

The virtues of omission in Organizational Citizenship Behavior¹

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Version 1.28

August 24, 2004

¹We would like to thank Jeff Goldberg and Kathleen Montgomery for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. We would also like to thank Andrew Chen, Alan Lewis, and Steven Tallman with their help in the data collection. The version you are reading is 1.28 last modified on August 24, 2004. Please quote that in any comments. This is a *draft* version.

Abstract

We argue for the need to distinguish active positive contributions from avoiding of doing harm to others within the concept of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). We demonstrate the usefulness of this distinction by showing that avoidance of harmful behaviors plays a major role in national differences in what is considered to be OCB. We argue that national differences affect what avoidance behaviors are considered to be OCBs through affecting the combination of people's perceptions of harm and people's ability to get away with some negative behaviors. We provide empirical support to this view by a study including 524 American and Chinese managers.

Organizations could not survive or prosper without their members behaving as good citizens by engaging in all sorts of positive organization-relevant behavior. Because of the importance of good citizenship for organizations, understanding the nature and sources of “Organizational Citizenship Behavior” (OCB) has long been a high priority for organizational scholars (Bateman and Organ, 1983; Organ, 1988) and remains to be so. Organizational Citizenship Behavior has been defined by Organ (1988, p. 4) as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization.”

Bateman and Organ (1983) who first coined the term Organizational Citizenship Behavior, operationalized the concept by including two types of behaviors: (1) active positive contributions, such as punctuality and attendance beyond what a strictly enforced, as well (2) omission of harm to one’s colleagues or organization, such as refraining from complaints, appeals and accusations over trivial matters. Organ (1990) in a later review suggested that omission of harm is “important, though under-appreciated, forms of OCB” (p. 47).

Despite of the importance of omission of harm in the original conceptualization of OCB, a vast portion of research on OCB that followed tended to pay little attention to this type of behavior. Most of this work tended to focus on the antecedents and consequences of OCB (see, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000) for an overview of this literature) while spending little time on elaborating on the concept of OCB itself. Podsakoff et al. (2000) find this an important weakness in the OCB literature: “the literature has focused more on understanding the relationship between organizational citizenship and other constructs, rather than carefully defining the nature of citizenship behavior itself” (p. 515). By not focusing on the concept itself, the field has somehow overlooked that the original concept of OCB included both active positive contributions and avoidance of harmful behaviors. Follow up conceptualizations of OCB often did not to distinguish avoidance of harmful behavior from active position contributions (e.g., MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Fetter, 1993; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Hui, 1993) and in many cases this type of behavior was left entirely out from the operationalization of OCB (e.g., van Dyne and LePine, 1998; Van Dyne, Graham, and Dienesch, 1994). We argue below that abandoning this distinction is a problem because avoidance of harmful behaviors is likely to be based on a different ethical system than active positive contributions are, and that the former type of behavior is

likely to occur under different conditions than the latter type. Thus, we can not simply assume that what we know about active positive contributions in OCB is also applicable to avoidance of harmful behaviors. Rather, we need a focused effort to understand more about avoidance of harmful behaviors as a type of OCB.

This paper takes a first step in this direction by focusing on the role of avoidance behaviors in national differences of what behaviors are considered to be OCB. We theorize and test the view that national differences in what avoidance behaviors are seen to be OCBs are due to national differences of what behaviors people consider to be harmful and yet are likely to get away with in a given society. We proceed as follows: First, we argue for the importance of maintaining the distinction between active positive contributions and avoidance of harm in OCB. Then we provide a theoretical argument for why the combination of perceived harm and an ability to get away with a behavior is behind national differences in what avoidance behaviors are considered to be OCBs. Finally, we describe a study that tested our argument and found support for it.

1 Two types of behavior in OCB

There are many reasons for why we believe it is useful to maintain the distinction between avoidance of harmful behaviors and active positive contributions in OCB.

One of these reasons is that these behaviors may stem from different ethical systems. The feeling of obligation of not making the situation worse is often rooted in a “constraint-based” ethical system, that tells people what they should *not* do (Baron, 1998). According to this view, people are responsible for not causing harm to others with their actions, but they are not responsible for improving the overall situation. Active positive contributions, on the other hand, are often based on “consequentialism” that views ethical behavior based on the consequences of one’s (in)action. In this view the best ethical choice is the one that maximizes the overall benefits for all parties and not just simply avoids doing harm to others. In Frankena’s (1963) view, avoiding harm and active positive contributions are not so much duties that are rooted in different ethical systems but rather duties with different levels of difficulty to carry them out. In this view, it is not as difficult to “avoid harm” than it is to “do good.” Thus, avoiding harm becomes a moral duty

while doing good remains a moral ideal that people should strive for.

Whether we treat these two behaviors as qualitatively different categories of ethical behavior or take the difference to be merely one of difficulty, psychologically people do treat them as essentially different. Baron (1998, p. 10) provides an illustration where people make the distinction even where the avoiding harm behavior would be more difficult to perform than the “do good” behavior.

When I play tennis, I often open a can of tennis balls on the court. I feel strong obligation to throw away the metal top to the can I just opened, rather than leaving it to litter the court. So I do this. But I often leave behind several tops left by others, which I could easily pick up and throw away. My intuitive sense says that I am obliged not to make the situation worse, but I am not obliged to improve it. (Baron, 1998, p. 10)

We all tend to engage in this form of reasoning in our daily life (both private and organizational life) when deciding what actions to take. This suggests that avoidance of harm and active positive contributions are meaningful distinction for all of us whether we are aware of it or not. Since this distinction is also likely to affect what people see as OCB and what types of OCBs they are likely to engage in, distinguishing these two types of behaviors within OCB is likely to be a useful framework to improve our understanding of OCBs.

Another reason to maintain the distinction between avoidance of harmful behaviors and active positive contributions is that these behaviors may occur in different conditions and may be valued differently by organizational members. For example, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Bommer (1996) have shown that some transformational leadership behaviors, like articulation of a clear vision or high performance expectations seem only to affect sportsmanship or courtesy but no other OCBs. In our conceptualization both sportsmanship and courtesy are about avoiding of doing harm. Sportsmanship is a “willingness to tolerate the inevitable inconveniences and impositions of work without complaining” (Organ, 1990, p. 96), and “not making federal cases out of small potatoes” (Organ, 1990, p. 11) while courtesy is about being mindful of how one’s action affect others (Podsakoff et al., 1996). Similarly, Podsakoff et al. (1996) have shown that some subordinate characteristics have the opposite effect on sportsmanship (avoidance of harm in our conceptualization) than

on other types of OCBs. The higher the ability, experiences, training and knowledge of a subordinate, for example, the less likely it is that the subordinate will display sportsmanship (avoidance of harm) while she or he is more likely to display behaviors that fall in the category of civic virtues (active positive contributions in our conceptualization).¹ Similarly, Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994) who examined the effect of OCB on managerial evaluation of sales unit performance found that sportsmanship (avoidance of harm in our conceptualization) had a far weaker effect on the evaluation of unit performance than helping behavior or civic virtue did (these latter two encompasses positive contributions in our conceptualization). Results like these point to the need of distinguishing avoidance of harmful behaviors from active positive contributions when looking for conditions that lead to OCB or investigating how OCB is evaluated by organizational members.

Another reason for distinguishing avoidance of harmful behaviors from active positive contributions is because this distinction allows researchers to focus their attention to one type of OCB at a time without implying that their findings are also applicable to the other type of OCB. This paper does just that by exploring the reasons behind national differences in what avoidance behaviors are considered to be OCBs, while acknowledging that these reasons are likely to be different from those that explain national differences in what active positive contributions are considered to be OCBs.

To show that avoidance behaviors play an important role in national differences of what is seen to be OCB we applied the distinction of active positive contributions and avoidance harmful behaviors to the OCBs that were identified by Farh, Earley, and Lin (1997) as specific to China, as specific to the U.S.A. and as common to both China and the U.S.A. The result is listed in Table 1.² Our conceptualization makes the important role of avoidance behaviors in country specific differences immediately clear. We basically found that the OCBs that Farh, Zhong, and Organ (2004) identified to be country specific are all avoidance behaviors.³ OCBs that are specific to

¹See tables 5 and 6 for our categorization of OCBs as active positive contributions and avoidance of harmful behaviors

²Table 6 in the Appendix list the items that are used to measure the specific OCB dimensions that vary across countries

³Note that a recent study extended the China specific OCB dimensions that appeared in Farh et al. (1997) by some additional dimensions, including *self-training*, *social welfare participation* and *keeping the workplace clean*, which are active positive contributions. Thus, we do not claim that national differences are restricted to avoidance of harmful

China include avoidance of pursuing personal power (interpersonal harmony) and avoidance of using company resources for personal purposes (protecting resources), while OCBs that are specific to the U.S.A. include tolerating less than ideal circumstances (sportsmanship) and being mindful towards others (courtesy) as forms of OCB. In what follows we explore the reasons of why avoidance of some harmful behaviors are considered to be OCBs in one country but not in another.

2 Harm and punishment

We argue below that for an avoidance behavior to be seen as OCB in a given country it needs to be considered *both* highly harmful to one's colleagues or organization and yet it needs to be seen as a behavior that is easy to get away with. These behaviors also need to be organizationally relevant behaviors which we assume throughout of the paper. Perceiving a behavior as highly harmful is a necessary condition because avoiding a behavior that people do not consider harmful is not likely to be seen by organizational members as something that promotes the effective functioning of an organization. For example, if giving priority to individual goals above collective harmony is not considered highly harmful in a given country than restraining from that behavior will not likely to be seen as OCB even if it is easy to get away with such a behavior. But while seeing a behavior as harmful to one's colleagues and organization is necessary to see this behavior as OCB, it is not sufficient. One also needs to believe that it is easy to get away with such a behavior, because OCB is a discretionary behavior by definition. This is why although both killing one's colleagues and being corrupt are likely to be seen as highly harmful in most countries only avoiding the latter is likely to be seen as OCB. This is, because in most countries there are strongly enforced norms and legal penalties against killing one's colleagues and thus it is not really a discretionary behavior, while the norms, laws and rules against corruption and/or especially their enforcements can be weak enough in some countries to make non-engaging in such a behavior discretionary.

In sum, for avoidance of some behavior to be seen as OCB in a country it needs to be considered both highly harmful to one's colleagues and organization and relatively easy to get away with. We argue below that the reason

behaviors, but only that avoidance of harmful behaviors play an important role in these national differences.

Western and Chinese OCB scales	
American OCB scale	Chinese OCB scale
Avoidance of harm that are specific to countries*	
<i>Sportsmanship</i>	
Willingness of an employee to tolerate less the ideal circumstances without complaining; to avoid complaining petty grievances and railing against real of imagined slights.	
<i>Courtesy</i>	
Discretionary behavior by an employee aimed at preventing work-related problems with others from occurring; mindful of the effects of one behavior on others; not abusing others' rights; preventing problems with other people.	
	<i>Interpersonal harmony</i>
	Discretionary behavior by an employee to avoid tactics of pursuing personal power and gain with detrimental effects on others
	<i>Protecting company resources</i>
	Discretionary behavior by an employee to avoid negative behaviors that abuse company policies and resources for personal use.

Table 1: The table is from Farh et al. (1997, p. 429) page: 429.

*Categorizing OCBs as avoidance of harmful behaviors is from the authors of this paper.

why countries differ in which behaviors are seen to be OCB is because they differ in terms of perceived harmfulness of some behaviors and in terms of how strongly some behaviors are enforced.

That countries often differ in what behaviors are seen to be bad or harmful is supported by research. Haidt, Koller, and Dias (1993), for example, have shown that what behaviors parents consider bad behaviors vary across cultures. Similarly, Baron and Miller (2000) shown that Indian students perceive not helping a stranger in a life threatening situation to be far more harmful of than American students do. This finding corresponds with the finding of Miller, Miller, and Harwood (1990) who showed that Indians see moral obligations where Americans do not. Hustedh (2001) suggested that national differences in what behaviors are considered to be harmful behavior are likely to be affected by whether people hold individualistic or collectivistic cultural assumptions, values, norms and beliefs. In individualistic cultures people tend to perceive themselves as independent selves who pursue their own goals that take priority over group goals (Erez and Earley, 1987). Also, in individualistic cultures personal rights take precedents above duties to the collective. In collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, individuals conceptualize themselves as part of a group and the collective duties and interest take precedents above personal interest and rights. These different conceptualizations of the self and the duties towards the collective are likely to affect what people perceive to be harmful behaviors (Hustedh, 2001). In individualistic cultures people are more likely to see a behavior harmful if it violates the rights and autonomy of individuals, while in collectivistic cultures people are more likely to perceive a behavior to be harmful if it is inconsistent with the welfare of the collective (Hustedh, 2001). We need to note, however, that even in individualistic cultures pursuing individual rights to an extreme that completely disregards others is also considered to be highly harmful (Bunderson, 2001; Coates, 1989; Garry, 1997).

Countries often differ not just in what behavior is seen as harmful but also what behavior is easy to get away with. The ease of getting away with some behaviors is likely to be affected by the legal and regulatory conditions in a given country (Khanna and Palepu, 1997; Kostova, 1999) as well as by the effectiveness of a society at enforcing social norms (Ralston, Egri, Stewart, Terpstra, and Kaicheng, 2003). Countries, for example, differ in the development and effectiveness of their legal and regulatory system which makes it easier in one country than in another to get away with some behaviors, such as corruption (Khanna and Palepu, 1997). Countries also tend to undergo

economic and societal transitions during which they experience a decline of traditional social controls including a reduction of their abilities to enforce traditional social norms, which often leads to an increased rate of deviance (Inglehart, 1990).

We also need to note, however, that the ease of getting away with a behavior is not independent from whether a behavior is seen as harmful. It is likely that it is easier to get away with a behavior in a given country that is not considered highly harmful than with the one that is considered to be highly harmful. This interdependence between perceived harmfulness and ease of getting away with a behavior, however, is not so problematic here, given that our focus is on behaviors that are seen as *both* harmful and yet easy to get away with.

Overall, we suggest that countries often differ in the perceived harmfulness of a behavior and/or the ease of getting away with a behavior which in combination affect the national differences of what avoidance behaviors are considered to be OCB in a country.

This relationship is presented in Figure 1.

2.1 Harmful yet tolerated behaviors in China

Below we discuss how the above framework is applicable to national differences between China and the U.S.A. in what avoidance behaviors are considered to be OCB in these countries.

The Chinese culture is said to be characterized by collectivistic values, beliefs and assumptions, where the collective interest has a primacy above the individual interest (e.g., Bond, 1996; Earley, 1989, 1994; Hofstede, 1980). Furthermore, it is broadly asserted that Chinese people care very much about maintaining good personal relationship and interpersonal harmony. Some scholars attribute this concern for interpersonal harmony to a Confucianist ethic that dominates the Chinese culture (e.g., Boisot and Child, 1988). Alternatively, this concern could be rooted in the fact most Chinese are less than a generation from having lived in close-knit village communities. Whatever the ultimate cause, some concern for preserving interpersonal harmony is widely reported.

We do not expect this to be the case, however, in the U.S.A. where pursuing individual goals is considered to be an accepted form of behavior (Hofstede, 1980). Again, whether this is attributed to being part of culture founded on individual rights and achievements or to the fact that most

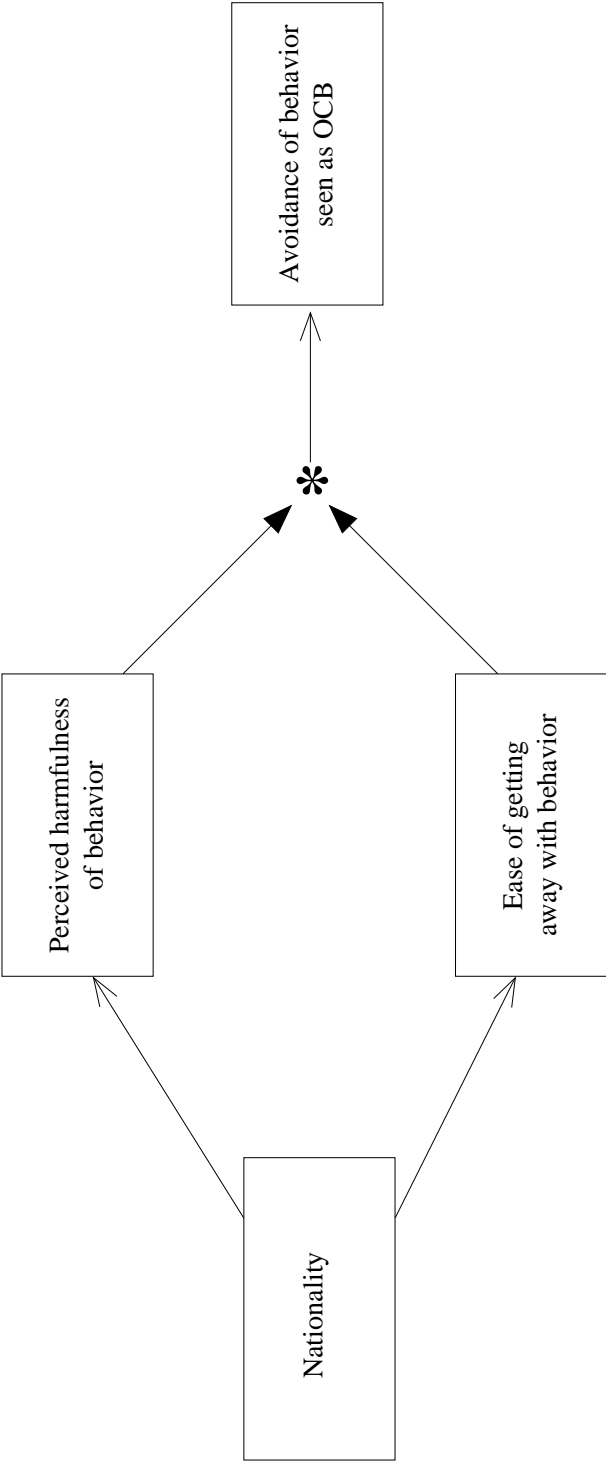


Figure 1: Relationship between nationality and what behaviors are seen as OCBs

Americans are more distantly removed from heavily interdependent village life, the observation appears to stand.

As we argued above, for an organizationally relevant behavior to be considered OCB it should not only be seen as harmful but also to be relatively easy to get away with in a given country. We are not trying to make the case that it is easier to get away with breaching interpersonal harmony in the collectivistic China than in the individualistic U.S.A. where pursuing self-interest above the collective interest is an accepted practice, but simply argue that even in China people believe that it is relatively easy to get away with violating interpersonal harmony. Research in contemporary China suggests that this is indeed the case because modernization is increasingly leading the new generation to adopt more individualistic values (Koulack and Peterson, 1969). Furthermore, as Chen (1995) has shown, in contemporary China economic goals often are given primacy to societal norms of equality and harmony, leading Chinese managers to prefer equity based reward distribution even more so than their American counterparts do. Thus in transforming China there is more tolerance towards the practice of pursuing self-interest above the interest of the collective than it was the case in the past and thus it is more discretionary than it used to be to engage in such a behavior. Because people often use the past as a reference point (Koulack and Peterson, 1969) increased tolerance for this behavior may appear to be too much for many. We predict that the combination of perceived high harmfulness and ease to get away with breaching interpersonal harmony makes avoidance of this behavior to be seen as OCB in China, but not in the U.S.A. where this behavior is not seen as highly harmful even though it is easy to get away with it. Thus, we hypothesize that

Hypothesis 1 *Chinese subjects in China will see not breaching interpersonal harmony as OCB. This relationship is mediated by the combination of perceived high harmfulness and ease of breaching interpersonal harmony.*

Using company resources for personal purposes is another practice that places individual interest above the collective's and thus likely to violate collectivistic norms in China. We thus expect Chinese people to find this behavior rather harmful and problematic. There is evidence that this is indeed the case. A market research company Horizon, for example, asked Chinese people in 11 large cities to name their 8 highest societal problems in 1998. The survey result showed corruption, which is a form of using public

resources for personal gain to be the second highest on the problem list after unemployment and above problems of state enterprises, crime, pollution, old age security, inflation and foreign threat (Jianbao, 1998). In comparison corruption was not listed among the top concerns for Americans (Calmes, 1997). While using company resources for personal purposes is considered harmful by Chinese people, the legal and regulatory system is often not sufficient to make people to restrain from this behavior (e.g., Lee, 1993; Yeh, 1999). As we mentioned above, an extreme form of using public office for personal gain is corruption. While there are some highly publicized corruption cases in China, Hu Angang and Guo Yong of Beijing's Quinghua University recently published a paper that estimated that only 10–20% of corruption cases are solved in China and only 6.6% of these cases end up in disciplinary action (Economist, 2002). A more striking finding is by the *Transparency International Daily Corruption News Full Text Service* (Transparency, 2003) is that 22 officials out of 37 corruption cases got promoted soon after their corruption case. Examples like these indicate that in China using company or public resources for personal gain may be a practice that one can expect to get away with relatively easily, which is not so in the U.S.A. Although recent company scandals in the U.S.A. suggest that using company properties to personal purposes is also an issue in the U.S.A. the general level of corruption still seem to be relatively low in the U.S.A. due to strong legal and regulatory constraints on this behavior in the U.S.A. In a 2002 survey by the *Transparency International* (Transparency, 2002) that ranked countries from those with the lowest corruption level to the ones with the highest corruption level, the U.S.A. ranked 16 among 102 countries while China ranked 51. Thus, the potential to get away with corruption in China makes protecting organizational resources a discretionary behavior and thus a form of OCB. We predict that the combination of perceived high harmfulness and ease to get away with breaching using company resources for personal purposes makes avoidance of this behavior to be seen as OCB in China, but not in the U.S.A. where this behavior although is seen as highly harmful it is not so easy to get away with it. Thus, we hypothesize that

Hypothesis 2 *Chinese subjects in China will see not using organizational resources for personal benefit as OCB. This relationship is mediated by the combination of perceived high harmfulness and ease to get away with using organizational resources for personal benefit.*

2.2 Harmful yet tolerated behaviors in the U.S.A.

As we discussed above, the U.S.A. is often described as being characterized by individualistic values, beliefs and norms where individuals view themselves as independent from others and are more concerned with their own goals, rights and interest than with the interest of the collective (Thomas, Au, and Ravlin, 2003). People who see themselves to be independent from others are more likely to see inconveniences that naturally arise from the interdependencies that exist in all organizations as an impediment on their individual rights and use legal and procedural means to challenge those who impinged on their rights (Garry, 1997). While Americans generally support the right of individuals to challenge those who impinge on their rights, there is also an increased recognition of the potential harmful effect of over-using this right by blowing small inconveniences out of proportion and trying to resolve even minor grievances this way (Garry, 1997). We also expect that pushing individual rights to an extreme will be considered highly harmful by Chinese subjects. We expect, however, that in China where the legal system is unsympathetic toward individual rights it is not easy to get away with such behavior. In the U.S.A. on the other hand, while there is a strong sentiment against those who use legal and procedural means to resolve even minor issues, the legal system strongly supports individuals to defend their rights at the court and in the societal level there is a tolerance and even support towards individuals who raise grievances (Garry, 1997). Thus, in American it is more in the discretion of an individual to decide whether to be a good sport or not. Based on the above, we predict that

Hypothesis 3 *American subjects in the U.S.A. will see sportsmanship as OCB. This relationship is mediated by the combination of perceived high harmfulness and ease of not being a good sport.*

Americans support the pursuit of individual rights, but only to the degree that it does not violate the rights of others. A way to violate the rights of others is by not being mindful of how one's action affect others. Not being mindful towards others is an issue that is increasingly recognized in the American workplace as harmful and problematic (e.g., Faulkner and Kinchin, 2001; Pearson, Andersson, and Porath, 2000; Weiss, 1997). A study, for example, that surveyed 2,013 adults in a nationwide random sample through telephone surveys and focus groups, found that 79 percent of Americans believe that lack of respect and courtesy should be regarded as a serious national

problem (Wadsworth, 2002). Another study that interviewed 1,400 workers found that 78% of those who were interviewed found workplace incivility a worse problem than it was 10 years ago (Porath, Pearson, and Shapiro, 1999). There are many ways one to be inconsiderate towards others in the workplace, ranging from ignoring others (i.e., not greeting people, not making eye contact with them), to not respecting the rights of others' to resources and not considering how one's action affect others etc (e.g., Faulkner and Kinchin, 2001; Weiss, 1997). Incivility is likely to be also considered harmful in China where collectivistic values promote concern towards others.

The difference between China and the U.S.A. is less likely to exist in perceived harmfulness and more so in the ease of getting away with lack of courtesy. In China it is not likely to be easy to get away with lack of courtesy where collectivistic values put high priority on harmonious interpersonal behavior. In the U.S.A. on the other hand, there is evidence that lack of courtesy is a behavior that is easy to get away with despite the fact that many Americans consider this behavior to be harmful (Jr, Brandes, and Dharwadkar, 1998; Rynes, Trank, Lawson, and Ilies, 2003). While on the rhetorical level American organizations make more effort to reward and promote those who possess values, behavioral skills and ethics that emphasize the importance of others, there is increasing evidence that in reality those who are inconsiderate towards others are no less likely to be promoted than those who are not (Jr et al., 1998; Rynes et al., 2003). What matters for promotion and reward is whether managers are high achievers in terms of organizational goals (like profit), but not whether these goals are achieved in a considerate way towards others (Lewis, 1989; Rynes et al., 2003). Thus, inconsiderateness towards others does not jeopardize people's chances for success and promotion and thus it is up to an individual to decide whether to be mindful towards others. We suspect that this type of behavior is less tolerated in China where considerateness towards the others is required by the societal norms and values. We, thus predict that

Hypothesis 4 *American subjects in the U.S.A. will see courtesy as OCB. This relationship is mediated by the combination of perceived high harmfulness and ease to get away with lack of courtesy.*

3 The study

3.1 The sample

To test our hypotheses, we collected data from managers in three business schools (two in the U.S.A. and one in China) and in a Chinese company. The Chinese sample included 168 managers from an executive MBA training course and 75 managers from a Chinese company that produces gift items, such as wooden pens, collectible figurines and glass items. The American sample included 281 American managers from executive MBA courses in two business schools. The average age in the Chinese sample in the executive training course is 36.5 (s.d. 4.37) and in the company is 36.6 years (s.d. 6.92). The average age in the two American samples are 34.00 (s.d. 5.6) and 35.00 (s.d. 4.6).

4 The measures

4.1 Perception of harm and of what people get away with

In a survey we listed the harmful behaviors that are present in the Chinese and American country-specific OCB dimensions (see Table 6 in the Appendix). For example, the harmful behavior that is present in the item “Does not use illicit tactics to seek personal influence and gain with harmful effect on interpersonal harmony in the organization” was listed in the survey as “Uses illicit tactics to seek personal influence and gain with harmful effects on interpersonal harmony.” We asked subjects to answer among others, two questions concerning all items in the questionnaire on a 1–5 Likert scale: (1) In your society how likely is it that people get away with the described behaviors? (1=almost never to 5=almost always), and (2) In your opinion how harmful are the described behaviors are to others? (1=Not at all harmful to 5=Extremely harmful). The questionnaire was presented in English for the American subjects and in written Chinese for the Chinese subjects. For the China-specific items of the Farh et al. (1997) questionnaire, we used the original Chinese version of the questionnaire for the Chinese subjects. The translation of the U.S.A.-specific items went through a three-stage process: (1) a native Chinese speaker translated the items into Chinese; (2) these

items were back-translated by another native Chinese speaker into English; (3) the back-translation was compared to the original English version by the first author. The Chinese version was carefully checked against the English version by the second author who is a native Chinese speaker.

4.2 Perception of OCB

We measured perception of OCBs by listing items of the country specific OCBs (see Table 6 in the Appendix) and asking subjects the following question:

Below we give you a broad description of the meaning of organizational citizenship behavior. Following this we list some specific behaviors. We are interested in your view to what degree do you consider the described behaviors organizational citizenship behavior.

A 1–5 Likert scale was used to measure the degree subjects considered the listed behaviors to be OCBs.

4.3 National differences and controls

National differences were measured categorically 0 for China and 1 for the U.S.A.. Individual characteristics such as age, gender (1=male, 2=female), and company affiliation (0=managers from Chinese company, 1 = for rest), and education level (measured categorically based on highest degree) used as control variables in the study. Company affiliation was used to control the potential effect of organizational affiliation affecting what avoidance behaviors are considered to be OCBs.

5 Analysis

The cross-correlation tables, means and standard deviations are listed in Table 2. Based on the suggestion of Leung and Bond (1989) we used standardized measures of the predictor variable, the dependent variable and the mediator variables throughout the analysis.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. OCB-Harm.																
2. OCB-Res.	.46**															
3. OCB-Sport	-.09*	-.33**														
4. OCB-court.	-.19**	-.34**	.47**													
5. Nationality	-.29**	-.34**	.38**	.32**												
6. Age	.08	.24**	.28**	.18**	.16**											
7. Gender	-.09*	-.01	-.01	-.04	-.03	-.31**										
8. Education	.01	.11**	.16**	.10*	-.12**	.11*	-.11*									
9. Affiliation	.05	.12**	-.06	-.21**	-.14**	.04	-.10*	-.09*								
10. Harm-harm	.29**	.48**	-.37**	-.35**	-.39**	.32**	-.06	.12**	.12*							
11. Get-harm	.16**	.48**	-.31**	-.30**	-.36**	.27**	-.08	.01	.24**	.54**						
12. Harm-res	.28**	.26**	-.35**	-.37**	-.35**	.17**	-.09*	.09*	.14**	.54**	.37**					
13. Get-res	.24**	.53**	-.35**	-.37**	-.39**	.25**	-.08	.21**	.07	.54**	.45**	.38**				
14. Harm-sport	-.24**	-.38**	.47**	.41**	.38**	.28**	-.04	.21**	-.13**	-.35**	-.33**	-.39**	-.36**			
15. Get-sport	-.24**	-.38**	.54**	.51**	.46**	.26**	-.08	.15**	-.03	-.34**	-.36**	-.36**	-.34**	.35**		
16. Harm-court	-.24**	-.36**	.46**	.44**	.40**	.31**	-.02	.22**	-.12**	-.39**	-.37**	-.34**	-.38**	.51**	.47**	
17. Get-court	-.24**	-.37**	.46**	.50**	.36**	.26**	-.06	.08*	-.24**	-.32**	-.37**	-.38**	-.36**	.46**	.53**	.45**

† $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table 2: Correlations

5.1 The analysis

We used mediated regression analysis to establish whether perceived harm in combination with the ease to get away with a behavior mediate the relationship between nationality and what avoidance behavior is perceived to be OCB (Baron and Kenny, 1986). The results are listed in Table 3 and Table 4.

In step 2 we regressed the perception that an avoidance behavior is OCB (dependent variable) to nationality (predictor variable) while controlling for the effect of age, sex, education, and company affiliation. The effect of these control variables on the dependent variable was tested in step 1. In step 3, following the control variables we entered perceived harm and ease to get away with a behavior into the regression analysis, while in step 4 we entered the interaction effect between these variables. Since we predicted that the interaction effect between perceived harm and ease to get away with a behavior act as a mediator between nationality and the dependent variable, we expected the effect of the mediator on the dependent variable to be significant, while also expecting that the effect of nationality on the dependent variable will become non-significant (Baron and Kenny, 1986).

We run these analyzes for all four investigated OCB dimensions (avoiding breaching interpersonal harmony, protecting organizational resources, sportsmanship and courtesy) as dependent variables. Since the mediating variables are inter-correlated, we tested for multicollinearity. The VIF values were only slightly higher than 1 (the highest being 1.5), so multicollinearity did not turn out to be a problem.

Dependent variable	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Harmony as OCB				
Age	.08	.05		
Gender	-.11*	-.09*		
Education	.08	.01		
Affiliation	.06	.03		
Nationality		-.24***		
ΔR^2	.03	.05		
Harmony as OCB				
Age	.08	.02	.01	.01
Gender	-.11*	-.11*	-.12*	.10*
Education	.08	.08	.08	.03
Affiliation	.06	.03	-.03	-.05
Harm no harmony		.21***	.29***	.23***
Ease no harmony		.01	.08	.07
HarmEase			.18**	.20**
Nationality				-.09
ΔR^2	.03	.04	.03	.01
Protecting resources as OCB				
Age	.27***	.23***		
Gender	-.08	-.06		
Education	.12**	.02		
Affiliation	.10*	.06		
Nationality		-.28***		
ΔR^2	.10	.07		
Protecting resources as OCB				
Age	.27***	.12*	.12*	.02
Gender	-.08	-.00	-.00	.01
Education	.12*	.01	.01	.01
Affiliation	.10*	.07	.05	.05
Harm of abuse resources		.02	.05	.07
Ease of abuse resources		.49***	.42***	.39**
HarmEase			.17**	.16**
Nationality				-.08
ΔR^2	.09	.13	.04	.01

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; $N = 525$

Standardized β s are listed.

Table 3: Mediated regression for Chinese OCB dimensions

Dependent variable	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Sportsmanship as OCB				
Age	.27***	.24***		
Gender	-.12**	-.10*		
Education	.17***	.17***		
Affiliation	-.04	-.04		
Nationality		.30***		
ΔR^2	.12	.08		
Sportsmanship as OCB				
Age	.27	.09*	.10*	.10*
Gender	-.12**	-.02	-.02	-.02
Education	.17***	.04	.04	.03
Affiliation	-.04	-.01	-.01	-.01
Harm no sports.		.25***	.29***	.28***
Ease no sports.		.40***	.43***	.42***
HarmEase			.10*	.09*
Nationality				.08
ΔR^2	.12	.16	.01	.00
Courtesy as OCB				
Age	.17***	.17***		
Gender	-.09*	-.08		
Education	.17***	.19***		
Affiliation	-.21***	-.17***		
Nationality		.24***		
ΔR^2	.11	.05		
Courtesy as OCB				
Age	.17***	.03	.04	.04
Gender	-.09*	-.01	-.00	-.00
Education	.17***	.07	.06	.05
Affiliation	-.21***	-.09*	-.09*	-.09*
Harm of no courtesy		.26***	.16**	.15**
Ease of no courtesy		.38***	.28	.27***
HarmEase			.20***	.20***
Nationality				.06
ΔR^2	.11	.15	.02	.00

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; $N = 525$

Standardized β s are listed.

Table 4: Mediated regression for US OCB dimensions

6 Results

The mediated regression results in Tables 3 and 4 provide empirical support to the view that the effect of nationality on what avoidance behaviors are seen as OCBs are mediated by perception of harmfulness of a given behavior and the ease of getting away with the behavior. Namely, we found that consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 2, Chinese nationality predicts that maintaining interpersonal harmony ($\beta = -24$; $p < .001$) and protecting organizational resources ($\beta = -28$; $p < .001$) are seen as OCBs, but the relationship between Chinese nationality and these two avoidance behaviors are mediated by the combination of perceived harmfulness of breaching these behaviors and the ease of getting away with breaching these behaviors ($\beta = 20$; $p < .01$ for breaching interpersonal harmony and $\beta = 16$; $p < .01$ for using organizational resources for personal purposes). Similarly, consistent with Hypotheses 3 and 4 we found the American nationality predicts that sportsmanship ($\beta = -30$; $p < .001$) and courtesy ($\beta = -24$; $p < .001$) are seen as OCBs, but the relationship between American nationality and these avoidance behaviors are mediated by combination of perceived harmfulness of breaching these behaviors and the ease of getting away with breaching these behaviors ($\beta = 09$; $p < .05$ for not being a good sportsman and $\beta = 20$; $p < .001$ for using organizational resources for personal purposes).

7 Discussion

In this paper we called attention to the forgotten importance of distinguishing active positive contributions from avoidance of harmful behaviors in OCB by pointing to the potential differences in the ethical basis of these two types of behaviors as well as to the differences in the conditions in which these behaviors likely to occur. We suggested that on the intuitive level people tend to distinguish between active positive contributions and avoidance of harmful behaviors and this distinction is likely to affect what behavior they see as part of their moral duty. Since perception of moral duty may affect what people see as OCB and why they engage in this form of behavior, maintaining the distinction between these two types of behaviors is likely to take us closer to understanding these issues.

We also suggested that making this distinction is useful as it allows researchers to focus their attention to one type of OCB without implying that

their findings are applicable to the other type of OCB. We used this ourselves in this paper by focusing on the role of avoidance behaviors in national differences in what is seen to be OCB.

This focus allowed us to keep our work manageable while we ventured to unknown terrains of uncovering some of the reasons behind national differences in what is seen to be OCB.

Before this study, few studies even raised the possibility that countries may differ in what people consider to be OCB (see Farh et al. (1997) and Farh et al. (2004)) for exceptions) and even fewer attempted to look for the reasons behind those national differences (see Farh et al. (2004) for an exception). Most cross-country work on OCB simply used western measures of OCB in other countries with an implicit assumption that people's understanding of what is OCB is the same across countries (e.g., Ang, Dyne, and Begley, 2003; Chen, Hui, and Segó, 1998; Dyne and Ang, 1998).

In this paper we departed from this assumption, by suggesting and testing the view that, at least in the case of avoidance behaviors, nationality affects what is seen to be OCB through affecting the combination of perceived harmfulness of behaviors and the ease of getting away with some behaviors. We consider this study an important first step to a better understanding of national differences in what is seen to be OCB. It must also be noted that in at least some cases where scholars seek to attribute national differences to deep cultural factors (e.g., Farh et al., 1997), situational factors may serve as better explanations.

Our hope is that this study will facilitate further research in this relatively unexplored area. Such research is needed in our increasingly global environment where many managers work in countries other than their own. We know for example, from existing research that people's view of what is part of OCB affect both supervisor's evaluation of employees (Eastman, 1994) as well as people's willingness to engage in such behavior (Morrison, 1994). This research, however, has been conducted within the boundaries of the U.S.A., so we have little understanding of how these results would bear out in other countries. This focus on one country limits the ability of the field to give advice to managers who work abroad as to how to recognize and boost OCB in their workplace. To do so, we need a better understanding of the nature and sources of national differences in what people consider OCB. We hope that this paper made a useful step into this direction.

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OCB Dimensions and items that are similar in the Chinese and in the American scales

1. Civic virtue (Active contributions)

Willing to stand up to protect the reputation of the company

Eager to tell outsiders good news about the company

Makes constructive suggestions that can improve the operation of the company

Actively attends company meetings

2. Altruism (Active contributions)

Willing to assist new colleagues to adjust to the work environment

Willing to help colleagues solve work-related problems

Willing to cover work assignments for colleagues when needed

Willing to coordinate and communicate with colleagues

3. Conscientiousness (Mixture of active contributions and avoidance behaviors)

Complies with company rules and procedures even when nobody watches and no evidence can be traced (avoidance behavior)

Takes one's job seriously and rarely makes mistakes (avoidance behavior)

Does not mind taking on new challenging assignments

Tries hard to self-study to increase the quality of work outputs

Often arrives early and starts to work immediately

Table 5: OCB dimensions and items that are mostly active positive contributions based on a Chinese OCB scale by Farh et al. (1997). These OCB dimensions are similar to the ones in the American OCB scale that were developed by Podsakoff et al. (1990)

Country specific OCB Dimensions and items

Interpersonal harmony (Avoidance of harm: Chinese)

Does not use illicit tactics to seek personal influence and gain with harmful effect on interpersonal harmony in the organization

Does not use position of power to pursue selfish personal gain

Does not take credits, does not avoid blames, and does not fight fiercely for personal gain

Does not speak ill of the supervisor or colleagues behind their backs

Protecting company resources (Avoidance of harm: Chinese)

Does not conduct personal business on company time

Does not use company resources to do personal business (e.g., company phones, copy machines, computers, and cars)

Does not view sick leave as benefit and does not make excuses for taking a sick leave

Sportsmanship (Avoidance of harm: U.S.A*)

Avoid consuming a lot of time complaining about trivial matters

Avoid making "mountains out of the molehills" (makes problems bigger than they are)

Avoid focusing on what's wrong with his/her situation, rather than the positive side of it

Courtesy (Avoidance of harm: U.S.A*)

Avoid hurting other people's rights to common/shared resources (including clerical help, materials, etc)

Avoid taking actions that hurts others

Do not initiate actions before consulting with others that might be affected

Trying to avoid creating problems for colleagues

* Items are reworded to make it clear

that these are about avoidance of harmful behaviors

Table 6: OCB dimensions and items that are about avoiding harmful behaviors based on a Chinese OCB scale (dimensions 4-5) by Farh et al. (1997), and on an American OCB scale (dimensions 6-7) by Podsakoff et al. (1990). Note that dimensions 4-5 are specific to China and dimensions 6-7 are specific to the U.S.A.