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Firms Reap What They Sow: The Effects of Shared Values and Perceived Organizational Justice on Customers' Evaluations of Complaint Handling

Employing elements of organizational theory and service recovery research, the authors examine how employees' perceptions of shared values and organizational justice can stimulate customer-directed extra-role behaviors when handling complaints. They also investigate how these extra-role behaviors affect customers' perceptions of justice, satisfaction, word of mouth, and purchase intent. The authors capture and match employee and customer perceptions regarding the relevant constructs following a complaint and recovery experience. The results indicate that employees' perceptions of shared values and organizational justice affect customer-directed extra-role behaviors. Furthermore, the authors find that extra-role behaviors have significant effects on customers' perceptions of justice and that these behaviors mediate the effects of shared values and organizational justice on customer justice perceptions. Their study reveals that customer ratings of justice affect the customer outcomes of satisfaction with recovery, overall firm satisfaction, purchase intent, and word of mouth. Finally, the authors show that customers' perceptions of justice mediate the effects that extra-role behaviors have on customer outcomes.

Given that the concepts of customer service and complaint handling are relatively straightforward and intuitive and that the benefits are often quite significant (Goodwin and Ross 1992; Maxham 2001; Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998), why do many firms continue to provide poor service? One reason may be that firms often fail to inspire the employees providing the service. Because frontline employees are often the primary reflection of a firm's image and because they are often critical players in the recovery from failures, it is essential that they believe in the firm's recovery strategy. Apathetic employees may offer lackluster customer service, and disgruntled employees may even sabotage the firm by purposefully treating customers poorly. Some argue that poor recoveries occur partly because frontline customer service agents do not share the firm's values and/or feel they have been treated unfairly by their organization (Bowen, Gilliland, and Folger 1999; Hartline, Maxham, and McKee 2000). Therefore, it remains critical to identify factors that encourage recovery agents to take extra steps to resolve customer complaints.

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The current literature provides little empirical evidence on the best ways to inspire customer service employees to go beyond their job duties to help resolve customer problems. Consequently, many questions remain unanswered. For example, to what extent does the congruence between an employee's values and the values held by the organization (i.e., shared values) affect the employee's propensity to engage in customer-directed extra-role behaviors when handling complaints? Does treating employees fairly affect customers' perceptions of how fairly they have been treated after initiating a complaint? Research addressing such questions could help managers devise recovery strategies that improve organizational and customer outcomes. We seek to bridge the gap between organizational research focused on inspiring employees (e.g., Bettencourt and Brown 1997) and service recovery research focused on customer outcomes (e.g., Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998) by exploring how key organizational factors set the stage for desirable customer outcomes. Although extant research generally views complaint handling as an external customer issue, perhaps it should also be viewed as an internal human resource management issue. Companies may need to internally market the firm to employees just as employees need to externally market the product to customers. As such, managers may reap what they sow in complaint handling. We present a field study that investigates how employees' perceptions of shared organizational values and justice affect customers' perceptions of customer-directed extra-role employee performance, justice, satisfaction, word of mouth, and repurchase intent.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Extra-Role Behaviors in Service Recovery

Much has been written about employee performance that goes beyond “in-role” requirements. Such performance has been defined in at least four ways: (1) organizational citizenship behavior, which is viewed as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly, recognized by the formal reward system and in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ 1988, p. 4; Podsakoff et al. 2000, p. 13); (2) prosocial behaviors, defined as “acts that are not directly specified by a job description, but which are of benefit to the organization and which are not of direct benefit to the individual” (O’Reilly and Chatman 1986, p. 493); (3) contextual performance behaviors, defined as “behaviors that do not support the technical core [of the organization] itself so much as they support the broader organizational, social, and psychological environment in which the technical core must function” (Borman and Motowidlo 1993, p.73); and (4) extra-role behaviors, defined within the context of customer service as “discretionary behaviors of contact employees in servicing customers that extend beyond formal role requirements” (Bettencourt and Brown 1997, p. 41). Within these four classifications, there is a great deal of conceptual overlap, prompting Podsakoff and colleagues (2000) to identify several individual behaviors common to the four classifications. These behaviors include interpersonal helping behavior and altruism, sportsmanship, organizational compliance and loyalty, conscientiousness and civic virtue, and individual initiative and self-development. Furthermore, these performance behaviors have been broken down into those directed toward the firm, coworkers within the firm, and consumers. Although debate exists as to their classification (Organ 1997; Podsakoff et al. 2000), the outcomes of all such behaviors are beneficial to the organization (see meta-analyses by Organ and Ryan [1995] and Podsakoff et al. [2000]). In our research, we focus on the classification that has been the least researched, but perhaps the most beneficial to many firms—customer-directed extra-role behaviors.

Several researchers have conceptualized extra-role behaviors within a customer service setting. For example, Borman and Motowidlo (1993) suggest that favorably representing the organization to customers is part of contextual performance (i.e., not required) that goes beyond the task performance of an employee’s formal job requirements. More recently, Bettencourt and Brown (1997) and Bettencourt, Gwinner, and Meuter (2001) extend this conceptualization with three customer-directed extra-role behaviors (i.e., loyalty, participation, and service delivery) that go beyond formal role requirements. Loyalty refers to those behaviors in which employees advocate the interests and image of the firm. Participation is defined as those efforts to take initiatives that improve service when communicating with customers, and service delivery reflects conscientious employee efforts to effectively respond to customer concerns.

Consistent with Borman and Motowidlo’s (1993) notion of representing the organization to customers, Bettencourt

and Brown’s (1997, p. 41) view that customer service extends beyond formal role requirements, and the participation and service delivery components that Bettencourt, Gwinner, and Meuter (2001) suggest, we define customer-directed extra-role behaviors as the degree to which customers believe the service agent they dealt with exceeded their expectations in resolving their complaint. Note that our definition and subsequent operationalization are couched in terms of the customer’s view of extra-role behaviors in a complaint handling setting. To date, the studies examining customer-directed extra-role behaviors have used either manager ratings of contact service employees (Bettencourt and Brown 1997) or self-reports (Bettencourt, Gwinner, and Meuter 2001). Furthermore, these studies did not investigate extra-role behaviors in the context of complaint handling.

Studies examining customer-rated extra-role behaviors for product or service failures and recoveries are needed for several reasons. First, the constructs encompassing extra-role performance are somewhat convoluted (Organ 1997), leading researchers to suggest a focus on specific types of extra-role behaviors that are most appropriate for a given organization in a given context. Specifically, “service companies have special requirements on dimensions related to dealing with customers and representing the organization to outsiders” (Borman and Motowidlo 1993, p. 90). Thus, research needs to focus on the customer- and service-oriented extra-role behaviors of customer-contact employees (Bettencourt, Gwinner, and Meuter 2001; Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1997). Our research is consistent with this view, specifically assessing customer-rated extra-role behaviors within a complaint-handling context.

Second, some researchers suggest that self-reports may include social desirability bias and defensiveness on the employee’s behalf (Podsakoff and Organ 1986). That is, employees may overrate their performance. Manager ratings may be tainted by either excessive strictness or excessive lenience toward employees or limited contact with employees in a given situation (Netemeyer et al. 1997). Given our setting in which customers deal individually with service agents, we believe that customers’ perceptions of customer-directed extra-role behaviors are most important and accurate. Because supervisors do not observe all employee behavior, they often are not in the best position to judge whether agents engage in customer-directed extra-role behaviors during all complaint resolution exchanges. Furthermore, what a supervisor or an employee views as extra-role performance may be viewed as in-role performance by the customer, and what the customer views as extra-role behaviors may be considered in-role performance by employees or supervisors. Thus, given the complaint handling setting and the premise that customers’ views are the best predictor of firm ratings, we measure customer-rated extra-role behaviors in our research.

Third, because customer service agents are the primary contact between buyers and the firm, their efforts can either augment or weaken customers’ perceptions of the firm (Schneider and Bowen 1999). Researchers suggest that ineffective recoveries actually compound the problem and that effective recovery efforts can restore satisfaction and promote customer loyalty (Maxham 2001; Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999). Thus, product and service failures offer

unique service situations in which customers likely perceive injustices and hold relatively high expectations for redress (Seiders and Berry 1998). Given the confrontational nature of complaints, employees sometimes experience irritated or incensed customers, which makes these employees less likely to engage in customer-directed extra-role behaviors during complaint handling than during more civil customer service exchanges. As such, it is important to identify methods of inspiring employees to perform customer-directed extra-role behaviors while handling complaints. In this study, we uncover some potentially key antecedents and outcomes of customer-directed extra-role behaviors in the context of complaint handling.

Customer-Directed Extra-Role Behaviors, Shared Values, and Organizational Justice

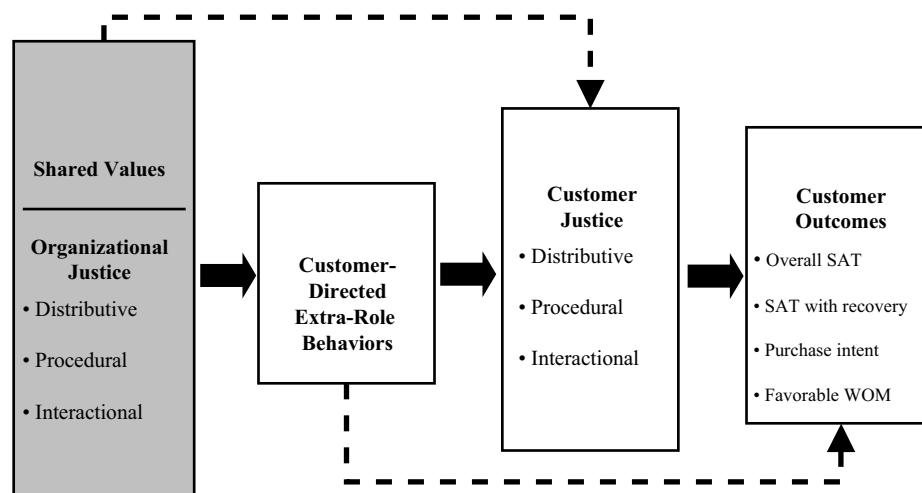
Consistent with the conceptual work by Bowen, Gilliland, and Folger (1999), Figure 1 proposes a framework, or recovery process model, that focuses on achieving customer-directed extra-role behaviors. In the subsequent sections, we offer rationale for why shared values and organizational justice are key factors associated with customer-directed extra-role behaviors and how these extra-role behaviors affect customers' perceptions of justice following a product or service failure and recovery effort. (Note that though shared values and organizational justice are key factors affecting extra-role behaviors, several personality or dispositional factors may also affect extra-role performance; Podsakoff et al. 2000.)

Shared values and extra-role behaviors. Research in organizational psychology suggests that employees and their job environments become intertwined through successive stages of attraction–selection–attrition (ASA). The ASA framework is grounded in the *person perspective*

on organizational behavior, in which people within an organization largely determine a firm's practice, structure, and culture (Schneider, Goldstein, and Smith 1995). Consistent with organizational culture literature, in which culture reflects a set of beliefs, expectations, and shared values that guides the behavior of an organization (Hatch 1993; Schein 1990), a central notion of the ASA framework is that people are attracted to firms whose general core or dominant values they share. The ASA view espouses that companies tend to attract, hire, and retain people who have values consistent with company goals and that the company will function most effectively when populated by employees who share the organization's values. As such, we define shared values as the congruence of general core or dominant values between employees and their organization. This conceptualization is consistent with shared values as a global construct in which values are viewed as fundamental, relatively enduring, and guiding employee behavior (Chatman 1991; Kristof 1996).

Although research has yet to investigate the relationship between shared values and customer-directed extra-role behaviors in a failure and recovery context, some studies have examined the association between related constructs and organizational citizenship-type behaviors in other settings. For example, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) find that person–organization fit is associated with increased levels of employee philanthropy and helping behavior toward the organization. Netemeyer and colleagues (1997) report an indirect relationship between person–organization fit and firm-directed organizational citizenship behaviors in a personal selling context. Goodman and Syvante (1999) note that person–organization fit affects the employee contextual behaviors of altruism and conscientiousness.

FIGURE 1
Process Model



Notes: Customer service employees rated the constructs shown in the shaded box, and customers rated the constructs shown in the white boxes. Solid lines and arrows represent direct relationships, and dotted lines and arrows represent mediated relationships. SAT = satisfaction, and WOM = word of mouth.

We believe that shared values also have important implications in a failure and recovery context. Given that complainants are often irritated, customer service agents must exude patience and diplomacy. However, it is plausible that service agents lacking shared values may be unable or unwilling to tactfully handle aggravated or demanding customers. In the midst of harsh criticisms from a customer, frontline employees lacking shared values may quickly become frustrated and then retaliate or withdraw from the customer. Alternatively, service agents sharing the core values of the firm are likely to take extra steps to resolve complaints. The ASA framework suggests that values, socially endorsed by the organization and shared by the individual, create an organizational culture in which employees are similar in their behaviors and orientations toward the firm and customers. Thus, when employees share the values of their employer, they will be more likely to take ownership of customer complaints and go out of their way to resolve them (Schneider, Goldstein, and Smith 1995). Thus, we posit the following:

H₁: Shared values positively affect customer-directed extra-role behaviors.

Perceived employee organizational justice. Perceived justice represents the extent to which people ascertain the fairness of an exchange between themselves and another party (Deutsch 1985; Greenberg 1990; Lind and Tyler 1988). Perceived justice focuses on the motivational and cognitive processes of weighing justice inputs (e.g., time, effort, opportunity costs) against justice outcomes (e.g., rewards or marginal utility). Injustice arises when people believe their ratio is inequitable when compared with a referent other's ratio; conversely, justice arises when people believe that ratio is equitable. For example, suppose that Customer Service Agent A is rewarded one day of vacation time for every month worked (12 days per year). Agent A may think this reward system is relatively fair until he or she discovers that Customer Service Agent B is rewarded one and a half days of vacation time for every month worked (18 days per year). In this scenario, Agent A may perceive an injustice because, compared with Agent B, he or she is rewarded relatively fewer outcomes (i.e., vacation time) for the same amount of input (i.e., hours worked).

Perceived organizational justice represents an important human resource management practice that facilitates the functioning of the firm and helps create a climate for service both within the firm and to customers (Konovsky 2000; Schneider 1990). Furthermore, perceived justice theories have been useful in explaining the processes and outcomes of organizational conflicts, and studies suggest that fairly treated employees are more likely to engage in extra-role behaviors/organizational citizenship behaviors (Podsakoff et al. 2000). As such, perceived organizational justice provides a worthy backdrop for studying how relationships between employers and employees affect employee extra-role behaviors (Sheppard, Lewicki, and Minton 1992). Consistent with current organizational research, we examine three organizational justice constructs that affect extra-role behaviors—distributive, procedural, and interactional justice.

Distributive justice and extra-role behaviors. Distributive justice is based in social exchange theory in which people assess the equity or fairness of an exchange by comparing input to outcomes (Deutsch 1985; Greenberg 1990). An exchange is judged as fair when employee input is proportional to outcomes. We define distributive justice as the degree to which employees believe that they have been fairly rewarded for the performance, effort, experience, and stresses associated with their jobs. Consider a scenario in which Customer Service Agent A is paid \$10 per hour for performing his or her job. Agent A may think this compensation system is relatively fair until he or she discovers that Customer Service Agent B is paid \$15 per hour. In this case, Agent A may perceive a distributive injustice. Compared with Agent B, Agent A is paid less for the same amount of work.

Distributive justice has warranted great attention because of its positive association with desirable job outcomes. Some research concludes that distributive justice is significantly correlated with job satisfaction (Netemeyer et al. 1997) and pay satisfaction (Folger and Konovsky 1989). Others have found relationships between distributive justice and employee-directed or firm-directed extra-role behaviors (Organ and Ryan 1995; Scholl, Cooper, and McKenna 1987). In a customer service context, Bettencourt and Brown (1997) also found a positive relationship between pay level, an element of distributive justice, and job satisfaction. However, no research has examined the association between distributive justice and customer-directed extra-role behaviors in a complaint-handling context. It has been conceptually argued that service recovery agents who are treated fairly with respect to outcomes will likely perform customer-directed extra-role behaviors (Bowen, Gilliland, and Folger 1999). That is, fair internal treatment of employees “spills over” to external customer service in the form of extra-role behaviors. We test the following hypothesis:

H₂: Perceived employee distributive justice positively affects customer-directed extra-role behaviors.

Procedural justice and extra-role behaviors. Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the policies and procedures used to achieve organizational outcomes (Lind and Tyler 1988). Even though a final outcome may be unfair, employees can still judge the procedures used to derive the outcome as fair (Folger and Konovsky 1989; Greenberg 1990). In our study, we define procedural justice as the perceived fairness of policies and procedures used in making decisions about employees. Suppose that Customer Service Agent A must consult a manager before offering customers more than \$50 in redress. Agent A may think this procedural system is relatively fair until he or she discovers that Customer Service Agent B is empowered to offer redress to complainants on the spot without consulting a manager, regardless of the costs involved with the redress. In this scenario, Agent A may perceive a procedural injustice because, compared with Agent B, Agent A has less autonomy.

In general, researchers have found that employees perceiving procedural justice are likely to perform extra-role behaviors/organizational citizenship behaviors. For example, Skarlicki and Latham (1996) find that people trained to

recognize and then engage in procedural fairness exhibit higher levels of organizational citizenship behaviors. Kim and Mauborgne (1996) report that multinational managers who perceived higher levels of procedural justice went “beyond the call of duty” to help the organization (for a review, see also Konovsky 2000). In a service setting, Bettencourt and Brown (1997) note that bank tellers perceiving fair pay rules (i.e., procedural justice) were likely to receive higher supervisor ratings of extra-role customer service behaviors. However, because complaint handling involves a specialized type of customer service often requiring extra efforts beyond those needed for general customer service, studies that investigate these relationships in a complaint setting are needed. Although it has been conceptually suggested that employees’ perceptions of procedural justice can affect extra-role behaviors when they handle complaints (Bowen, Gilliland, and Folger 1999; Schneider and Bowen 1999), no empirical studies have tested this premise. We offer the following hypothesis:

H₃: Perceived employee procedural justice positively affects customer-directed extra-role behaviors.

Interactional justice and extra-role behaviors. Interpersonal treatment is the cornerstone of interactional justice. It has been suggested that even if the employees perceive the procedures and outcomes as fair, they may still consider themselves unfairly treated if they perceive injustice during interactions with managers. As such, interactional justice can affect job behaviors beyond procedural and distributive justice (Bies and Shapiro 1987; Greenberg 1990). We define interactional justice as the extent to which employees believe they have been treated justly in their interactions with their supervisors. This conceptualization includes elements of courtesy, honesty, interest in fairness, and effort perceived by the employee. Consider a situation in which a supervisor frequently addresses Customer Service Agent A in a terse or rude manner. Agent A may dismiss these personal interactions until he or she notices that the supervisor addresses other customer service agents in a courteous manner, possibly prompting him or her to perceive an interactional injustice.

Some researchers report a positive relationship between interactional justice and organizational citizenship behaviors. In particular, Moorman (1991) finds that employees perceiving interactional justice are more likely to exhibit altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, and conscientiousness. Skarlicki and Folger (1997) find a strong main effect of interactional justice on organizational-based extra-role behaviors. Bettencourt and Brown (1997) similarly note a positive relationship between a supervisor’s propensity to value employee feedback before distributing tasks and supervisor ratings of extra-role customer service. Although not empirically tested, scholars have conceptually suggested that interactional justice may affect employee performance of extra-role behaviors in a recovery setting (Bowen, Gilliland, and Folger 1999). On the basis of these writings, we posit that interactional justice influences the extent to which recovery agents engage in customer-directed extra-role behaviors.

H₄: Perceived employee interactional justice positively affects customer-directed extra-role behaviors.

Outcomes of Extra-Role Behaviors and the Mediated Effects of Shared Values and Organizational Justice

Our previous discussion hypothesized shared values and organizational justice as antecedents of customer-directed extra-role behaviors when employees handle complaints. What are the likely consequences of customer-directed extra-role behaviors following complaint handling? It seems reasonable that extra-role behaviors should directly affect customers’ perceptions of justice and may affect outcomes relating to customer satisfaction, purchase intent, and favorable word of mouth. However, how do extra-role behaviors affect these outcomes? What is the nature of the relationship of customer justice with shared values and organizational justice? Consistent with Figure 1, we contend that mediating hypotheses are tenable and propose the following links: shared values/organizational justice → customer-directed extra-role behaviors → customer justice → customer outcomes. Thus, shared values/organizational justice affect extra-role behaviors, which in turn affect customer justice; that is, extra-role behaviors mediate the effect of shared values/organizational justice on customer justice. Furthermore, customer justice affects customer outcomes, and thus the effects of extra-role behaviors on customer outcomes are mediated by customer justice. The following section offers a rationale for these effects.

Extra-role behaviors and customers’ perceptions of justice. The rationale behind the extra-role behaviors → customer justice link is twofold. First, the services literature stresses the importance of interpersonal treatment during the service encounter (Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990), and some conceptual writings suggest that service agent extra-role behaviors affect customers’ perceptions of justice (Bowen, Gilliland, and Folger 1999; Schneider and Bowen 1999). It therefore seems reasonable that customers’ perceptions of the justice they receive from the firm will largely be determined by the customer–agent encounter. Second, if customers perceive extra effort by the service agent, their perceptions of justice should be enhanced. Customers often expect firms to overcompensate or engage in “correction-plus” behaviors after a product or service failure (Kelley, Hoffman, and Davis 1993; Oliver 1997). Customer-directed extra-role behaviors may provide the “plus” needed to raise customers’ perceptions of justice after a failure. We posit that a customer’s perception of the justice received from the firm is heavily influenced by the service agent’s customer-directed extra-role behaviors. Thus, we model extra-role behaviors as theoretical antecedents of customers’ perceptions of justice. We examine the distributive, procedural, and interactional dimensions of customer justice in a failure/recovery context.

Distributive justice is viewed as the extent to which customers believe they have been treated fairly with respect to the final service recovery outcome. Such outcomes may represent refunds, discounts, or other atonement offered to customers after a failure. Thus, customers’ perceptions of distributive justice should increase when they believe the agents put forth extra effort by offering attractive compensation. Elements of procedural justice include the timeli-

ness/speed of resolving the failure, the perceived convenience/flexibility of the process to the complainant, and the accessibility of the firm (Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998). Our procedural justice construct includes these elements and assesses the overall perceived fairness of policies and procedures in handling the recovery process. We argue that when agents go out of their way to handle a recovery in a timely fashion and explain in detail the procedures involved in the recovery effort (i.e., engage in extra-role behaviors), the customer's view of the firm's procedural justice is enhanced. Interactional justice is viewed as the extent to which customers believe they have been treated with honesty and courtesy by agents who are interested in fairness and who put genuine effort into the recovery (Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999). This concern for the customer throughout the recovery is enhanced when service agents go out of their way in their interaction with customers. We propose the following:

- H₅: Customer-directed extra-role behaviors positively affect (a) customer-perceived distributive justice, (b) customer-perceived procedural justice, and (c) customer-perceived interactional justice.

Extra-role behaviors mediate the shared values/organizational justice → customer justice link. Although research has yet to examine the shared values/organizational justice → customer-directed extra-role behaviors → customer justice link, theoretical arguments for such associations exist. Consistent with the ASA framework, Schneider, Goldstein, and Smith (1995) suggest that employees must share the values of the firm for an extra-role behavior-type culture to exist. Such extra-role behavior cultures indirectly lead customers to believe they have been fairly treated in service encounters. Bowen, Gilliland, and Folger (1999) and Schneider and Bowen (1999) argue that employees treated fairly by the firm will treat customers fairly (i.e., "justice in-justice out"). That is, internal organizational justice affects external customer service in the form of customer-perceived justice. However, we posit this effect as indirect because organizational citizenship behaviors/extra-role behaviors represent a mediating link between the justice in-justice out chain (Schneider and Bowen 1999). As such, we propose the following:

- H₆: Customer-directed extra-role behaviors mediate the effects of shared values and perceived organizational justice on customer-perceived justice.

Outcomes of Customer Justice and the Mediated Effects of Extra-Role Behaviors.

Recent research has examined the effects of customer-perceived justice on satisfaction with service recovery/complaint handling, firm commitment and trust, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth decisions (Blodgett, Hill, and Tax 1997; Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998). However, no studies have explored such outcome variables collectively, nor has overall firm satisfaction been examined as an outcome of perceived justice in a complaint setting. Furthermore, the extra-role behaviors → customer justice → customer outcomes link, in which customer justice mediates the relationships between extra-role behaviors and customer outcomes, has

not been addressed. We now advance hypotheses related to these links.

Distributive justice and customer outcomes. Seiders and Berry (1998) contend that as a firm increases the outcomes to its customers through recovery, perceptions of distributive justice increase, affecting several service-related outcomes. This contention has some empirical support. Smith, Bolton, and Wagner (1999) find that distributive justice affects service recovery satisfaction, and Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar (1998) find that distributive justice is positively related to satisfaction with complaint handling. Although not yet empirically tested, distributive justice associated with a given failure and recovery may also be related to overall firm satisfaction. Seiders and Berry (1998) suggest that a prime factor affecting overall firm satisfaction is the degree to which customers believe they have been fairly compensated after a failure. Furthermore, beyond its effects on satisfaction, distributive justice during recoveries may be related to purchase intent and word-of-mouth perceptions. Favorable complaint handling incidents include compensation commensurate with customer input, triggering increases in purchase intent (Kelley, Hoffman, and Davis 1993) and increases in positive word of mouth (Schneider and Bowen 1999).

- H₇: Customer-perceived distributive justice positively affects satisfaction with the recovery, overall firm satisfaction, purchase intent, and likelihood of positive word of mouth.

Procedural justice and customer outcomes. Theory and research suggest that procedural justice affects service recovery outcomes. A firm can provide a fair outcome (i.e., a full refund) in response to a service failure, but the customer may still deem the process in which the outcome was provided as unfair. For example, if customers experience a lengthy wait to receive refunds because the firm's policy requires frontline employees to clear all restitution offers with a department manager, customers may remain upset despite receiving a fair outcome. Because the service process is often an integral part of the entire product or service offering, firms can enhance satisfaction with the recovery by increasing customers' perceptions of procedural justice (Seiders and Berry 1998). Such theoretical contentions have empirical support. Smith, Bolton, and Wagner (1999) report that procedural justice has a significant effect on service encounter satisfaction, and Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar (1998) report that procedural justice has a positive effect on a customer's satisfaction with the firm's recovery.

We also suggest that customers' perceptions of procedural justice during a complaint experience can affect their overall firm satisfaction, purchase intent, and likelihood of word of mouth. Organizational psychologists (Greenberg 1990; Konovsky 2000) and market researchers (Seiders and Berry 1998; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998) argue that procedural justice is important in exchanges involving conflict resolution because it enhances the probability of maintaining long-term satisfaction between parties. Thus, a procedural justice → overall firm satisfaction link is tenable. It has also been argued and empirically demonstrated that procedural justice is related to purchase intent and word-of-mouth decisions. Blodgett, Hill, and

Tax (1997) theoretically suggest the procedural justice → purchase intent and procedural justice → word of mouth links, and others show that some elements of procedural justice are related to word of mouth (Goodwin and Ross 1992).

H₈: Customer-perceived procedural justice positively affects satisfaction with the recovery, overall firm satisfaction, purchase intent, and likelihood of positive word of mouth.

Interactional justice and customer outcomes. As previously stated, customers' evaluations of the firm are influenced by their interactions with the firm's agents, and research shows that interactional justice is positively related to satisfaction with recovery and overall firm satisfaction. Smith, Bolton, and Wagner (1999) find effects of interactional justice on satisfaction with service recovery, and Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar (1998) report that interactional justice has a strong effect on satisfaction with complaint handling (i.e., a regression coefficient of .457). Spreng, Harrell, and Mackoy (1995) find that the most important determinant of overall firm satisfaction with customer damage claims for a moving service is interpersonal treatment by the firm's agents, and Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault (1990) report that interactional justice is positively related to overall firm satisfaction. Finally, interactional justice is related to purchase intent and word-of-mouth decisions. Blodgett, Hill, and Tax (1997) theoretically argue for and find a positive relationship between interactional justice and purchase intent in a service failure context. They also hypothesize and find that higher levels of interactional justice are associated with lower levels of negative word of mouth.

H₉: Customer-perceived interactional justice positively affects satisfaction with the recovery, overall firm satisfaction, purchase intent, and likelihood of positive word of mouth.

Customer justice mediates the extra-role behaviors → customer outcomes link. As previously stated, the customer-agent encounter largely determines the customers' perceptions of the justice they receive from the firm. When customers perceive extra efforts by service agents, they likely will believe they have been treated fairly. Combining this with our preceding hypotheses (H₇–H₉) and the evidence that customer outcomes are affected by perceptions of justice in service recovery (Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998), we contend that customer-perceived justice represents a mediating mechanism between extra-role behaviors and customer outcomes.

H₁₀: Customer-perceived justice mediates the effects of customer-directed extra-role behaviors on customer outcomes (i.e., satisfaction with the recovery, overall firm satisfaction, purchase intent, and likelihood of positive word of mouth).

Method

Procedures, Sample, and Measures

We conducted a field study that focused on online customers who registered telephone complaints about the electronic equipment purchased from and serviced by a well-established electronics retailer. We chose this setting

because both the electronics industry and online retailers have historically experienced high rates of customer complaints (Cheng 2000; Consumer Electronics Manufacturing Association 1998).

Customers who purchased online initiated complaints by telephoning the customer service center, which routed them to a customer service agent. The agent logged a "job problem report" into the customer database (all complaints appeared in a complaint register viewed and managed by the customer service director) and then attempted to resolve the problem. Frontline customer service agents handled 96% of the complaints directly (customer service managers handled 4%). When handling the complaints, agents were empowered to determine the appropriate course of action. However, management limited the dollar amount of redress beyond a full refund (e.g., discounts on future purchases). A total of 26% of the complaints involved defects. Of these, 42% were handled by instructing customers how to fix the defect, 37% were handled by replacing the defective product, and 21% were handled by offering full refunds (including shipping costs). A total of 22% of the complaints were shipping mishaps. Of these, 82% were handled by accurately fulfilling the order (shipping the desired items and offering free shipping on returned items). Of the 17% of complaints representing billing inaccuracies, 77% were handled by adjusting the bill in the customer's favor. Another 15% of complaints involved online ordering troubles and were handled by first completing the order by telephone and then offering customers a 20% discount on a future purchase. A total of 12% of the complaints involved poor customer service. All of these complaints were handled by first attempting to resolve the dispute. In 36% of these cases, the customers were not satisfied with the resolution and were subsequently mailed a 20% discount coupon redeemable on the customer's next purchase. All 4% of the complaints handled by management involved customer service process complaints in which the customer specifically asked to speak to a manager. In these cases, a manager generally handled the complaint in a manner similar to a frontline service agent.

In one day, 56% of complaints were handled, and an additional 34% were handled within three days. After exhausting all efforts to resolve the complaint (including the 20% discount on the customer's next purchase), customer service agents "closed out" the job problem report in the customer database and noted the problem history in the buyer's profile. After customer service agents completed the complaint resolution process, surveys were e-mailed to relevant complainants (and to their respective customer service agents). A total of 700 surveys were e-mailed to complainants. Given the recent evidence that delivering a survey by e-mail has little effect on response patterns (Stanton 1998), sending the surveys in this manner was not viewed as problematic. The surveys were introduced with a cover message that explained the firm's desire to improve customer service, and this message asked complainants to complete the survey and submit a hard copy by facsimile or mail. Of the 700 surveys e-mailed, 346 were returned. Of these 346 surveys, 320 had complete responses across all study variables.

Customer survey and measures. We measured customer-rated extra-role behaviors with five items adapted from prior

research (e.g., Bettencourt and Brown 1997). These items were specific to the service agent that the customer dealt with and asked the customer to evaluate the extent to which that particular service agent put forth extra effort in the service recovery process (all items are shown in the Appendix). We measured distributive justice with four items from the extant literature that accounted for input (e.g., time, effort, hassle, anxiety, cost) and outcomes in the recovery process (Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998). We operationalized procedural justice using four items from Folger and Konovsky's (1989) scale that captured the fairness of policies and procedures in the recovery process as well as input (e.g., time, hassle). We also constructed a four-item scale that measured customer interactional justice for this research. We adapted two of the items from Folger and Konovsky's (1989) research that tapped the interactional dimension of justice, and we adapted the other two items from prior service recovery literature using a perceived justice framework (Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998). These items assessed the degree to which firm service agents put forth effort on the complainant's behalf and treated them with respect, courtesy, fairness, and honesty throughout the recovery process.

We measured service recovery satisfaction, overall firm satisfaction, purchase intent, and likelihood of spreading positive word of mouth using three-item scales adapted from prior research (Cronin and Taylor 1994; Goodwin and Ross 1992). We measured all items on seven-point Likert-type scales (see the Appendix). Sixty percent of the sample was male; 69% had been customers for two to four years; 51% reported incomes from \$40,000 to \$60,000; and 74% held college degrees.

Employee survey and measures. When a complaint was resolved, an automatic e-mail containing a survey was sent to the specific service agent who handled the complaint. As such, surveys were sent to the 700 service agents that specifically handled the 700 customer-initiated complaints. Of the surveys sent to customer service agents, 621 usable responses were collected through facsimile or mail. From these 621 responses, 320 were matched to the fully completed customer survey. That is, 320 service agent surveys were each fully matched to the specific customer survey representing the complainant they served. Thus, all analyses that follow use a sample of 320 customer-agent response pairs.

Service agents handling complaints were asked to complete a survey regarding their perceptions of organizational justice and shared values with the firm over the past six months. To ensure confidentiality, the surveys were sent directly to us, thereby reducing supervisory interference or biases. We measured distributive justice with four items that assessed the degree to which the service agent had been fairly compensated for job responsibilities, experience, efforts, and performance (Netemeyer et al. 1997). We measured procedural justice with four items that assessed the degree to which the company policies and procedures were fair with respect to decision making about employees, fairness of representation by employees, timeliness of decisions about employees, and feedback regarding decisions about employees (Folger and Konovsky 1989). We measured interactional justice with five items that tapped the degree to

which employees believed the company supervisors worked hard to be fair; considered the employees' rights; and were honest, respectful, and courteous in interactions with employees (Folger and Konovsky 1989; Moorman 1991). We measured the shared values construct with items from Netemeyer and colleagues' (1997) study and one item adapted from Chatman's (1991) shared values construct. Although one of these items (i.e., "FIRM has the same values as I do with regard to concern for others") reflects a specific value, concern for others has been noted as a core or dominant value (Chatman 1991). Thus, all items assessed the degree to which the employee's core values were congruent with the firm's values (the Appendix also shows these measures). Fifty-three percent of the sample was female; 82% had been employees for five years or less; 81% reported incomes from \$40,000 to \$70,000; 67% of employees held college degrees; and 58% worked from 35 to 50 hours per week.

Data and Measurement Checks

Sample and nonresponse bias. To check for sample and nonresponse, we queried the firm's database. The firm logs and manages all complaints in its database regardless of a complainant's participation in our study. The firm also asks online purchasers to complete a brief survey before completing their first purchase, which helps create a buying profile for each customer. Thus, we were able to compare our sample's demographic and buying profile with three other customer groups: (1) complainants who received our survey, but chose not to respond, that is, nonparticipants ($n = 300$); (2) complainants who did not receive our survey, that is, nonsurveyed complainants ($n = 268$); and (3) customers who have never registered a complaint, that is, noncomplainants ($n = 312$). There were no significant differences regarding the length of relationship with the firm (means ranged from 3.84 to 3.97 across groups), age (means ranged from 39.0 to 40.5), total number of purchases (means ranged from 5.13 to 5.41), or the dollar value of the order involving the complaint (means ranged from \$231.01 to \$243.24) between the three database customer groups and our sample respondents ($p > .10$). In addition, our sample and the database customer groups were similar across sex (males ranged from 40% to 44%), income (the percentage of customers reporting incomes from \$40,000 to \$60,000 ranged from 51% to 55%), and education (the percentage of customers holding college degrees ranged from 70% to 74%). Likewise, the reasons for the complaint and the firm's complaint handling strategies were similar across groups (i.e., our sample and the database groups that complained).

We also collected demographic data from 300 service employees who were not included in our analyses and compared the demographic profiles of these 300 nonrespondents to our employee respondents. We found no significant differences between the groups regarding the length of tenure with the firm ($\mu_{\text{respondents}} = 3.77$ years, $\mu_{\text{nonrespondents}} = 3.49$ years), age ($\mu_{\text{respondents}} = 33$ years, $\mu_{\text{nonrespondents}} = 34$ years), or the total number of hours worked per week ($\mu_{\text{respondents}} = 45$, $\mu_{\text{nonrespondents}} = 46$). In addition, the employee respondents and nonrespondents were similar across sex (female respondents = 53%; female nonrespondents = 52%), income

(81% of respondents reported incomes from \$40,000 to \$70,000; 83% of nonrespondents reported incomes from \$40,000 to \$70,000), and education (67% of respondents held college degrees, 71% of nonrespondents held college degrees). In summary, these results offer evidence that our respondents are a representative sample of the firm's customers and customer service employees.

Measurement properties. We conducted several procedures to examine the psychometric properties of our measures. For the customer measures, we started with 5 extra-role behavior items, 5 distributive justice items, 5 procedural justice items, 5 interactional justice items, 4 purchase intent items, and 3 items each for satisfaction with recovery, overall firm satisfaction, and word of mouth (a total of 34 items). We subjected these items to principal component and item analyses and our own judgment. On the basis of recommended scaling procedures (Clark and Watson 1995), we deleted one item each from the justice measures and one purchase intent item (5 items total). We then input the remaining 29 items into an eight-factor, 29-item confirmatory factor model for each data set. We conducted several tests of convergence among items in the scales and discriminant validity among constructs that supported the validity of the customer measures across both data sets (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Fornell and Larcker 1981). We conducted similar psychometric procedures for the employee measures. We started with 27 items: 7 for distributive justice, 6 for procedural justice, 6 for interactional justice, and 8 for shared values. Through principal component/item analyses and author judgment, we retained 4 distributive justice, 4 procedural justice, 5 interactional justice, and 3 shared values items. In the confirmatory factor model, we found strong evidence of convergence among items and discrimination between constructs. (Detailed information about our measurement procedures is available on request.)¹

As a partial validity check of our customer-rated extra-role behaviors measure, we also had agents rate themselves on the degree to which they generally engaged in customer-directed extra-role behaviors. Likewise, we asked supervisors to rate agents on the degree to which the agents engaged in customer-directed extra-role behaviors in the past six months. Both the agent-rated and employee-rated measures were similar to the customer-rated extra-role behaviors measure but were not specific to any particular customer or service event. The correlation between the customer-rated extra-role behaviors and agent-rated extra-role behaviors measures was .50, the correlation between the customer-rated extra-role behaviors and supervisor-rated extra-role behaviors measures was .54, and the correlation between the agent and supervisor rating was .30. Because the agent-rated and supervisor-rated customer-directed extra-role behaviors were not specific to the individual complaints of customers, we did not include them in the analyses.

¹We also gathered another data set comprising 132 complainants (and their respective service agents) in a business to-business setting in which all complaints were resolved face-to-face. All measures yielded internal consistency and discriminant validity estimates that mirrored those reported in the text and Table 1.

Analysis and Results

The Shared Values/Organizational Justice → Extra-Role Behaviors → Customer Justice Link

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics, correlations among study constructs, and coefficient alpha estimates of internal consistency for study measures. Given our hypotheses, we conducted regressions with mediation analyses. We first analyzed hypotheses that were consistent with the shared values/organizational justice → customer-directed extra-role behaviors → customer justice link presented in Figure 1. In keeping with current writings on mediated regression (Holmbeck 1997; Kenny, Kashy, and Bolger 1998), we examined four conditions to test mediation: (1) the predictor variables (shared values/organizational justice) must affect the mediator (customer-directed extra-role behaviors) in the predicted direction, (2) the predictor variables (shared values/organizational justice) must affect the dependent variables (customer justice) in the predicted direction, (3) the mediator (customer-directed extra-role behaviors) must affect the dependent variables (customer justice) in the predicted direction, and (4) the impact of the predictors (shared values/organizational justice) on the dependent variables (customer justice) must be less after controlling for the mediator (customer-directed extra-role behaviors).

We first regressed the mediator on the predictors variables, that is, customer-directed extra-role behaviors as a function of shared values/organizational justice. As Regression Equation 1 in Table 2 shows, shared values and all organizational justice constructs significantly affected customer-directed extra-role behaviors in the predicted direction (standardized regression coefficients ranged from .12 to .29 with an R^2 of .31). Thus, mediating "Condition 1" was satisfied, and our hypotheses that shared values and perceived organizational justice affect customer-directed extra-role behaviors was supported (H_1 – H_4).²

We next regressed shared values/organizational justice on each customer justice construct. Regression Equation 2 in Table 2 shows that for the most part, shared values and the organizational justice dimensions significantly affected the customer justice perceptions in the predicted direction. All but employee distributive justice significantly affected customer distributive justice with an R^2 of .38, all but shared values significantly affected customer procedural justice (in the predicted direction) with an R^2 of .29, and all employee justice constructs and shared values significantly affected customer interactional justice with an R^2 of .40. These results largely satisfy the second mediating condition that the predictor variables affect the dependent variables.

We then regressed customer-rated extra-role behaviors (mediator) on customer justice (the dependent variables) to test the third mediating condition. As Regression Equation 3 in Table 2 shows, extra-role behaviors significantly affected all customer justice dimensions (coefficients of .54, .52, and

²We also estimated interaction effects among the three organizational justice dimensions as they affect extra-role behaviors. These results were largely inconsistent (mostly nonsignificant or small, negative effects). These results are available on request.

TABLE 1
Correlations Among Constructs

	Mean	S.D.	Range	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Employee															
1. EDJ	4.32	.63	2.00–6.25	.73											
2. EPJ	4.50	1.45	2.25–7.00	.34	.93										
3. EIJ	4.50	.89	2.00–6.80	.45	.53	.82									
4. Values	3.13	.79	1.33–5.00	.13	.34	.23	.89								
Customer															
5. ERBs	3.37	1.06	1.00–6.80	.31	.45	.37	.42	.86							
6. CDJ	3.44	1.38	1.00–7.00	.28	.57	.45	.35	.54	.90						
7. CPJ	3.93	1.17	1.50–6.25	.40	.38	.45	.03	.52	.60	.91					
8. CIJ	3.89	1.27	1.00–6.00	.34	.45	.45	.50	.69	.54	.53	.83				
9. Sat-R	5.49	1.01	1.67–7.00	.17	.09	.27	.21	.30	.52	.58	.37	.83			
10. Sat-F	4.27	1.45	1.67–7.00	.43	.66	.55	.12	.40	.62	.53	.50	.35	.82		
11. Intent	3.25	1.03	1.33–6.33	.34	.73	.47	.39	.42	.65	.45	.48	.36	.65	.91	
12. WOM	4.03	.92	2.00–6.33	.14	.22	.28	.32	.33	.50	.41	.35	.50	.49	.56	.93

Notes: Numbers italicized on the diagonal are coefficient alpha estimates of internal consistency. EDJ = employee distributive justice, EPJ = employee procedural justice, EIJ = employee interactional justice, Values = shared values, ERBs = extra-role behaviors, CDJ = customer distributive justice, CPJ = customer procedural justice, CIJ = customer interactional justice, Sat-R = satisfaction with the recovery, Sat-F = overall firm satisfaction, Intent = purchase intent, WOM = likelihood of favorable word of mouth. Means, standard deviations (S.D.), and ranges are based on summated scale averages.

.69). These results also show support for our hypotheses that when customers perceive that the employee they dealt with put forth extra effort in service recovery, they perceive greater levels of justice (H_5).

Next, we regressed both the predictors and the mediator on the dependent variables to test the fourth mediating condition. For full mediation to be statistically supported, the predictor variable effects on the dependent variable must be nonsignificant after controlling for the mediator. However, full mediation is rare in the social sciences. As such, partial mediation is considered supportive of a mediating hypothesis (Kenny, Kashy, and Bolger 1998). Thus, when the effects of the predictor variables on the dependent variables are diminished after controlling for the mediator, mediation is supported. As Regression Equation 4 in Table 2 shows, the mediator (extra-role behaviors) was significant for all three dependent variables (customer distributive, procedural, and interactional justice). Moreover, the regression coefficients for the predictor variables of shared values and distributive, procedural, and interactional justice are generally smaller in Regression Equation 4 (controlling for the mediator) than they are in Regression Equation 2 (not controlling for the mediator) for each dependent variable.

Finally, we conducted a statistical test to determine whether the partial mediation effects were significant. That is, we tested whether the regression coefficients for the independent variables in Equation 4 (the effects of shared values, distributive, procedural, and interactional justice in which the mediating variable of extra-role behaviors was accounted for) were lower than the corresponding regression coefficients of Equation 2 (in which the mediating variable of extra-role behaviors was not accounted for) (Kenny, Kashy, and Bolger 1998). For those cases in which the regression coefficient was significant in Equation 2 (10 of 12 coefficients in the predicted direction), 8 of the 10 coef-

ficients were significantly smaller in Equation 4 (t-values ranged from 1.79 to 9.58, $p < .05$). Thus, partial mediation was largely supported (i.e., H_9 was supported).³

The Extra-Role Behaviors → Customer Justice → Customer Outcomes Linkage

To examine the hypotheses and mediating effects associated with the customer-directed extra-role behaviors → customer justice → customer outcomes link presented in Figure 1, we conducted the same set of regressions. We first regressed the mediator on the predictors variables, that is, customer justice on customer-directed extra-role behaviors. As Regression Equation 1 in Table 3 shows (and as shown in Table 2), extra-role behaviors significantly affected all customer justice dimensions, satisfying mediating “Condition 1.” We next regressed customer-directed extra-role behaviors (predictor variable) on the customer outcomes of satisfaction with recovery, overall firm satisfaction, purchase intent, and favorable word of mouth (dependent variables). Regression Equation 2 in Table 3 shows that customer-directed extra-

³As suggested by Kenny, Kashy, and Bolger (1998), the equation for testing the significance of partial mediation is as follows:

$$t = \frac{c - c^*}{\sqrt{b^2 s_a^2 + a^2 s_b^2 - s_a^2 s_b^2}}$$

where c = the independent variable regression coefficients of Equation 2, c^* = the independent variable regression coefficients of Equation 4, b = the regression coefficient of the mediator on the dependent variable, a = the regression coefficient of the independent variable on the mediator, s_a = the standard error of a , and s_b = the standard error of b . We also tested our mediating hypotheses so that the mediator was regressed on all predictors simultaneously. That is, consistent with Holmbeck (1997) and Kenny, Kashy, and Bolger (1998), we assessed the significance of any single predictor → mediator effect while accounting for the effects of all other predictors on the mediator.

TABLE 2
Shared Values/Organizational Justice → Customer-Directed ERBs → Customer Justice

Regression Equation 1: Shared Values/Organizational Justice → Customer-Directed ERBs

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable Beta Coefficient (t-Value)				F-Value	R ²
	EDJ	EPJ	EIJ	Values		
ERBs	.13(2.45)	.24(4.26)	.12(1.98)	.29(5.29)	36.11	.31

Regression Equation 2: Shared Values/Organizational Justice → Customer Justice

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable Beta Coefficient (t-Value)				F-Value	R ²
	EDJ	EPJ	EIJ	Values		
CDJ	.04(.73)n.s.	.40(7.38)	.19(3.36)	.17(3.64)	48.92	.38
CPJ	.23(4.23)	.20(3.48)	.27(4.57)	-.13(2.63)	31.97	.29
CIJ	.13(2.65)	.16(3.97)	.22(4.07)	.38(8.16)	53.01	.40

Regression Equation 3: Customer-Directed ERBs → Customer Justice

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable Beta Coefficient (t-Value)				F-Value	R ²
	ERBs					
CDJ				.54(11.60)	134.63	.30
CPJ				.52(10.89)	118.74	.26
CIJ				.69(17.30)	299.23	.48

Regression Equation 4: Shared Values/Organizational Justice → Customer Justice*

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable Beta Coefficient (t-Value)					F-Value	R ²
	ERBs	EDJ	EPJ	EIJ	Values		
CDJ	.31(6.18)	.00(.08)n.s.	.32(6.15)	.15(2.83)	.09(1.70)	51.42	.45
CPJ	.46(9.01)	.17(3.45)	.09(1.69)	.22(4.09)	-.27(5.65)	48.31	.43
CIJ	.50(11.63)	.07(1.56)n.s.	.03(0.77)n.s.	.16(3.54)	.23(5.58)	85.48	.57

*Analysis controls for ERBs.

Notes: ERBs = extra-role behaviors, EDJ = employee distributive justice, EPJ = employee procedural justice, EIJ = employee interactional justice, Values = shared values, CDJ = customer distributive justice, CPJ = customer procedural justice, CIJ = customer interactional justice. Except when noted by "n.s.," all coefficients are significant at the $p < .05$ level or better.

role behaviors significantly affected all outcome variables. These results satisfy the second mediating condition that the predictor variable affects the dependent variable.

We next regressed the customer justice constructs (mediator) on customer outcomes (dependent variables) to test the third mediating condition. As Regression Equation 3 in Table 3 shows, for the most part, the customer justice constructs affected the dependent variables, showing support for the third mediating condition and H_7 – H_9 . Finally, we regressed both the predictors and the mediator on the dependent variables to test the fourth mediating condition. As Regression Equation 4 in Table 3 shows, the mediators (justice dimensions) were mostly significant for the outcomes. Furthermore, the regression coefficient for extra-role behaviors was nonsignificant or had a negative value in Regression Equation 4 (controlling for the mediator) compared with Regression Equation 2 (not controlling for the media-

tor), thus showing a fully mediated effect (i.e., H_{10} was supported). As such, no partial mediation tests were necessary.⁴

Discussion

The purpose of our study was to examine how shared values and organizational justice influence customers' perceptions of a complaint experience. Although some studies have investigated how employees' perceptions of organizational justice lead to managerial perceptions of performance and other studies have assessed customers' perceptions of service recovery, none has specifically examined how employees' percep-

⁴Although our study concentrated on direct effects, we estimated three- and two-way interactions among the customer justice dimensions on customer outcome variables. The results were largely nonsignificant.

TABLE 3
Customer-Directed ERBs → Customer Justice → Customer Outcomes

Regression Equation 1: Customer-Directed ERBs → Customer Justice

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable Beta Coefficient (t-Value)	F-Value	R ²
	ERBs		
CDJ	.54(11.60)	134.63	.30
CPJ	.52(10.89)	118.74	.26
CIJ	.69(17.30)	299.23	.48

Regression Equation 2: Customer-Directed ERBs → Customer Outcomes

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable Beta Coefficient (t-Value)	F-Value	R ²
	ERBs		
Sat-R	.30(5.61)	31.53	.09
Sat-F	.40(7.85)	61.56	.16
Intent	.42(8.32)	69.15	.18
WOM	.33(6.28)	39.47	.11

Regression Equation 3: Customer Justice → Customer Outcomes

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable Beta Coefficient (t-Value)			F-Value	R ²
	CDJ	CPJ	CIJ		
Sat-R	.28(4.68)	.41(7.08)	.01(.05)n.s.	65.50	.38
Sat-F	.41(7.40)	.19(3.46)	.18(3.31)	84.65	.45
Intent	.55(10.13)	.03(.61)n.s.	.16(3.15)	90.49	.46
WOM	.37(5.77)	.15(2.40)	.07(1.18)n.s.	39.15	.26

Regression Equation 4: ERBs → Customer Outcomes*

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable Beta Coefficient (t-Value)				F-Value	R ²
	ERBs	CDJ	CPJ	CIJ		
Sat-R	-.14(2.20)	.30(5.05)	.43(7.37)	.08(1.20)n.s.	65.50	.38
Sat-F	-.09(1.51)n.s.	.43(7.57)	.20(3.65)	.22(2.20)	64.32	.44
Intent	-.02(.38)n.s.	.56(10.04)	.03(.67)n.s.	.18(2.87)	86.10	.46
WOM	.01(.09)n.s.	.37(5.64)	.15(2.36)	.07(.95)n.s.	39.15	.26

*Analysis controls for customer justice.

Notes: ERBs = extra-role behaviors, CDJ = customer distributive justice, CPJ = customer procedural justice, CIJ = customer interactional justice, Sat-R = satisfaction with the recovery, Sat-F = overall firm satisfaction, Intent = purchase intent, WOM = likelihood of favorable word of mouth. Except when noted by "n.s.," all coefficients are significant at the $p < .05$ level or better.

tions of the firm influence customers' perceptions following a failure and subsequent recovery. By capturing employee and customer perceptions in a complaint handling experience, our study bridges the gap between organizational theory and service recovery research. We summarize our results as follows:

- *Customer-directed extra-role behaviors through shared values and organizational justice.* An employee's shared values influenced how customers rated that employee's performance of extra-role behaviors, and all dimensions of organizational justice affected customer ratings of extra-role behaviors.
- *Extra-role behaviors and customers' perceptions of justice.* Customer-directed extra-role behaviors had strong effects on

customers' perceptions of interactional justice, procedural justice, and distributive justice (i.e., regression coefficients of .69, .52, and .54, respectively).

- *Shared values/organizational justice → extra-role behaviors → customer justice chain.* The effects of shared values/organizational justice perceptions on customer justice are partially mediated by extra-role behaviors. Thus, by managing employees well, a firm is in effect managing its customers well. That is, justly treated employees are more likely to perform extra-role behaviors, and customer justice is higher when customers perceive that the employee put forth extra effort in handling the complaint.
- *Customers' perceptions of justice and customer outcomes.* Customer ratings of distributive justice affected all outcome

variables (i.e., satisfaction with recovery, overall firm satisfaction, purchase intent, and word of mouth). Procedural justice affected satisfaction with recovery, overall firm satisfaction, and word of mouth, and interactional justice affected overall firm satisfaction and purchase intent. Thus, all aspects of justice affected the customer outcomes, and as Table 3 shows, distributive justice had the strongest effects.

•*Extra-role behaviors → customer justice → customer outcomes chain.* The effects that extra-role behaviors had on customer outcomes were fully mediated by customer justice, and customers treated fairly show positive affect and intentions toward the firm. Still, extra-role behaviors affected all dimensions of customer justice, which shows that extra-role behaviors indirectly (and significantly) affect customer outcomes.

Implications

Shared values and extra-role behaviors. Our study indicates that shared values play a significant role in explaining extra-role behaviors, which highlights the importance of selecting (and socializing) employees who share a firm's core/dominant values. Employees who share the organization's values are more likely to feel like an integral part of the system, taking ownership in and responsibility for the firm and its performance. This positive shared values effect, then, hints at the importance of making customer service a core value. Although many firms hang banners and artifacts that pledge customer service as a top priority, they sometimes support and reward employees as if service were an afterthought. Firms can make a commitment to service viable by hiring and training carefully. When hiring employees, managers can measure shared values through structured interviews, customer service simulations, and psychological assessments. As for training and compensation, firms should align their training in a manner that emphasizes shared values and reward employees for performance consistent with those values. Otherwise, firms may be hiring customer employees who will either leave the firm because they do not share its values or become socialized to de-emphasize the importance of handling complaints—both outcomes will erode service levels.

Organizational justice and extra-role behaviors. Our study contributes to the services literature by showing that treating employees fairly inspires them to go out of their way to help resolve customer complaints. Our results show that procedural justice is most influential in spurring extra-role behaviors. In light of this finding, managers should seek employee feedback and incorporate workers' comments into any procedural changes. Simply asking for feedback may itself signal improved fairness. Distributive justice was also significantly related to extra-role behaviors. Managers interested in enhancing extra-role behaviors should first assess the current state of outcome fairness by enlisting employee feedback pertaining to the fairness of compensation, bonuses, and benefits. Service managers, employees, and human resource officers could then work together to modify these programs for enhanced employee distributive justice. By doing so, management can strive to improve complaint handling efforts by concentrating on internal customer ser-

vice. Interactional justice is important in stimulating extra-role behaviors, quantifying an intuitive "golden rule" of customer service: Treat employees the way you want them to treat customers. Personal interactions from managers to employees send clear signals that can either enhance or detract from an employee's likelihood of engaging in extra-role behaviors. Each interaction may represent a "moment of truth," sending signals to employees regarding acceptable customer service. If managers do not go out of their way to help employees resolve problems, how can they expect employees to do the same for customers?

Extra-role behaviors and customer justice. Our results show that customer-directed extra-role behaviors are positively associated with customers' perceptions of fairness, which provides evidence that extra-role behaviors can indirectly lead to desirable customer outcomes. Specifically, extra-role behaviors have the greatest influence on the extent to which customers believe their personal interactions with frontline employees have been fair. This finding follows logically, given that extra-role behaviors are frequently directed toward customers during personal interactions with frontline employees, and it underscores how beneficial it can be for employees to go above and beyond "in-role" requirements to help customers.

Extra-role behaviors also affect customers' perceptions of fairness involving policies and procedures, which indicates that employees can influence the perceptions of policies and procedures by engaging in extra-role behaviors. On the one hand, perhaps customers see policies and procedures independently of employee behaviors. On the other hand, perhaps customers' perceptions are embedded in and shaped by employee behaviors. Our research supports the latter notion. Our results also show a positive relationship between extra-role behaviors and distributive justice, suggesting that customer redress outcomes are intertwined with employee behaviors. Managers recognizing that employee behaviors play an invaluable role in shaping customers' perceptions of service recovery fairness can train employees in customer service skills that cast policies, procedures, and outcomes in a positive light. These results again emphasize the importance that human resource management plays in enhancing customers' perceptions of justice by encouraging extra-role behaviors.

Customer justice and outcomes. Our results indicate that customer justice significantly affects customer outcomes. For example, distributive justice had the greatest relative influence on overall satisfaction, purchase intent, and word of mouth. Although managers striving to improve long-term customer relations would ideally like to improve all aspects of perceived justice, they may benefit most by investing in resources that enhance compensation (e.g., refunds, future discounts, accurately fixing problems). Indeed, interactional justice during a recovery effort was not significantly associated with satisfaction with recovery or word of mouth, and procedural justice was not related to purchase intent. Given a product failure, customers may be more interested in obtaining fair outcomes than in the manner in which these outcomes are provided.

Service recovery as an e-commerce customer service strategy. Given the context of our study, our results have implications for e-commerce. The promise of e-commerce has enticed firms to rush to market, investing millions of dollars in Web site infrastructure. However, many of these firms have neglected customer service in their quest to capitalize quickly on the e-commerce market. *Brandweek* reports that e-commerce complaints are dramatically rising and finds that one in four e-shoppers cannot complete their online purchases as a result of inadvertent disconnections, computer freezes, network gridlock, or stock outs (Cheng 2000). These service failures may prove detrimental to firm success. Customers of e-commerce have become accustomed to a certain level of offline customer service and likely expect the same level of online service. Moreover, an astounding 90% of e-shoppers stated that customer service was critical in their decision to choose a particular supplier, and almost half said they would switch providers if they received poor service (Cheng 2000). Given the abundance of online product/service providers, it remains imperative for e-tailers to find competitive advantages. Our study suggests that one such advantage is recovering well from failures.

Limitations and Directions for Further Research

Although this study expands our knowledge of complaint experiences, it must be tempered with certain limitations. First, our study did not account for every important antecedent or consequence of all dependent variables. Thus, the potential for omitted variables bias exists, and our regression coefficients may best be viewed as partial coefficients (Kenny, Kashy, and Bolger 1998). One such omitted variable is disconfirmation (Oliver 1997). Disconfirmation assesses customer expectations that are associated with the service encounter and has been shown to affect customer satisfaction in a failure/recovery context (Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999). Although our study assessed the primary predictors of satisfaction in failure/recovery (i.e., customer justice), future studies need to assess the effects of disconfirmation on satisfaction in relation to the effects of extra-role behaviors. Such studies could also help discriminate between disconfirmation and extra-role behaviors, as both constructs have a performance-based standard.

Second, although recovery research suggests that processes play an influential role in service encounters, it remains unclear whether this holds when multiple failures occur. When consumers are irritated over experiencing multiple failures, they may weigh tangible outcomes (e.g., refunds) more than fair processes. Furthermore, given the emergence of online services, it seems beneficial to recognize potential differences in recovery expectations between these budding services and more traditional services (e.g., online banking versus personal banking). Do the self-service characteristics of online services diminish or enhance the importance of personal interaction processes in complaint handling?

Third, although the online customers in our study complained over the telephone, additional research should focus on if and how complainants view complaint resolution strategies offered online. It has been argued and empirically demonstrated that delivering a compelling customer experience is paramount to creating a competitive advantage for

online retailers. In particular, Novak, Hoffman, and Yung (2000) show that certain shopping features create a compelling online experience. These features include easy product returns, customer support, and quick delivery, about which customers commonly have complaints. What is of interest is how an online complaint context might affect responses to the customer justice and outcome variables. For example, given the lack of face-to-face or verbal interactions with a service agent, do customers' perceptions of interactional justice exist in online complaint settings? If so, how do various forms of communication (e.g., chat room dialog) affect these perceptions? Also, given Novak, Hoffman, and Yung's (2000) findings, it would seem imperative that online retailers clearly specify and simplify the policies and procedures for product returns. It has been suggested that online consumers may be more involved with their purchases and may have more complete information about product alternatives (Novak, Hoffman, and Yung 2000). Would these customers expect more in terms of redress (distributive justice) than in-store customers? Thus, future work needs to investigate the relative effects of interactional, procedural, and distributive justice during online complaint handling. Given the increasing popularity of online customer networks (e.g., chat rooms), it is important to determine if positive online recommendations affect customers differently than negative online recommendations. Online retailers would be particularly sensitive to online recommendations, especially given the speed at which such online recommendations can travel.

Fourth, our study also highlights the need for further research on measuring extra-role behaviors and shared values. As previously noted, we collected measures of extra-role customer service behavior from managers, employees, and customers. However, because managers cannot rate each employee on each recovery effort, they rated the extent to which employees engaged in extra-role behaviors over the past six months. The employee measure also captured the extent to which employees rated their own performance of extra-role behaviors over the past six months. However, customer-rated extra-role behaviors specifically measured extra-role behaviors related to a particular complaint handling experience. One viable area for further research is to investigate how different levels of measurement (i.e., general versus specific) affect extra-role behavior ratings. That is, how much, if any, is a general extra-role behavior measure influenced by halo effects and other recall biases? Our study finds significant, positive correlations among manager, employee, and customer ratings of extra-role behaviors despite differences in level of measurement (correlations ranged from .30 to .54). The means of these extra-role behaviors are also notable. The employee extra-role behavior mean (4.45) is significantly higher than the extra-role behavior mean ratings from managers (3.01) and customers (3.37). To what degree are extra-role behaviors in the eyes of employees considered in-role behaviors among managers and customers? If supervisors and customers underrate employee performances of extra-role behaviors and employees overrate themselves, what is the most appropriate way to gauge extra-role behaviors? Such inquiries would help managers choose the most accurate extra-role behaviors measure.

Our shared values measure tapped into a more global/dominant shared values construct. The conceptualization and measurement of shared values have been sometimes confounded with, or considered a dimension of, related constructs, most notably person–organization fit and organizational culture (Kristof 1996; Schein 1990). Thus, the construct of shared values is in need of further conceptual and measurement work. Perhaps the approach suggested by Goodman and Syvante (1999) is most fruitful, in which they refer to shared values as the match between a person's values and the value system of a specific organizational context (e.g., type of firm). Matching specific individual values to a specific organizational context may enhance the predictive validity of shared values.

Fifth, future work needs to focus on the selection and training of employees best suited for handling complaints. Are there specific employee characteristics that are correlated with solid recovery efforts and good overall customer service? Some noteworthy constructs may include general cognitive ability, conscientiousness, and extraversion, which are considered important predictors of overall job performance. Studies could examine the extent to which these constructs predict an employee's aptitude and attitude for handling service encounters. Moreover, how can firms effectively socialize employees so that they "buy into" a customer orientation and feel compelled to deliver good service recoveries? Studies exploring how factors such as organizational artifacts, formal and informal controls, compensation, and empowerment affect complaint handling could provide useful insights for both scholars and managers.

Appendix

Customer Measures

Customer-Directed Extra-Role Behavior:

1. For this particular encounter, the service representative I dealt with willingly went out of his/her way to make me satisfied.
2. For this particular encounter, the service representative I dealt with voluntarily assisted me even if it meant going beyond his/her job requirements.
3. For this particular encounter, the service representative I dealt with helped me with problems beyond what I expected or required.
4. For this particular encounter, the service representative I dealt with frequently went out of his/her way to help me.
5. For this particular encounter, the service representative I dealt with went "above and beyond the call of duty" in servicing me.

Distributive Justice:

1. Although the event caused me problems, (firm's) effort to fix it resulted in a very positive outcome for me.
2. The final outcome I received from (firm) was fair, given the time and hassle.
3. Given the inconvenience caused by the problem, the outcome I received from (firm) was fair.
4. The service recovery outcome that I received in response to the problem was more than fair.

Procedural Justice:

1. Despite the hassle caused by the problem, (firm) responded fairly and quickly.
2. I feel (firm) responded in a timely fashion to the problem.
3. I believe (firm) has fair policies and practices to handle problems.
4. With respect to its policies and procedures, (firm) handled the problem in a fair manner.

Interactional Justice:

1. In dealing with my problem, (firm) personnel treated me in a courteous manner.
2. During their effort to fix my problem, (firm) employee(s) showed a real interest in trying to be fair.
3. (Firm name) employee(s) worked as hard as possible for me during the recovery effort.
4. (Firm name) employee(s) were honest and ethical in dealing with me during their fixing of my problem.

Overall Firm Satisfaction:

1. I am satisfied with my overall experience with (firm).
2. As a whole, I am not satisfied with (firm).
3. How satisfied are you overall with the quality of (firm)?

Satisfaction with Recovery:

1. In my opinion, (firm) provided a satisfactory resolution to my problem on this particular occasion.
2. I am not satisfied with (firm's) handling of this particular problem.
3. Regarding this particular event (most recent problem), I am satisfied with (firm).

Purchase Intent:

1. In the future, I intend to use (firm) for electronics purchases.
2. If you were in the market for electronics, how likely would you be to use (firm)?
3. In the near future, I will not use (firm) as my electronics provider.

Word of Mouth:

1. How likely are you to spread positive word of mouth about (firm)?
2. I would recommend (firm) for electronics to my friends.
3. If my friends were looking to purchase electronics, I would tell them to try (firm).

Employee Measures

Distributive Justice:

1. To what extent are you fairly rewarded for the amount of experience you have?
2. To what extent are you fairly rewarded for the stresses and strains of your job?
3. To what extent are you fairly rewarded for the amount of effort you put forth?
4. To what extent are you fairly rewarded for the work you have performed well?

Procedural Justice:

1. When decisions about employees are made at (firm), complete information is collected for making those decisions.
2. When decisions about employees are made at (firm), all sides affected by the decisions are represented.
3. When decisions about employees are made at (firm), the decisions are made in a timely fashion.
4. When decisions about employees are made at (firm), useful feedback about the decisions and their implementation is provided.

Interactional Justice:

1. When decisions are made about me at (firm), my supervisors/managers deal with me in a truthful and ethical manner.
2. When decisions are made about me at (firm), my supervisors/managers treat me with respect and dignity.

3. When decisions are made about me at (firm), my supervisors/managers work very hard to be fair.

4. When decisions are made about me at (firm), my supervisors/managers show concern for my rights as an employee.

5. When decisions are made about me at (firm), my supervisors/managers are courteous.

Shared Values:

1. (Firm) has the same values as I do with regard to concern for others.

2. In general, my values and the values held by (firm) are very similar.

3. I believe in the same values held and promoted by (firm).

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