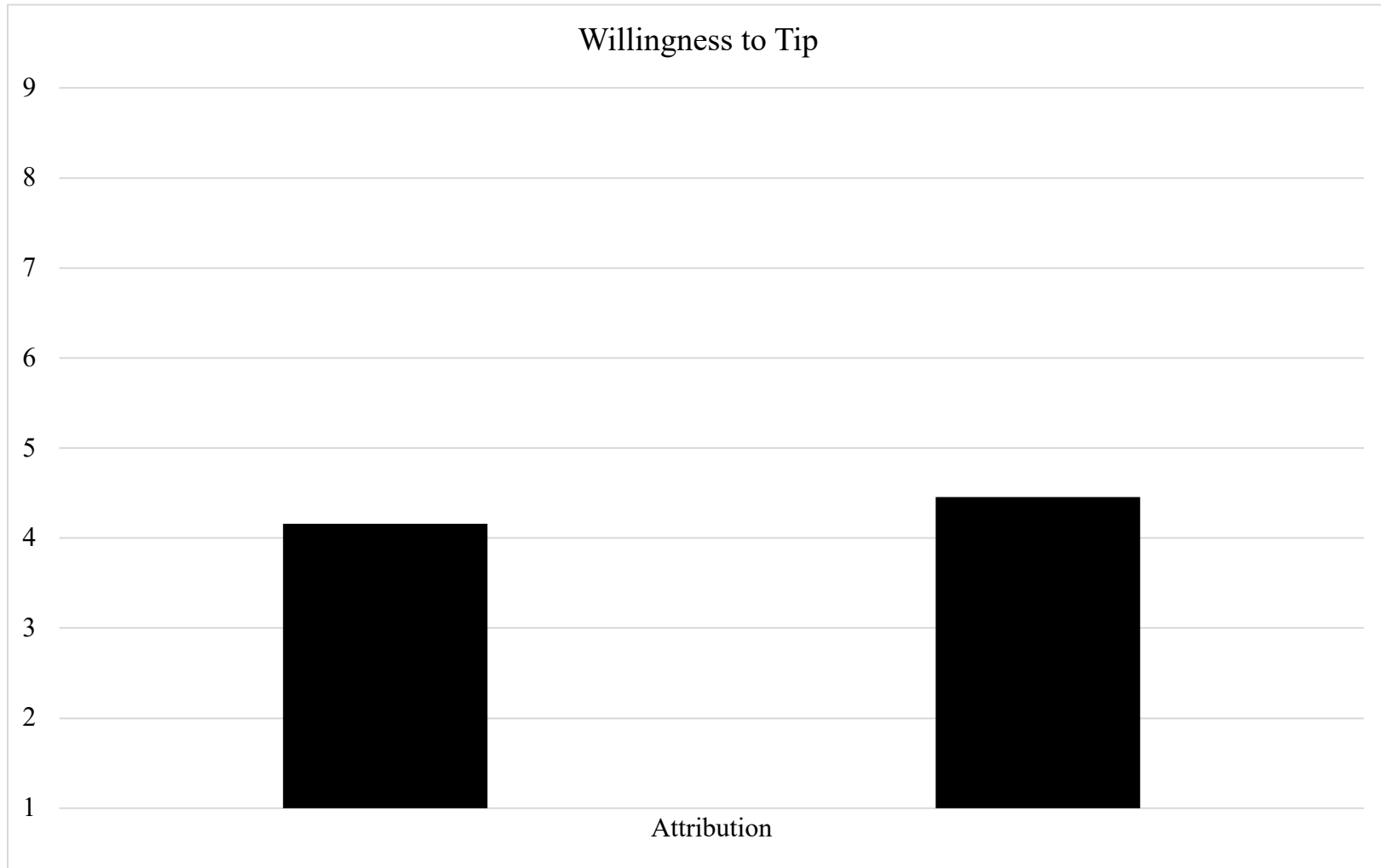Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Intent To Return

Figure 8

Willingness to Tip

Adherence | Breaking Character - Anger | Breaking Character - Sadness

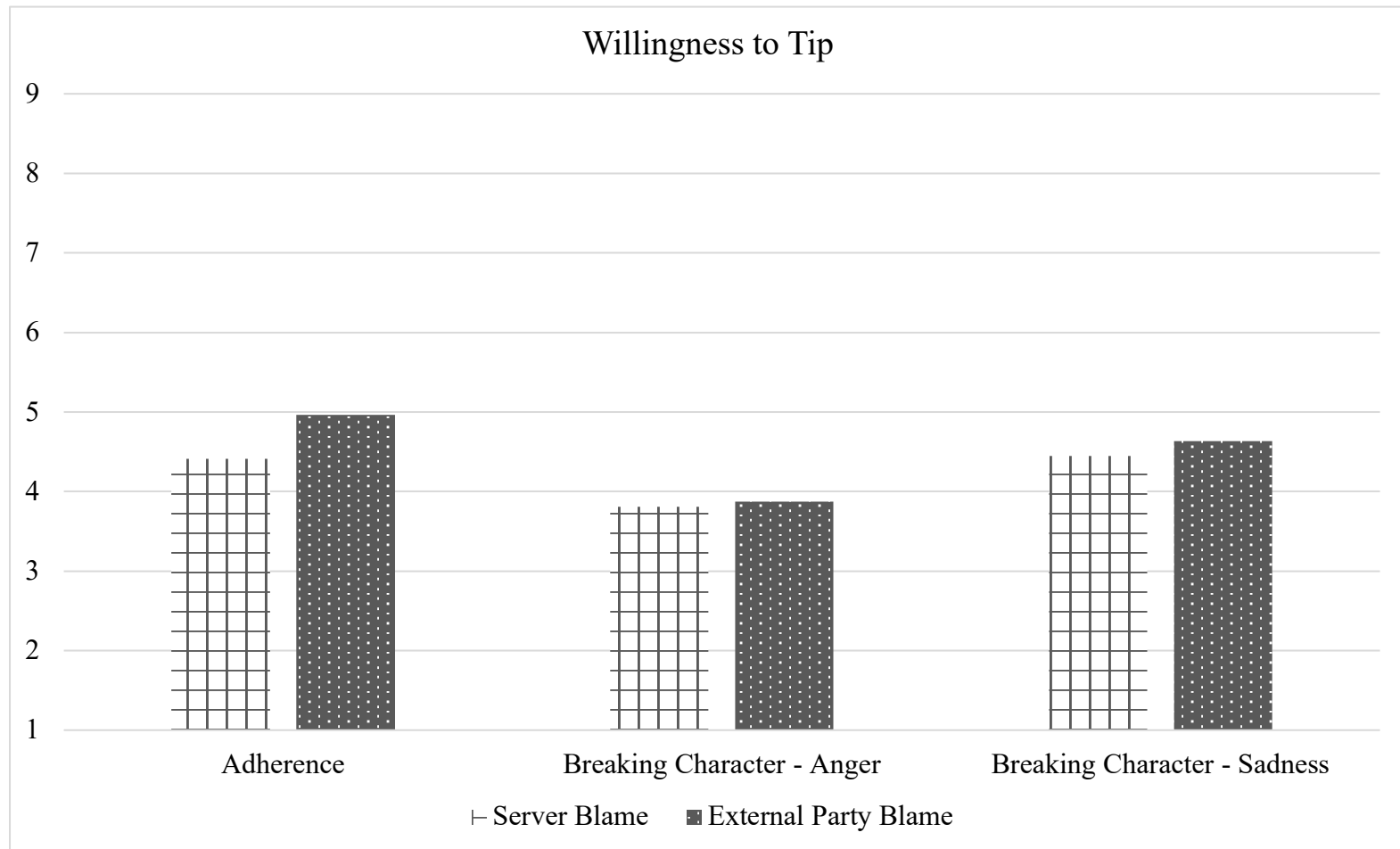■ No customer Mistreatment ⬚ Customer Mistreatment
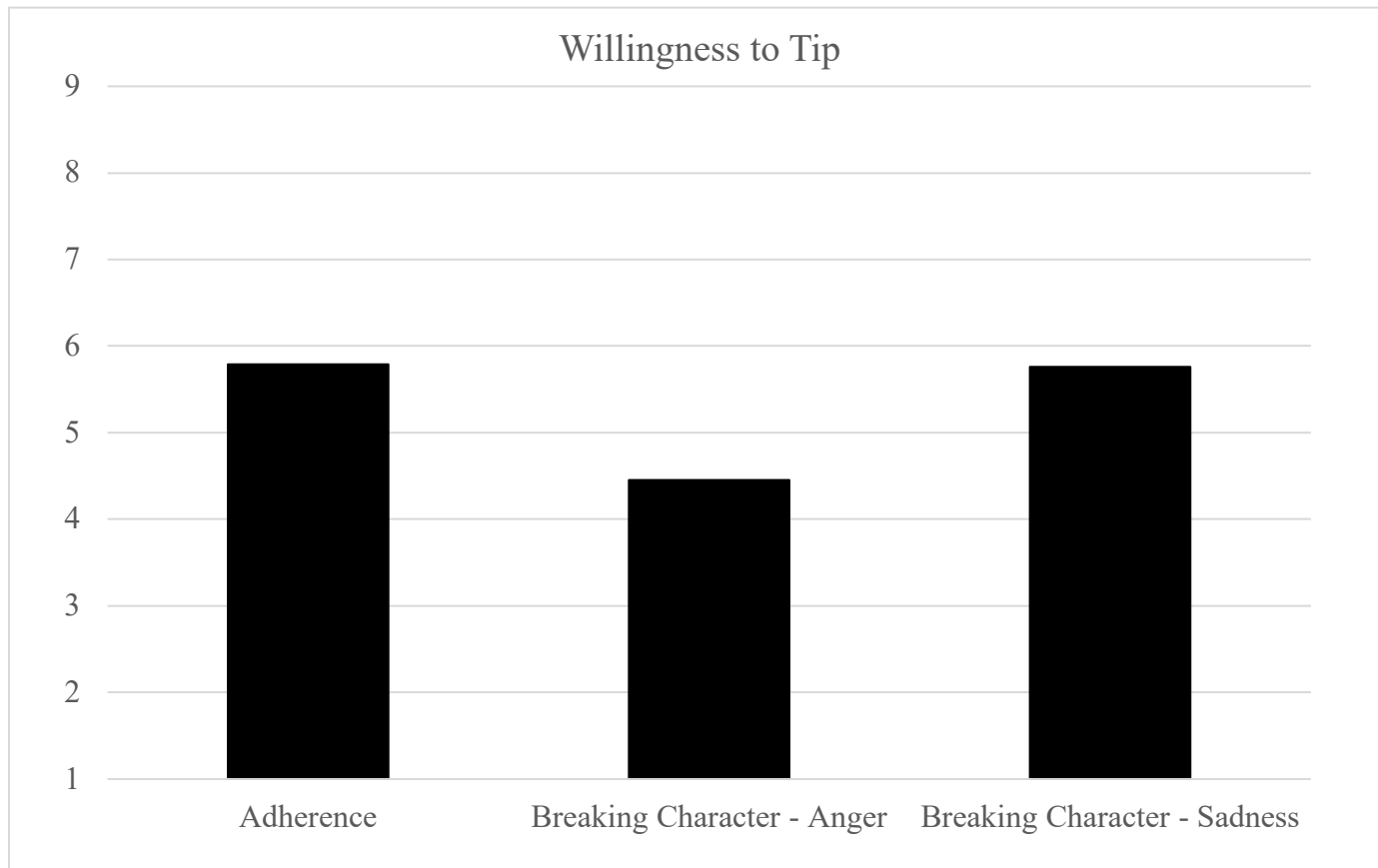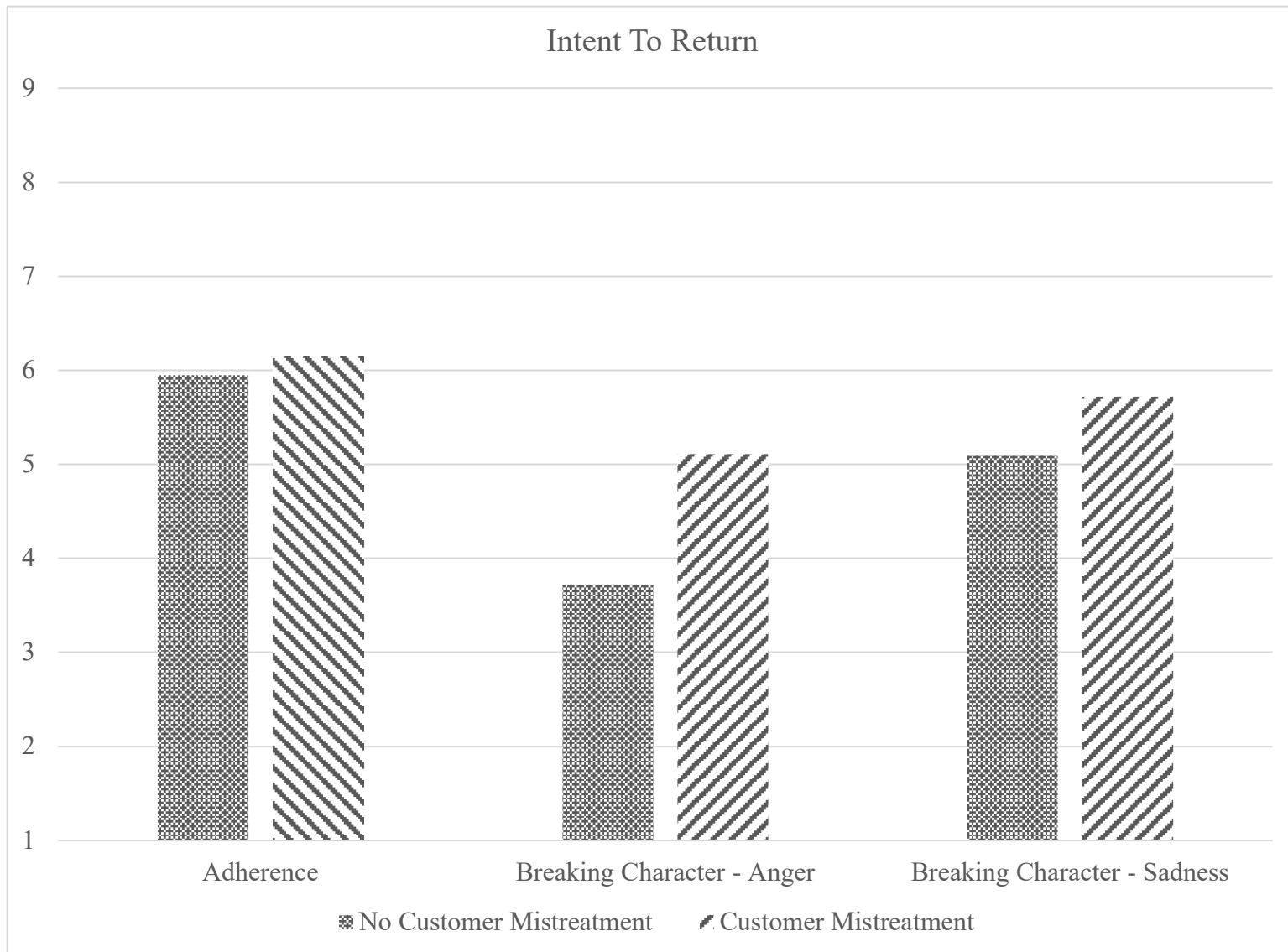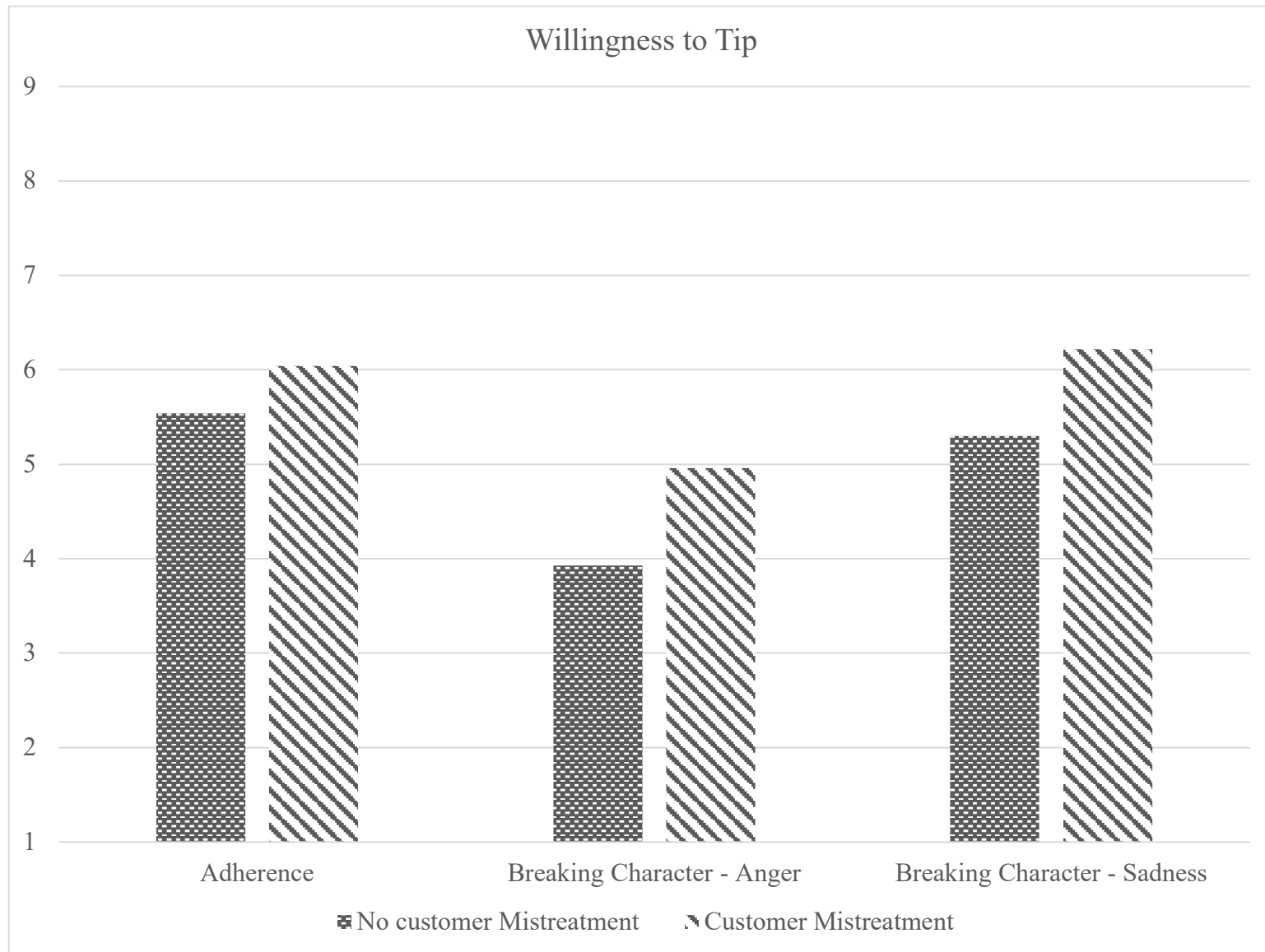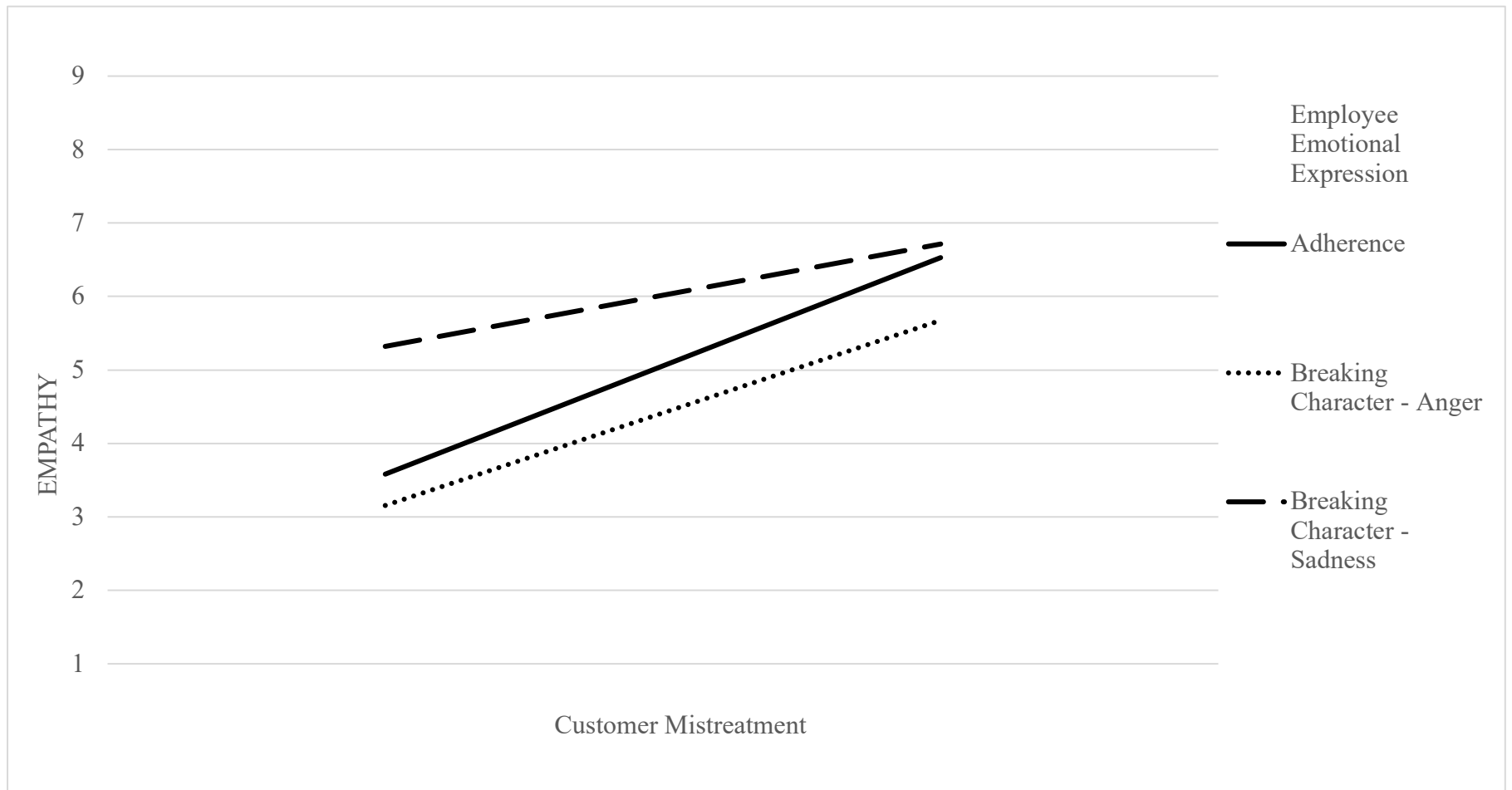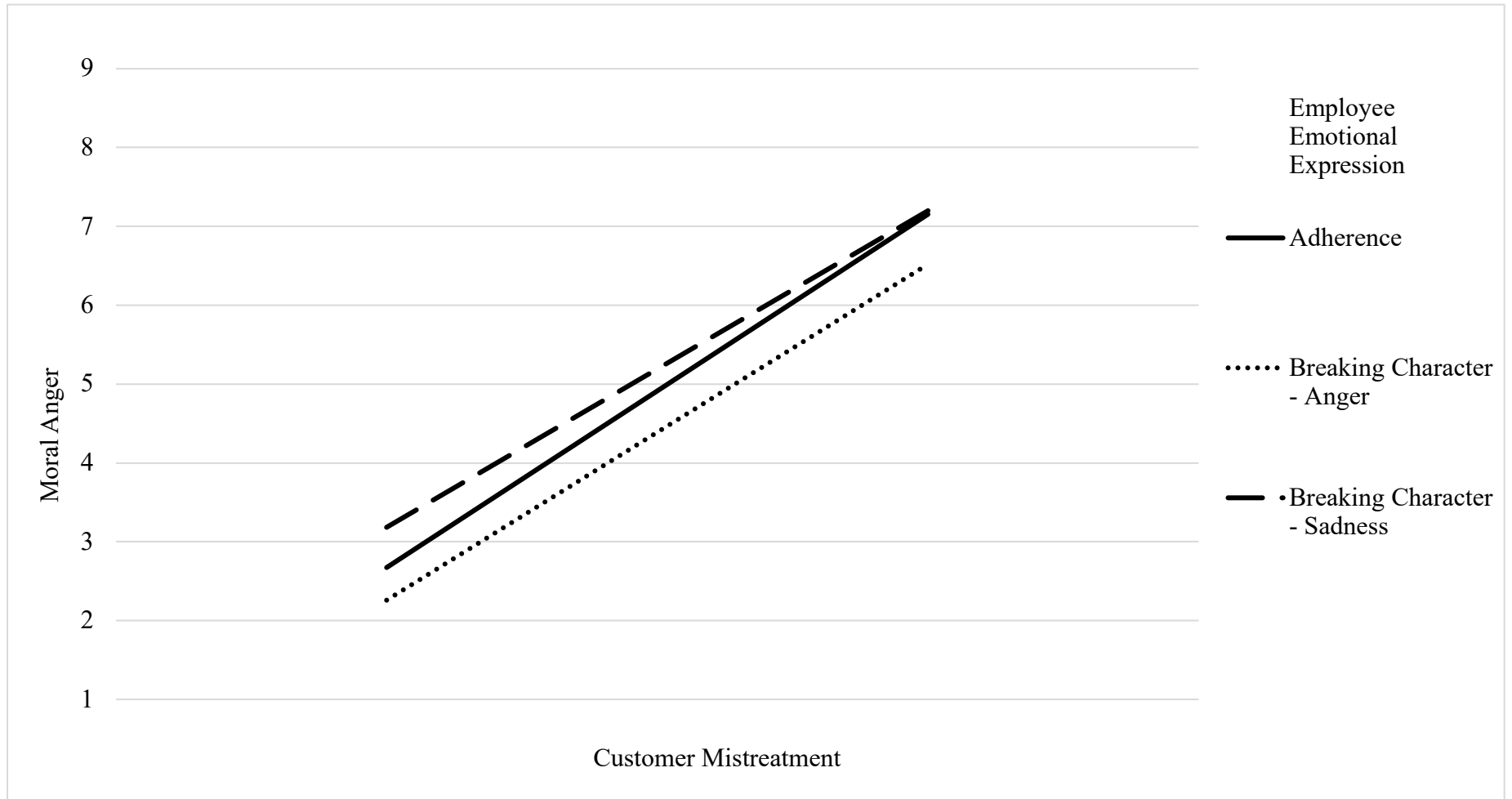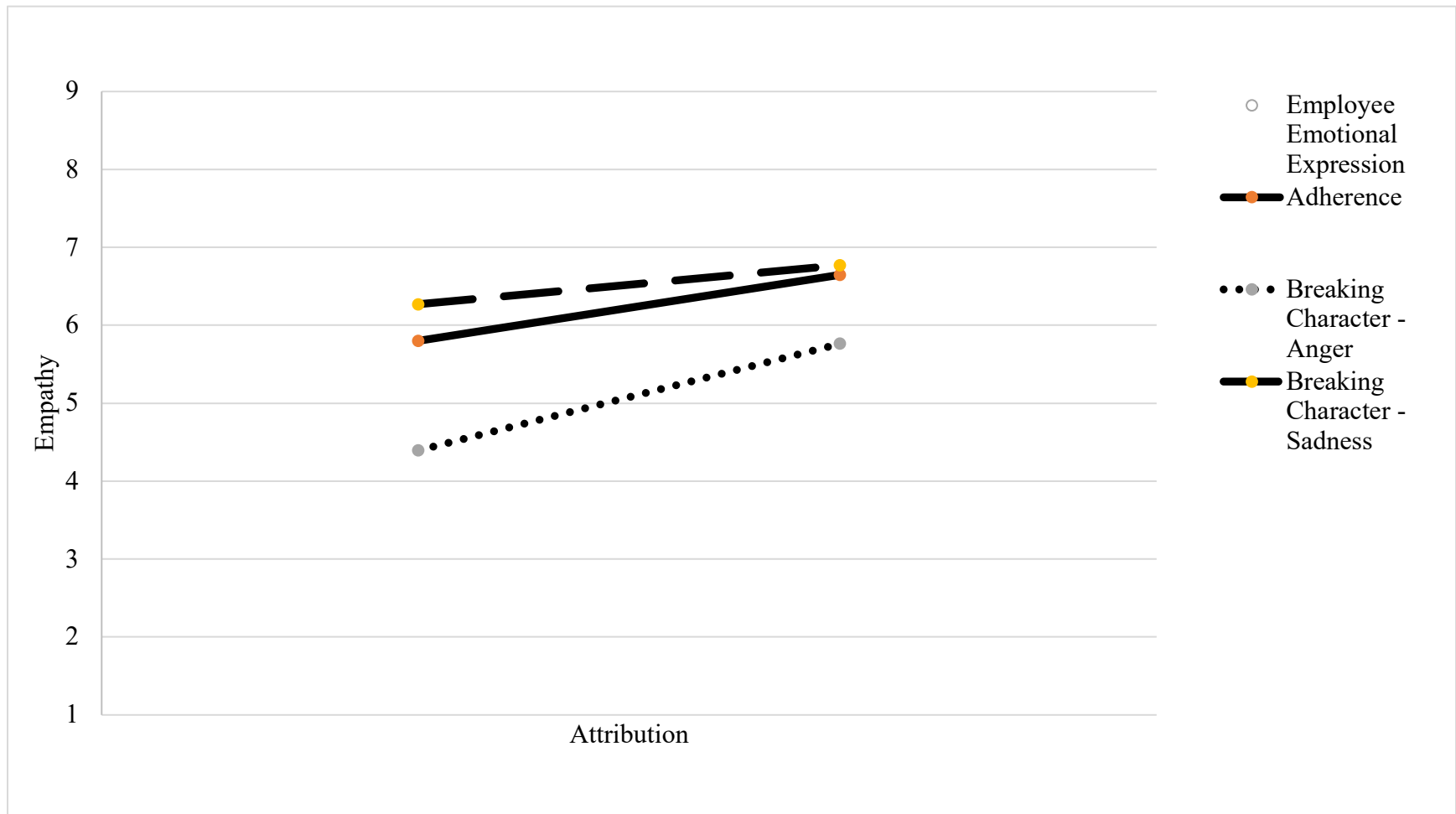
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Figure 10

Figure 11
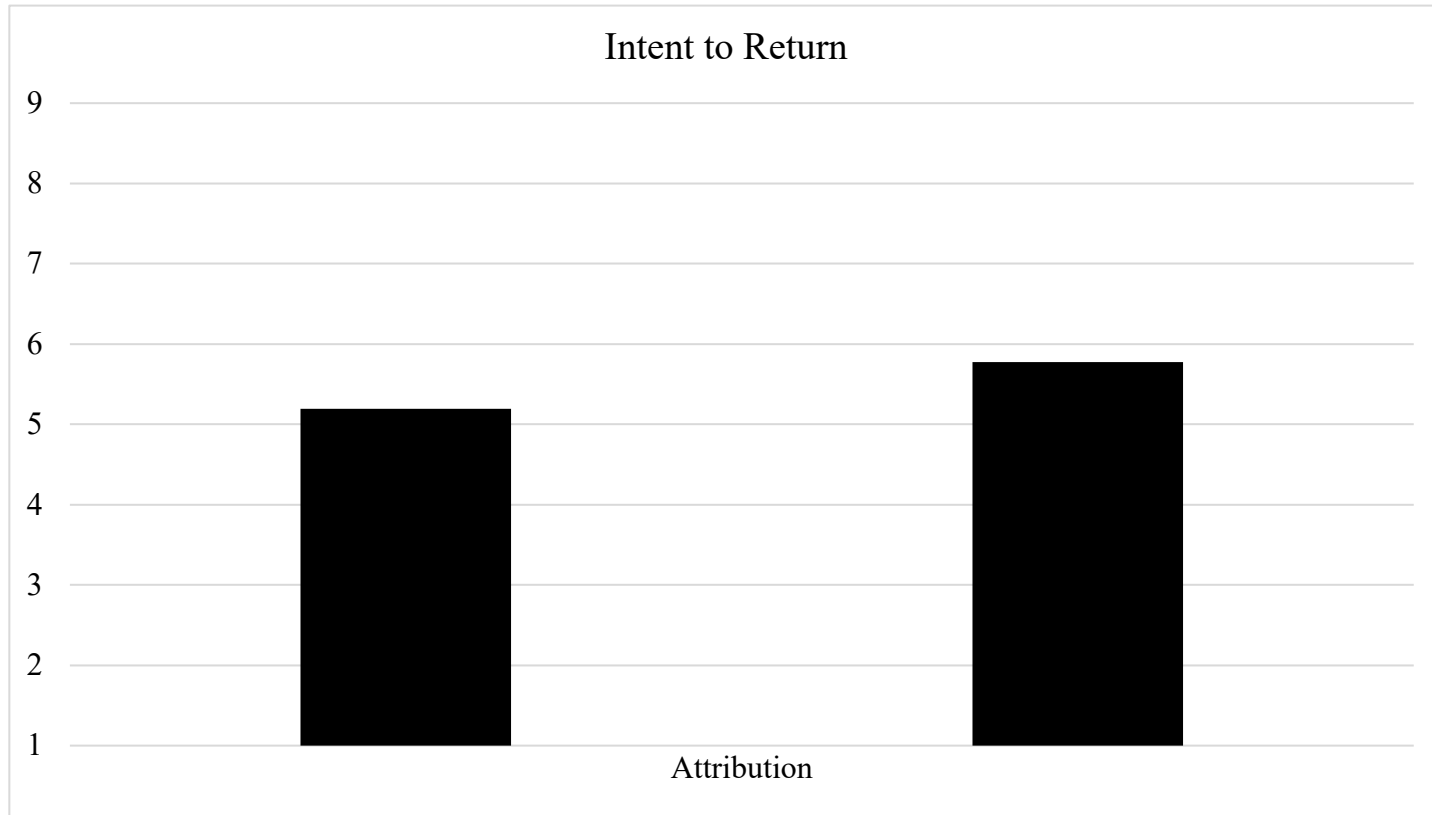
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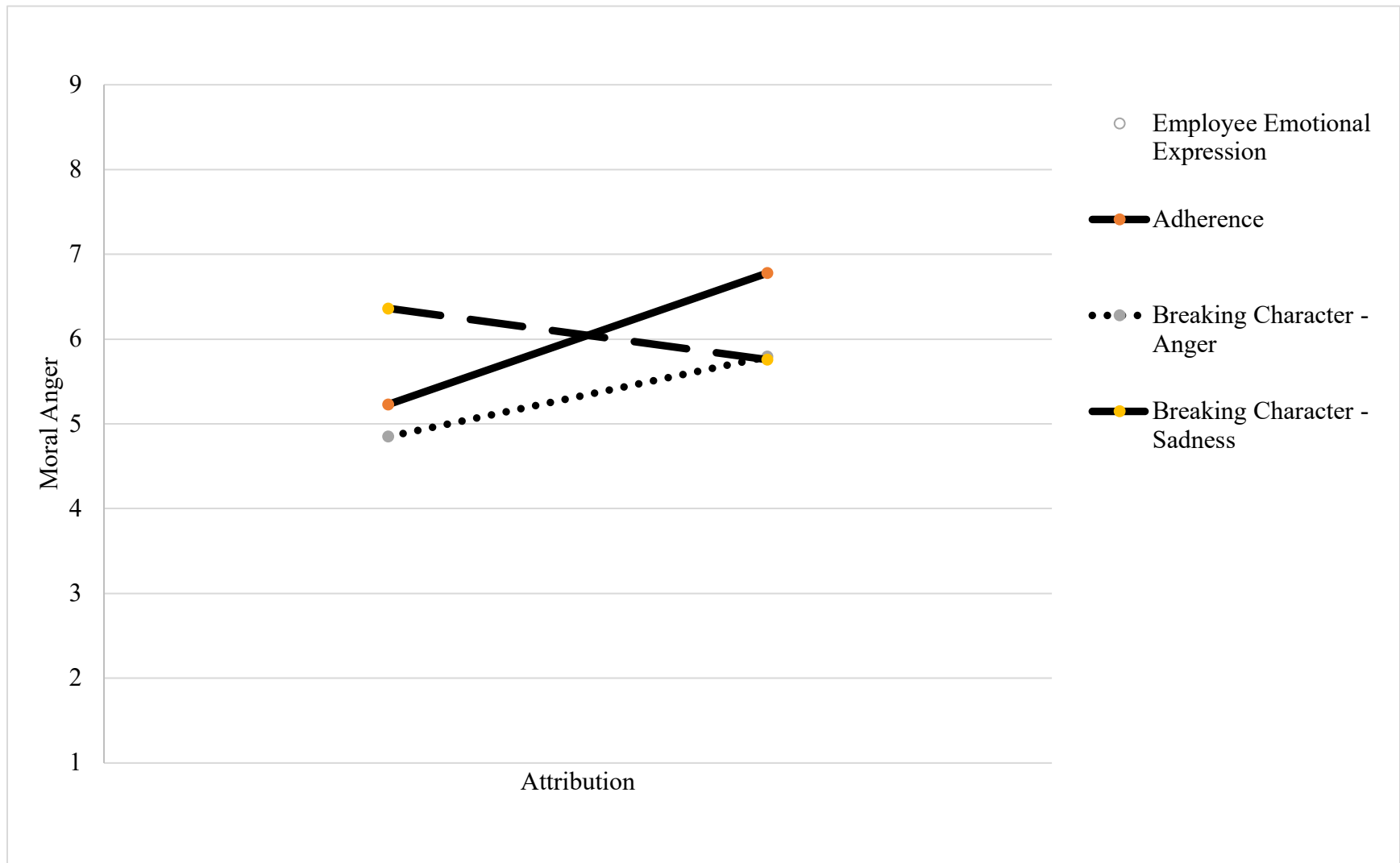
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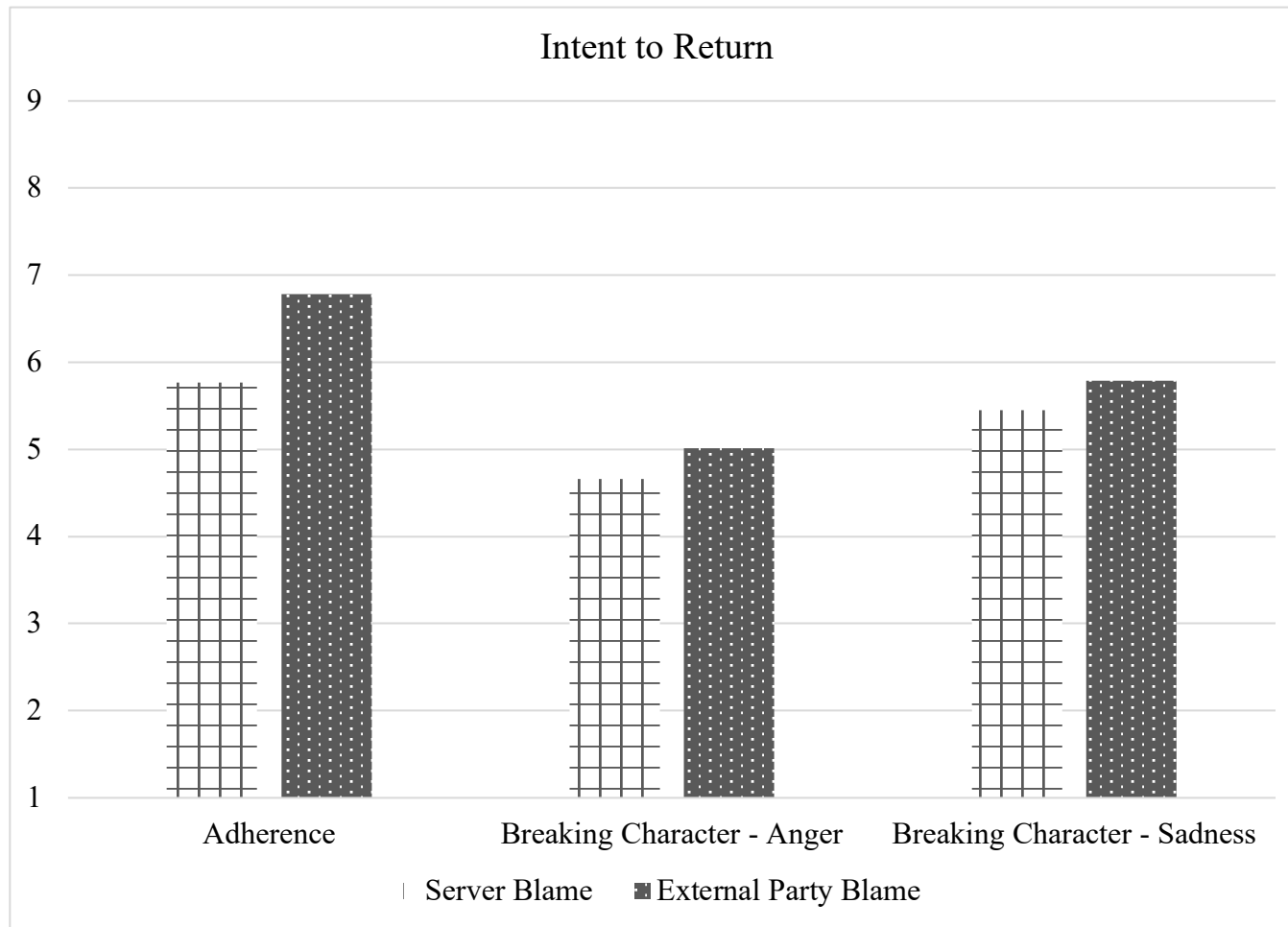
Figure 14

Figure 15

Figure 16

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

GENERAL & BACKGROUND
How long have you been a flight attendant?
How do you feel about being a flight attendant?

Customer Mistreatment
Do customers treat you unfairly or disrespectfully?
Can you tell me about a customer mistreatment experience you have had?

Emotional Labor
Do you think you put on a show for customers?
Do you fake the emotions you think you should have in a customer interaction?
Do you feel that there are certain emotions you should display to customers?
Do you really try to feel the emotions you think you should be displaying in customer interactions?
Is there anything you can think of that would make you either want to fake the emotions or actually try to feel them?
Have there been times at work where you show the customer your true feelings? For example, your sadness, anger, frustration?
Possible follow up: Could you tell me more about that?
What got you to the point of showing your true negative emotions?
How do you feel about what you did?
Were you worried about getting in trouble?
Have there been times at work where you see a coworker express negative emotions to their customer?
Tell me about a time that you showed your true emotions to a customer at work?
How did your boss respond?
Your coworkers?
Would you feel comfortable showing your true, negative emotions to a customer?
Can you describe an experience of someone getting in trouble for showing their true emotions to a customer?
When you are mistreated by a customer, do you ever think about that interaction throughout the day?
When you show your true feelings to a customer, do you think about that interaction throughout the day?

Coworkers
In general, do you and your coworkers help each other out with work-related tasks?
If you saw a coworker snap back at a snappy customer, would you consider pulling them aside and telling them you support what they did?
If you saw a coworker being treated unfairly by a customer, would that make you more inclined to help them with their work tasks throughout your shift?

APPENDIX B
Study 2 Scenarios:

Condition: no mistreatment, adherence

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to the other table they are serving and drops off customer's food. You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a "neutral tone: "Could you go get some condiments for us?" Taylor responds by smiling and says: "I'll get that right away for you" and then returns to work.

Condition: no mistreatment, breaking character with anger

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to the other table they are serving and drops off customer's food. You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a "neutral tone: "Could you go get some condiments for us?" Taylor responds angrily (with their voice raised and a stern look on their face), saying: "Yeah I *do* know you need some. I'll get that *right* away for you". Taylor then storms off and goes back to work.

Condition: no mistreatment, breaking character with sadness

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to the other table they are serving and drops off customer's food. You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a "neutral tone: "Could you go get some condiments for us?" Taylor responds tearfully and in a quiet tone, says: "Yeah I *do* know you need some. I'll get that *right* away for you". Taylor then slowly goes back to work.

Condition: mistreatment, adherence

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to the other table they are serving and drops off customer's food. You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "Aren't you smart enough to know that we need condiments for our burgers? Could you go get some condiments for us?!" Taylor responds by smiling and says: "I'll get that right away for you" and then returns to work.

Condition: mistreatment, breaking character with anger

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to the other table they are serving and drops off customer's food. You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "Aren't you smart enough to know that we need condiments for our burgers? Could you go get some condiments for us?!" Taylor responds angrily (with their voice raised and a stern look on their face), saying: "Yeah I *do* know you need some. I'll get that *right* away for you". Taylor then storms off and goes back to work.

Condition: mistreatment, breaking character with sadness

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to the other table they are serving and drops off customer's food. You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "Aren't you smart enough to know that we need condiments for our burgers?

Could you go get some condiments for us?!" Taylor responds tearfully and in a quiet tone, says:

"Yeah I *do* know you need some. I'll get that *right* away for you". Taylor then slowly goes back

to work.

Study Measures

Measures

Positive Affect

During the past 30 days, how much of the time did you feel:

	Almost Never	Less than Half	About Half	More than Half	Almost every Day
Cheerful					
In good spirits					
Extremely happy					
Calm and Peaceful					
Satisfied					
Full of Life					

Social Desirability

Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attributes and traits. Read each item and decide whether the statement is true or false as it pertains to you:

<div align="center">True   False</div>

It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.

I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my own way.

On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.

There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.

No matter who I am talking to, I'm always a good listener.

There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.

I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.

I sometimes try to get even, rather than forgive and forget.

I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.

I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.

There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.

I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.

I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.

Very low	Moderately low	Low	Slightly low	Neither high nor low	Slightly high	High	Moderately high	Very high

The
probability
that I will
come to
this
restaurant
again is

The
probability
that I would
recommend
this
restaurant
to others is

The
probability
that I would
say positive
things
about this
restaurant
is

ITR: Based on the previous encounter, please answer the following:

Empathy:

To what extent did the interaction between the customer and the employee make you feel the following towards the employee…

	Not at all	A minimal amount	A small amount	Somewhat	A moderate amount	A high amount	Completely
Empathy for the employee							
Pity for the employee							
Concern for the employee							
Protective towards the employee							
Sorry for the employee							

Moral Anger:

To what extent did the interaction between the customer and the employee make you feel the following…

	Not at all	A minimal amount	A small amount	Somewhat	A moderate amount	A high amount	Completely
Angry at the customer							
Upset with the customer							
Irritated with the customer							

APPENDIX C
Study 3 Scenarios:

Condition: internal attribution, adherence

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to the other table they are serving and drops off customer's food. Unfortunately, the order was put in by Taylor incorrectly, and the kitchen did not prepare the dish to the customer's liking. You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "This order isn't right! I asked for this to be WELL DONE! Aren't you smart enough to get an order, right?" Taylor responds by smiling and says: "I'll get that right away for you" and then returns to work.

Condition: internal attribution, breaking character with anger

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to the other table they are serving and drops off customer's food. Unfortunately, the order was put in by Taylor incorrectly, and the kitchen did not prepare the dish to the customer's liking. You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "This order isn't right! I asked for this to be WELL DONE! Aren't you smart enough to get an order, right?" Taylor responds angrily (with their voice raised and a stern look on their face), saying: "Yeah I *do* know you need some. I'll get that *right* away for you". Taylor then storms off and goes back to work.

Condition: internal attribution, breaking character with sadness

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to the other table they are serving and drops off customer's food. Unfortunately, the order was put in by Taylor incorrectly, and the kitchen did not prepare the dish to the customer's liking. You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "This order isn't right! I asked for this to be WELL DONE! Aren't you smart enough to get an order, right?" Taylor responds tearfully and in a quiet tone, says: "Yeah I *do* know you need some. I'll get that *right* away for you". Taylor then slowly goes back to work.

Condition: External attribution, adherence

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to the other table they are serving and drops off customer's food. Unfortunately, although Taylor put the customer's order in correctly, the kitchen did not make the dish to the customer's liking. You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "This order isn't right! I asked for this to be WELL DONE! Aren't you smart enough to get an order, right?" Taylor responds by smiling and says: "I'll get that right away for you" and then returns to work.

Condition: External attribution, breaking character with anger

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to the other table they are serving and drops off customer's food. Unfortunately, although Taylor put the customer's order in correctly, the kitchen did not make the dish to the customer's liking. You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "This order isn't right! I asked for this to be WELL DONE! Aren't you smart enough to get an order, right?" Taylor responds angrily (with their voice raised and a stern look on their face), saying: "Yeah I *do* know you need some. I'll get that *right* away for you". Taylor then storms off and goes back to work.

Condition: External attribution, breaking character with sadness

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to the other table they are serving and drops off customer's food. Unfortunately, although Taylor put the customer's order in correctly, the kitchen did not make the dish to the customer's liking. You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "This order isn't right! I asked for this to be WELL DONE! Aren't you smart enough to get an order, right?" Taylor responds tearfully and in a quiet tone, says: "Yeah I *do* know you need some. I'll get that *right* away for you". Taylor then slowly goes back to work.

Study 3 Final Scenarios

Condition: internal attribution, adherence

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server (Taylor) drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to another table and delivers that customer's food. Unfortunately, Taylor made an error when putting that customer's order in with the kitchen – so when the dish was delivered, it was not the way the customer had ordered it.). **In other words, Taylor is at fault for this mistake**. You then overhear the customer say to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "This order isn't right! I asked for this to be WELL DONE! Aren't you smart enough to get an order, right?" Taylor responds by smiling and says: "I'll get that right away for you" and then returns to work.

Condition: internal attribution, breaking character with anger

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server (Taylor) drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to another table and delivers that customer's food. Unfortunately, Taylor made an error when putting that customer's order in with the kitchen – so when the dish was delivered, it was not the way the customer had ordered it. **In other words, Taylor is at fault for this mistake.** You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "This order isn't right! I asked for this to be WELL DONE! Aren't you smart enough to get an order, right?" Taylor responds angrily (with their voice raised and a stern look on their face), saying: "Yeah I *do* know you need some. I'll get that *right* away for you". Taylor then storms off and goes back to work.

Condition: internal attribution, breaking character with sadness

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server (Taylor) drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to another table and delivers that customer's food. Unfortunately, Taylor made an error when putting that customer's order in with the kitchen – so when the dish was delivered, it was not the way the customer had ordered it. **In other words, Taylor is at fault for this mistake.** You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "This order isn't right! I asked for this to be WELL DONE! Aren't you smart enough to get an order, right?" Taylor responds sadly (tearfully and in a quiet tone), and says: "Yeah I *do* know you need some. I'll get that *right* away for you". Taylor then slowly goes back to work.

Condition: External attribution, adherence

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to another table and delivers that customer's food. Unfortunately, although Taylor put the customer's order in correctly, the kitchen made a mistake and cooked the dish completely wrong. **In other words, Taylor is not at fault for this mistake.** You then overhear the customer say to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "This order isn't right! I asked for this to be WELL DONE! Aren't you smart enough to get an order, right?" Taylor responds by smiling and says: "I'll get that right away for you" and then returns to work.

Condition: External attribution, breaking character with anger

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to another table and delivers that customer's food. Unfortunately, although Taylor put the customer's order in correctly, the kitchen made a mistake and cooked the dish completely wrong. **In other words, Taylor is not at fault for this mistake.** You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "This order isn't right! I asked for this to be WELL DONE! Aren't you smart enough to get an order, right?" Taylor responds angrily (with their voice raised and a stern look on their face), saying: "Yeah I *do* know you need some. I'll get that *right* away for you". Taylor then storms off and goes back to work.

Condition: External attribution, breaking character with sadness

You are at your table at a restaurant. Your server Taylor drops your receipt off at your table for you to fill out. Taylor then goes to another table and drops off that customer's food. Unfortunately, although Taylor put the customer's order in correctly, the kitchen made a mistake and cooked the dish completely wrong **In other words, Taylor is not at fault for this mistake.** You then overhear the customer say the following to Taylor in a raised voice and with a stern look on their face: "This order isn't right! I asked for this to be WELL DONE! Aren't you smart enough to get an order, right?" Taylor responds sadly (tearfully and in a quiet tone), and says: "Yeah I *do* know you need some. I'll get that *right* away for you". Taylor then slowly goes back to work.