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## Restaurant Industry Perspectives on Pro-social Rule Breaking: Intent versus Action

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# Restaurant Industry Perspectives on Pro-social Rule Breaking: Intent versus Action

## **Abstract**

The resounding message extracted from the service literature is that employees serve pivotal functions in the overall guest experience. This is of course due to the simultaneous delivery of personalized service provision with resultant consumption of those services. This simultaneous delivery and consumption cycle is at times challenged by a perceived desire to accommodate guest request that may violate, to a greater or lesser degree, an organizational rule. This is important to note because increased interactions with customers enable frontline employees to have a better sense of what customers want from the company as well as from the company itself (Bitner, et al, 1994). With that platform established, then why are some employees willing to break organizational rules and risk disciplinary action to better service a customer? This study examines the employee personality, degree of autonomy, job meaning, and co-worker influence on an employee's decision to break organizational rules. The results of this study indicate that co-worker influence exerted a minimal influence on employee decision to break rules while the presence of societal consciousness exerted a much stronger influence. Women reported that they were less likely to engage in rule divergence, and significant correlations were present when filtered by years in current position, and years in the industry.

## **Keywords**

rule divergence, conscientious, neuroticism, demographics, company rules

**Restaurant Industry Perspectives on Pro-social Rule Breaking: Intent versus Action**

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## **Abstract**

The resounding message extracted from the service literature is that employees serve pivotal functions in the overall guest experience. This is of course due to the simultaneous delivery of personalized service provision with resultant consumption of those services. This simultaneous delivery and consumption cycle is at times challenged by a perceived desire to accommodate guest request that may violate, to a greater or lesser degree, an organizational rule. This is important to note because increased interactions with customers enable frontline employees to have a better sense of what customers want from the company as well as from the company itself (Bitner, et al, 1994). With that platform established, then why are some employees willing to break organizational rules and risk disciplinary action to better service a customer? This conundrum is multifaceted in that deviating from normative behavior is wrought with conflict and can be influenced by various influences. For instance, is the decision to deviate from the norm based on their degree of autonomy, their personality, or do co-workers have an influence on their decision to break organizational rules?

The results of this study indicate that co-worker influence exerted a minimal influence on employee decision to deviate from the norm while the presence of societal consciousness exerted a much stronger influence. Women reported that they were less likely to engage in rule divergence, and significant correlations were present when filtered by years in current position, and years in the industry.

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## **Introduction**

It is generally understood that restaurant servers, like many other service professions, have a high degree of customer contact. This concept, therefore, implies that the quality of service a customer receives from frontline employees is vital to the service experience (Groth & Grandey, 2012). The service literature has reiterated the fact that employees play a critical role in the overall customer experience (Bowen & Ford, 2004; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Kelly, 1992). Berry, Carbone, and Haeckel (2002) dissected the service experience into three categories: functional clues, mechanic clues, and humanic clues. Wall & Berry (2007) applied these categories to the restaurant industry defining functional clues as the food itself, along with the precision of service; mechanic clues as the nonhuman environmental components, such as design, layout or lighting; the humanic clues are defined as the behavior of the service employees, “including body language, tone of voice, and level of enthusiasm” (Wall & Berry, 2007, p. 60). According to these categories, a restaurant server would only have direct control of the functional and humanic clues. However, because the frontline restaurant employees have a high degree of customer interaction they are able to adapt their behavior in response to the feedback they are receiving from customers. To this end, frontline employees have a better sense of what customers want from the company, more so than the company itself (Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 1994). However, because of this knowledge, an employee may be presented with a dilemma; because the offering of better service may result in breaking an organizational rule. Generally the breaking of an organizational rule results in disciplinary action and in some cases, termination. Therefore, the employee is faced with the dilemma whether or not to provide a benefit for a customer despite the fact that the employee may be subject to disciplinary action.

## **Literature on Rule Breaking and Personality Factors**

As fitting with the service industry, pro-social behavior is defined as actions that benefit other people or society as a whole (Twenge, Ciarocco, Baumeister, & Bartels, 2007). It is characterized by assisting the guest in a manner that does not benefit the service agent. What this implies is that there are costs associated with deviating from expected behavior. Morrison (2006) introduced pro-social rule breaking into the literature after performing

three studies to explain the phenomena. In general, employee rule breaking is commonly associated with workplace deviance (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). However, Morrison (2006) was able to make a distinction between pro-social rule breaking and rule breaking that was self-centered or deviant to the organization. The framework for pro-social rule breaking was derived from a model of positive deviance (Spreitzer & Sonneshein, 2003), leading Morrison (2006) to state that pro-social rule breaking is “any instance where an employee intentionally violates a formal organizational policy, regulation, or prohibition with the primary intention of promoting the welfare of the organization or one of its stakeholders,” (p.6). Therefore, rule breaking that is pro-social has a non-selfish intent, is not done with any self-interest, and there is no sought after benefit for the employee (rule breaker). Examples of pro-social rule breaking include: employees violating rules to improve efficiency, violating rules to help a co-worker, or violating rules to better service a customer (Mayer, Caldwell, Ford, Uhl-Bien, & Gresock, 2007).

Morrison (2006) claimed that pro-social rule breaking is more likely to occur when the job provides both: meaning and autonomy, and three individual dispositions of: 1. empathy, 2. proactive personality, and 3. risk taking dispositions are strong. The influence of co-worker behavior was also critical in the decision to participate pro-social rule breaking behavior.

Morrison (2006) and Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003) note that individuals possessing an elevated level of job meaning are more inclined to violate rules in execution of their job duties. Therefore, individuals with an increased sense of job meaning will attempt to make a difference in the workplace. Within that context job meaning is defined as the degree by which individuals feel their job is meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 256). The findings of the Morrison (2006) study identified three influencers of rule breaking: (a) personal enhancement of one’s job performance, (b) collegial support of co-worker’s job performance, or (c) a compelling desire to enhance the customer’s experience. Furthermore, individuals who perceive a higher degree of control over their job performance will be more likely to participate in pro-social rule breaking activities (Morrison, 2006). Morrison also asserts that once the act of breaking a rule can be contagious because if a fellow employee violates a rule, the act of doing so increases the likelihood of another employee breaking that same rule (Morrison, 2006). This propensity to mirror co-worker

behavior can be explained by the social information processing theory which states that social influence of co-workers will be swayed by statements and actions taken by co-workers (Salancik & Pfeffer 1978; Zagenczyk, Scott, Gibney, Murrell, & Thatcher, 2010). The contribution of this body of literature is that the pressure to conform in the workplace can have substantial influence on an individual's propensity to violate organizational rules (Shimko, 1994).

Various researchers have posited that an individual's personality composition also influences a person's desire to deviate from company norms (Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrack, 2004; Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006). With this concept in mind, the Big Five Personality Inventory was identified as a useful tool for measuring an individual's propensity to engage in pro-social rule breaking.

The Big Five personality dimensions are not a representation of a specific theoretical perspective; instead, the subscales represent a compilation of proven personality constructs (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). The five subscales of the Big Five Personality Inventory are 1: Extraversion, 2: Agreeableness, 3: Conscientiousness, 4: Neuroticism, and 5: Openness. The first factor Extraversion, describes sociability, and the traits commonly associated with this dimension are: assertiveness, talkativeness, and other types of positive emotions (Barrick & Mount, 1991; John et al., 2008). The second factor, Agreeableness, focuses on pro-social conduct and the traits of warmth and modesty (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998). The third factor, Conscientiousness, can be described as those that are committed to appropriate task and goal behavior (John et al., 2008). Those individuals possessing traits of dimension are seen as dependable and organized. Neuroticism, the fourth factor, is also sometimes called Emotional Stability. This factor is different from the others in the sense that it contrasts emotional stability with negative emotionality, describing feelings of anxiety or nervousness and prototypical traits like depression and embarrassment (John et al., 2008). Lastly, the fifth factor, Openness, has also been called Openness to Experience (McCrae & Costa, 1987) of which factor has been classified difficult to identify because it is coupled with sociological influences (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Benet-Martínez & John, 1998; John et al., 2008).

## **Scope of the Study**

In a seminal study, Eddleston, Kidder and Litzky (2002) found that pharmaceutical employees routinely face competing expectations from management and customers whereby the latter often have requests that require workers to bend organizational rules. These researchers specifically noted that this dilemma is heightened for tipped workers. Even though this is a key study on the topic of rule breaking, the truth remains that there is a paucity of research for tipped workers in the restaurant industry which measures intent to violate organizational rules for the explicit purpose of satisfying restaurant clientele needs. Therefore, pro-social rule breaking, for the purposes of the study, was defined as violating an organizational rule in an effort to accommodate a restaurant customer's needs. In particular, frontline restaurant employees were presented with a series of service scenarios whereby they had to make a forced decision on whether to (a) comply with an organizational rule or (b) violate the organizational rule in order to meet the customer's needs.

Based on this compilation of literature in tandem with a pressing industry need to understand the array of factors influencing restaurant employee propensity to deviate from organizational rules, the following questions were addressed:

- R<sub>1</sub>. What is the pro-social rule breaking profile (PRSB profile) for this group of restaurant servers?
- R<sub>2</sub>. Are there significant differences in pro-social rule breaking behavior (PRSB) when respondents are classified by demographic variables?
- R<sub>3</sub>. Which BFI personality indicators are commonly displayed by these restaurant servers?
- R<sub>4</sub>. Are there significant differences on BFI indicators when respondents are classified by demographic variables?
- R<sub>5</sub>. Using the stepwise regression procedure, what combination of job characteristics, BFI indicators, and demographics influence pro-social rule breaking behavior?

## **Methodology**

The administered survey consisted of two scales and one service scenario. The initial portion of the survey measured the five subscales that comprise the Big Five Inventory, (BFI): extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991). The BFI is a 44-item self-report measure of personality in the five traits previously mentioned. Rather than using a single adjective in this measure, one



or two prototypical trait adjectives serve as the core item with descriptions to clarify each item (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998). Sample items include, “is helpful and unselfish with others” or “can be moody”.

Next, the participants were given a short scenario to read based on the earlier work of Morrison (2006) with the participant contemplating whether or not to break an organizational rule: accepting expired coupons on behalf of the customer. In general, within the restaurant industry, servers may provide less attention to those customers bearing coupons because many of those diners have been known to undertip for service (Lynn & Withiam, 2008; Maynard & Mupandawana, 2009). Therefore, the effort to be “pro-social” is at the risk of being short changed on a tip. Scenario content was checked for appropriateness and clarity by a panel of academics and industry professionals. After reading the scenario, participants answered six questions that measured the likelihood of breaking the described rule. Based on the earlier work of Morrison (2006), the researchers manipulated the variables of job meaning, autonomy, and co-worker behavior. This generated eight versions of the scenario, presenting eight different experimental conditions. The eight conditions presented all possible combinations of the three manipulated independent variables: autonomy (high or low degree of influence) and co-worker influence (yes or no), job meaning (high or low degree of influence).

### Sampling Process and Components

Participants for this study represented tipped restaurant employees (N=305) from thirteen stores of a nationally branded restaurant chain located in the southeastern United States. Participation was voluntary in this study and each participant received a token of appreciation in the form of a pen. The administered survey consisted of two scales and one service scenario. The initial portion of the survey measured the five subscales that comprise the Big Five Inventory: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991). Next, the participants were given a short scenario to read based on the earlier work of Morrison (2006) with the participant contemplating whether or not to break an organizational rule on accepting expired coupons on behalf of the customer (see Appendix A). In general, within the restaurant industry,

servers may provide less attention to those customers bearing coupons because many of those diners have been known to undertip for service (Lynn & Withiam, 2008; Maynard & Mupandawana, 2009). Therefore, the effort to be pro-social is at the risk of being short changed on a tip. Scenario content was checked for appropriateness and clarity by a panel of academics and industry professionals. After reading the scenario, participants answered six questions that measured the likelihood of breaking the described rule. Participants were asked to evaluate the perceived realism of the scenario and whether or not the participant believed that rule breaking was considered to be pro-social or self-interested. In particular, respondents were told that we were studying rule compliance and rule breaking, and they were asked to read a service scenario (Appendix A). The scenario had two conditions; one where the server had observed fellow co-worker violating a rule under the condition where the company did not give the server latitude to “bend” company rules; the second condition noted that the server observed this same server-to-patron interaction where co-workers had also violated a company rule with the condition being the company did allow the server latitude to “bend” company rules.

To measure personality traits, the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John, Donahue, & Kentle 1991), was used. The BFI is a 44-item self-report measure of personality in the five traits previously mentioned. Rather than using a single adjective in this measure, one or two prototypical trait adjectives serve as the core item with descriptions to clarify each item (Benet-Martínez and John 1998). Sample items include, “is helpful and unselfish with others” or “can be moody”. Reliability for each of the scales in the BFI was over the minimum of .5 and is at, above or close to the acceptable level of .7 (Nunnally, 1978). The resulting coefficient  $\alpha$  for each of the scales of the BFI ranged from .63 to .81.

The dependent variable in this study was pro-social rule breaking. It was measured using six items from the pro-social rule breaking scale developed by Morrison (2006). The coefficient  $\alpha$  for the pro-social rule breaking scale was .79. Exploratory factor analysis using maximum likelihood estimation was used to extract factors from the variable data, and completed this in four iterations. The six items from the pro-social rule breaking scale loaded on to one factor which was capable of explaining 68% of all the variable variances. The factor loadings ranged from .39 to .90 (see Table 2). The survey concluded with the collecting of demographic variables including gender, position, years on the job, and years in the industry.

## **Results**

### Profile of Respondents

Participants were frontline restaurant employees (N=305) from thirteen stores of a nationally branded restaurant chain located in the southeastern United States. Participation was voluntary in this study and each participant received a token of appreciation in the form of a pen. More than half of the participants (55%) were between ages 21-30. Approximately 44% of the participants had been on the job for 1-3 years and approximately 33% had worked in the industry for 3-6 years. The survey was administered while the servers were on premise but had not yet engaged their first table of the evening.

### Pro-social Rule Breaking Profile (R<sub>1</sub>)

The findings for the first research question were based on the basic underlying dimensions of pro-social rule breaking (PRSB) as applied to the hospitality industry. The construct of pro-social rule breaking behavior is based on the work of Morrison (2006). In that study, Morrison indicated that the construct of pro-social rule breaking is comprised of six elements (Table 1). The analysis of Morrison's (2006) pro-social rule breaking individual items yielded that "how likely to violate" had the highest Mean rating along with the greatest standard deviation, and the item of "probability to violate" was the least prevalent at a Mean rating of 2.72 with a standard deviation of 1.29. One of the key points is that there is an obvious gap between "intent to violate" versus "appropriateness of engaging in violation of a rule."

Table 1. Pro-social Rule Breaking Profile

<u>Pro-social Rule Breaking Scale</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>sd</u>
how likely to violate	305	3.19	1.42
violating would be wrong	304	3.03	1.29
feel conflicted about violating	305	3.03	1.25
probability to violate	305	2.98	1.43
how do you feel about violating	304	2.77	1.32
appropriate to violate	305	2.72	1.29

For the purposes of the present study, the dependent variable of pro-social rule breaking was subjected to exploratory factor analysis. This procedure was used to determine if this array mimicked the Mean rating profile and to arrive at a composite pro-social rule breaking variable for the purpose of further statistical analysis.

Exploratory factor analysis using maximum likelihood estimation was used to extract factors from the variable data, and completed in four iterations which resulted in a coefficient  $\alpha$  for the pro-social rule breaking scale of .79. It should be noted that the six pro-social rule breaking items loaded on to one factor which in turn accounted for 68% of all the variable variances. The factor loadings for these individual PRSB items ranged from -.39 to .90 (see Table 2). It is interesting to note that the aggregated responses indicate that these restaurant servers expressed a moderate level of pro-social rule breaking which was similar trend as noted by Morrison's (2006) although the respondents in that study represented a variety of supervisory

jobs in guest relations, financial analyst, project supervisors and from a variety of industries such as entertainment, telecommunications, health care, education, and financial services. The key difference is that Morrison focused on nonsupervisory, first-line managerial, and middle management positions across a variety of job classifications.

Table 2: Results of EFA of PSRB scale

PSRB Item	Factor Loading	Communality	Eigenvalue	Variance (%)
			4.087	68.118
How likely to violate	.903	.816		
Probability to violate	.901	.812		
How appropriate to violate	.836	.700		
Feel about violating	.868	.754		
Feel conflicted	-.388	.151		
Violating would be wrong	-.746	.556		

### Relationship of Demographic Variables and Pro-social Rule Breaking (R<sub>2</sub>)

Morrison (2006) revealed that gender had a significant difference upon the likelihood to participate in pro-social rule breaking whereby females were less likely to partake in pro-social rule breaking. Gender was tested using an independent samples t-test and revealed a significant difference in the means between males ( $M=.3283$ ,  $s.d.=.8849$ ), and females ( $M=-.2037$ ,  $s.d.=.9657$ ;  $t(259.962)=4.910$ ),  $p<.01$ . Also, in contrast to Morrison's findings (2006), the current study found that industry work experience exerted a statistically significant impact upon pro-social rule breaking.

### Big Five Personality Characteristic Profile and Impact on PRSB (R<sub>3</sub>)

The finding that Agreeableness, a BFI item, was the most common personality dimension for this sample of restaurant workers is consistent with existing literature. Studies that used five factor inventories in samples of hotel workers (Kim, Shin, & Umbreit, 2007; Silva 2006) and restaurant workers (Kim, Shin, & Swanger, 2009) were consistent with this study's findings that Agreeableness is the most prominent of the five factors of personality in hospitality employees. Conscientiousness was the second most prominent dimension, which was also consistent with the hospitality literature (Kim et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2007; Silva, 2006). Extraversion was the third most prominent of the five personality dimensions, followed by Openness, and then Neuroticism, which was consistent with recent studies using five factor inventories (Kim et al. 2009; Kim et al. 2007).

While examining the Big Five and pro-social rule breaking it was found that Conscientiousness had the most impact on pro-social rule breaking (Beta= -.228,  $p=.004$ ). The negative direction of the relationship indicates that the more conscientious an individual is, the less likely the individual will participate in pro-social rule breaking. Conscientiousness has been shown to be a valid predictor in across many occupational groups for job performance and focuses on the accomplishment of tasks (Barrick & Mount 1991). Individuals that convey traits from this dimension have a strong sense of purpose and obligation in their work and perform better than those that do not possess these qualities (Barrick & Mount, 1991). In this study's investigation of pro-social rule breaking, it may be suggested that these individuals may possess a stronger sense of compliance to follow organizational procedures. This is a premise that is supported in earlier organizational research by Brief and Motowidlo (1986).

Table 3: Results of Regression (N=305)

Variable	B	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F
Industry Experience				
Gender	-.393	-.177		
Job Meaning	.011	.005		
Autonomy	.155	.072		
Co-worker Behavior	.078	.036		
BFI-Extraversion	.071	.049		
BFI-Agreeableness	.010	.005		
BFI-Conscientiousness	-.441	-.228		
BFI-Neuroticism	-.163	-.116		
BFI-Openness	.031	.015		
			.121	3.992
p<.01				

Neuroticism also revealed a small negative relationship with pro-social rule breaking (Beta= -.116,  $p=.022$ ). Again, the negative direction reveals that the more neurotic an individual is the likelihood to participate in pro-social rule breaking decreases. This is understandable as neurotic individuals tend to lack emotional intelligence which would guide them in their ability to read others' emotions, needs and wants (Newsome, Day, & Catano, 2000).

#### Relationship of Demographic Variables with Big Five Personality Indicators (R<sub>4</sub>)

According to Benet-Martínez and John (1998) gender differences have been small in Big Five inventories and the factor structures replicate across gender equally with the exception of Neuroticism and Agreeableness, which is generally slightly higher in females. In the present study, there was a statistically significant difference in Neuroticism, males ( $M=2.2199$ ,  $s.d=.74710$ ), and females ( $M=- 2.4608$ ,  $s.d=.9657$ ;  $t(303)=-2.690$ ),  $p=.008$ . The differences in the means was small (eta squared=.023) which is consistent with the literature (Benet-Martínez & John, 1998). The difference that is

not consistent with literature is the statistical significance with Openness, males ( $M=3.8863$ ,  $s.d=.54881$ ), and females ( $M= 3.7440$ ,  $s.d=.53131$ ;  $t(303)=2.247$ ),  $p=.025$ . However, the differences in the means was small (eta squared=.016).

Table 4: Gender Differences and Big Five

BFI-Scale		Mean	SD	df	t	Sig.	Eta squared
Extraversion	males	4.0069	.69517	303	-.636	.525	.001
	females	4.0627	.78466				
Agreeableness	males	4.2327	.53843	303	-.996	.320	.003
	females	4.2967	.55058				
Conscientiousness	males	4.0893	.59303	303	-1.592	.112	.008
	females	4.1944	.54027				
Neuroticism	males	2.2199	.74710	303	-2.690	.008	.023
	females	2.4608	.76830				
Openness	males	3.8863	.54881	303	2.247	.025	.016
	females	3.7440	.53131				

For the present study, the findings for years in the industry and Big Five personality dimension revealed one statistically significant relationship. The Kruskal-Wallis test was utilized for these data as the assumptions for MANOVA were violated. Conscientiousness and years in the industry, were



statistically significant  $X^2(4, N=301) = 16.164, p = .003$ . To examine this relationship further the Mann-Whitney test was performed. The results of this test indicated that there is a difference in conscientiousness levels as categorized by length of industry experience,  $z = -2.36, p < .05$ . Those workers with less than one year of experience had an average rank of 30.76 and those workers with more than 9 years of experience had an average mean rank of 46.64. This procedure indicates that those who have worked in the industry for most of their employment years seem to have an enhanced set of work expectations relative to what needs to be done on the job better, and therefore what is acceptable by management, versus those who are newer to the industry and have less than one year of server experience.

Using the stepwise regression procedure, what combination of job characteristics, BFI indicators, and demographics influence pro-social rule breaking behavior? (R<sub>5</sub>)

To determine if the job characteristics of job meaning, autonomy, co-worker behavior, and the Big V personality dimensions had any predictive influence upon pro-social rule breaking, a multiple regression procedure was conducted. The demographic variables of gender and industry experience were also included in this model. The model suggested that this group of independent variables in the regression procedure explained 12.1% of the variation in pro-social rule breaking  $F(10, 290) = 3.992, p < .01$ .

After an examination of the confidence intervals around the b weights, the variables Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and gender included zero as a probable value, indicating that a value of zero was probable. Likewise, the b weights for gender, years of industry experience and BFI-Conscientiousness were also statistically significant, while the other independent variables entered do not reveal any statistical significance. Moving forward, this implies that the results for BFI-Conscientiousness, industry experience, and gender should be retained in the specified model.

Inspection of the Beta weights revealed that a standardized unit change in Y with respect to gender (Beta = -.187) was higher than a standardized unit change in Y with respect to Conscientiousness (Beta = -.172). To check for potential problems with multicollinearity, the VIF was consulted for the predictors and was not an issue as the VIF for all predictors did not exceed 10.00. Further inspections of the plot of the standardized

residuals against the predicted values revealed that there were no nonlinear trends or heteroscedasticity. Therefore, the distribution of the standardized errors was indicative of normality.

In summary, Table 5 shows the means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and correlations among the study variables. As shown, participants reported, on average, a moderate likelihood of rule breaking. There were significant correlations between pro-social rule breaking and gender, with women reporting that they were less likely to participate, and significant correlations with years in the current job, and years in the industry. The most prominent personality dimension for this group of hospitality employees was Agreeableness with a reported Mean of 4.27. Conscientiousness was the second most prominent dimension with a Mean rating of 4.15.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for all Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. PSRB	2.93	1.09	(.79)										
2. Autonomy	.51	.501	.108										
3. Co-worker behavior	.53	.500	.068	-.004									
4. Job meaning	.51	.501	.016	.016	.008								
5. BFI-E	4.04	.751	.019	.033	-.009	-.085	(.63)						
6. BFI-A	4.27	.546	-.068	.047	-.069	-.072	.131*	(.76)					
7. BFI-C	4.15	.562	-.128	.049	-.036	-.085	.340**	.477**	(.76)				
8. BFI-N	-2.37	-.768	-.052	-.091	.000	.088	-.242**	-.521**	-.506**	(.81)			
9. BFI-O	3.80	.542	.035	-.029	-.046	-.006	.247**	.043	.167**	-.131*	(.69)		
10. Gender	1.62	.487	-.242**	-.075	-.079	.003	.037	.057	.091	.153**	-.128*		
11. Years in current job	2.44	1.10	.185**	.106	.042	-.005	.089	-.114*	.062	.052	.026	.046	
12. Years in industry	3.21	1.22	.179**	.116*	.045	.038	.125*	-.086	.204**	-.019	.115*	-.069	.680**

Scale reliabilities in parentheses on diagonal.

\*.  $p < 0.05$  level (2-tailed).

\*\* .  $p < 0.01$  level (2-tailed)

## Implications

There is little evidence in the hospitality literature on how tipped employees are forced to accommodate patron wishes. Conversely, there is a dearth of studies exist on how organizational rules challenge worker performance. Therefore the results of this study contribute to research on worker compliance with organizational rules within the context of satisfying patron requests which are often contradictory with those rules. Clearly there are times when employees choose not to comply with organizational rules or to accommodate a patron request. Understanding such situations assists management in understanding the limits of compliance as well as the conditions that influence non-compliance of company standards.

There are three major conclusions emanating from this study. First, restaurant servers in this study indicated a moderate likelihood of pro-social rule breaking on the behalf of a customer, with males being more likely to partake; second, the most prominent personality dimension in this sample of frontline restaurant workers is Agreeableness; lastly, the best predictor for not engaging in the act of pro-social rule breaking is governed by the concept of Conscientiousness. From a managerial perspective these findings imply that restaurant operators can select and then place individuals who are more inclined to engage in pro-social rule breaking, in accordance with company parameters, by using Big Five personality instrument as a placement instrument. This assumption implies that if high guest satisfaction scores are important and leaders truly feel that the “guest is always right,” hiring individuals with a high degree of Agreeableness would be best. If the leader wants rules followed to perfection and not be just guidelines they should hire for Conscientiousness. Furthermore, this study has implications for researchers as well as managers in the industry. The results from this study suggest that restaurant managers to some degree may be able to encourage pro-social behavior from their employees. Managers can have an element of control within the hiring process with the aid of a personality assessment tool. However, managers must take caution while educating and training their employees to understand that some gestures that are beneficial to the customer may be dysfunctional for all other parties. Not all managers may desire their employees to act upon pro-social rule breaking. It would also be beneficial for management to grasp how employees evaluate the benefits and risks associated with violating a rule (Morrison 2006; Shimko 1994). If employees consistently violate an organizational rule, then managers should

evaluate the worthiness of that rule, how an individual's organizational commitment influences that decision, if job satisfaction exerts an influence on that decision, and whether the rule was clearly communicated and reinforced and if company sanctions are strong enough to deter non-compliance.

### **Study Limitations**

The findings of this study are limited by the size and type of restaurants included in this sample. Therefore the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other segments of tipped employees in other segments such as private clubs, fine dining, or cruise line dining operations. In addition, the sample size is somewhat limited in size and scope which means that replicating these pro-social scenarios within similar restaurant operations and within other geographic segments is needed for reliability and validity purposes.

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## APPENDIX A

### The Scenario

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#### *Scenario*

You are a server at a restaurant that is part of a nationally recognized brand. You have been with the company for 3 years. Your responsibilities include, among other things, taking orders from customers. You have just taken a dinner order from a customer, and the customer presented you with a coupon. Upon looking at the coupon, you realize that the coupon has expired. You know that there are strict policies in place for coupons. The policy of primary concern is that servers are not allowed to accept expired coupons without approval from their manager. Unfortunately your manager is busy helping another server with a large party so you cannot ask her whether or not you can accept the coupon. You are considering whether to accept the coupon without approval, even though this would mean violating the policy, and you could get in trouble for this. You are really torn. Although you have nothing personally to gain by accepting the coupon, it would be good for the customer and might also be good for the company.

#### *High Condition*

As you think about what to do, you consider the fact that you have much freedom to make decisions regarding your work. You also consider the fact that you heard of other servers violating the policy in the past. In addition, you consider that this job does have much personal meaning to you.

#### *Low Condition*

As you think about what to do, you consider the fact that you have never felt that you have much freedom to make decisions regarding your work. You also consider the fact that you have never heard of other servers violating the policy in the past. In addition, you consider that this job does not have much personal meaning to you.