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## Job Perceptions of Citizenship Behavior and Deviance: Musings from Behind the Bar

Catherine R. Curtis Ph.D.

Oklahoma State University, [catherine.curtis@okstate.edu](mailto:catherine.curtis@okstate.edu)

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to examine bartender workplace behavior. This study begins with a review of the literature pertaining to the job of bartending, and positive work behavior (citizenship) and negative (deviant) workplace behavior. Data was collected by semi-structured interview. The bartenders expressed instances of both behaviors and showed support for a newly termed citizenship behavior, norm avoidance.

## **Keywords**

bartenders, citizenship behavior, deviance, qualitative, job perceptions

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By Catherine R. Curtis

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine bartender workplace behavior. This study begins with a review of the literature pertaining to the job of bartending, and positive work behavior (citizenship) and negative (deviant) workplace behavior. Data was collected by semi-structured interview. The bartenders expressed instances of both behaviors and showed support for a newly termed citizenship behavior, norm avoidance.

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## INTRODUCTION

For some operators in the hospitality industry, the mention of the word bartender triggers theft, or to lesser extent another cost to doing business. Many published studies concern negative behaviors of bartenders (Geller, 1991; Litzky, Eddleston, & Kidder, 2006), theft (Kirby, 2009; Scarpa, 2006; Smith, 1997) or ways to implement controls (Borchgrevink & Anchill, 2003; Kirby, 2009). Another view purported by Sullivan (1998) states that bartender performance is positively associated with increased profitability. This research examines work behavior of bartenders from the perspective of bartenders.

To assess the perceptions of job image and work behavior of bartenders, a qualitative research design was used. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to let the bartenders speak freely about their jobs. The basic job description of bartenders was collected from a published online database (O\*NET), a literature review of positive and negative work behavior was included, and quotations and analysis from the interviews conducted.

This study contributes to the existing body of literature relating to frontline hospitality workers, in the sense that it recommends increasing the understanding of one of the frontline occupations in the hospitality industry. Limitations of the current study and opportunities for future research are also discussed.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Bartenders and Bartending*

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics states that almost 500,000 people were employed as bartenders in 2010 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the job and understand the perspectives presented later in this study of those employed in this profession, a summary was compiled through the use of the Occupational Information Network (O\*NET), (2011), an online system that incorporates knowledge about occupations through

the past sixty years (Peterson et al, 2001). According to O\*NET (2011), bartenders have numerous responsibilities on the job. The traditional tasks commonly associated with bartenders were listed as: collecting money for drinks served, verifying age of customers, serving wine, bottled or draft beer, and/or mixed drinks with liquor, cleaning glasses and necessary equipment, balancing cash receipts, monitoring customers' excessive drinking by limiting drinks or ordering transportation for intoxicated guests, keeping bar area stocked with alcohol, glassware, napkins, and straws, fulfilling orders from direct bar customers and/or serving staff, and cleaning work area and/or surrounding tables (O\*NET, 2011).

However, O\*NET (2011) also mentions the knowledge, skills, and abilities that have been associated as necessary for a bartending job. Some of the knowledge deemed important to this profession was listed as customer service, sales and marketing, administration and management, and psychology. Customer service is important as bartenders must know how to implement quality service and observe customers' immediate satisfaction levels (Eddleston, Kidder, & Litzky, 2002; O\*NET, 2011). Knowledge of sales and marketing is also critical so that bartenders may promote and sell products and attract customers to the bar, and convert a customer into a "regular" (Sullivan, 1998). Business and management principles are also necessary for bartenders, although the position itself lacks a formal management title, may be involved in the strategic planning process, the allocation of resources including people, leadership, and methods of production (O\*NET, 2011). Finally, psychology was mentioned for the importance of understanding of human behavior. In this instance, it would be important for bartenders to understand how to "read" their customers. "Reading" a customer entails watching the customer's non-verbal cues in body language or need for interaction (Donovan & Hocutt, 2001).

Further skills mentioned on O\*NET, such as active listening, service orientation, social perceptiveness, speaking, are largely considered to be important interpersonal skills that could distinguish a service provider from a competitor (Coulter & Coulter, 2002). The abilities listed on O\*NET are more physical requirements that pertain to the job, but oral expression and oral comprehension were mentioned and would be necessary for service delivery.

### *Workplace Behavior*

In general, literature regarding bartenders tends to focus on negative actions such as theft (Kirby, 2009; Scarpa, 2006; Smith, 1997) or how to prevent theft by implementing control systems (Borchgrevink & Anchill, 2003; Kirby, 2009). Literature is limited that describes benefits, such as increased sales and profitability (Sullivan, 1998). The section above provided a detailed description of the duties, skills, and abilities expected of bartenders in general. This next section explains the differences in job performance from the accepted norm. In order to make a behavioral comparison, norms describe established behavior of a specific reference group (Warren, 2003). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, behavior departing from established norms in a positive direction will be

analyzed in the form of organizational citizenship behavior, and departure in the negative direction will be classified as workplace deviance.

### *Citizenship Behavior*

Organizational citizenship behavior has been defined by Organ (1988) as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (p.4). Stamper & Van Dyne (2003) assert that organizational citizenship behavior is essential in service businesses because of guests’ demands; in many times altering operating procedures to accommodate the guest. These behaviors may benefit other co-workers, (interpersonal), or the organization itself (organizational) (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). Seven types of commonly mentioned citizenship behaviors are known as helping behavior, sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, organizational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue, and self-development (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Helping behavior is the process of helping other employees which can prevent work related problems (Podsakoff et al., 2000) and increase customer satisfaction (Stamper & Van Dyne, 2001). An example of helping behavior is taking extra time to assist someone in their new job role. Although it is not required for that person to do so, this can contribute to the smooth running of the operation. Sportsmanship is about being a good team member. Those exuding sportsmanship do not complain when they become inconvenienced by others; are optimistic and maintain a positive attitude even when things do not go their way. Organizational loyalty, which is also known as boosterism, involves employees that actively promote the organization to outsiders and more importantly, remain committed to the organization if adverse conditions occur. Organizational compliance is an employee’s observance of the rules and regulations of the organization when no one is monitoring. Although, this is an expected behavior at most organizations, many employees do not adhere to rules when no one is watching. Individual initiative is employee involvement in task-related. Such behaviors include voluntary acts of creativity and innovation designed to improve one’s task or the organization’s performance, such as volunteering to take on extra responsibilities. This approach is known as going “above and beyond” the typical duties (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Civic virtue is a demonstration of commitment to the organization as a whole. This is shown by a willingness to attend meetings, voicing opinion on strategy, and looking out for the general safety of the business (locking doors, etc.) (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The final behavior is self-development, which involves an employee making voluntary efforts to better themselves by the way of knowledge, skill or ability. Employees may accomplish this by enrolling in a course. This study will introduce an eighth category of organization citizenship behavior entitled norm avoidance. Derived from social norm theory, norm avoidance concentrates on the deliberate avoidance of stereotypical negative behaviors associated with an occupation for example, “all bartenders steal” may be a belief that many managers and employees hold true in the industry. Some employees may make efforts to dissociate from such a stereotype.

## *Workplace Deviance*

Deviance from workplace norms that head in a negative direction has been described as workplace deviance. When behaviors, despite the intention, exceed organizational norms, the consequences for the organization may be financial, hamper decision making, and affect productivity (Applebaum, Iaconi, & Matousek, 2007). Robinson and Bennett (1995) expound deviant behavior as “voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in doing so threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both” (p.556). Examples of negative deviant behavior in the workplace can include such infractions as: sexual harassment, tardiness, rumor spreading, tardiness, disrespect to co-workers, and theft (Applebaum et al., 2007).

In an attempt to classify deviant behaviors, Robinson and Bennett (1995) developed two dimensions of deviance: 1. the first dimension describes the type of infraction: minor vs. serious, and 2. the second dimension describes the intended direction of the action: interpersonal vs. organizational. Thereafter, four categories of deviance were derived from the study. The first two constructs were derived from Hollinger and Clark (1982): 1. production deviance: which is a violation of the quantity or quality of the work performed; 2. property deviance: which is the acquisition or damaging of property belonging to the organization; 3. political deviance: which is the engagement of a social interaction that puts others at a political/personal disadvantage; and 4. personal aggression: behaving in a hostile manner toward other individuals.

There are a variety of reasons that employees may choose to engage in deviant behavior such as feelings from perceived injustice, dissatisfaction, role modeling, and thrill seeking (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Mayer, Workman, Van Dijke, & De Cremer, 2012). Also, management may treat the employees poorly (Greenberg, 1997). It is the managers' responsibility to keep an ethical climate where their actions and behaviors discourage deviant behaviors (Litzky et al., 2006). The six factors that influence the propensity to engage in deviant behavior are: 1. the compensation/reward structure, 2. social pressures to conform, 3. negative and untrusting attitudes, 4. ambiguity about job performance, 5. unfair treatment, and 6. violating employee trust (Litzky et al., 2006). Employees who depend on commission or gratuities are more likely to participate in deviant behaviors because of the compensation/reward structure (Litzky et al., 2006). This is particularly the case when employees depend on some sort of compensation from the customer. The employee depends on the customer financially and may empathize with their position and will further justify any deviant acts under the guise of customer service (Litzky et al., 2006).

In the workplace, social pressures to conform may influence the person's needs for affiliation and acceptance. For instance, one particular group at work may have norms that may be deviant; such as hospitality service workers who may be in the practice of underreporting pooled tips (Litzky et al., 2006). Negative and untrusting attitudes by management can cause deviant behavior. Some employers feel as if they must control employees in order to get them to

behave properly (Litzky et al., 2006). The result is similar to a self-fulfilling prophecy because the negative behavior is expected. In some job types there can be ambiguity of job performance. Salespeople, customer service representatives, accountants, management consultants, financial services, and insurance professionals are professions that cross over many boundaries which can lead to added stress and low job performance. These expanded boundaries can cause confusion and lead to all types of deviance (Litzky et al., 2006). Unfair treatment is also highly likely to incite incidents of deviance (Bordia, Restubog, & Tang, 2008; Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrick, 2004). Employees may feel as if they can ignore rules if it interferes with them performing job tasks and are treated unfairly. Litzky et al., (2006) note that one hotel housekeeper lamented that stealing at a hotel is justified because managers are always asking for too much and customers always want something for nothing. The last factor that may cause employee workplace deviance is employee trust. Trust can be violated by a specific event or unjust treatment, such as reprimanding an employee publicly (Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998; Litzky et al., 2006). However, the deeper the relationship the employee has with the manager, the more damage the relationship will incur (Litzky et al., 2006).

The damage that deviant behavior can do to an organization is a result of various costs. The types of costs include lack of productivity consistency, higher production costs, loss of inventory control, inconsistent service quality, loss of profits, inconsistent pricing, poor service reputation, and lack of repeat business (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002; Litzky et al., 2006).

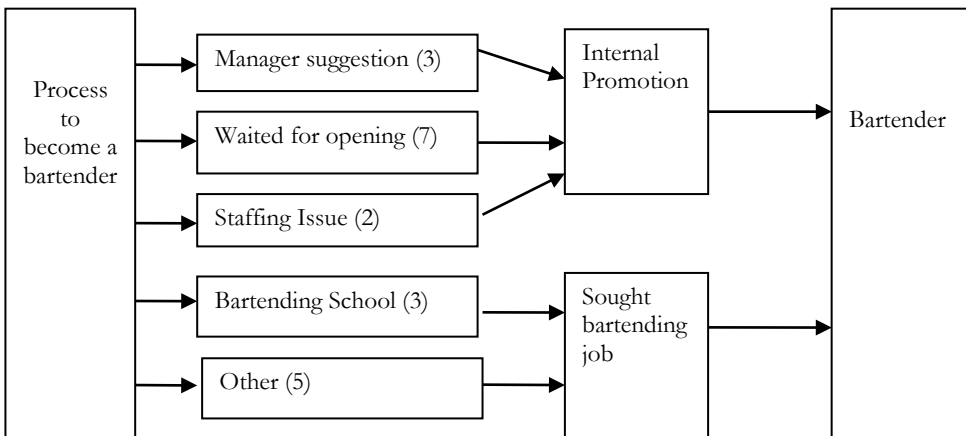
## **Methodology**

*Sample.* The participants in this study consisted of twenty bartenders located in a metropolitan city located in the southeastern United States. Bartenders were sampled from a clustered grouping of hotels, stand alone restaurants, and free standing bars. The only requirements for the study were that a person must be employed with the job title bartender and has been so for at least six months. No effort was made to ensure that any one defined group was represented as the aim of the study was to examine bartender's job perceptions.

*Procedure.* Managers were contacted by telephone or electronic mail to explain the purpose of the study and to gain permission to interview the bartenders employed by the establishment on premise. The interviews were scheduled during off-peak hours depending upon the availability of the employee. The study took place over a four week period. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed as a general guide for conducting interviews with the bartenders. Four open ended questions were composed so that when a participant answered initially, the researcher could interact to generate further comments.

## Findings and Discussion

The sample consisted of 12 females and 8 males. There was no effort made to represent any one group. Figure 1 was developed to illustrate how most of the participants in this study became bartenders. The responses generated for Figure 1 also make an inference of the citizenship behavior, self-development, which is generally characterized by the individual displaying outstanding performance and/or proceeding to increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities in the workplace (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Most of the bartenders interviewed became bartenders by internal promotion. They had been working at an establishment and were promoted as a position became available, by a manager’s suggestion, or by their expressed desire. One bartender recounts: “I was a server and they just thought I was really responsible, they really liked my attitude and they just thought I’d be really good as a bartender.” Others had the intention of becoming bartenders by seeking instruction as one bartender stated, “I have always been interested in doing it. I kind of just self-motivated, jumped into it, took some classes and then went hunting for a job, landed one that was good.”



**Figure 1: Process of becoming a bartender, n=20**

Organizational loyalty is is the citizenship behavior exemplified by supporting or protecting the business by acting responsibly (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The majority of the bartenders interviewed felt that their jobs entailed more responsibility than their co-workers. Common responsibilities mentioned were the care of the guests by monitoring alcohol intake and financial responsibilities such as a cash drawer and providing change for co-workers. A bartender expressed many of the duties in this statement:

Yes, you’re responsible for more money, of course, the manager is responsible at the end of the day, but bartenders check a lot of the money, no one else does. Every time there is a problem, they see the bartender. The bartender is always smiling getting food, making drinks, working the service bar. Waiters only have 3-4 table stations.



You are always making change for everybody; no one else has as much prep or clean up. You're a quality controller and a quantity controller.

Some of the bartenders interviewed had more responsibilities such as training, and were the designated trainers for the company while a few of the bartenders stated that they took on more responsibility despite the fact they were not compensated, "I do all my liquor orderings; I do all of our inventory, if something's broken I make sure it gets fixed, but I took that responsibility on, and I enjoy it." Another bartender noted their input was valued in managerial decision making, "I train all of the new people coming in and managers ask me questions before making any decisions."

The participants were asked if they believed bartenders had more opportunities to "get away with things," (participate in deviant behavior). In this case, adherence to company rules and regulations while no one is watching is known as organizational compliance (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Many bartenders admitted that they were not "watched" while they worked. Most of the bartenders interviewed tended to agree that opportunities exist to participate in negative work behaviors. The most common forms of deviance mentioned were instances of property deviance, namely theft; however, the participants noted that there is a deliberate choice to engage in activities such as over pouring and not charging for drinks and straight theft of cash. Many bartenders affirmed the possibility with responses such as "definitely" and absolutely, but a few went on to elaborate the situations. One bartender said:

I think that genuinely depends on the people that you are working with, if you are in a good environment where people actually follow the rules and care about their co-workers, then no, they're not going to steal and they'll do things by the book. If you're in an environment where there is little employee empowerment where employees feel that they are constantly under the microscope and they have very little power to make executive decisions then yes, they're going to act out, they're going to innocently steal from the bar, but if you're in an environment where it's a family feel, then no they're not going to steal. If they're in an environment where it is very structured and very ruled, very coming down on the employees, yes, they're going to do what they can to get by.

Another felt there was not any opportunity, "No, I don't think so because we're just like servers. We have to ring in everything just like they do, and if you don't then you're responsible."

The final question participants were asked was how they felt their jobs were perceived by the general public. The responses dealt with a bartender's ability to not accept the perceived societal norm, norm avoidance. The public perception of bartending jobs as described by these interviewees varied from positive responses, negative responses, and mixed responses. Some of the

bartenders felt that the variability in perception was due to age group, “I feel that because of my age, it’s perceived as appropriate for my age, being 23, but if I was in an older demographic it would be perceived in a negative way.” Some felt that the public viewed all service jobs in negative light stating, “(they think)

Like I’m some kind of party person, I don’t know, stuck in the restaurant business for the rest of my life. It’s horrible; I think that’s how they look at any job that’s in a restaurant, that we’re stuck here.

Some bartenders conveyed that a bad reputation went along with the job stating:

That we drink all of the time, and that we party all of the time, do drugs all of the time and I do none of that, at all. None of it. It’s how we’re perceived, yeah.

Those instances reflect the bartenders’ acknowledgement of norm avoidance, and how they were aware of an overall perception from society, and the unfair association.

Bartenders that mentioned the positive response they have received and that it is a job people desire:

I think a lot of people really want to bartend; that is always like the wanted career in the hospitality industry. So to be a bartender is about as good as it gets in this industry, besides management.

Some bartenders felt that their social status and work persona were held in higher regard commenting:

Whenever anybody asks me what I do, I say oh, I’m a bartender; they usually tend to think it’s kind of glamorous “Oh, that’s cool!” That’s like the cool job; you’re the cool person because you’re the bartender. The servers are like, the people that you work with are like, “oh that’s the bartender,” like we’re on some sort of hierarchy, we’re higher up there than servers, it’s weird. I’ve never had anyone say, “oh, you bartend?” People think it’s fun.

One bartender noted that despite the negative acceptance there is a thriving business:

I think people perceive it as being a second rate job or whatever but in my eyes I think we serve just as an important purpose as a lawyer or somebody else, people are always going to drink, without us there would be no business.

## **Implications**

The implications of this of this study add to what is known about the role of positive and negative deviant workplace behaviors and specifically, to the impact the influence that bartenders have upon service provision within hospitality organizations. Past research concludes that committed employees are more likely to contribute to positive organizational citizenship behavior (Bolino

& Turnley, 2003; Koys, 2003; Stamper & Van Dyne, 2003) and this commitment is positively associated with the financial performance of an organization. Of particular importance is the assertion made by Sullivan (1998) that bartender performance is positively associated with increased profitability. In spite of this, it must be mentioned that these bartenders were aware and saw opportunities to engage in deviant behavior. In order for managers and owners, to deter deviant behaviors and encourage positive citizenship behaviors, they must take the time to supervise employees and provide guidance, as many lamented that they were not monitored for long periods of time and model desired behaviors (Dineen, Lewicki, & Tomlinson, 2006). A manager's presence is often the best deterrent for deviant behaviors (Litzky et al., 2006).

### **Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research**

Although there are strengths to this study such as a comprehensive discussion of a frontline position in the hospitality industry, there are limitations to this study. The purposive sample was small due to the nature of the hospitality business, in such that there is generally a lesser amount of bartenders employed in one establishment and this study limited to one geographic area. Bartenders in other parts of the country may not be in agreement with the opinions expressed in this study. An opportunity for future investigation into the job performance of bartenders could be explored by examining the financial impacts of "popular" bartenders on a business.

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**Catherine R. Curtis, Ph.D.**, is, Oklahoma State University.