A GLIMPSE INTO THE CONSUMER COMPLAINING BEHAVIOR OF IMMIGRANTS

Fanchen Meng, Beijing Institute of Technology, China
Sijun Wang, Loyola Marymount University, CA
Susan Peters, Francis Marion University, SC
Gary W. Lawson, CEO, Medical Discounts International, Inc., CA

ABSTRACT

Previous studies found that international consumers exhibit different complaint behavior to product or service disappointments, often explained in terms of underlying cultural values or norms. However, this could be attributed to other factors as well. This study re-examines the cultural impact on consumer complaint behavior (CCB) by investigating differences between first-generation immigrants. A 2X2X2 between-subject scenario-based experiment was administered with 250 Mexican and 165 Chinese, first generation immigrants. Although the two groups now reside in the same market environment, our study documented the existence of their CCB differences. The proposed underlying mechanisms for such differences are largely supported by our data. Implications for theory and managerial practices are highlighted.

INTRODUCTION

Immigration undoubtedly represents one of the most significant social phenomena of our time. In fact, today we are witnessing the single largest tide of population movements in history. Immigrants and their U.S.-born children account for 55 percent of that growth between 1998 to 2006 (Pew Hispanic Center 2007) and immigrants are projected to continue coming to the United States at a steady rate. Between 2020 and 2025, the proportion of foreign-born in the United States is projected to surpass the previous century's peak of 14 percent, and by 2050, the foreign-born population is projected to reach 19 percent (Passel and Cohn 2008). In particular, the U.S. government estimates that some fifteen million Hispanics living in the United States are foreign born with more than half arriving in the last fifteen years (Ramirez and de la Cruz 2003), and another twelve million are estimated to be living in the United States illegally (Orrenius 2006). The Hispanic market in the U.S. consists of 40.4 million consumers (U.S. Census Bureau 2004). Another fast growing immigrant group is from Asia. Since 2000, the Asian-American population has increased nine percent, the highest growth rate of any ethnic group. The Asian-American population, which currently exceeds eleven million, is expected to more than triple to 34 million in the next 50 years (U.S. Census Bureau 2004). Immigrants are generally found in highly concentrated enclaves and in urban areas. The geographic concentration of ethnicities make reaching them very practical and economical (Guzman 2001). Retailers spend about two billion dollars a year to better serve these growing demographic markets.

Consumer scientists have long recognized the importance of cultural differences in consumer behavior. In the service marketing literature, there is an emerging research stream inquiring into cultural differences in consumer service expectations, service evaluations, and consumer reactions to service failure and recovery (e.g., Schoefer 2010; Patterson, Cowley, and Prasongsukarn 2006; Donthu and Yoo 1998; Liu, Furrer, and Sudharshan 2001). In particular, consumers were found to react differently to a dissatisfied service

experience by demonstrating different consumer complaint behavior (CCB). Such CCB differences are typically explained in terms of underlying cultural values or norms such as individualism vs. collectivism (Watkins and Liu 1996; Liu, Furrer, and Sudharshan 2001); uncertainty avoidance (Hernandez et al. 1991; Schoefer 2010); or Confucian Dynamism also known as Saving Face (Nakata and Sivakumar 1996).

Although previous studies have documented cross-cultural (cross-national) differences of consumer complaint behavior, there are at least two important unanswered questions regarding the cross-cultural CCB differences: (1) can these cross-cultural differences be observed even when consumers reside in the same market environment; and (2) if cross-cultural CCB differences exist, what kind of mechanisms exist through which consumers' cultural orientations influence their complaint behavior? A study by Blodgett, Hill, and Bakir (2006) challenges the commonly-cited cultural explanation (i.e., CCB difference is caused by consumers' cultural differences); they found that the observed cross-national CCB differences can be attributed to the prevailing return policies, which ultimately are determined by competitive forces within each country. Similarly, Hernandez and Fugate (2004) have also posited that unique market environment in Mexico such as the existence of large number of monopolies (e.g., Telmex, Pemex, and Bimbo) and the scarcity of the economy could, along with cultural differences, partially contribute to the lower voice rate among Mexican consumers.

Thus, this paper attempts to answer these two questions by studying the CCB differences between two groups of first-generation immigrants (i.e., The generation of people born in a foreign country who later immigrated to the U.S.) in Southern California. Using first-generation immigrants from two ethnic groups located within the same geographic region enables us to re-examine previous findings on cultural difference of CCB. We chose to study Mexican and Chinese first-generation immigrants because these two groups represent the fastest growing immigrant population in the nation as well as in the region (Pew Hispanic Center 2007). In addition, these two groups' home cultures vary along all five dimensions of Hofstede's (2001) cultural framework. Given the fact that both groups live in the same region, and presumably similar market environment, the observed CCB differences could more readily be attributed to their parent country's cultural orientations.

Further, previous studies on cultural difference of CCB have yet to offer an integrated theoretical framework explaining the observed difference (Watkins and Liu 1996). Conceptually, CCB difference could be explained by the cultural influence in consumer perceptions and attitudes such as perceived utility of complaint; self-perception; and different attitudes toward complaining. In addition, CCB differences could also be explained by the moderating roles of culture in consumers' reactions to various situational factors of service failures. For example, individualistic consumers tend to have higher expectations (Donthu and Yoo 1998). Thus, consumers from a more individualistic culture could react more strongly to the same service failure than those from a more collectivist culture. This study seeks to empirically investigate these mechanisms through which culture orientations influence CCB.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. First, we provide a brief overview of the literature relevant to the study with a focus on studies on various CCB antecedents and the role of consumer cultural background. Next, the mechanisms through which consumers' cultural background influence their CCB choices are presented, and the related hypotheses are developed. The research methods and results are then discussed. We conclude with managerial

implications and suggestions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

Antecedents of CCB: Scenario-Based versus Non-Scenario-Based Factors

Great attention has been given to consumer complaining behavior. Researchers have systematically examined why and how consumers respond to perceived dissatisfaction. Several researchers have offered taxonomies of CCB (Day and Landon 1977; Singh 1988, 1989; Richins 1987) and developed and tested theories of the antecedents leading to various CCB choices. In particular, Singh (1988) empirically investigated the distinct dimensions that underlie consumers' intentions to engage in various complaint behaviors, including voice CCB, actions directed at the seller /manufacturer; private CCB, informal complaint actions involving friends and relatives and exit; and third party CCB, formal complaints directed toward agencies not directly involved in the exchange relationship.

In deciding on the three types of CCB, consumers may experience different cognitive and emotional evaluation process (Singh 1990a; Stephens and Gwinner 1998). In this study, we only focus on voice CCB because understanding voice CCB has more managerial implications to service providers. "Maximizing the number of verbal complaints from dissatisfied customers" has been prescribed as a viable marketing strategy to achieve the lowest possible level of consumer turnover (Fornell and Wernerfelt 1987; p.338), and to enhance brand loyalty and increase repurchase intentions (c.f., Oliver 1980; Richins 1983).

The first systematic study concerning attitudinal antecedents of complaint behavior was carried out by Richins (1983), who reported that a consumer's complaint action is determined by (a) the cost of complaining; (b) his or her norms of complaining or whether he or she should complain; and (c) his or her perception of societal benefits likely to result from complaining. Later, researchers have studied a large number of CCB antecedents as listed in the Appendix A. Broadly speaking, these CCB antecedents can be classified into service/product failure *scenario-specific factors* (e.g., type and magnitude of the failure), and *non-scenario-specific factors* including personal characteristics (e.g., consumer demographic and psychographic features) and industry characteristics, and interactions among personal, industrial and situation-specific factors.

The large number of CCB antecedents makes it impossible to include all the antecedents in one study. Further, findings of some CCB antecedents were inconclusive in the literature. For example, Richins and Verhage (1985) found that the general attitude toward complaints is a poor predictor for CCB. Yet, other studies found it a strong predictor for CCB (e.g., Bearden and Oliver 1985; Singh 1990b) while Singh and Wilkes (1996) found its predictive power varies by industry. We have chosen to examine three scenario-specific factors and four non-scenario-specific CCB antecedents based on a review of the literature. The following two selection criteria were adopted: (1) the chosen CCB antecedents are more likely to be influenced by consumer cultural differences, and (2) the antecedents have been consistently found to be strong predictors for voice CCB in previous studies. Each of them will be elaborated on in the following sections.

Before offering hypotheses regarding the differences between these CCB antecedents, an overview of Mexican and Chinese immigrants' home cultures is warranted.

Overview of Mexican and Chinese Cultures: Hofstede's Perspective

Hofstede's framework (Hofstede and Bond 1988; Hofstede 2001) has been

accepted as a basis for numerous cross-cultural studies. This framework suggests the following five pertinent dimensions that distinguish different cultures: (1) power distance; (2) individualism/collectivism; (3) masculinity/femininity; (4) uncertainty avoidance; and (5) long-term orientation. **Table 1** summarizes a comparison of the five dimensions of Hofstede's (2001) cultural framework between Mexicans, Chinese (Taiwan), and Americans (used here as a reference point).

Table 1

Relative Ranking of Mexico, China, and U.S. on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Country	Power distance		Individualism		Masculinity		Uncertainty avoidance		Long-term orientation*	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Mexico	5/6	81	32	30	6	69	18	82		
China	29/30	58	44	17	32/33	45	26	69	3	118
US	38	40	1	91	15	62	43	46	27	*29*

***Mexico has no long-term orientation score because it was not among the 23 countries in the study.**
Source: Hofstede (2001)

Mexicans score much higher in power distance, individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance than Chinese. In addition, influenced by Confucian doctrines, as compared with people from other nations, Chinese have been recognized for possessing a long-term orientation (Markus and Kitayama 1990).

Power distance is characterized as the extent to which members of a society accept the fact that power in organizations and families is distributed unequally (Hofstede and Bond 1988; Hofstede 1985; Lu et al. 1999). Previous studies have suggested that individuals from higher power distance cultures have higher expectations of service quality (e.g., Donthu and Yoo 1998) and less likely to give positive word of mouth even upon experiencing positive service quality (Liu, Furrer, and Sudharshan 2001).

Individualism, which is opposite to collectivism, is defined as the extent to which an individual pursues self interests rather than their membership groups, individual expressions, and loose ties between individuals (e.g., Hofstede 2001). Previous studies have reported that consumers from a more individualistic culture tend to have higher overall service quality expectations (Donthu and Yoo 1998).

Uncertainty avoidance represents a measure of intolerance for risk and refers to the degree to which members of a society feel uncomfortable in unstructured situations (Hofstede and Bond 1988). It has been shown to be negatively associated with post-failure negative WOM (Hernandez et al. 1991). Not surprisingly, previous studies have demonstrated that consumers with different cultural backgrounds often have different reactions after service failures (e.g., Cornwell et al. 1991; Keng and Liu 1997; Liu and McClure 2001; Hernandez et al. 1991).

Masculinity, which is opposite of femininity, refers to a preference for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and

material success (Hofstede and Bond 1988). To our knowledge, it has not been empirically tied to CCB or service quality expectations.

Individuals with *long-term orientations* tend to focus on the future, and they are usually more dynamic. Consumers with long-term orientations tend to have lower service quality expectations (Donthu and Yoo 1998).

As discussed above, scholars have not yet explicitly tested the underlying mechanisms through which consumers with different cultural orientations react differently to service failures. The following sections will first discuss the cultural impact on antecedents pertinent to consumers' attitude toward complaining and personality tendency. Recall that we labeled such antecedents as non-scenario-specific antecedents. We then explore how consumers' cultural difference moderates the impacts of scenario-specific factors on their complaining behavior. Three commonly studied scenario-specific factors are type of the failure (outcome versus process), severity of the loss (high versus low), and the group membership of the service provider (in-group versus out-group).

Cultural Impact on Non-Scenario-Specific Antecedents

Recall that we chose to study the following non-scenario-specific factors: perceived likelihood of success; perceived complaint costs (to represent the cognitive reactions to the service failure scenario); negative emotional reactions to the failure; and self-confidence (to represent personal characteristics). The impact of consumers' cultural orientations on these attitudinal and perceptual CCB antecedents is still unexplored. Building upon primary differences along the above-mentioned dimensions between Mexican and Chinese immigrants' home cultures, the following hypotheses will address the cultural impact on these attitudinal and perceptual CCB antecedents.

Perceived Utility of Complaining

Building upon an economic theoretical framework, several CCB researchers have found that before proceeding consumers tend to consider their CCB options. Specifically, when a consumer believes that a service provider is more responsive or more likely to redress the problem, the consumer is more likely to speak to the provider and less likely to take private action or complain to a third-party (see **Appendix A**). The probability of complaint success consistently has been found to be a strong predictor for CCB. On the other hand, from the consumer's perspective, complaining takes effort and is an investment (Richins 1983, 1987). Therefore, when consumers perceive a higher cost of complaining than benefit, they are less likely to engage in voice behavior or complaining to a third-party. Instead, they are more likely to take private action (e.g., Richins 1983, 1987; Bearden 1983; Day 1984; Bolfing 1989).

In summary, consumers assess the overall utility of complaining based on the probability of complaint success (gain/benefit) and then factor in the perceived costs of complaining. Consumers who perceive higher overall utility will be more likely to engage in public actions (i.e., voice and third-party), and less likely to engage in private actions.

Coming from a more collective cultural background, Chinese immigrant consumers will be more passive in predicting a service provider's actions than their Mexican counterparts. In a collective culture, a service provider will be perceived as part of a larger group, and with such low controllability of the environment, the consumer has a lower expectation for complaint success (Kim et al. 2003). Therefore, given the same service failure scenario, Chinese consumers (*more collectivistic*) may perceive a lower likelihood

of success as compared to Mexican immigrants (*more individualistic*).

Furthermore, Chinese consumers have long been recognized to value harmony and avoid conflict because confrontational situations tend to cause higher social and psychological costs for group-oriented cultures than it does for individualistic cultures (Markus and Kitayama 1990).

Given the information summarized above, we offer the following research hypotheses:

H1: Under the same service failure scenarios, Mexican immigrant consumers will perceive higher likelihood of success of complaining than Chinese immigrant consumers.

H2: Under the same service failure scenarios, Mexican immigrant consumers will perceive lower costs of complaining than Chinese immigrant consumers.

Negative Emotional Reactions to the Failure

CCB researchers have long recognized the dual-appraisal process that consumers use for assessing their (dis)satisfaction of consumer experiences (Oliver 1993). Through cognitive processes, consumers form their (dis)satisfaction judgment based on the confirmation or disconfirmation of perceived performance and the expected performance of product/service. Meanwhile, consumption-based emotions complement cognitive appraisals in predicting satisfaction (Mano and Oliver 1993; Westbrook 1987; Westbrook and Oliver 1991; Blodgett and Granbois 1992). In addition to assessing the role of consumer emotions in predicting consumer (dis)satisfaction, researchers have also found that consumer emotions from a service failure could be influential in the service recovery process (e.g., Smith and Bolton 2002).

The predictive power of negative emotional reactions evoked by an experience eliciting dissatisfaction has been largely ignored by CCB researchers. Stephens and Gwinner (1998) proposed a cognitive-emotional process model of CCB but did not empirically test it. Earlier studies on cultural differences suggest that collectivism encourages the suppression of emotional expressions for the sake of group harmony while the value system of individualism actively encourages the exploration and expression of emotion (Oyserman, Coon and Kemmellmeier 2002). Individuals from a collectivist culture could also gain respect and self-esteem by adjusting and restraining themselves in public while individualist cultures encourage self expression, including emotional expression (Oyserman, Coon and Kemmellmeier 2002; Watkins and Liu 1996).

Therefore, we would expect that Chinese immigrants would be more reticent about expressing their feelings than their Mexican counterparts. Through such emotional controls, individuals from a collectivist culture (in contrast with an individualist culture) will be more likely to also regulate their actions based on their suppressed emotions, which then further lessen their emotional reactions to a dissatisfied experience to minimize the behavior and feeling contradiction (Festinger 1957). Given this overview, we offer the following research hypothesis:

H3: Under the same service failure scenarios, Mexican immigrant consumers will report stronger negative emotions than Chinese immigrant consumers.

Self Confidence

A wide range of personal factors have been found to have a direct impact on CCB, including personal traits such as aggressiveness; assertiveness; self-confidence; locus of control; dogmatism; self-monitoring; self-consciousness and consumer

sophistication (e.g., Bolfing 1989; Fornell and Westbrook 1979; Singh and Wilkes 1996; Singh 1990b; Marquis and Filliatrault 2002). In particular, self-confidence or personal competence has been found to have a positive impact on consumer voice actions (e.g., Bearden and Teel 1980). In our study, consumer self-confidence was chosen to represent an important personal difference variable. Previous studies suggest that individualist cultures tend to grant individuals higher self-confidence because the self-definition and self-esteem among individualists is relatively independent of social context and encouraged (Markus and Kitayama 1990; Watkins and Liu 1996). Further, a more masculine culture tends to emphasize competitiveness and assertiveness (Hostede and Bond 1988). Therefore, we expect that the Mexican immigrant consumers will have higher self-confidence than Chinese immigrants.

H4: Mexican immigrant consumers have higher self-confidence than Chinese immigrant consumers.

The four research hypotheses stipulated above suggest that home cultural distinctions of Mexican and Chinese immigrants' could lead to differences in perceptions and attitudes toward CCB. Given the fact that all these CCB antecedents have been frequently found to positively relate to voice actions (See **Appendix A** for a table summarizing a sample of the research published in this area), we further expect that Mexican immigrant consumers will have higher intentions to complain than the Chinese immigrant consumers. If Mexican immigrant consumers place higher utility of complaining (e.g., higher likelihood of success of voice behavior and lower complaint costs), experience stronger negative emotions, and feel more confident about themselves, they should be more likely to engage in voice actions (i.e., complain directly to the service provider) when facing same service failures. Given the context of our study, we adopted *voice intention* to capture consumers' complaint behavior tendency and offer the following research hypothesis:

H5: Under the same service failure scenarios, Mexican immigrant consumers will havehigher voice intention than Chinese immigrant consumers.

Cultural Moderation on the Associations between Scenario-Specific Antecedents and Consumer Complaining Behavior

Previous studies have found that consumers from different cultural backgrounds could react to the same scenario differently, not only because of the above mentioned CCB antecedents, but also because of different attribution and evaluation processes (e.g., Cornwell et al. 1991; Keng and Liu 1997; Liu and McClure 2001; Hernandez et al. 1991). The following section of this article will examine different reactions to scenario-specific factors. Building upon social exchange and equity theories, Smith et al (1999) proposed that a service failure could result in the loss of economic (e.g., money, time) and/or social (e.g., status, esteem) resources for customers. Therefore, the amount and nature of the loss of resources will be determined by the *type* and *magnitude (severity)* of the failure that occurs.

Furthermore, some researchers have also classified service failures along outcome or process dimensions to examine customer responses (Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990; Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999; Hoffman, Kelley, and Rotalsky 1995; Keaveney 1995; Smith and Bolton 2002). *Outcome failures* relate to the core service offering, while *process failures* relate to the manner in which the service is delivered. In addition, various researchers (Sinha 1982; Triandis et al. 1988) found that compared with individualistic cultures, cooperation in

collectivist cultures is higher with in-group members, but lower with out-group members. Therefore, the group-membership (in-group vs. out-group) of the service providers will also be examined below.

The values of collectivism and individualism create very different symbolic-subjective cultures. When making judgments, individualism encourages a direct focus on internal responses to the context (Choi, Nisbett, and Norenzayan 1999; Fletcher and Ward 1988). Therefore, the symbolic-subjective culture of individualism tends to place less importance on the context and the cues it contains and is more attuned to an individual's responses to context (representing a low context culture). Collectivism places greater importance upon causal reasoning and forming perceptions of the individual's social context, situational constraints, and social roles (Watkins and Liu 1996; Morris and Peng 1994; Oyserman, Coon and Kemmelmeir 2002; Triandis 1995). In a service failure context, the core-service failure (outcome failure) should be more influential for Mexican immigrants than for Chinese immigrants because process failures are social/role-related. Therefore, the difference between outcome versus process failures should be smaller among Chinese immigrants than Mexican immigrants. Accordingly, we expect the following:

H6: The difference of voice intention for an outcome versus process failure will be larger for Mexican immigrant consumers than for Chinese immigrant consumers.

On the other hand, individuals from a higher power distance and a more masculine culture tend to react more strongly given the same degree of severity of service failures. High power distance would increase the social position between the customer and service provider. This will in turn increase the service expectation of the customers (Donthu and Yoo 1998). Further, in a masculine society, people tend to have higher expectations of service and attach great value to good service. Masculinity is likely to enhance the role distinction between customer and server, thus increasing the "disconfirmation" gap. Therefore, we expect that the more serious the failure the more strongly Mexican immigrants will react than Chinese immigrants.

Indeed, previous research shows that Mexican consumers are very concerned with the value they get for their money (Yankelovich, Skelly and White, Inc. 1984). About 80 percent of Hispanics indicated that they pay close attention to ensure quality for price paid (Yankelovich, Skelly and White, Inc. 1984). A more recent study by Cultural Access Group (AC Nielson) echoes this point. That study reports that key influencers among Hispanic consumers are price, promotions, and special displays. Therefore, the severity of the service failure will have larger impact on Mexican immigrants' reactions to a failed service encounter. Thus, we expect the following:

H7: The difference of voice intention between service failures of high severity versus those of low severity will be bigger for Mexican immigrant consumers than for Chinese immigrant consumers.

Social interactions between individuals in a collectivist culture depend heavily on whether they belong to the same in-group. Competition with and manipulation and exploitation of out-groups is more extensive in collectivist cultures than individualistic cultures (Espinoza and Garza 1985). Collectivists are more likely to treat in-group service providers as partners by showing concerns for the service provider's well-being (Watkins and Liu 1996).

In contrast, in individualist cultures, people have membership in many in-groups (e.g., family, peer-groups, coworkers, and clubs) where much of their behaviors are more likely to concern goals of the individual since the demands from various in-groups are

more diffused. As a result, distinction between in- and out- groups is blurred. Therefore, with a more collectivist culture, Chinese immigrants are more likely to complain to in-group service providers than to out-group providers because complaining directly to a service provider signals helping behavior to the benefit of the service provider (Fornell and Wernerfelt 1987). Such in- vs. out-group difference should be less significant among Mexican immigrants given the fact that its cultural origin is more individualistic. Given this perspective, we expect:

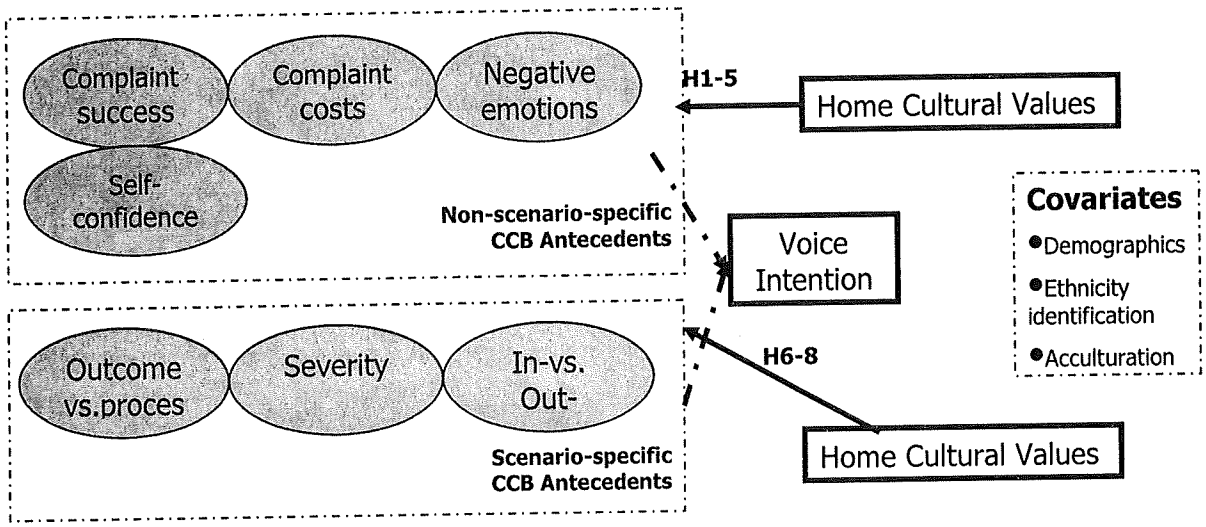
H8: Chinese immigrant consumers will show higher voice intention when service providers are Chinese (i.e., in-group) than when service providers are non-Chinese (i.e., out-group). However, such difference will be smaller for Mexican immigrant consumers.

Covariates

Besides the above-mentioned CCB antecedents, a large number of other factors could influence immigrant CCB. For example, many studies have demonstrated the influential roles of demographic features, including age, gender, education, income and social class (e.g., Bernhardt 1981; Kowalski 1993; Zaichowsky and Liefeld 1977; Moyer 1984). Additionally, previous studies in the sub-cultural consumer behavior literature have long recognized the impact of ethnicity, ethnic pride, acculturation and assimilation on consumption practices (e.g., Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu 1986; Laroche et al. 1996;

Figure 1

A Conceptual Model



Chung and Fischer 1999). In particular, ethnic identification has been shown to influence immigrants' values and shopping behavior (Shim and Eastlick 1998). Accordingly, we will consider both ethnicity identification and the degree of acculturation, along with demographic factors, when examining immigrant consumer CCB.

A summary of the above-detailed is offered in diagrammatic form as **Figure 1.**

METHOD

Research Design

Using a snowball sampling technique, common in sub-cultural studies (e.g., Quester and Chong 2001), our study is conducted among a convenience sample of Mexican and Chinese non-student adult immigrant consumers in the Southern California area (250 Mexican and 165 Chinese). So. Cal. is an ideal field laboratory for our study because a large number of first-generation immigrants reside in great proximity (often in ethnic communities) while speaking their own languages and keeping their cultural traditions (Ackerman and Tellis 2001).

Respondents were initially recruited from some immigrant neighborhoods. Upon completing their surveys, they were asked to refer more friends and relatives to this study. We then contacted the referred immigrants for cooperation and repeated the same snow-balling procedure until we achievedsufficient sample size. All respondents were given choices for the English version or their mother language version (Chinese and Spanish) of the survey. ***Notably, all of our respondents chose their mother language version.*** Both the Chinese and Spanish questionnaires were developed from English using the back-translation method, involving bilingual research assistants (Hui and Triandis 1985).

Our study employed a scenario-based methodology in which respondents were asked to imagine themselves in the role of a customer experiencing a hypothetical service failure scenario. Each respondent was first presented with one of the 8 scenarios (see **Appendix B** for sample scenarios) in a car repair setting where each of three scenario-specific factors were manipulated at 2 levels: *type of failure* (outcome versus process failure), *severity of the failure* (high versus low magnitude of the failure), and *group-membership of service provider* (in-group versus out-group service provider). **Appendix C** shows the distribution of respondents by scenarios.

Table 2 provides various demographic characteristics and measures of our sample respondents. We see that there is a fairly good distribution of gender, education and income for the two samples. The Mexican sample tends to be less affluent, less educated, and has longer immigrant experience (median immigration years for Mexican is 18 while 10 for Chinese), roughly corresponding to the census data (www.census.org). Majority of our respondents use their mother languages as their primary communication.

Table 2
Respondent Profiles

Demographic Variables (%)		Mexican Immigrants (N=250)	Chinese Immigrants (N=165)
Gender	Male	49.6	49.1
	Female	50.4	50.9
Age	Mean (years)	32.54	34.77
How many years of immigration	Mean (in years)	18.63	13.42
	Median (in years)	18.0	10.0
Education	Less than High School	24.9	6.0
	High School	25.8	11.3
	Some College	31.7	14.0
	College Graduate or Above	17.6	68.7
Visa Status	Visiting visa (e.g., F-1)	7.4	23.5
	Green Card	29.5	17.4
	Citizenship	52.6	45.0
	Others	10.5	14.1
Income (family)	Below $25K	30.7	20.8
	$25K-$50K	36.4	26.8
	$50K-$75K	13.6	27.5
	$75K-$100K	11.0	12.8
	Above $100K	8.3	12.1

Manipulation checks

Manipulation checks can be conducted in a pilot study or in the main study. While each way of conducting manipulation checks has its own pros and cons, the pilot study option was recommended by Hogg and cooper (2003) when manipulation in the main study could endanger the validity of the study design. Following recommendations by Hogg and Cooper (2003), we conducted a pilot paper and pencil pretest for manipulation checks in order to alleviate the potential confounding effects of manipulation checks in the main study. The pretest was conducted with 90 undergraduate business students at a western U.S. university in order to assess the effectiveness of the manipulations, as well as to check if the scenarios are perceived to be realistic. Half of these students were assigned to a car repair and a restaurant scenario, each reflecting a outcome failure with high severity and caused by in-group (i.e., same ethnicity as the respondent's) service employees while the other half were exposed to a scenario, reflecting process failure with low severity and caused by out-group (i.e., different ethnicity from the respondent's) service employees. Items used for the manipulation checks are reported in **Table 3** along with their Cronbach's alphas and correlation coefficients (where relevant). All three factors (outcome versus process failure, severity of failure, and service provider's group membership) were successfully manipulated as desired. Subjects receiving the outcome failure manipulation reported that service outcome was very disappointed and lousily done than those receiving the process failure manipulation ($\overline{X}_{Outcome}$=6.40 vs. $\overline{X}_{Process}$ =3.36; p<.001). On the other hand, subjects receiving the process failure manipulation considered employee attitudes more unacceptable than those receiving the outcome failure manipulation ($\overline{X}_{Outcome}$=2.74 vs. $\overline{X}_{Process}$ =5.80; p<.001). Those subjects who received the high level of service failure severity, as a manipulation, perceived that the

service provider failed them more than those receiving lower level of severity ($\overline{X}_{highseverty}$=6.22 vs. $\overline{X}_{lowseverity}$ =3.65; p<.001). Almost every respondent could identify the race of service provider correctly. Further, in order to check whether the hypothetical scenario was perceived as "realistic" to the respondents, we included one question to assess how realistic each scenario seemed for the respondents to imagine themselves as the customer in the scenario. The mean rating was 5.29 on a seven-point scale (with seven indicating most realistic/believable), and the realistic rating does not differ by scenario (P>.10).

Table 3

Measures used in the study *

	Mexican Immigrants	Chinese Immigrants
Voice Intention (Adopted from Day 1984)		
If this problem had really happened to me, I would contact the repair shop (the restaurant manager) to complain.		
Negative Emotions (adopted from Stephens and Gwinner 1998)		
If this problem had really happened to me, I would feel...	.70	.81
angry		
sad		
upset		
ashamed		
scared		
Annoyed		
Perceived likelihood of success of complaint (Adopted from Singh 1990b)		
Assume you reported the incident to the repair shop (the restaurant) how likely is it that the shop (the restaurant) would...	.80	.78
1. take appropriate action to take care of your problem.		
2. solve your problem and give better service to you in the future.		
3. be more careful in the future and everyone would benefit.		
Perceived costs of complaint (Adopted from Day 1984)		
1. complaining may take a lot of my time and effort.	.77	.71
2. complaining may disrupt my daily routine.		
3. complaining may require a substantial amount of out-of-pocket expenses.		
4. complaining may be a hassle I really don't need.		
5. complaining may cause me embarrassment.		
Self-confidence (adopted from Bearden, Hardesty and Rose 2001)		
1. I am afraid to "ask to speak to the manager."	.85	.79
2. I don't like to tell a salesperson something is wrong in the store.		
3. I have a hard time saying "no" to a salesperson.		
4. I am too timid when problems arise while shopping.		
5. I am hesitant to complain when shopping.		
Attractiveness of Alternatives (Adopted from Jones, Mothersbaugh, and Beatty 2000)		
If I needed to change auto repair shops, there are other good shops to choose from.		
Subjective Acculturation (self-developed)		
1. I believe I have accepted most of American culture.	.79	.85
2. I believe that I am already Americanized.		
3. I believe that I have adopted most of American cultural values.		

Objective Acculturation (adopted from Ownbey and Horridge 1997)

1. years of immigration
2. What language do you speak most often when you are
   - At home
   - At work
   - Among friends
   - At school

List the ethnicities of the following important people in your life.

- Your mother
- Your father
- Your spouse (partner)
- Your first best friend
- Your second best friend
- Your third best friend

How often do you travel back to your home town

What is your residential status?

****Note: The subjective acculturation and objective acculturation was correlated (coefficient =.20, p<.001). For the rest of the study, we adopted the subjective acculturation for data analyses.*

Ethnicity Identification (Adopted from Appiah 2001)

1. I am happy that I am a member of the ethnic group I belong to.	.71	.91
2. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments.		
3. I feel a strong attachment to my ethnic group.		
4. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.		

Individualist / Collectivist Value (Horizontal) (Adopted from Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000)

1. I often do "my own thing."	80	.73
2. One should live one's life independently of others.		
3. I like my privacy.		
4. I prefer to be direct and forthright when discussing with people.		
5. I am a unique individual.		
6. What happens to me is my own doing.		
7. When I succeed, it is usually because of my abilities.		
8. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways.		

Outcome Failure Manipulation Checking Questions (γ =.73)

I would think the repair job was lousily done.
I would be very disappointed by their repair job.

Process Failure Manipulation Checking Questions (γ =.74)

I would think the employees at the repair shop had treated me impolitely.
I would be very disappointed by their employees' attitudes.

Severity Manipulation Checking Question

I would think the auto repair shop severely failed me.

Realistic Evaluation of Scenarios

I think the situation described in this scenario could really happen to some one.

***All items were measured with a 7-point Likert scale unless it was stated otherwise.**

Measurement Equivalence

The scale items and reliabilities, as well as the sources, are shown in **Table 3**. Following Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998), the measurement equivalence of the key measurement variables was tested using confirmatory factor analysis. **Table 4** shows no chi-square difference between the full metric invariance model and the configural invariance model, which also has no chi-square increase from the baseline model (i.e., with no constraints). This confirms that our measurements for all the constructs of interest were valid across the 2 samples and achieved full scalar invariance. Further, full factor variance invariance model and partial error variance invariance model (out of 37 error variance terms, 5 were set free for the two samples) were also supported by our data. Thus, the observed differences were comparable.

We have verified the collectivism/individualism values of our participants using Hofstede's (1980) Collectivism/Individualism Scale. The scale was found to be reliable across the Chinese and Mexican samples (α = .73 and .80, respectively) and a t-test confirmed that the Chinese sample was significantly lower in individualist cultural values than the Mexican sample ($\overline{X}_{Mexican}$=5.47 vs. $\overline{X}_{Chinese}$ =4.90, p<.001).

Table 4

Measurement equivalence across the Mexican and Chinese Immigrant samples

	χ^2	df	RMSEA	CAIC	CFI	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta\chi^2$/df	P-value
Configural invariance model	2393	1202	.060	3887	.94	.069			
Full metric invariance model	2455	1230	.060	3743	.94	.089	62	2.21	.14
Full Factor variance invariance model	2525	1265	.060	3558	.93	.124	70	2.00	.16
Full error variance invariance model	3209	1302	.073	3971	.90	.139	684	18.5	<.001
Partial error variance invariance model	2609	1293	.061	3436	.93	.126	84	3.00	.08

Table 5

Testing Hypotheses H 1 - 5

	Chinese immigrants	Mexican immigrants
	Car Repair	Car Repair
Perceived likelihood of success (H1)	4.17	4.70
Perceived cost of complaint(H2)	4.05	3.77
Negative emotions (H3)	3.21	3.98
Self confidence(H4)	3.17	2.99
Voice intention (H5)	5.00	5.80
Individualist value	4.90	5.47

Addressing the Research Hypotheses

Table 5 shows the mean difference of the non-scenario-specific CCB antecedents and voice intention across the two immigrant groups. All the mean comparisons were conducted with all three scenario-specific factors, demographic factors, ethnicity identification, and acculturation being controlled as covariates. Hypothesis 1 (*predicting Mexican immigrant consumers to perceive higher likelihood of success if they let the service provider know the problem*) was supported ($\overline{X}_{Mexican}$=4.70 vs. $\overline{X}_{Chinese}$ =4.17, p=.005). In contrast, Mexican immigrant consumers reported lower perceived costs of complaint than Chinese immigrant consumers ($\overline{X}_{Mexican}$=3.77 vs. $\overline{X}_{Chinese}$ =4.05, p<.001), providing support for hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 3 (*predicting stronger negative emotional reactions among our Mexican immigrant consumers than the Chinese immigrants sampled*), was also supported by our data ($\overline{X}_{Mexican}$=3.98 vs. $\overline{X}_{Chinese}$ =3.21, p=.003). Hypothesis 4, predicting higher self-confidence among Mexican immigrants than their Chinese counterparts, was not supported (p>.10). Hypothesis 5 predicted Mexican immigrant consumers to have higher voice intention. It was supported ($\overline{X}_{Mexican}$=5.80 vs. $\overline{X}_{Chinese}$ =5.00, p<.001).

Table 6

ANCOVA Results

Independent variables	***Car Repair (Voice Intention)***				
	Mexican		Chinese		**Hypotheses**
Main Effects	**F**	***P*-value**	**F**	***P*-value**	
Outcome vs. process (A)	1.61	.21	2.21	.14	H7 not supported
severity (B)	3.48	**.06**	2.05	.16	H8 Supported
In-vs. out-group (C)	.00	.99	5.85	**.017**	H9 Supported
Two-Way Interactions					
AB	4.03	.05	2.46	.12	
AC	.004	.95	.13	.72	
BC	.007	.93	2.70	.10	
Covariates					
Subjective Acculturation	1.96	.16	7.02	**.009**	
Ethnicity Identification	11.41	.001	2.41	.12	
Gender	4.21	.042	1.49	.22	
Age	2.83	.094	2.65	.11	
Income	.55	.46	.50	.48	
Education	.033	.86	6.45	.012	
R^2	17%		26.9%		

To address Hypotheses 6, 7 and 8, ANCOVA was conducted with voice intention as the dependent variable, the three scenario-specific factors (type of service failure, severity of the failure, and group membership of the service provider) as the fixed independent variables while demo-graphic variable and immigrant's ethnicity identification and their degree of acculturation served as covariates. **Table 6** shows the ANCOVA results for the two samples.

Hypothesis 6 predicted smaller difference of voice intention for Chinese immigrants than for Mexican immigrants when facing outcome versus process failures. It was not supported by our data as no main effects were significant for either sample. Hypothesis 7, predicting that there is smaller difference of voice intention for Chinese immigrants than for Mexican immigrants when facing high severity failures versus low severity failures, was supported; Mexican immigrants were found to react more strongly to high severity failures than Chinese immigrants as the influence of severity on voice intention was significant only for Mexican sample at .10 significance level, but not at .05 significance level ($\overline{X}_{highseverity}$=6.00 vs. $\overline{X}_{lowseverity}$ =5.51, p=.064). Hypothesis 8, predicting that Chinese immigrants would be more likely to voice to in-group service providers than out-group providers, was supported. We found that Chinese immigrants demonstrated higher voice intention ($\overline{X}_{ingroup}$=5.25 vs. $\overline{X}_{outgroup}$ =4.54, p=.017) while no such group differentiation was found among Mexican immigrants.

In addition, the ANCOVA also revealed some interesting findings in regards to covariates besides our focal constructs. First, we found that income and age did not impact CCB across both immigrant groups. However, we found subjective acculturation and education level significantly increase Chinese immigrants' CCB while such effects did not show in the Mexican sample. Additionally, ethnicity identification was found to decrease Mexican immigrants' CCB and Mexican females are more actively involved in CCB than Mexican males. Such gender difference did not show in our Chinese sample.

DISCUSSION

Findings

Our primary goal was to explore the impact of immigrants' home cultures on their CCB decisions. We not only observed significant differences among Mexican and Chinese immigrant consumers in their voice intentions when facing same service failures but also proposed and tested the two mechanisms through which immigrants' home cultures exert strong influence in their voice intentions.

Results from our study suggest that consumers' value orientations (e.g., indiv-idualist vs. collectivist; power distance; masculine vs. feminine; uncertainty avoidance; long-term vs. short-term orientations) can directly influence consumers' perceptions, reactions, and attitude toward complaining. All of these non-scenario-specific CCB antecedents have been shown in other studies to be strong predictors for consumer complaining choices, but the *cultural influence* of these antecedents has not been empirically studied before (Watkins and Liu 1996). Thus, our study provides new insight into the observed cultural CCB differences as reported in previous studies (Watkins and Liu 1996; Hernandez et al. 1991).

We further found that immigrants with different home cultures react differently to service failure scenarios based on the type and severity of failures, and service providers' group memberships. In our study, Mexican immigrant consumers react more strongly than Chinese immigrants when the service failure is severe. On the other hand, Chinese immigrants will be more likely to voice to in-

group service providers than to out-group service providers while no such group membership distinction was found among Mexican immigrants.

Another contribution of this study to the literature is to validate previous findings about cultural difference in CCB with an experiment design. Previous CCB studies typically rely on surveys of consumers' self-reported recall of past dissatisfying experiences (e.g., Richins 1987; Brady, et al. 2005; Landon 1980). However, such survey-based recall designs may result in several undesirable biases, such as consistency factors and memory lapses, and may be less likely to represent the full range of problems that might arise.

Although researchers have recognized the importance of episode-specific measures in predicting CCB (Landon 1977; Day 1980; Richins and Verhage 1985; Didow and Barksdale 1982), few actually empirically test using episode-inducing methods. Our experimental design using scenarios offers the advantages of manipulating episode specific factors and allows for the control of as many variables as possible in order to isolate the effects of interest.

Previous sub-cultural studies largely emphasized acculturation and ethnicity identification. Our study provides some supportive evidence for the importance of these two constructs by examining them as covariates. More importantly, we were able to show significant group differences in terms of both the ending complaint intention and cognitive and emotional reactions to same service failures even after controlling for these two sub-cultural variables (again, see **Tables 5 and 6**). Therefore, future sub-cultural research, especially involving immigrant consumers, should incorporate immigrants' home culture orientations into their studies.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The encouragement of complaints has been prescribed as a vital marketing strategy (e.g., Fornell and Wernerfelt 1987). In today's multi-cultural marketplace, how to encourage CCB adds challenging complexity to marketers. Our study may offer the following managerial implications.

First, based on our findings that Chinese immigrants are less likely to let service providers know their dissatisfaction, especially when the service providers are non-Chinese, we encouraget service providers to provide more indirect, less demanding CCB choices in order to lower the perceived complaint costs (social and time costs). For example, service providers may consider providing non face-to-face complaint channels such as Internet and complaint letters or more frequently soliciting Chinese consumers' feedbacks. We also encourage service provides to put extra effort in encouraging less educated and less acculturated Chinese consumers to engage in voice behavior. Policy makers and immigrant advocacy groups may also need to communicate more with Chinese immigrants about their rights for voicing their complaints, as Chinese immigrants tend to feel that there are higher complaint costs and less likelihood of success.

In dealing with Mexican immigrant consumers, all providers should be aware of the more expressive, negative emotions among this group and take this factor into their service recovery strategies. Service employees should be trained to "read" their emotional reactions in service failure /recovery encounters. Since Mexican immigrant consumers may only complain about serious failures and remain silent for minor ones, actions should be taken to encourage direct communications with service providers even though some failures

may be minor: such failures could be equally detrimental to businesses in the long- run. Service providers should also encourage Mexican male consumers to voice their dissatisfaction.

LIMITATIONS, SPECULATIONS, AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the interesting insights achieved here, we must note a number of limitations and potential new research directions. Our study was limited to one area of the U.S. and the two samples also represented a narrow region. Subsequent research should compare different immigrant groups across a broader range of regions and home cultural backgrounds in order to rule out other explanations. More importantly, we did not compare our immigrant consumers with non-immigrant consumers. Our snowballing sampling method may be effective in gathering representative minority sample respondents, but not useful to sample a large non-immigrant population because snowballing will not guarantee representativeness of respondents. In the future, scholars are encouraged to conduct random sampling research to survey both immigrant and non-immigrant consumers.

Another limitation of our study was the failure to measure the various value orientation dimensions and to examine the hypothesized cultural impacts. We only measured collectivism and individualism because it is (arguably) one of the most important aspects of cultures. However, it would also be interesting and useful to understand how complaining behavior is impacted by other dimensions such as masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and long-term orientation.

Although most of our research hypotheses were supported by our data, some surprising findings merit additional research. First, we failed to find support for higher self-confidence among the Mexican immigrants in the database compared to the Chinese immigrants in the database. Self-confidence measures consumers' self-reported comfort level of directing voices to services providers. The lack of cultural difference on this variable could be attributed to immigrant consumers' language fluency and their excellent knowledge about American rules and regulations relevant to consumer protection. Unfortunately, we did not gather such information from respondents, so we do not know what might account for this outcome. Additional research is warranted to reexamine this reported finding so as to examine alternative explanations.

In addition, we failed to find significant CCB differences between outcome and process failures in either sample. It is possible that our study context—car repair—represents a unique service industry where consumers are concerned equally with service outcome and process. Future research is encouraged to see if our findings hold in different service industries.

Finally, while CCB researchers have identified three categories of CCB actions (voice, private and third-party complaints), our research focused solely on voice intention. Additional research is needed to examine the cultural roles in the other CCB action categories.

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Send correspondence regarding this Article to:

Dr. Sijun Wang
Associate Professor of Marketing
Department of Marketing and Business Laws
Loyola Marymount University
1 LMU Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90045
Tel: 310-338-1787
E-mail: swang15@lmu.edu

Appendix A Antecedents for Consumer Complaint Behavior Reported in Previous Studies

CCB Antecedents	Studies & Authors	Major Findings
Failure Scenario-Specific Antecedents		
Outcome vs. Process failure	Levesque and McDougall 1996	Outcome leads to greater exit
Severity of failure	Johnson 1988, Andreasen 1988; Tax et al. 1993; Gilly and Gelb 1982; Richins and Verhage 1985; Singh 1991; Day 1984	Severity is positively related to voice and negative WOM
Price (level of importance, social risk)	Bloch & Richins 1983; Bearden and Oliver 1985; Bolfing 1989; Day 1984; Gilly and Gelb 1982; Jacoby and Jaccard 1981; Didow and Barksdale 1982; Richins and Verhage 1985; Levesque and McDougall 1996	Price is positively related to voice, private, and third-party actions
Perceived industry/market structure (market concentration; Availability of Alternatives)	Singh 1990; Fornell and Didwo 1980; Hirschman 1970; Singh 1991	More concentrated market, less voice and private actions.
Personal Characteristics		
Demographics	Bearden and Oliver 1985; Singh 1990; Warland et al. 1975; Zaltman et al., 1978;	Varied influences were found.
Social class	Bearden and Oliver 1985 Warland et al. 1975	Higher social class are more likely to engage in CCB.
Personal values	Bearden and Teel 1980	personal values influence voice action.
Personality factors (e.g., alienation, aggressiveness, assertiveness, self-confidence, locus of control, dogmatism, self-monitoring, self-consciousness)	Bolfing 1989; Fornell and Westbrook 1979; Singh and Wilkes 1996; Robinson 1979; Singh and Howell 1985; Singh 1989; Marquis and Filliatrault 2002	Varied influences were found.
Consumer sophistication	Singh 1990	Positively relate to three types of CCB.
Attitude toward complaint	Bearden and Oliver 1985; Day 1984; Richins 1982; Singh 1989; Bearden and Mason 1984; Singh and Wilkes 1996; Jacoby and Jaccard 1981; Singh 1990; Sorensen and Strahle 1990; Zaltman et al., 1978; Bearden and Crockett 1981	Inconclusive results
Prior experience (previous service failure/recovery encounters)	Singh and Wilkes 1996; Voorhees and Brady 2005;Singh 1989; Ursic 1985	More experiences lead to more voice and third-party actions, not for private actions.
Personal competence	Bearden and Teel 1980	Positively related to voice action.
Interactions among scenario-, personal and industrial factors		
Perceived likelihood of complaint success (perceived provider responsiveness, expectancy value)	Bolfing 1989; Brown and Beltramini 1989; Gilly and Gelb 1982; Jacoby and Jaccard 1981; Richins 1983;Singh 1990; Richins 1983, 1987; Bearden & Teel 1983; Singh & Wilks 1996; Andreason 1985;	Positively related to voice and third-party actions, negatively related to private actions.

	Singh 1991; Fornel and Didow 1980; Blodgett et al., 1995; Day 1984; Ursic 1985	
Perceived costs of complaint (perceived difficulty of complaint)	Richins 1983,1987; Bearden 1983; Day 1984; Bolfing 1989)	Negatively related to voice actions.
Perceived value of complaint (cost-benefit evaluation, pay off, worthwhileness of complaint)	Andreasen 1985; Fornell and Didow 1980; Landon 1977; Singh 1990	Positively related to voice and third-party actions, negatively related to private actions.
Attribution of blame (external attribution)	Folkes 1984; Folkes et al., 1987; Krishnan and Valle 1979; Richins 1983; Blodgett et al., 1995; Kirshnan and Valle 1979; Singh 1989	Positively related to voice and third-party actions, negatively related to private actions.
Negative emotions toward provider	Westbrook 1987; Singh 1989b; Folkes et al. 1987; Day 1984; Blodgett and Granbois 1992; Oliver 1993	Positively related to voice and private actions.

Appendix B

Sample scenario used for car repair setting (Scenario 3 in Appendix C)

You were involved in a car accident recently. Fortunately no severe damage occurred to either driver. According to the police it was your fault, so your insurance company will pay for the damage that occurred to the other driver's car. Since your insurance did not cover the damage for your own car, you need to fix a number of problems caused by the accident: your car makes noise, shakes when you drive over 60 mph, and part of the body paint needs to be repaired. One of your friends recommended one Chinese auto repair shop to you. So you asked them to estimate the cost and were told it would cost $900 to fix all the problems. You agreed and sent your car to the shop one week ago. Today is the day that you were told to pick up the car. You looked over the car and found out that the paint job was perfect. You paid the bill, which is now $1,800 (double the estimate!), because you were told that the noise and shaking problems were more severe than they had originally thought. The employees seemed to be very polite and friendly to you. On your way home, as you are driving the car, you found out that the noise did not go away and the car still shook. As matter of fact, the car was making an even louder noise and shook more frequently than it did before the repair.

Appendix C

Distribution of Respondents by Scenarios

	Mexican Respondents				Chinese Respondents			
Scenarios	**Type (process/ outcome)**	**Severity (high/low)**	**Group membership (in- vs. out- group)**	**Cell size**	**Type (process/ outcome)**	**Severity (high/low)**	**Group membership (in- vs. out- group)**	**Cell size**
1	Outcome	High	In	24	Outcome	High	In	21
2	Process	High	In	36	Outcome	Low	In	19
3	Outcome	Low	In	29	Outcome	High	Out	20
4	Process	Low	Out	32	Process	High	Out	23
5	Process	High	Out	33	Process	High	In	18
6	Outcome	Low	Out	26	Process	Low	In	16
7	Process	Low	In	34	Outcome	Low	Out	25
8	Outcome	High	Out	36	Process	Low	Out	23