

Proactive Customer Service Performance: Relationships With Individual, Task, and Leadership Variables

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Despite the increasing interest in specific forms of proactive employee behavior in domains such as career development and organizational change, little research has investigated proactive behavior in the realm of customer service. Based on a review of the literatures on proactive behavior, customer service, and job performance, this study investigated relationships between a relevant set of individual and situational predictor variables and proactive customer service performance (i.e., individual service employees' self-started, long-term-oriented, and persistent service behavior that goes beyond explicitly prescribed requirements). Field survey data from 186 supervisor-subordinate dyads working in a large financial services organization demonstrated that proactive service performance, as rated by supervisors, was factorially distinct from prescribed task performance. Multiple regression analysis revealed that proactive service performance was significantly and positively associated with employee ratings of trait personal initiative, affective organizational commitment, task

complexity, and participative leadership. The task and leadership variables explained incremental variance in proactive service performance beyond the individual predictors.

Since the early 1990s, organization scientists have devoted increasing attention to various forms of proactive behavior (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Frese, Kring, Soose, & Zempel, 1996; Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995). In his review, Crant (2000) emphasized the power of different proactive behavior concepts in predicting desirable outcomes, including career advancement, organizational change, stress management, and entrepreneurial success. Surprisingly, however, little research has investigated proactive behavior in one increasingly important domain of organizational behavior, namely, customer service (Van Dyne, Jehn, & Cummings, 2002). Furthermore, few studies have examined predictors of proactive behavior, particularly situational predictors such as task and leadership variables (Parker & Collins, 2004). Therefore, the major objective of this study is to identify not only individual but also situational predictors of customer service employees' proactive service performance (defined as individuals' self-started, long-term-oriented, and persistent service behavior that goes beyond explicitly prescribed performance requirements). Specifically, we examine three individual variables (trait personal initiative, affective organizational commitment, work-related self-efficacy), employee perceptions of two task variables (complexity and autonomy), and employee perceptions of two leadership variables (participative and transformational leadership) as predictors of proactive service performance.

Both American (e.g., Bateman & Crant, 1993; Morrison & Phelps, 1999) and European (e.g., Frese & Fay, 2001) researchers have emphasized that individuals exhibiting proactive behavior engage in self-started activities going beyond requirements, adopt a long-term orientation involving forward thinking, and tend to effect positive change in their work environments. Most of the recently developed constructs in this area represent either individual differences variables such as proactive personality (Bateman & Crant, 1993) or behavioral concepts including voice behavior (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) and various context-specific types of proactive behavior in domains such as feedback seeking, career advancement, and stress management (Crant, 2000). However, none of them specifically captures proactive behavior in the service domain. Because frontline service employees play a vital role in shaping crucial customer outcomes (Liao & Chuang, 2004), this constitutes a significant gap in the literature, especially considering that the service sector accounts for more than three fourths of all new jobs created in recent decades in North America and other regions (Van Dyne et al., 2002).

A few studies grounded in the literature on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Pain, &

Bachrach, 2000) have explored predictors of service-oriented OCBs (e.g., Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Bettencourt, Gwinner, & Meuter, 2001; Kelley & Hoffman, 1997). Organ and colleagues (2006) defined OCB as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization” (p. 3). Our approach differs in at least two important ways from these previous service-related OCB studies: First, these studies examined other predictors and focused mainly on individual variables (e.g., empathy, knowledge, job satisfaction, positive affect). Second, although the OCB concepts and measures used in these studies captured important behaviors, they did not focus on the proactive (e.g., long-term-oriented) facets that we aim to assess but included either broader or different criteria, including some that are not necessarily directed at customers. For example, Bettencourt et al. (2001) examined the criteria “service delivery” (following rules and avoiding errors), “loyalty” (positively representing the organization to outsiders), and “participation” (communicating ideas and suggestions to coworkers). Furthermore, several previous studies (e.g., Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Bettencourt et al., 2001) used employee self-reports of such service behaviors.

In comparison, our study integrates both individual and situational predictors, provides a concept and measure focusing explicitly on the proactive (i.e., self-started, long-term-oriented, and persistent) aspects of individuals’ service behavior, and uses supervisor ratings to assess it. Although several authors emphasized the need for research on discretionary service behaviors (e.g., Borman & Motowidlo, 1993), this line of research is still in its early stage in the OCB domain and rudimentary in the proactive behavior area. We further consider implications of the OCB literature in a later section of the introduction, when comparing proactive service performance to other performance variables, as well as in the discussion. In the remainder of the introduction, we first describe the proactive service performance concept and compare it to other behavioral constructs—most important, to service employees’ explicitly prescribed task performance, which is included as a second criterion in this study. In the second part of the introduction, we develop hypotheses relating proactive service performance to individual, task, and leadership variables suggested as predictors based on the literature review.

PROACTIVE SERVICE PERFORMANCE IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER BEHAVIORAL CONSTRUCTS

Within the area of research dealing with proactive behavior, the conceptual and empirical work by Frese and associates (e.g., Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997; Frese et al., 1996) bears strong implications for the service domain, because

their personal initiative construct (i.e., self-started, long-term-oriented, and persistent behavior that is organizationally functional and goal directed; Frese & Fay, 2001) represents a broad proactive behavior concept that is applicable across jobs and situations. On the contrary, other proactive behavior constructs such as voice behavior (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999), issue selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993), and proactive coping (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997) are designed to capture more specific forms of proactive behavior (e.g., effecting change in one's group or organization, influencing strategy, or managing stress). For example, in comparison with voice behavior ("promotive behavior that emphasizes expression of constructive challenge"; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998, p. 109), proactive service performance is explicitly service oriented, implies an actually performed persistent course of action, does not necessarily entail the communication of critical opinions or suggestions for change in one's work group, but may include the articulation of improvement suggestions to customers—for example, when employees recommend products or courses of action that serve customer needs better than those known by customers.

Proactive customer service performance reflects the three core characteristics of personal initiative (Frese & Fay, 2001; Frese et al., 1996) as they may be demonstrated by customer service employees. First, it entails self-started behavior (e.g., exhibiting service behaviors exceeding those demanded by customers or supervisors). Second, it encompasses long-term-oriented (i.e., forward-thinking) behavior, such as anticipating future customer needs and establishing partnerships with other service employees that may be helpful in future customer interactions. Third, it involves persistent behavior such as following through with the delivery of promised special services and proactively seeking feedback to verify customer satisfaction. In sum, we define proactive service performance as individuals' self-started, long-term-oriented, and persistent service behavior that goes beyond explicitly prescribed performance requirements.

Several previous studies in the customer service domain also informed our conceptualization of proactive customer service performance, although broad service performance descriptions (e.g., as behaviors of serving and helping customers; Liao & Chuang, 2004) and measures (e.g., Borucki & Burke, 1999; Butcher, Sparks, & O'Callaghan, 2003) do not specifically capture the proactive component of individuals' service performance. Specifically, Schneider and coauthors (Schneider, Wheeler, & Cox, 1992; Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998) found that the quality of interdepartment service and the solicitation of customer feedback positively predicted service quality ratings as well as employees' descriptions of their units as having a "passion for service" (indicated by high-frequency and favorability ratings of service themes in interviews). The proactive service performance concept reflects individual-level behaviors (e.g., communicating client needs to other service areas, seeking customer feedback) that may contribute to such unit-level outcomes.

Previous work in the job performance domain also has implications for our research, because proactive service performance reflects individual-level job performance, which has been defined as observable behaviors that are relevant to the organization's goals and can be measured in terms of each individual's contribution (Campbell, Gasser, & Oswald, 1996). Following Campbell and associates, we also consider articulated solutions resulting from cognitive operations as performance (e.g., proactively developing solutions to anticipated customer demands). Particularly relevant is the issue that proactive service performance goes beyond prescribed task performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997). Task performance relates directly to an organization's technical core, either by executing its technical processes or by maintaining its requirements, whereas contextual performance encompasses behaviors that are voluntary, relate more strongly to social circumstances, and occur similarly over a variety of jobs (Borman, Penner, Allen, & Motowidlo, 2001; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). Similar to task performance, "in-role" performance comprises behaviors that are part of the requirements, such as completing assigned duties (Williams & Anderson, 1991).

The citizenship dimension that most closely corresponds to proactive behavior is the one identified as "conscientious initiative" (Borman et al., 2001) or "individual initiative" (Organ et al., 2006; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Organ and coauthors (2006) noted that this form of OCB is somewhat difficult to distinguish from task performance, although it differs from the latter, as it reflects "behaviors at a level so far beyond minimally or generally expected levels that it takes on a voluntary flavor" (p. 309). Several authors such as Walz and Niehoff (2001) emphasized the general importance of distinguishing OCB from task or "in-role" performance. Based on factor-analytical results, they concluded that "OCB and in-role performance were conceptually and statistically distinct" (p. 306). However, they assessed OCBs directed at coworkers and supervisors rather than customers. Hence, there is a need to empirically address the distinguishability of service-oriented proactive behavior from prescribed task performance. It should be noted that distinguishability or distinctness does not imply that the criteria are non-overlapping, considering that proactive behavior or initiative may relate to one's task domain (Crant, 2000; Frese & Fay, 2001; Podsakoff et al., 2000), although it goes beyond minimum requirements. Several researchers (Crant, 2000; Frese & Fay, 2001; Morrison & Phelps, 1999) have emphasized that proactive behavior is different from prescribed behavior, because the former involves long-term-oriented courses of self-started action rather than mere responses to demands. As this rationale clearly suggests, proactive service performance includes behaviors that go beyond explicitly prescribed task performance.

H1: Proactive service performance will be distinct from service employees' prescribed task performance.

RELATING PROACTIVE SERVICE PERFORMANCE TO INDIVIDUAL, TASK, AND LEADERSHIP VARIABLES

The selection of predictor variables was guided by the theoretical considerations explicated in the preceding section, a comprehensive review of previous findings on relationships between the variables and related performance criteria (e.g., overall job performance, OCB, and various service criteria), and our intention to include a manageable set of relevant factors (including personality, attitudinal, motivational, task, and leadership variables) without narrowly focusing on only one predictor domain. In the subsequent sections, we develop hypotheses relating employees' proactive service performance to their trait personal initiative, affective organizational commitment, self-efficacy, task complexity, task autonomy, and their supervisors' participative as well as transformational leadership.

Proactive Service Performance and Individual-Level Variables

Trait personal initiative. Clearly, proactive service performance may be predicted by employees' proclivity to engage in proactive behavior. In addition to their previously mentioned work on initiative as performance, Frese and associates (Frese et al., 1997; Frese et al., 1996) developed and validated a self-report personality measure assessing trait personal initiative, one's propensity to engage in self-started, long-term-oriented, and persistent behavior. Borman and colleagues (2001) explicitly mentioned this concept as "an important personal characteristic to consider in future research" (p. 64). Trait personal initiative is highly similar to the proactive personality construct (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Frese and Fay (2001) compared the trait personal initiative scale to the proactive personality scale and found a disattenuated correlation of .96, hence suggesting that these two measures are basically interchangeable. Recently, Crant (2004) agreed with this analysis. In this study, we used trait personal initiative, because the development of the proactive service concept was guided by the initiative construct and because the items in the trait initiative scale (e.g., "Whenever there is a chance to get actively involved, I take it") appear to be more appropriate for a sample of service representatives than those of the proactive personality scale (e.g., "I feel driven to make a difference in my community, and maybe the world"). In previous studies, trait personal initiative positively predicted various outcomes, including performance, citizenship behavior, job-search success, and feedback seeking (Fay & Frese, 2001).

H2: Trait personal initiative will be positively related to proactive service performance.

Affective organizational commitment. An attitudinal individual-level predictor of proactive service performance may be affective organizational commitment, one's emotional attachment to the organization, manifesting itself in "identification with and involvement in the organization" (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 1). Previous research has demonstrated the role of affective commitment in influencing service performance. In a study of airline customer contact employees (Chenet, Tynan, & Money, 2000), the gap between actual and optimal service was smaller when the employees had a strong desire to remain in the organization. In a sample of service managers, affective commitment positively predicted overall performance (Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin, & Jackson, 1989). Affective commitment is typically related to perceptions of positive affective states (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993), which facilitate outcomes that may be conducive to proactive behavior, including enhanced cooperation, creative problem solving, cognitive flexibility, and persistence (Isen & Baron, 1991). Kelley and Hoffmann (1997) found positive relationships between employees' positive affect and their customer-oriented behavior. As Van Dyne and colleagues (1995) argued, employees high in affective commitment may tend to engage in promotive forms of discretionary behavior. When encountering special challenges, they may demonstrate proactive behavior, as they are interested in the success and survival of their organization (Meyer et al., 1993).

H3: Affective organizational commitment will be positively related to proactive service performance.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, individuals' subjective estimate of their capacity to perform (Bandura, 1997), may function as a motivational predictor of proactive service performance. According to Kanfer's (1992) integrative theoretical framework of motivation constructs, self-efficacy represents a relatively proximal motivational variable that may directly predict performance. Morrison and Phelps (1999) demonstrated that generalized self-efficacy beliefs were positively associated with employees' discretionary efforts to initiate workplace change. Longitudinal research (Frese et al., 1996; Speier & Frese, 1997) identified work-related self-efficacy as a positive predictor of several behavioral forms of initiative (e.g., overcoming barriers, taking an active approach). Because self-efficacy beliefs are partially derived from one's performance history (Bandura, 1997) and because efficacious individuals tend to positively assess their ability to overcome the risks associated with new courses of action (Morrison & Phelps, 1999), they may be more likely to exhibit proactive behavior, for example, by improvising new solutions in challenging customer encounters.

H4: Work-related self-efficacy will be positively related to proactive service performance.

Proactive Service Performance and Task Characteristics

Task complexity. Summarizing encouraging findings on positive relationships between task characteristics such as task feedback and OCBs, Podsakoff and coauthors (2000) stated, "Although not emphasized in the existing OCB literature, it appears that task characteristics are important determinants of citizenship behavior and deserve more attention in future research" (p. 531). A task characteristic that is relevant to proactive behavior is complexity, which reflects the degree of challenge in one's job (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Kohn and Schooler (1983) showed that the complexity of one's work increases one's active orientation and instills a higher degree of intellectual flexibility. According to Frese and associates (1996), complexity leads to the development of skills and knowledge, which may in turn facilitate forward thinking and help overcome barriers. In longitudinal studies (Frese et al., 1996; Speier & Frese, 1997), complexity perceptions predicted personal initiative. It may also be argued that employees may simply not have the opportunity to exhibit initiative if they encounter only simple routine requests rather than challenging service tasks. Complex service demands frequently create a necessity for personalized service solutions (Liao & Chuang, 2004), thus enabling service representatives to take initiative when tailoring their offers and responses to customers' individual needs.

H5: Task complexity will be positively related to proactive service performance.

Task autonomy. Among the five specific core job dimensions included in job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), task autonomy may predict proactive service performance, as it is the only characteristic in the theory expected to directly enhance one's felt responsibility for work outcomes, a psychological state that may lead to extra effort. Task autonomy is "the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out" (p. 246). Although two meta-analyses (Fried, 1991; Spector, 1986) yielded only moderate correlations between autonomy and general job performance, autonomy may be critical to proactive service. In the longitudinal studies by Frese and associates (Frese et al., 1997; Frese et al., 1996), control perceptions predicted personal initiative. In the airline study by Chenet et al. (2000), the gap between actual and optimal service was smaller when perceived employee control was high. Salanova, Agut, and Peiro (2005) identified positive relationships between a service climate variable including an autonomy dimension and customer loyalty. Moreover, experimental research (Sparks, Bradley, & Callan, 1997) using videotaped scenarios revealed that observers provided higher service quality ratings when service providers had greater autonomy.

H6: Task autonomy will be positively related to proactive service performance.

Proactive Service Performance and Leadership Variables

Participative leadership. As House (1995) suggested, managers in the 21st century may be particularly successful if they facilitate subordinates' initiative rather than merely ensuring their fulfillment of prescribed requirements. Participative leadership encompasses involvement in decision making and emphasizes the value of subordinate contributions (Vroom & Jago, 1988). Using a measure of employee involvement that included items pertaining to participation, Liao and Chuang (2004) found positive relationships between unit-level involvement and aggregates of employee-rated service performance as well as customer-rated service quality. In their interview studies with financial services employees, Schneider and associates (1992) found that panelists with a "passion for service" tended to also mention managerial issues reflecting participation (e.g., "manager keeps his door open," "manager is very responsive to our questions and concerns"; p. 712). Contingency models such as path-goal-theory (House, 1996) and the Normative Decision Model (Vroom & Jago, 1988) prescribe participation only under certain circumstances, for example, when the leader has to rely on subordinates' knowledge or decision acceptance. These conditions may often be given in the service context, where frontline service representatives are engaged in more direct customer encounters than supervisors. Although meta-analytic research has revealed only moderate relationships between participation and overall subordinate performance (Spector, 1986), participative leadership may more strongly facilitate proactive behavior, for example, by enhancing job involvement.

H7: Participative leadership will be positively related to subordinates' proactive service performance.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership (Bass, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1993) includes supervisory behaviors such as inspirational motivation (articulating visions and promoting positive expectations), intellectual stimulation (encouraging followers to question traditional assumptions and to adopt new approaches), and individualized consideration (understanding subordinates' strengths and needs and coaching them to maximize full potential). Meta-analytic research identified positive relationships between transformational leadership and objectively measured unit-level productivity (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996) as well as individuals' OCB (Podsakoff et al., 2000). A service-related study revealed that the transformational leadership exhibited by head nurses positively predicted ratings of nursing quality (Prenekert & Ehnfors, 1997). The augmentation hypothesis (Bass, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1993) implies that subordinates will exert extra effort beyond prescribed requirements if their supervisors exhibit transformational in addition to transactional leadership (i.e., exchange-oriented) behaviors. Frese and Fay (2001) suggested a variation of this hypothesis by pro-

posing that the performance effects of transformational leadership may be due to an increase in subordinate initiative.

H8: Transformational leadership will be positively related to subordinates' proactive service performance.

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

The present research was conducted in one of North America's largest financial services organizations. The sample comprised 186 matched pairs of bank employees and their immediate supervisors. The employees belonged to three lines of business (bank branches, mortgage services, and credit card services) and worked in eight geographically dispersed U.S. states. To evenly represent the lines of business and locations in the overall sample, we adopted a stratified sampling technique. The subordinates rated their supervisors' leadership behaviors and completed self-report inventories assessing the individual variables and task characteristics. The supervisors provided ratings of their subordinates' proactive service performance, prescribed task performance, and task characteristics. In a cover letter signed by the principal investigator and a human-resource executive, participants were assured confidential treatment of their individual responses. All participants were allowed to complete the survey during normal work hours. To maximize independence of the data and the potential to obtain sufficient variability across the leadership and performance ratings, we included 240 subordinates with 240 different supervisors (i.e., each subordinate rated only one supervisor, and each supervisor rated only one subordinate).

Two hundred twenty-four of these employees (93% response rate) returned their completed surveys through the company's internal mail system (132 female and 92 male). The subordinates' average organizational tenure was 6.08 years ($SD = 5.94$). On average, they worked 38.86 hr per week ($SD = 5.84$). Immediately after each subordinate questionnaire was received, we sent a supervisor survey to the subordinate's manager. Supervisors who did not respond within 5 business days received up to three reminders by phone and electronic mail. Of the 224 managers asked to complete performance ratings, 186 managers (98 male and 88 female) returned their completed questionnaires within 20 business days (83% response rate).

Measures

Proactive service performance. Proactive service performance was measured with the Proactive Service Performance Scale (PROSPER). The seven items

TABLE 1
Items Included in the Proactive Service Performance Scale
and Their Means, Standard Deviations, and Item-Total Correlations

<i>Proactive Service Performance Items</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r_{it}</i>
1. My staff member proactively shares information with customers to meet their financial needs.	4.78	1.45	.72
2. My staff member anticipates issues or needs customers might have and proactively develops solutions.	4.93	1.60	.82
3. My staff member uses own judgment and understanding of risk to determine when to make exceptions or improvise solutions.	4.70	2.14	.59
4. My staff member takes ownership by following through with the customer interaction and ensures a smooth transition to other service representatives.	4.53	1.71	.75
5. My staff member actively creates partnerships with other service representatives to better serve customers.	5.22	1.63	.74
6. My staff member takes initiative to communicate client requirements to other service areas and collaborates in implementing solutions.	4.96	1.50	.80
7. My staff member proactively checks with customers to verify that customer expectations have been met or exceeded.	4.82	1.48	.77

Note. $N = 178$. r_{it} = corrected item-total correlation.

(see Table 1) were developed internally in the organization by a team of psychologists and human resource managers. A set of pilot studies was conducted to identify relevant behaviors. The qualitative pilot research involved an analysis of transcripts from five focus group sessions with employees and managers, eight in-depth interviews with human resource executives, and more than 800 critical incidents reported by employees in a nationwide customer service training program. In these sessions, each employee provided a description of one highly successful example of individual-level service performance that led to high customer satisfaction, including the exceptional service behavior leading to this outcome. To condense the critical incident information via content analytical procedures, we created approximately 25 labels capturing the key behaviors. In a subsequent coding stage, similar behavioral labels were combined into broader categories reflected in the PROSPER items (e.g., proactively sharing information, anticipating customer needs, proactively developing solutions, making reasonable exceptions, ensuring

smooth transitions to coworkers, creating partnerships with other service areas, and proactively verifying customer satisfaction). Overall, there was strong overlap between these inductively identified components of proactive service performance and those suggested by the literature review described in the introduction.

The seven PROSPER items were presented with a 7-point response scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). To assess the internal consistency of the scale in a quantitative pilot study, it was included in a training evaluation survey completed by managers of participants in customer service training programs. In this nationwide sample of 256 service representatives, Cronbach's alpha reliability was .88. In the main study, it was .91. To further assess the psychometric properties of the PROSPER scale, we conducted an item analysis and computed interitem correlation coefficients. Because six supervisors failed to respond to all of the seven items, the sample size for all subsequent analyses involving the PROSPER scale is 178. The item intercorrelations ranged from .45 (between Items 3 and 6) to .78 (between Items 5 and 6) and were all significant at $p < .01$. As can be seen in Table 1, the means obtained on the seven-item response scale ranged from 4.53 (Item 4) to 5.22 (Item 5), the standard deviations from 1.60 (Item 2) to 2.14 (Item 3), and the corrected item-total correlations from .59 (Item 3) to .82 (Item 2).

Prescribed task performance. In addition to proactive service performance, each supervisor also rated the prescribed task performance exhibited by his or her subordinate. Prescribed task performance was assessed with the seven-item in-role behavior scale by Williams and Anderson (1991). Cronbach's alpha was .91. An introductory statement clarified that the scale was to be used to rate the subordinate's fulfillment of prescribed service behavior. All items were presented with a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is, "My staff member meets formal performance requirements of the job." Two of the seven items are negatively worded (e.g., "My staff member neglects aspects of the job he/she is obligated to perform"). It should be noted that a few previously used scales labeled as "in-role performance" included more general performance items (e.g., "has shown outstanding performance," "performs his or her job the way I like to see it performed"; Walz & Niehoff, 2001). In comparison, the scale by Williams and Anderson better served our purpose of capturing explicitly prescribed task performance.

Individual variables. The individual predictors were assessed via subordinate self-report. Trait personal initiative was measured with the seven-item self-report scale by Frese et al. (1996). The internal consistency was .86. A sample item is, "I take initiative even when others do not." Affective organizational commitment ($\alpha = .86$) was measured with the eight-item self-report scale proposed by Meyer and associates (1989; for items see McGee & Ford, 1987). A sample item is,

"I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own." Finally, self-efficacy was measured with Spreitzer's (1995) three-item work-related self-efficacy scale ($\alpha = .70$). A sample item is, "I feel self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities." All items were presented with a 7-point answer scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Task characteristics. The two task characteristics were assessed both via subordinate self-report and via supervisor ratings of the subordinates' task complexity and autonomy. Task autonomy was measured with the three-item scale from the Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman & Oldham, 1975), accompanied by a 7-point answer scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is, "My job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my work." Cronbach's alpha for the subordinate self-report version (i.e., perceived task autonomy) was .83. For the supervisor reports of subordinate autonomy ($\alpha = .66$), the items were prefaced with "my staff member." The correlation between the incumbent's autonomy rating and the supervisor's rating of the incumbent's autonomy was .39 ($p < .05$).

Task complexity was measured with the four-item complexity scale used by Frese et al. (1996). A sample item is, "Do you have to make complicated decisions in your work?" Cronbach's alpha for the subordinate self-report version was .70. Responses were given on a 7-point scale ranging from *not at all* to *very much*. For the supervisor reports of subordinate complexity ($\alpha = .66$), the items were prefaced with "my staff member." The correlation between the incumbent's complexity rating and the supervisor's rating of the incumbent's complexity was .31 ($p < .05$). It should be noted that the correlations between the employee and supervisor ratings were not lower than in previous studies. For example, Spector and Fox (2003) also used a version of the Job Diagnostic Survey and obtained a nonsignificant .15 correlation between supervisor and incumbent ratings of autonomy. Because the supervisor ratings yielded only moderate internal consistencies and because incumbent perceptions of job conditions may more strongly affect their performance (Crant, 2000), we relied more strongly on the subordinate ratings in the subsequent analyses but did consider whether both perspectives yielded similar findings.

Leadership variables. The leadership variables were assessed with subordinate ratings of the manager's supervisory behaviors. Participative leadership ($\alpha = .84$) was measured with a 4-item scale by Vroom (1959), presented with a 7-point scale ranging from *not at all* to *very much*. A sample item is, "Does your immediate superior ask your opinion when a problem comes up which involves your work?" Transformational leadership was measured with the three 4-item scales inspirational motivation (e.g., "Talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished"), intellectual stimulation (e.g., "Gets me to look at problems from many different angles"), and individualized consideration (e.g., "Spends time

teaching and coaching me”) from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 5X-Short (Bass & Avolio, 1995). Each scale consists of four items presented with a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*frequently, if not always*). Correlations among the three subscales ranged from .81 to .84. Cronbach’s alpha of the composite 12-item transformational leadership measure was .94.

RESULTS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Hypothesis 1 predicted that proactive service performance would be distinguishable from customer service representatives’ prescribed task performance. We assessed this hypothesis via confirmatory factor analysis of the scales’ items using LISREL 8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). We specified a two-factor measurement model (proactive service performance, prescribed task performance). The 14 factor loadings (see Table 2) were all significant ($p < .01$) and corresponded to the hypothesized underlying constructs. To assess whether proactive service performance is distinguishable from task performance, we tested two hierarchically

TABLE 2
Standardized Factor Loadings Resulting From
Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the
Hypothesized Measurement Model With the
Seven PS Items and the Seven TP Items

<i>Item</i>	<i>PS</i>	<i>TP</i>
PS1	.76	
PS2	.84	
PS3	.60	
PS4	.78	
PS5	.79	
PS6	.87	
PS4	.80	
TP1		.86
TP2		.90
TP3		.92
TP4		.94
TP5		.62
TP6		.65
TP7		.63

Note. $N = 178$. All factor loadings are fully standardized lambda loadings derived from a confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL 8.30 and are significant at $p < .01$. PS = proactive service performance; TP = prescribed task performance.

nested models: a one-factor overall service performance model (all 14 items) and the expected two-factor differentiated performance model (proactive service performance vs. task performance). As can be seen in Table 2, all indicators (i.e., items) yielded significant standardized loadings ranging from .60 to .92 on the respective latent performance factor.

Table 3 displays the chi-square statistic as well as the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and its associated 90% confidence interval, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), the normed fit index (NFI), and the non-normed fit index (NNFI) associated with each of the two models. Because two of the seven task performance items (Items TP6 and TP7 in Table 2) were negatively worded, we allowed their associated error variances to be intercorrelated by freeing up the respective parameter (Byrne, 1998). The two-factor model provided a fit superior to that of the one-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2(df = 149, n = 178) = 1265.62, p < .01$. RMSEA for the two-factor model was .065, which reflects good fit (Bentler, 1990; Byrne, 1998). As can be seen in Table 3, the hypothesized two-factor model yielded additional fit indexes (GFI = .91, CFI = .97, NNFI = .96, NFI = .93), superseding the .90 borderline values typically specified in the literature (Bentler, 1990) and were clearly superior to the indexes associated with the one-factor model.

It should also be noted (see Table 2) that proactive service performance was associated with a lower mean (4.85 on the 7-point scale) and greater standard deviation (1.34) than prescribed task performance (5.93 and 1.14, respectively), which reflects greater variance in supervisor ratings of subordinate proactive service performance and might suggest that it is not as commonly performed as prescribed in-role service behavior. Overall, these findings indicate that proactive service performance is distinguishable from prescribed task performance, hence supporting Hypothesis 1. Further empirical support for Hypothesis 1 may be gained by regarding the differential relationships between the two criteria and several of the predictor variables (see final paragraph of the Results section).

TABLE 3
Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis Comparing the Hypothesized
Differentiated Two-Factor Performance Model to a One-Factor Overall
Performance Model

<i>Model</i>	χ^2	<i>RMSEA (90% CI)</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>NFI</i>	<i>NNFI</i>
1. One-factor performance model (Overall service performance)	1399.29	.31 (.29-.32)	.48	.59	.57	.51
2. Two-factor performance model (Proactive service performance vs. prescribed task performance)	133.67	.065 (.047-.083)	.91	.97	.93	.96

Note. $N = 178$. RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; NFI = normed fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index.

Correlations and Multiple Regressions

Hypotheses 2 through 8 regarding relationships of proactive service performance with other variables were tested with correlational and hierarchical multiple regression analyses. The regressions followed an “enter” procedure (i.e., all hypothesized predictors were entered into the regression equation in meaningful blocks of predictors) rather than a more exploratory stepwise predictor selection procedure (Pedhazur, 1997). Table 4 lists the bivariate zero-order correlations. Table 5 displays the results of the multiple hierarchical regression, including the determi-

TABLE 4
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Proactive service performance	4.85	1.34								
2. Prescribed task performance	5.93	1.14	.41**							
3. Trait personal initiative	5.76	0.87	.29**	.18*						
4. Affective commitment	5.04	1.19	.34**	.21**	.48**					
5. Self-efficacy	6.29	0.76	-.04	.02	.26**	.07				
6. Task complexity	4.26	1.20	.34**	.11	.30**	.37**	.00			
7. Task autonomy	5.17	1.45	.30**	.14	.50**	.40**	.06	.34**		
8. Participative leadership	4.07	1.45	.43**	.23**	.29**	.29**	.04	.51**	.38**	
9. Transformational leadership	2.78	0.84	.32**	.28**	.36**	.50**	.03	.33**	.42**	.48**

Note. *N* = 186.

p* < .05. *p* < .01 (two-tailed tests).

TABLE 5
Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis of the Two Performance Criteria
on the Individual, Task and Leadership Predictors

Block and Variables	Proactive Service Performance				Prescribed Task Performance			
	<i>R</i> ²	ΔF	β	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔF	β	<i>t</i>
Block 1: Individual variables	.14	7.34**			.06	2.73*		
Trait personal initiative			.21	2.28*			.06	.58
Affective commitment			.24	2.61**			.21	2.23*
Self-efficacy			-.14	-1.62			-.05	-.60
Block 2: Task variables	.19	3.91*			.06	.12		
Task complexity			.21	2.43*			.04	.43
Task autonomy			.09	.92			.01	.14
Block 3: Leadership variables	.26	6.07**			.12	4.31*		
Participative leadership			.30	3.04**			.09	.80
Transformational leadership			.04	.45			.25	2.34*

Note. *N* = 186.

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

nation coefficients (R^2 s) and respective F -test values for each block of variables, and the regression weights (β s) and associated t -test values for each single predictor variable. The hierarchical regression included the individual variables in Block 1, the task variables in Block 2, and the leadership variables in Block 3. Because individual variables have received somewhat greater attention in previous studies on OCB, contextual performance, and proactive behavior, particularly on service-oriented OCBs (e.g., Bettencourt et al., 2001; Borman et al., 2001; Crant, 2000; Parker & Collins, 2004; Podsakoff et al., 2000), it was of particular interest whether the employee perceptions of situational variables explain incremental variance in proactive service performance beyond the individual predictors. At the end of the Results section we describe how the results differed when the order of the situational blocks (task variables, leadership variables) was reversed.

As can be seen in Table 4, the supervisor rating of subordinate proactive service performance was significantly correlated with the following ratings provided by the subordinates: trait personal initiative ($r = .29, p < .01$), affective organizational commitment ($r = .34, p < .01$), task complexity ($r = .34, p < .01$), task autonomy ($r = .30, p < .01$), participative leadership ($r = .43, p < .01$), and transformational leadership ($r = .32, p < .01$). However, proactive service performance was unrelated to self-efficacy ($r = -.04, p = .58$). Similar to the incumbent ratings, the supervisor ratings of subordinate task complexity and task autonomy also correlated significantly and positively with proactive service performance ($r = .37, p < .01$, and $r = .47, p < .01$, respectively).

The regression results (see Table 5) yielded findings relatively similar to those of the correlational analysis. Among the three individual variables entered into the first block, trait personal initiative ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) and affective organizational commitment ($\beta = .24, p < .01$) significantly and positively predicted proactive service performance, as hypothesized. Again, self-efficacy was unrelated to proactive service performance ($\beta = -.14, p = .11$). Together, the individual variables explained 14% of the variance. After accounting for the individual variables, the two task variables (subordinate ratings) explained an additional 5% of the variance. Proactive service performance was significantly and positively associated with complexity ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) but not autonomy ($\beta = .09, p = .36$). Finally, the block of leadership variables significantly incremented the variance prediction by another 9%. The standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .30$) for participative leadership was significant ($p < .01$), whereas the coefficient for transformational leadership was nonsignificant ($\beta = .04, p = .45$). In total, the set of subordinate-reported predictors accounted for 26% (adjusted 22%) of the variance in supervisor ratings of subordinate proactive service performance. In conclusion, Hypothesis 4, predicting a positive relationship of proactive service performance with self-efficacy, received no support. Hypotheses 5 and 8 regarding autonomy and transformational leadership received only partial support. Both the correlational and the regression results revealed significant positive relationships between proactive service per-

formance and trait initiative, affective commitment, complexity, and participative leadership, hence fully supporting Hypotheses 2, 3, 5, and 7.

These results also provide further support of Hypothesis 1, predicting that proactive service performance would be distinguishable from prescribed task performance, because the overall determination coefficient was considerably larger for proactive service performance than for prescribed task performance (.26 vs. .12), and several predictors (i.e., trait personal initiative, task complexity, participative leadership) significantly predicted only proactive service performance but not prescribed task performance. Overall, prescribed task performance was positively and significantly associated only with affective organizational commitment ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) and transformational leadership ($\beta = .25, p < .05$), with the latter variable being unrelated to proactive service performance. Hence, the regressions revealed that affective organizational commitment was the only common predictor of both criteria. In addition to the confirmatory factor analysis, these analyses corroborate the conclusion that proactive service performance is distinguishable from prescribed task performance.

It should be noted how the regression results changed when the order of the two blocks with the situational variables was reversed, when control variables were entered, and when the supervisor ratings of the task characteristics were used. When the two leadership variables were entered into the second and the two subordinate-reported task characteristics into the third block, the leadership block accounted for 11% ($p < .01$) and the task characteristics block for 1% ($p = .67$) of the variance in proactive service performance. Of the situational variables, only participative leadership yielded a significant regression weight ($\beta = .34, p < .01$). The leadership block accounted for 6% ($p < .01$) and the task characteristics block for 0% ($p = .80$) of the variance in task performance. Of the situational variables, only transformational leadership yielded a significant regression weight ($\beta = .24, p < .05$). When line of business and geographical region were entered as dummy-coded control variables in Block 1 (with the individual variables in Block 2, the task variables in Block 3, and the leadership variables in Block 4), the results were similar to those in Table 5. None of the two control variables yielded significant main effects, and the same variables were identified as significant predictors of the criteria.

As noted previously, proactive service performance was significantly correlated with both the subordinate and the supervisor ratings of the two task characteristics. When the supervisor-rated instead of the subordinate-rated task characteristics were entered into the second block of the regression equation, the results differed. The second block with the supervisor-rated task variables accounted for more variance in proactive service performance (12%, $p < .01$) and task performance (23%, $p < .01$) than did the incumbent-rated task variables (see Table 5), which may be due to common method variance. For proactive service performance as the criterion, the regression weights were .17 ($p = .06$) for complexity and .29 (p

< .01) for autonomy. For task performance, they were .06 ($p = .52$) for complexity and .53 ($p < .01$) for autonomy. Participative leadership still emerged as a significant positive predictor of proactive service performance in the third block ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$), but transformational leadership did not significantly predict task performance ($\beta = .09$, $p = .41$).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study supported several of the seven hypotheses relating individual, task, and leadership variables to customer service employees' proactive service performance. With respect to the individual variables, proactive service performance was significantly and positively associated with one personality variable (trait personal initiative) and one attitudinal variable (affective organizational commitment). The fact that both of these variables emerged as significant predictors in the regression suggests that these variables capture different facets of an individual's propensity to engage in proactive service performance. Trait personal initiative, which is highly similar to the proactive personality concept (Crant, 2004; Frese & Fay, 2001), directly reflects an individual's proclivity to initiate proactive courses of action. Affective organizational commitment may relate to proactive service performance through its affective and behavioral consequences (e.g., via enhanced positive affect and its outcomes, including creative problem solving, helping, and persistence; Isen & Baron, 1991). As explained in the introduction, proactive service performance may correspond to the citizenship performance dimension "conscientious initiative" (Borman et al., 2001). Hence, the finding that trait personal initiative more strongly related to proactive service performance than to prescribed task performance is consistent with the theory of individual differences in task and contextual performance (Motowidlo et al., 1997), which implies that personality more strongly predicts contextual or citizenship rather than task performance.

Contrary to our expectations, proactive service performance was unrelated to work-related self-efficacy, although this variable predicted personal initiative in interview studies (Frese et al., 1997; Frese et al., 1996), and generalized self-efficacy related to the proactive behavior construct "taking charge" in a survey study (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). The main reason for this result may be the range restriction operative in our sample, because the mean on the 7-point self-efficacy scale was 6.29. In addition to the potential social desirability bias, this may be explained by the fact that all of the employees had received extensive customer service training. The measure may have differentiated only between those with high versus extremely high levels of self-efficacy. Recent experimental research revealing intraindividual decreases in performance over time among complacent individuals high in self-efficacy (Vancouver, Thompson, Tischner, & Putka, 2002) may

partially explain why employees with very high self-efficacy did not obtain higher proactive performance ratings than those who were somewhat lower in self-efficacy.

One of the major findings of our study is that the situational variables explained incremental variance in supervisor ratings of proactive service performance beyond the individual predictors. Together, the situational variables explained an additional 12% of the variance. Specifically, the regression revealed significant relationships between two situational predictors (task complexity and participative leadership) and proactive service performance. Among all predictors, participative leadership yielded the strongest correlation with proactive service performance and emerged as its strongest predictor in the multiple regression. This finding is important, because previous OCB studies of leadership predictors have focused on different supervisory variables (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The meta-analytic result that participation is more strongly associated with job involvement than autonomy (Spector, 1986) may explain why participation emerged as a stronger predictor than autonomy. The fact that only two situational variables emerged as significant predictors in the regression, although all yielded significant correlations with proactive service performance, may be due to intercorrelations among these predictors. When the block with the task predictors was entered after the leadership block, the task block did not explain incremental variance in proactive service performance, and complexity did not emerge as a significant predictor. This may be due to the shared variance between the leadership and task variables combined with the fact that the reverse order was advantageous for the leadership predictors. However, it should be noted that several indices (i.e., tolerance and variance inflation factors) did not point to serious multicollinearity in our dataset.

The confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated that the hypothesized two-factor performance model (proactive service performance vs. prescribed task performance) was associated with adequate model fit indexes clearly superior to those of an undifferentiated one-factor overall performance model. In the regressions, the set of subordinate-rated predictors explained substantially more variance in supervisor ratings of proactive service performance than in those of prescribed task performance. Three of the four predictors (i.e., trait personal initiative, task complexity, participative leadership) that were significantly and positively associated with proactive service performance were unrelated to task performance. Together, these findings suggest that proactive service performance is distinguishable from task performance. This result is important, because it complements previous work emphasizing the distinctness of task performance from other forms of citizenship performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994; Walz & Niehoff, 2001). In conclusion, our research addressed the “major need to begin thinking of performance in terms of its major components” (Campbell et al., 1996, p. 277) within the specific domain of customer service.

Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of our research is that it used different sources (subordinate and supervisor ratings) for the predictor and criterion assessments, whereas several previous studies used employee self-ratings of general service performance (e.g., Liao & Chuang, 2004) or service-related OCBs (e.g., Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Bettencourt et al., 2001). Second, the U.S.-wide sample represented three important lines of business in the financial services sector (bank branches, mortgage, and credit card services) as well as geographically dispersed locations. Third, the data are independent, because each manager rated the performance of only one subordinate, whereas each manager's leadership behaviors were rated by only one subordinate. Fourth, the PROSPER scale development phase involved a combination of deductive theory-driven as well as inductive qualitative and quantitative approaches. Consequently, the PROSPER items reflect proactive behaviors suggested as antecedents of desirable service outcomes not only in our qualitative pilot research but also in the previous customer service literature (e.g., Schneider et al., 1992; Schneider et al., 1998). Fifth, it is noteworthy that our study involved a broad but manageable set of individual, task, and leadership predictors. Although Liao and Chuang, for example, used a variety of predictors of unit-level service performance, they employed only personality measures as predictors of individual-level service performance. Studies of service-related OCBs focused either only on other individual variables (e.g., Kelley & Hoffmann, 1997) or on only one situational issue such as fairness perceptions (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997). Our study complements this research by showing that employee ratings of situational variables explained incremental variance in proactive service performance beyond individual predictors. Sixth, considering levels-of-analysis issues (e.g., Klein & Kozlowski, 2000), all study variables were appropriately tailored to the individual level, because we collected individual subordinates' ratings of task characteristics and leadership behaviors rather than the group-level climate variables typically employed in unit-level service studies (e.g., Schneider et al., 1998).

A potential limitation of our study may be the exclusive reliance on supervisor ratings of proactive service performance. However, the managers in the participating organization regularly monitored service performance (e.g. by listening in to customer calls in credit card service centers without the subordinates' awareness). Service researchers, who often rely on customer ratings, have noted that supervisor ratings are also useful (Borucki & Burke, 1999). In a project using supervisor ratings (Hogan, Hogan, & Busch, 1984), service employees' dispositional service orientation positively and significantly predicted supervisory ratings of several service performance components, including insurance agents' communication behavior and nursing aides' patient services. Meta-analytic research (Viswesvaran, Ones, & Schmidt, 1996) showed that supervisory ratings had higher interrater and intrarater reliabilities than peer ratings, considering both overall performance rat-

ings and two dimensions particularly relevant to proactive service performance, namely, effort and interpersonal competence. Nonetheless, studies assessing the convergence of supervisor with peer and customer ratings are desirable. Although our pilot research ensured that the PROSPER items reflected proactive behaviors going beyond explicitly prescribed minimum requirements in the participating organization, researchers may have to adapt the items if they conduct studies in settings with different levels of prescribed requirements, particularly if their aim is to distinguish proactive service performance from prescribed task performance or to identify distinctive antecedents or outcomes of these criteria.

This study examined individuals' perceptions of situational variables rather than objective assessments or aggregated unit-level perceptions. Most previous studies examining relationships between task or leadership predictors and individual-level performance criteria including OCBs have also used employee ratings of such predictors (see summary in Podsakoff et al., 2000). In our study, there was convergence across the employee-rated and supervisor-rated task measures in terms of their correlations with proactive service performance, because the complexity and autonomy ratings derived from both sources positively and significantly correlated with this criterion, although the regression results were somewhat different. Crant (2000) recommended that proactive behavior researchers focus on employee perceptions, arguing that "people act based on how they perceive things, not on how things really are" (p. 458). Nevertheless, studies assessing relationships between objective measures of these variables and proactive service performance would be an important extension of the present research.

Rather than aggregating leadership ratings across followers, we used individual subordinates' ratings of the supervisory behaviors. Because our study is thoroughly individual level, this is appropriate, particularly considering that the dyads were independent (i.e., each subordinate had a different supervisor). Most previous studies examining relationships between leadership predictors and OCB criteria used the same procedure (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990; Podsakoff et al., 2000). However, our findings on individual-level relationships between the leadership variables and proactive service performance do not necessarily imply identical patterns at the group or organizational levels of analysis. Leadership ratings may differ somewhat across subordinates of one and the same supervisor, as suggested by positive relationships between subordinate ratings of dyad-specific leader-member-exchange quality and subordinate ratings of both transformational leadership (Howell & Hall-Meranda, 1999) and delegation, which may partially overlap with participation (Bauer & Green, 1996). Although this does not pose a substantial problem for individual-level research focusing on leadership perceptions, future studies should examine whether similar relationships exist between aggregated leadership ratings and unit-level proactive service performance.

Practical Implications and Future Research Directions

Cross-validation and longitudinal studies are needed before definitive practical prescriptions can be recommended, although our findings suggest that proactive service performance may be enhanced by participation, job design interventions enhancing task complexity, measures to increase affective commitment, and selection and staffing procedures ensuring that individuals high in personal initiative perform the types of service activities that benefit most from high levels of proactive behavior. Job or competency analyses may be required to identify the specific positions that most strongly benefit from high levels of proactive behavior. Considering the increasing importance of the customer service sector in most economies (Van Dyne et al., 2002), efforts to enhance proactive service performance may be warranted once its consequences are identified.

Future research may investigate whether proactive service performance is associated with different antecedents than other proactive behavior constructs such as voice behavior (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Although the personality trait agreeableness, for example, negatively predicted voice behavior in a previous study (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001), it is unlikely that this is the case for proactive service performance, taking into account the generally positive relationship between agreeableness and service performance (Frei & McDaniel, 1997). With respect to the consequences of proactive service performance, it is of particular interest whether relations with customers truly prosper when employees exhibit proactive service performance. This would be a useful extension of previous research (Walz & Niehoff, 2001) that showed the relationship between OCB-helping directed at coworkers or supervisors and customer satisfaction. Some indirect support for this expectation comes from a recent unit-level study (Salanova et al., 2005), in which the employee-reported work engagement factor "vigor" (high levels of energy, resilience, persistence, and willingness to expend effort) significantly correlated with customer-rated service performance. Desirable customer outcomes that may be examined include perceived service quality, customer satisfaction, purchase decisions, and loyalty to the organization (Liao & Chuang, 2004; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Possibly, effects of proactive service performance depend on the specific setting. For example, it may be more critical when customers are not fully aware of the benefits and risks associated with different choices than in settings such as shoe stores, where salespersons' displayed positive emotions predicted customer reactions (Tsai, 2001). Researchers may also want to investigate employee outcomes, including not only positive (e.g., career advancement) but also potential negative effects of prolonged proactive behavior (e.g., burnout).

Future research should also examine similarities and differences between proactive service performance concept and service-related OCB variables and measures (e.g., Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Bettencourt et al., 2001). An inspection of the items used in these publications suggests that they are either more gen-

eral than the PROSPER or capture other specific behaviors. Perhaps the strongest overlap may be found with the general "extra-role customer service scale" developed by Bettencourt and Brown (1997), although the items in this scale refer broadly to activities "beyond requirements" or "beyond the call of the duty" without specifying the behaviors or narrowing them to those reflecting a long-term orientation or persistent course of self-started action. As these authors as well as Bettencourt et al. (2001) used employee self-ratings of the service behaviors, it may be desirable to simultaneously gather supervisor and/or customer ratings of the PROSPER and these service behavior scales and to assess potential differential relationships between these measures and several predictor variables, including some of those identified by these authors (e.g., empathy, knowledge, job satisfaction, fairness perceptions). Furthermore, it is of interest whether proactive service performance and the Bettencourt et al. (2001) OCB-variable "service delivery," which focuses on the avoidance of errors and compliance with rules, explain unique portions of the variance in outcomes such as customer satisfaction. Similarly, researchers may examine whether proactive service performance is associated with different outcomes than the "beyond core service" variable social regard (Butcher et al., 2003). Whereas social regard (i.e., displayed respect and deference) may influence the affective components of customer attitudes, proactive service performance may more strongly predict cognitive and behavioral facets of customer attitudes.

The conceptual model of service quality (Zeithaml & Berry, 1985) specifies several service gaps, including the gap between the service that customers expect and the service that they actually perceive. Considering that service quality factors such as reliability and responsiveness influence customer outcomes (Parasuraman et al., 1988), this gap between expected and perceived service may diminish when employees exhibit proactive service performance. Although research linking predictors such as employee attitudes directly to customer outcomes (e.g., Schmit & Allscheid, 1995) is valuable, individual-level proactive service performance may have been one of the intermediate missing links in such previous studies. Clearly, service-specific proactive behavior research is an important addition to previous work on other forms of proactive behavior (e.g., Crant, 2000; Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). In conclusion, we hope that the proactive service performance concept will aid researchers in closing the gap of knowledge regarding the nature, antecedents, and outcomes of proactive behavior in the customer service domain.

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