

## Exploring the Influence of Workplace Relationships on Work-Related Attitudes and Behaviors in the Hospitality Work Environment

By: Lawrence E. Ross and [James S. Boles](#)

Larry E. Ross and James S. Boles, "Exploring the Influence of Workplace Relationships on Work-Related Attitudes and Behaviors in the Hospitality Work Environment". *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 13 (No. 2, 1994), 155-171. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0278-4319\(94\)90036-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0278-4319(94)90036-1)



© 1994 Elsevier Science Ltd. This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](#).

### Abstract:

Food servers are an important resource in generating revenue and insuring customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Some important issues facing managers in the hospitality industry include role stress and its effects on performance and job satisfaction among tipped food servers. This paper explores how the work environment can influence employee attitudes and outcomes. Findings generally support a diverse collection of previously researched dimensions. This study represents the first such published attempt at validation of the proposed model. Implications for management are discussed in relation to the various relationships that were examined in the model.

**Keywords:** work environment | role stress | performance | job | satisfaction | reward | motivation | foodservers

### Article:

#### Introduction

The hospitality industry represents an important segment of the economy since it is the second largest employer in the US and does approximately US\$2.5 trillion a year in business. (Hosteur, 1992). A significant number of employees in this industry are foodservice workers (estimated at 9 million by the National Restaurant Association, 1993). Many of those employees, particularly tipped food servers, are in direct contact with customers. Previous studies suggest that personnel filling these boundary spanning positions between their firm and it's customers typically experience high levels of role conflict and role ambiguity (Schneider, 1980; Behrman and Perreault, 1984).

A number of studies in organizational research have focused on role conflict, role ambiguity, and the work environment as key constructs in determining workplace attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Fisher and Gitelson, 1983; Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Tyagi, 1982). Role perceptions have been researched extensively in many different occupational settings, including sales, medical workers, managers, retail employees, and educators (Jackson and Schuler, 1985). Previous studies have

linked role conflict and role ambiguity to important workplace constructs including employee performance and decreased job satisfaction (Tyagi, 1982; Fisher and Gitelson, 1983; Hampton, Dubinsky, and Skinner, 1986).

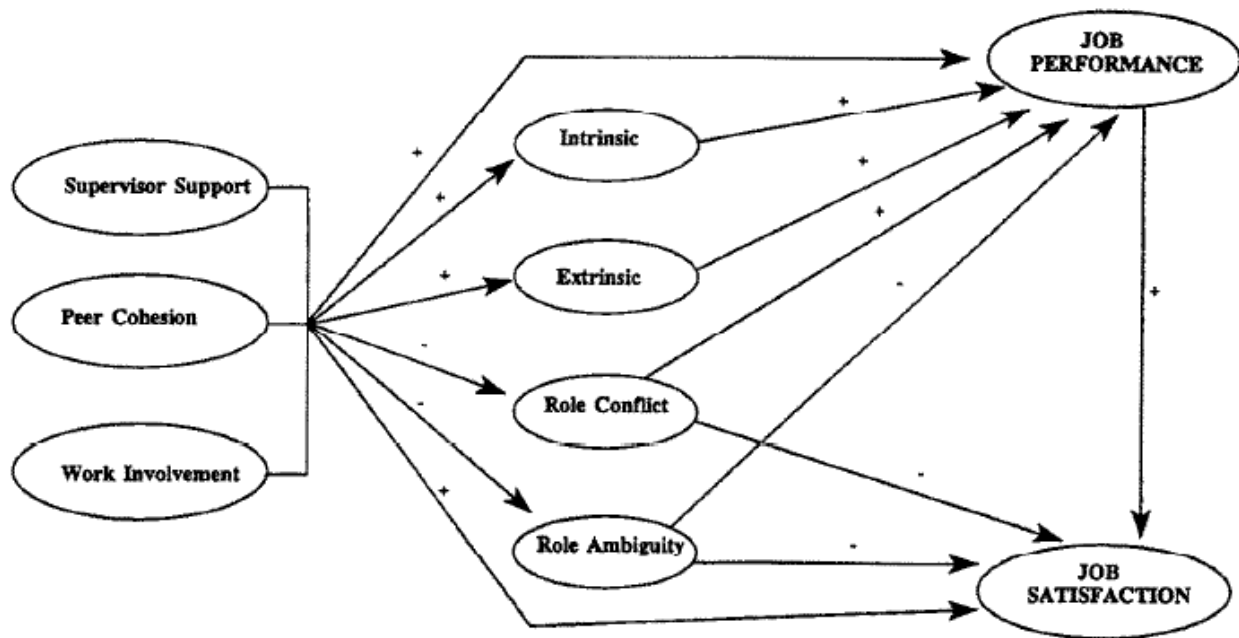
The work environment provided for workers also has been examined extensively (Leigh, Lucas, and Woodman, 1988; Savicki and Cooley, 1987; Tyagi, 1985). Research indicates that employee perceptions of the workplace are very important since components of the work environment such as supervisory support, leadership consideration and the closeness of supervision have been identified as antecedents of role conflict, role ambiguity, or both (Schaubroeck, Cotton, and Jennings, 1989; Teas, 1983; Walker, Churchill, and Ford, 1975). Previous studies in marketing settings have further demonstrated the influence of various supervisory behaviors on job satisfaction, motivation, and performance (e.g. Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Kohli, 1989; Mill, 1985; Tyagi, 1982). However, other aspects of the work environment have received less attention in the literature.

The work environment can be viewed as consisting of several broad categories of ‘. . . stressful and supportive aspects of the job milieu’ (Billings and Moos, 1982, p. 215). These include work stressors, work motivators, physical surroundings, and co-worker relationships, as well as a variety of supervisory and management actions and behaviors (Moos, 1981; Newman, 1977). Previous research indicates that supportive interpersonal relationships in the workplace are one very important component of a favorable work environment (Kirmeyer and Lin, 1987; Parkes, 1982). Billings and Moos (1982) suggest that there are three types of work relationships: (1) the extent supervisors support employees and encourage interpersonal support among workers (supervisor support); (2) how friendly and supportive co-workers are to each other (peer cohesion); and, (3) the extent that workers are concerned and dedicated to their work (work involvement). These three areas address the degree of social support that employees can obtain from their work environment. Support, from both work and/or non-work sources, is an important construct that has been identified as an antecedent of various attitudes and behaviors including: burnout, job satisfaction, and anxiety (Parkes, 1982; Schwab, Jackson, and Schuler, 1986; Seltzer and Numerof, 1988).

The current study attempts to expand what is known about the influence of supportive work relationships (supervisor support, peer cohesion, and work involvement) in an organizational setting. Effects of these work relationships on role conflict, role ambiguity, extrinsic and intrinsic reward motivation, performance, and job satisfaction will be examined (See Figure 1). Although some work environment factors such as supervisory support and work involvement have been studied in a variety of other work settings (e.g. Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986; Savicki and Cooley, 1987), a recent review of the hospitality literature produced little evidence of any research directly related to the topics examined in this study.

Tipped food servers were selected as the population of interest for several reasons. First, they perform a boundary spanning role serving as the interface between the firm and the customer. In fact, boundary spanners represent the firm in the minds of many customers (Johnston, Parasuraman, Futrell, and Black, 1990). Due to the nature of their job, they often experience much greater levels of role conflict and role ambiguity than workers in non-boundary roles (Schneider, 1980). Thus, if workplace relationships can influence role perceptions this group

should represent an ideal population to study. Additionally, the current study's findings may offer some insight into the workplace attitudes and behaviors of other boundary spanning service employees.



**Figure 1.** Hypothesized influences of relationships in the work environment on job outcomes

A review of the relevant literature follows, describing the workplace attitudes and behaviors that can be influenced by work relationships. Then, a model is developed detailing the hypotheses tested by the current study. Findings obtained from the statistical analyses and the managerial/theoretical implications of those results are then presented. Finally, the paper offers some suggestions for future research concerning issues relating to the work environment.

## Relevant literature

### Work environment

According to Billings and Moos (1982), supportive work relationships are characterized by perceptions of increased social support from supervisors, close relationships with coworkers, and high levels of job involvement. Previous studies indicate that a supportive work environment improves worker attitudes and behaviors in both business and nonbusiness settings (Leigh et al., 1988; Savicki and Cooley, 1987; Teas, 1983). Positive perceptions of workplace relationships can reduce work-related stress, increase job satisfaction and motivation, as well as improve performance (Kirmeyer and Dougherty, 1988; Kohli, 1985; Tyagi, 1985).

Behrman and Perreault (1984) demonstrated that supervisory actions such as closeness of supervision and allowing employees to have some influence over work standards reduced role ambiguity and role conflict among industrial salespeople. Leigh *et al.* (1988) suggested that positive perceptions of the organizational climate reduce role stress (role conflict/ambiguity). Similar findings were reported in Teas' (1983) examination of the effects of supervisory

behaviors on salesperson role conflict and role ambiguity. Employee job satisfaction also can be influenced by various components of the work environment and/or supervisory activities. For example, a supervisor's initiating of structure and demonstrating consideration for his/her employees was found to increase job satisfaction among industrial salespeople (Teas, 1983). Leadership consideration also has been linked to work satisfaction for the salesforce of a consumer good manufacturer (Johnston, Parasuraman, and Futrell, 1989). However, Kohli (1989) reported that these supervision factors only improved job satisfaction for some industrial salespeople, not for everyone.

In addition to reducing levels of role conflict and role ambiguity, while improving employee job satisfaction, interpersonal factors in the work environment have been linked to work motivation (Mill, 1985). Tyagi (1985) demonstrated the importance of a variety of supervisory behaviors such as leadership consideration, as well as management concern and awareness, as predictors of intrinsic and/or extrinsic motivation. These findings support the contention that motivation levels in both sales and hospitality settings can be increased by the use of appropriate supervisory action.

While the effects of workplace relationships on role stress, work motivation, and satisfaction are well documented, less emphasis has been given to the importance of supervisory actions in relation to performance. Although few studies have been directed toward this issue, results from this research stream indicate the work environment may hold promise as a predictor of performance. In a marketing setting, Tyagi (1982, 1985), indicated that both supervisor support and interaction predicted salesperson performance. Furthermore, Hampton *et al.* (1986) determined that initiating structure leads to improved performance levels. The limited amount of available research suggests the relationship between an employee's work environment and job performance is one that needs further exploration.

### Role conflict/ambiguity

Role conflict is 'the degree of incongruity or incompatibility of expectations associated with a role' (Miles and Perreault, 1976, p. 2). Role ambiguity is a second key aspect of role stress. Role ambiguity reflects an employee's uncertainty about others' expectations of the employee's job and the consequences of different aspects of that role (Behrman and Perreault, 1984). Research indicates that role conflict and role ambiguity, also called role stress (Bedeian and Armenakis, 1981), are common among service employees (Schneider and Bowen, 1985). In a restaurant setting tipped food servers interact directly with customers, functioning as boundary spanners. In boundary roles, it is common for employees to experience conflicting or ambiguous feelings with respect to how they should carry out their job (Behrman and Perreault, 1984). An example of this is the conflict experienced when salespeople must simultaneously fulfill their clients' needs and the needs of their own firm.

Previous studies suggest that role stress is an antecedent of a variety of important work-related attitudes and outcomes. For instance, role conflict and role ambiguity have a negative effect on job satisfaction (Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986; Schaubroeck *et al.*, 1988). In addition, some studies indicate that role constructs (such as role conflict, role ambiguity and/or role clarity) negatively influence employee work motivation (Hampton, *er al.*, 1986; Tyagi, 1982).

Role conflict and role ambiguity also can affect performance, although the exact direction of their influence is unresolved at this time. Some research indicates that these role constructs are negatively linked to performance (Schuler, 1977). Other findings demonstrate that role conflict (Bagozzi, 1978) and role ambiguity (Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986) are negatively related to job performance. However, several marketing studies have discovered a positive relationship between role conflict and performance among employees occupying boundary positions (Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986). It appears that the type of position being studied may determine the nature of the role conflict/job performance relationship.

### Motivation, performance, and job satisfaction

Motivation can be viewed in two parts, intrinsic and extrinsic (Sujan, 1986; Tyagi, 1982). Intrinsic motivation comes internally from the desire to do a job well. Extrinsic motivation is defined as externally mediated rewards such as pay or promotion (Tyagi, 1985). Past research suggests employees may value both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and that both types can influence performance (Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986; Tyagi, 1985). However, not all studies have found a significant relationship between motivation and performance (Hampton *et al.*, 1986). Once again, the nature of the position may help determine the relationship between motivation and performance.

Organizational research indicates that in some positions, performance is an antecedent of job satisfaction (Bluen, Barling, and Burns, 1990; Bagozzi, 1978). However, in a number of studies the relationship between these variables is either weak or non-existent (Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986). Iaffaldano and Muchinsky (1985) conclude that the relationship between the two variables, performance and job satisfaction, although possibly significant, is relatively low.

The available evidence suggests that supportive work relationships can have far ranging influences on work-related attitudes and outcomes in a variety of employment settings. However, aside from supervisory related constructs, the influence of workplace relationships does not appear to have been adequately tested in boundary spanning positions. In particular, previous studies indicate that role stress, can be reduced by support from sources at work. Beyond their influence on role constructs, research also suggests that positive workplace relationships may increase motivation, performance, and job satisfaction in a variety of settings.

### Study hypotheses

Tipped food service workers were selected for study due to the size of the workforce and their role in a boundary spanning position. Based on the literature, this study proposes that a variety of work-related attitudes and behaviors among these tipped food service employees are influenced by workplace relationships. The current study contends that role stress figures prominently in determining job satisfaction and performance due to the boundary spanning nature of service encounters in this type of employment. If work relationships influence role stress and other important workplace constructs, then the current study should be able to demonstrate new ways

to improve management practices and help further our understanding relating to employees that interact directly with customers. Figure 1 provides a model based on the following hypotheses:

- H<sub>1a</sub> Positive relationships in the workplace will reduce role conflict (Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Hampton *et al.*, 1988; Johnston *et al.*, 1989; Teas, 1983).
- H<sub>1b</sub> Positive relationships in the workplace will reduce role ambiguity (Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Hampton *et al.*, 1988; Johnston *et al.*, 1989; Teas, 1983).
- H<sub>2a</sub> Positive relationships in the workplace will increase levels of intrinsic reward motivation (Tyagi, 1982; Tyagi, 1985).
- H<sub>2b</sub> Positive relationships in the workplace will increase levels of extrinsic reward motivation (Tyagi, 1982; Tyagi, 1985).
- H<sub>3a</sub> Role conflict will be positively related to job performance, while role ambiguity will be negatively related to performance (Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986).
- H<sub>3b</sub> Positive perceptions of work relationships will increase job performance (Tyagi, 1985).
- H<sub>3c</sub> Intrinsic and extrinsic reward motivation will increase job performance (Tyagi, 1985).
- H<sub>4a</sub> Positive perceptions of work relationships will increase job satisfaction (Iaffaldano and Muchinsky, 1985; Kohli, 1985; Kohli, 1989).
- H<sub>4b</sub> Role conflict and role ambiguity will reduce job satisfaction (Teas, 1983).
- H<sub>4c</sub> Job performance will increase job satisfaction (Iaffaldano and Muchinsky, 1985; Kohli, 1985; Kohli, 1989).

## Research method

Data for the current study was obtained through a regional survey of tipped food servers at moderately priced (\$8-12 per person) restaurants. The region was comprised of six southeastern states. Participating restaurants were selected from eight major cities within the region. Surveys were administered by the researchers to approximately 380 tipped food servers and of those, 184 were complete and included in the current analysis, representing a forty-eight percent response rate. This data collection approach was selected in order to improve response rates and eliminate management involvement in the process. By reducing management's role in data collection, one potential source of bias to questions about workplace relationships may have been eliminated. Participants in the study were assured that their responses would remain confidential. The survey instrument addressed a variety of organizational and personal constructs related to job satisfaction and performance.

The group of employees being studied are primarily compensated through commissions (tips) and perform what may be described as a selling function in the hospitality industry (Kimes and Mutkoski, 1991; LaGreca, 1989). This group of employees was selected because their job is often associated with high levels of role conflict and role ambiguity. Respondents in this group averaged 27 years of age and had approximately 2.5 years of tenure with their present firm. Sixty-four percent of these respondents were single and forty-one percent were male. More than eighty percent of the sample had some college education (many were currently students) and thirty-eight percent had a college degree.

## Description of measures

Constructs used in the study include: role conflict and role ambiguity; work relationships (supervisor support, peer cohesion and work involvement) intrinsic and extrinsic reward motivation; performance; and job satisfaction.

Three sub-scales of the Relationship dimension of the Work Environment Scale were used to assess the quality of workplace relationships (Moos, 1981). This scale was selected for several reasons. First, it has demonstrated acceptable reliability in previous studies across a wide range of employee groups including salespeople, public safety workers, and health care professionals (Billings and Moos, 1982; Kirmeyer and Lin, 1987; Parkes, 1982). Second, the sub-scales include items relating to several different types of work relationships including: supervisors (supervisor support), peers (peer cohesion), and overall employee involvement in their job (work involvement) (Moos, 1981). Examples of survey questions include: supervisors really stand up for their people (supervisor support); people take a personal interest in each other (peer cohesion); and, the work is very interesting (work involvement). Each sub-scale has 9 items scored yes-no. Scores were summed according to the appropriate scoring directions (Moos, 1981). Due to the dichotomous nature of the scale items, reliabilities for these measures were computed using KR20 which is the appropriate measure of reliability with dichotomous items (Specht, 1986).

Role conflict and role ambiguity were measured using the Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman instrument (1970). This scale was chosen because it is perhaps the most widely used measure of role constructs that is available (e.g., Bedeian and Armenakis, 1981; Netemeyer *et al.*, 1990). By utilizing such a commonly accepted measure, our findings can be more readily compared with previous research, thus allowing our findings to further our understanding of what is known about the influences of supportive work relationships. Role conflict and role ambiguity have eight and six items respectively. Scores were summed to arrive at overall measures of these two constructs. Cronbach's alpha for these measures were 0.78 and 0.79 respectively.

Brayfield and Rothe's (1951) Job Satisfaction Scale consists of eighteen items. This measure was used to assess the overall job satisfaction of respondents. Scores were reported on a 1 to 5 rating scale where '1 = strongly disagree' and '5 = strongly agree', and then summed. Higher scores reflect greater job satisfaction. This measure was selected for two reasons. First, it is a global measure of job satisfaction that is applicable to a wide variety of employment settings. Second, this scale has demonstrated reliabilities (measured by Cronbach's alpha) typically exceeding 0.80 in studies examining a wide range of employment types including hospitality (e.g., Kent, 1982; Moorman, 1991).

The intrinsic and extrinsic reward motivation measures are adapted from Sujana (1986). These items were adapted to reflect the differences between the requirements of outside sales jobs (where Sujana's original research was done) and the current study's inside services selling positions. Intrinsic motivation comes from internal rewards arising from performing the job itself. Extrinsic items relate to external rewards occurring due to task performance. The intrinsic motivation scale has four items while the extrinsic motivation measure is made up of two items.

Scoring direction indicate that the items should be summed for each measure. This measure was selected for two reasons. First, it represents a brief measure of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Second, it has been successfully utilized to examine employee motivation in boundary spanning positions (Sujan, 1986). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are 0.65 and 0.53 respectively.

Performance was measured by an eight item self-report measure. The items used in the current research were adapted from previously developed measures to reelect the nature of the food servers' position (Busch and Bush, 1978; Hampton et al., 1986; Pym and Auld, 1965). This measure's had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84. Similar self-report performance measures have previously been used in marketing to study sales performance (Pruden and Reese, 1972). Busch and Bush (1978) suggest that a self-report measure taps a wide range of behaviors related to successful performance that may not be included if income is the sole measure of employee performance. Self-report measures also tend to correlate highly with more objective ratings of performance (Pym and Auld, 1965).

## Results

Many of the constructs included in the study are highly correlated. Means, standard deviations, and reliabilities for these constructs are shown in Table 1. Table 2 presents the correlations between study constructs. Supervisor support is related to every construct in the study except extrinsic motivation. The same is true for both role conflict and role ambiguity. Work involvement and peer cohesion are correlated with all constructs except job performance and extrinsic motivation. These correlations are consistent with previous research and indicate that work relationships and role constructs are related, either directly or indirectly, to the other constructs in the study.

**Table 1.** Constructs included in the hypothesized model Means, Standard Deviations and Reliabilities

Scale	No. of items	Mean	S.D.	n =	Cronbach's Alpha
Role Stress					
Role Conflict	8	22.59	5.97	162	0.78
Role Ambiguity	6	23.88	3.93	162	0.79
Work Relationships					
Supervisor Support	9	12.73	2.43	162	0.70
Peer Cohesion	9	11.22	1.66	162	0.57
Work Involvement	9	12.12	2.55	162	0.78
Reward Motivation					
Intrinsic Rewards	4	9.88	3.25	162	0.69
Extrinsic Rewards	2	5.00	2.04	162	0.53
Job Performance	4	12.55	4.21	162	0.84
Job Satisfaction	18	46.32	13.11	162	0.88

Because of the level of correlation between the work environment measures, tests were undertaken to determine if multi-collinearity between these independent variables was a significant problem. To examine this issue, tolerance values and variance inflation factors for



each of the work environment constructs were examined. For these measures, the highest tolerance level discovered was 0.70, while the greatest variance inflation factor equaled 1.54. The values for tolerance levels and inflation factors for this study indicate that multi-collinearity is not a significant problem (Hair *et al.*, 1992).

**Table 2.** Correlations of study constructs

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Supervisor Support	(0.70)	0.51	0.54	-0.50	-0.40	0.41	-0.06	0.49	-0.16
2. Work Involvement		(0.78)	0.59	-0.40	-0.33	0.45	0.01	0.62	-0.12
3. Peer Cohesion			(0.57)	-0.43	-0.30	0.30	-0.07	0.42	-0.11
4. Role Conflict				(0.78)	0.36	-0.31	0.08	-0.38	0.16
5. Role Ambiguity					(0.79)	-0.31	0.03	-0.38	-0.16
6. Intrinsic Motivation						(0.69)	0.09	0.72	0.18
7. Extrinsic Motivation							(0.53)	0.05	0.11
8. Job Satisfaction								(0.88)	0.11
9. Performance									(0.84)

Correlations equal to or >0.17 are significant  $p < 0.01$ .

Correlations >0.15 are significant  $p < 0.05$ .

Reliabilities are in parentheses on the diagonal.

### Tests of hypotheses

A hierarchical regression analysis was used to examine the hypothesized relationships. This allowed the unique contribution of each construct to be identified. In the regression equations predicting role conflict and role ambiguity, as well as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the three work relationship constructs were entered as predictors. The order of entry was: work involvement; then peer cohesion; and finally, supervisory support. In the equation predicting job performance, the two motivation constructs were entered last, following the work environment variables and both role constructs. Finally, to predict job satisfaction, the order of entry in the prediction equation was identical except that job performance was entered last as a predictor.

**Table 3.** Results of regression analysis

Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	T for β	β
Role Conflict				
Work Involvement	0.161	0.161	-1.70 <sup>d</sup>	-0.140
Peer Cohesion	0.208	0.047	-1.73 <sup>d</sup>	-0.146
Supervisor Support	0.284	0.076	-4.36 <sup>a</sup>	-0.341
Model F = 23.57, $p < 0.001$				
Role Ambiguity				
Work Involvement	0.113	0.113	-1.98 <sup>c</sup>	-0.173
Peer Cohesion	0.130	0.017	-0.726	-0.067
Supervisor Support	0.170	0.040	-2.95 <sup>a</sup>	-0.247
Model F = 12.34, $p < 0.001$				

<sup>a</sup> $p < 0.001$

<sup>b</sup> $p < 0.01$

<sup>c</sup> $p < 0.05$

<sup>d</sup> $p < 0.1$

Results demonstrate some support for both H<sub>1a</sub> and H<sub>1b</sub> (See Tables 2 and 3). Positive perceptions of supervisor support reduce levels of role conflict ( $T = -4.36, p < 0.01$ ) and role ambiguity ( $T = -2.94, p < 0.01$ ), while work involvement also is negatively related to role ambiguity ( $T = -1.98, p < 0.05$ ). These findings are in the predicted direction. However, contrary to the hypotheses, work involvement is not a predictor of role conflict and peer cohesion does not predict either role conflict or role ambiguity. The regression equation indicates that work relationships account for about eighteen percent of the variance in role ambiguity and twenty-nine percent for role conflict. These results confirm the influence of supervisory behavior and work involvement on the role perceptions of food servers.

Limited support is found for H<sub>2a</sub> with both work involvement ( $T = 4.62, p < 0.01$ ) and supervisor support ( $T = 2.70, p < 0.01$ ) serving as predictors of intrinsic motivation (See Table 4). The prediction equation with all three variables included accounts for almost thirty percent of observed differences in intrinsic motivation. In the case of extrinsic reward motivation (H<sub>2b</sub>), none of the work relationship measures serve as significant predictors, and the overall regression equation is not significant (See Table 4).

**Table 4.** Results of Regression Analysis

Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	T for β	β
Intrinsic Rewards				
Work Involvement	0.251	0.251	4.62 <sup>a</sup>	0.384
Peer Cohesion	0.256	0.005	0.15	0.013
Supervisor Support	0.285	0.030	2.70 <sup>b</sup>	0.213
Model F = 23.51, p < 0.001				
Extrinsic Rewards				
Work Involvement	0.017	0.017	-0.26	-0.025
Peer Cohesion	0.026	0.009	-0.83	-0.083
Supervisor Support	0.033	0.007	-1.31	-0.104
Model F = 1.99, p < 0.15				

<sup>a</sup>p < 0.001

<sup>b</sup>p < 0.01

In the prediction equation for job performance, the three work environment constructs were entered first, followed by role ambiguity, role conflict, intrinsic motivation, and finally extrinsic motivation. Hypotheses 3<sub>a,c</sub> receive partial support. Role ambiguity ( $T = 0-2.92, p < 0.01$ ), role conflict ( $T = 3.90, p < 0.05$ ), and intrinsic motivation ( $T = 3.16, p < 0.01$ ) all predict job performance. As hypothesized, role conflict and intrinsic motivation were positively related to performance while role ambiguity is negatively related to performance. However, H<sub>3c</sub> is only partially supported since extrinsic motivation did not effect performance. The hypothesis related to influences of work relationships on performance, H<sub>3b</sub>, is rejected. None of the three work environment measures directly affected food server performance. The overall R<sup>2</sup> for the regression equation containing all variables is approximately twenty percent. This compares favorably with some other attempts to predict performance in previous sales management and marketing studies (Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986; Hampton *et al.*, 1986). It appears, the effects of work relationships on performance are indirect, operating through role conflict, role ambiguity, and intrinsic motivation (See Table 5).

**Table 5.** Results of Regression Analysis

Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	T for β	β
Job Performance				
Work Involvement	0.003	0.003	-0.42	-0.043
Peer Cohesion	0.015	0.012	-0.78	-0.076
Supervisor Support	0.019	0.007	-0.67	-0.064
Role Ambiguity	0.053	0.034	-2.92 <sup>b</sup>	-0.237
Role Conflict	0.123	0.070	3.90 <sup>a</sup>	0.338
Intrinsic Rewards	0.173	0.050	3.16 <sup>a</sup>	0.268
Extrinsic Rewards	0.178	0.005	1.02	0.074
Model F = 5.02, p < 0.001				
Job Satisfaction				
Work Involvement	0.436	0.436	6.52	0.462
Peer Cohesion	0.445	0.009	0.26	0.019
Supervisor Support	0.489	0.044	2.79	0.195
Role Ambiguity	0.502	0.013	-0.68	-0.041
Role Conflict	0.514	0.012	-3.07	-0.202
Job Performance	0.555	0.041	3.89	0.217
Model F = 33.90, p < 0.001				

<sup>a</sup>p < 0.001<sup>b</sup>p < 0.01

Considerable support was found for H<sub>4a,b,c</sub> which relate to predicting job satisfaction. To examine these hypotheses, the same prediction equation was used as for job performance, except that job performance was added as a predictor. Both supervisor support (T = 2.79, p < 0.01) and work involvement (T = 6.52, p < 0.01) are positively related to job satisfaction. In addition, higher performance also leads to greater satisfaction with the job (T = 3.89, p < 0.01). In contrast, role conflict is negatively related to job satisfaction (T = -3.07, p < 0.05) and neither role ambiguity nor peer cohesion are significant predictors. The entire equation accounts for over fifty percent of the variance in job satisfaction (See Table 5).

## Discussion

Findings from the current study extend what is known about the influences of the work environment on food servers specifically and boundary role employees in general. First, the results indicate that other aspects of the work environment beyond supervisory behaviors, such as work involvement, influence a variety of important workplace attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, this study demonstrates that these effects are significant for boundary-spanning personnel in a hospitality services setting.

In the current research, supervisor support reduces both role conflict and role ambiguity. This finding is not surprising since previous research indicates that a variety of supervisory and leadership behaviors can increase role clarity and/or reduce role stress (Hampton *et al.*, 1986; Johnston *et al.*, 1989). In addition to its influence on role conflict and ambiguity, it has a direct, positive effect on job satisfaction. This finding is interesting since some research in retail settings indicates that the link between supervision and job satisfaction is only indirect, operating through role conflict and/or role ambiguity (Hampton *et al.*, 1986). However, findings from this study are in agreement with others that also report a direct link between favorably perceived supervisory or

leadership actions and job satisfaction (Kohli, 1989; Teas, 1983). These results emphasize the importance of supervisory personnel exerting a positive, supportive influence on employees.

Work Involvement predicts foodserver role ambiguity but not role conflict. It is possible that the very nature of the food server's job results in role conflict with the customer's role expectations for their server being different than those role expectations of management with regard to the foodservers actions, behaviors, and level of interaction with the customer. This could be particularly true in cases where there is inadequate staffing to provide the level of service that certain customers expect. In that instance, work involvement could not be expected to reduce role conflict and in fact, might lead to an increase in the level of construct.

On the other hand, work involvement reduces levels of role ambiguity in restaurant service settings. Involvement with the tasks associated with the job may reduce role ambiguity in several ways. First, it can make the foodserver more effective and, therefore, better able to deal with the ambiguity that is inherent in the situation. Second, involvement also could help an individual better understand exactly what is expected of him/her and how to best accomplish his/her work.

Work involvement also predicts intrinsic motivation. This finding is consistent with that of Dubinsky and Hartley (1986) who found that job involvement explained almost ten percent of the variance in retail salesperson motivation. Work involvement, operating through intrinsic motivation, also indirectly influences performance. This finding also is not particularly surprising since intrinsic motivation has previously been linked to increased performance in other marketing settings where the employee performs a selling function (Tyagi, 1982; Tyagi, 1985). Another point of interest is that work involvement has the strongest direct effect on job satisfaction of any construct in the prediction equation. This finding extends what is known about work environment influences because work involvement has not received nearly as much research attention as supervisor behaviors with respect to affecting levels of employee job satisfaction (Teas, 1983; Kohli, 1985). These results concerning the effects of work involvement in a restaurant setting have several important implications for restaurant managers.

Establishing an involved workplace can yield large benefits through increases in motivation and performance. By imparting a belief that the task is important, managers and co-workers, may be able to improve the level of employee intrinsic motivation whereby employees receive internal rewards simply by doing the job. While many people take jobs as foodservers until they can 'find something better', helping these workers develop more involvement with the job, may increase the individual's intrinsic reward from doing the job well and, consequently, increase customer satisfaction with the dining experience. By increasing an employee's level of work involvement management also might see an increase in server performance levels and overall job satisfaction. In a boundary spanning service position, it may be imperative that the employee receive some satisfaction simply from doing the job well, since this could allow them to better accept the times when they have to deal with a difficult customer.

The third component of the work environment examined by this study is peer cohesion. Results in Table 1 indicate that peer cohesion is significantly correlated with all but two of the constructs included in the study ( $p < 0.01$ ). However, when placed in the regression equation, it does not influence those variables that are affected by supervisor support or work involvement.

There are several possible explanations for this finding. First, the reliability of the peer cohesion measure was low (0.57). The marginal measurement of this construct may have attenuated any effects that it had on the dependent measures. Second, the nature of a tipped food servers position is such that individuals may be less likely to do things together than a group of co-workers in other positions. For instance, in many jobs co-workers eat lunch together. Foodservers might be less likely to participate in this sort of activity with their peers because they are working at lunch-time, or they may not even go to work until dinner-time. In addition, many of these employees serve staggered shifts where they arrive and leave work at different times. Furthermore, there is some evidence that service employees in food-service positions often have other roles to fill, such as: student, parent, or working at other jobs when not waiting on tables. Workers with these responsibilities may only show up to work and not be interested in socializing with co-workers (Farmer and Tucker, 1988; Tas, Spalding, and Getty, 1989). Any of these situations would limit the influence of peer cohesion on the hypothesized relationships.

Findings concerning work-related effects of role conflict and role ambiguity also are of interest to this study. Results demonstrating that role perceptions affect performance are consistent with some of the sales performance literature which indicates that role ambiguity has a negative effect on performance while role conflict contributes positively to an employee's performance (Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986). One reason for the positive relationship between role conflict and performance may lie in the boundary-spanning nature of the food servers' position. Employees in constant contact with customers may find that they experience considerable role conflict-it is simply part of the job. Individuals that can best cope with these feelings may be better able to perform their tasks (Behrman and Perreault, 1984).

Results from the current study indicate that there is a negative relationship between role ambiguity and performance. While this is consistent with previous research, it indicates that work relationships can indirectly influence performance by reducing role ambiguity. In particular, supportive supervision and the establishment of an involving workplace may reduce role ambiguity and thereby increase performance.

Finally, role conflict and role ambiguity have traditionally been viewed in the organizational literature as having a powerful, negative effect on job satisfaction (Fisher and Gitelson, 1983; Jackson and Schuler, 1985). Of particular interest to the current study is the finding indicating that components of the work environment, notably supervisor support and work involvement, may have a greater influence on an employee's level of job satisfaction than either of these role constructs. While role conflict is negatively related to satisfaction in the current research, it is the least important of four significant predictors. This has important managerial implications for the restaurant industry. Boundary spanning personnel may not be able to avoid role conflict or role ambiguity, both of which are negatively related to job satisfaction. However, the direct and positive influence of work relationship variables on job satisfaction combined with the effect they have on reducing role conflict and role ambiguity means that appropriate management practices can have a powerful influence on employee job satisfaction levels. Future research examining job satisfaction must take into account environmental issues as well as role constructs (Teas, 1983).

## Limitations and future research

Future studies concerning work environment issues should examine other employee perceptions of their workplace such as perceived organizational support or other constructs not often examined such as the physical comfort of employees or the firm's task orientation. Other dependent measures also should be studied in relationship to work environment influences. Possible variables could include propensity to leave; work family conflict; turnover; burnout; and objective measures of performance. By examining how work environment factors influence these variables, our understanding of organizational behavior could be considerably extended. Finally, similar research should be undertaken in other service or hospitality settings to determine the generalizability of these findings.

The present study has several limitations. First, only three aspects of the work environment were examined. Other considerations concerning the workplace climate experienced by employees might produce different results. Second, the sample was of tipped food servers working at mid-to-upscale restaurants. While these employees are an important group in the hospitality field, any broad generalizations from this study to other hospitality workers or service employees may not be warranted. Finally, only certain workplace attitudes and behaviors were studied. Although the work environment components used in the study were significant predictors of the dependent measures, other workplace attitudes may be equally important yet not be as strongly influenced by these variables.

## Conclusion

This study expands our understanding about work environment influences in a services setting. By extending what is known from sales and other organizational settings, the study contributes to the current level of knowledge about how supervisor support and work involvement influence workplace attitudes and outcomes. Changing the work environment experienced by employees can be done at little or no expense and may produce changes that positively effect workers in terms of role stress, intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, job performance and job satisfaction.

## References

- Bagozzi, R. P. (1978) Salesforce performance and satisfaction as a function of individual difference, interpersonal, and situational factors. *Journal of Marketing* 15, 517-531.
- Bedeian, A. G. and Armenakis, A. A. (1981) A path-analytic study of the consequences of role conflict and ambiguity. *Academy of Management Journal* 24, 417-424.
- Behrman, D. H. and Perreault, W. D. (1984) A role stress model of the performance and satisfaction of industrial salesperson. *Journal of Marketing* 48, 9-21.
- Billings and Moos, R. H. (1982) Work stress and the stress buffering roles of work and family resources. *Journal of Occupational Behavior* 3, 215-232.

- Bluen, S. J., Barling, J. and Burns, W. (1990) Predicting sales performance, job satisfaction, and depression by using the achievement strivings and impatience-irritability dimensions of type A behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 75, 212-216.
- Brayfield, A. H., and Rothe, H. F. (1951) An index of job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 35, 307-311.
- Busch, P. and Bush, R. F. (1978) Women contrasted to men in the industrial salesforce: job satisfaction, values, role clarity, performance, and propensity to leave. *Journal of Marketing Research* 15, 438-448.
- Dubinsky, A. J. and Hartley, S. W. (1986) A path-analytic study of a model of salesperson performance. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 4, 36-46.
- Farmer, S. W. and Tucker, D. (1988) A comparative study of working conditions in the hospitality industry: expectations versus realities. *Hospitality Education and Research Journal* 12, 19-26.
- Fisher, C. D. and Gitelson, R. (1983) A meta-analysis of the correlates of role conflict and ambiguity. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 68, 320-333.
- Franke, G. R., Behrman, D. N. and Perreault, W. D. (1982) Salesforce performance and satisfaction: contemporaneous relationships and selected antecedents. In *An Assessment of Marketing Thought and Practice*, pp. 233-237. B. Walker *et al.*, eds. American Marketing Association, Chicago.
- Hair, J. F., Jr., Anderson, R. E., Tatham, R. L., and Black, W. C. (1992) *Multivariate Data Analysis*, Third Edition. MacMillan Publishing Company, New York.
- Hampton, R., Dubinsky, A. J. and Skinner, S. J. (1986) A model of sales supervisor leadership behaviors and retail salesperson's job-related outcomes. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 14, 33-42.
- Iaffaldano, M. T. and Muchinsky, P. M. (1985) Job satisfaction and job performance: a meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin* 97, 251-273.
- Jackson, S. E. and Schuler, R. S. (1985) A meta-analysis and conceptual critique of research on role ambiguity and role conflict in work settings. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Making* 36, 16-78.
- Johnston, M. W., Parasuraman, A. and Futrell, C. M. (1989) Extending a model of salesperson role perceptions and work related attitudes: impact of job tenure. *Journal of Business Research* 18, 269-290.
- Johnston, M. W., Parasuraman, A., Futrell, C. M. and Black, W. C. (1990) A longitudinal assessment of the impact of selected organizational influences on salespeople's organizational commitment during early employment. *Journal of Marketing Research* 27, 333-344.
- Kent, W. E. (1982) Job satisfaction among hotel managers: implications for hospitality educators. *Journal of Hospitality Education* 7, 11-20.

- Kimes, S. E. and Mutkoski, S. A. (1991) Assessing customer contact: Work sampling in restaurants. *The Cornell Hotel Restaurant Administration Quarterly* May, 83-88.
- Kirkmeyer, S. L. and Line, T. R. (1987) Social support: it's relationship to observed communication with peers and superiors. *Academy of Management Journal* 30, 138-151.
- Kirmeyer, S. L. and Dougherty, T. W. (1988) Work load, tension, and coping: moderating effects of supervisor support. *Personnel Psychology* 41, 125-139.
- Kohli, A. K. (1985) Some unexplored supervisory behaviors and their influence on salespeople's role clarity, specific self-esteem, job satisfaction, and motivation. *Journal of Marketing Research* 22, 424-433.
- Kohli, A. K. (1989) Effects of supervisory behavior. The role of individual differences among salespeople. *Journal of Marketing* 53, 40-50.
- LaGreca. G. (1989) Selling and serving. *Restaurant Business* 88, 78-80.
- Leigh, J. H., Lucas, G. H. and Woodman, R. W. (1988) Effects of perceived organizational factors on role stress-job attitude relationships. *Journal of Management* 14, 41-58.
- Mill, R. C. (1985) Uppmg the organization: Enhancing employee performance through an improved work climate. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Quarterly* February, 30-37.
- Moorman, R. H. (1991) Relationship between organizational justice and organizational citizenship behaviors: do fairness perceptions influence employee citizenship. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 74, 193-200.
- Moos, R. H. (1Y81) *Work Environment Scale Manual*. Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA.
- Netemeyer, R. G., Johnston, M. W. and Burton, S. (1990) Analysis of role conflict and role ambiguity in a structural equations framework. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 75, 148-157.
- Newman, J. E. (1977) Development of a measure of perceived work environment (PWE). *Academy of Management Journal* 20, 520-534.
- Parkes, K. R. (1982) Occupational stress among student nurses: a natural experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 67, 784-796.
- Pruden. H. O. and Reese, R. M. (1972) Interorganization role-set relations and the performance and satisfaction of industrial salesmen. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17, 601-609.
- Pym, K. L. A. and Auld, H. D. (1965) The self-rating as a measure of employee satisfaction. *Occupational Psychology* 39, 103-113.
- Rizzo, J. R., House, R. J. and Lirtzman, S. I. (1970) Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 15, 150-163.
- Savicki, V. and Cooley, E. (1987) The relationship of work environment and client contact to burnout in mental health professionals. *Journal of Counseling and Development* 65, 249-252.



- Schaubroeck, J., Cotton, J. L. and Jennings, K. R. (1989) Antecedents and consequences of role stress: a covariance structure analysis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 10, 35-58.
- Schneider, B. (1980) The service organization climate is crucial. *Organizational Dynamics* 3, 52-65.
- Schneider, B. and Bowen, D. E. (1985) Employee and customer perceptions of service in banks: replication and extension. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 79, 423-433.
- Schuler, R. S. (1977) The effects of role perceptions on employee satisfaction and performance moderated by employee ability. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 18, 98-107.
- Schwab, R. C., Jackson, S. E. and Schuler, R. L. (1986) Educator burnout: sources and consequences. *Educational Research Quarterly* 10, 14-29.
- Seltzer, J. and Numerof, R. E. (1988) Supervisory leadership and subordinate burnout. *Academy of Management Journal* 31, 439-446.
- Sheridan, J. E. and Vredenburg, D. J. (1978) Usefulness of leadership behavior and social power variables in predicting job tension, performance, and turnover of nursing employees. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 63, 89-95.
- Specht, D. A. (1986) Reliability, *SPSS User's Guide*, 2nd. Edition. McGraw-Hill, New York.
- Sujan, H. (1986) Smarter versus harder: an exploratory attributional analysis of salespeople's motivation. *Journal of Marketing Research* 23, 41-49.
- Tas, R. F., Spalding, J. B. and Getty, J. M. (1989) Employee job satisfaction determinants within a national restaurant company. *Hospitality Education and Research Journal* 13, 129-136.
- Teas, R. K. (1983) Supervisory behavior, role stress, and the job satisfaction of industrial salespeople. *Journal of Marketing Research* 20, 84-91.
- Tyagi, P. K. (1982) Perceived organizational climate and the process of salesperson motivation. *Journal of Marketing Research* 19, 240-254.
- Tyagi, P. K. (1985) Relative importance of key job dimensions and leadership behaviors in motivating salesperson work performance. *Journal of Marketing* 49, 76-86.
- Walker, O. C., Churchill, G. A. and Ford, N. M. (1975) Organizational determinants of the industrial salesman's role conflict and ambiguity. *Journal of Marketing* 39, 32-39.
- Walker, O. C., Churchill, G. A. and Ford, N. M. (1979) Where do we go from here? Selected conceptual and empirical issues concerning the motivation and performance of the industrial sales force. In *Critical Issues in Sales Management: State of the Art and Future Research Needs*, G. Albaum and G. A. Churchill, eds. University of Oregon Press, Eugene, OR.