

PERCEIVED CUSTOMER SERVICE: A POLICY-CAPTURING AND ORGANIZATIONAL
BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

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by Eric Michael O'Rourke

As the American economy continues to shift from a predominately manufacturing economy to an information-based and service-based economy, it will be important for business-related research areas to investigate customer service and customer satisfaction. However, previous studies have been survey research or observational studies and lack control; rarely are experimentally-controlled studies used to determine the predictors of customer satisfaction. Two studies were conducted to determine the variables that customers use to evaluate satisfaction. Study 1 was an experimental study using a policy-capturing methodology and written scenarios of hypothetical customer-service encounters in fast food restaurants and family restaurants. Study 2 was a field study using an organizational behavior management (OBM) design to confirm the results of Study 1. It was hypothesized that both employee affective delivery (EAD) and service latency will be related to customer satisfaction, but EAD would be more important for family restaurants and latency would be more important for fast-food restaurants. It was also hypothesized that female employees using neutral EAD should be more harshly rated than other employees and latency should be more important when customers are busy. It was hypothesized that these results would be confirmed in the field observations in Study 2. Both EAD and latency predicted customer-service satisfaction in both studies. EAD was more important than latency in family restaurants, and latency was more important than EAD in fast food restaurants in Study 1. Additionally, busy customers' ratings of satisfaction were more affected by latency in Study 1. The gender hypothesis was not confirmed. The moderation hypotheses were not

confirmed in Study 2, but these results were hampered by sample size concerns. Practical implications, limitations, and future directions are discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Customer service research generally employs surveys as the main medium of data collection; however, survey data are generally hampered with nonresponse bias concerns, like restriction of range (Brown & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1994). By itself, an experimental lab study would not provide any validity evidence; it could not be determined if customers behave in the same manner as they would in a field setting. Thus, the present study employed a policy-capturing methodology and statistical approach to determine the policies used by customers of restaurants in making customer satisfaction decisions, as well an observational approach in the field to confirm the policies established in the policy-capturing study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Service

Recently the United States shifted from a predominately manufacturing-oriented to a service-oriented economy. Albrecht and Zemke (1985) in *Service America!* presented narrative evidence of this shift by comparing this “service revolution” (p. v) to the Industrial Revolution in the late 19th century. They argued that this cultural paradigm shift has forced organizations to renew attention to principles of leadership that may have been neglected during the Industrial Revolution. This allows the organization and its leaders to remember why the organization exists – to serve its customers, not to solely make a profit.

Recent economic difficulties are weakening the United States and much of the rest of the world. However, service-related businesses, such as transportation, health care, information, and food service, are still thriving while American manufacturing and investment-related businesses are rapidly declining. In 2009, the gross domestic product of the United States dropped 2.4% from the previous year; however, the service sector *increased* .04% from 2008. In fact, the service industry has shown gains in 14 of the 16 quarters from 2006-2009 while the manufacturing industry declined (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2010), and these positive gains have persisted through the third quarter of 2011 (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2012). These statistics provide evidence for the field of Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychology to shift some of its focus away from manufacturing to service industries.

Service organizations have recognized the necessity for customer satisfaction. A wide body of literature in the business and service literature has been devoted to studying the

determinants and consequences of customer satisfaction (e.g., Jayawardhena, Souchon, Farrell, & Glanville, 2007; Pugh, 2001; Rust & Zahorik, 1993). Some of the most important findings from this area of research are the effects of customer satisfaction on profit as well as customer retention and loyalty. Strong relationships exist between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, as well as customer loyalty and profitability (e.g., Hallowell, 1996). Since the cost of bringing in new customers can be as much as five times more than retaining previous customers (Spechler, 1989; Uller, 1989), retention is a necessity for service industries. Customer satisfaction reduces costs if complaints are managed (Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1987, 1988) and predicts retention at least for tourist destinations (Alegre & Cladera, 2009).

Specifically, customer satisfaction is paramount to restaurant services. A large portion of restaurants' customers come from repeat customers, and since dissatisfied customers rarely return, customer satisfaction is vital to a restaurant's prolonged success (Dubé, Renaghan, & Miller, 1994). To increase repeat customers, managers of restaurants should focus on satisfaction with the services provided (Komaki, Blood, & Holder, 1980). Customer-employee interactions in restaurants likely affect customer satisfaction because of the frequency of their occurrence (Therrein, Wilder, Rodriguez, & Wine, 2005). Thus, positive emotions from the restaurant employee are a necessity to improve customer satisfaction and ultimately customer loyalty and retention.

The field of organizational behavior management (OBM) often researches customer satisfaction and customer-service behaviors in restaurants (Johnson & Masotti, 1990; Squires et al., 2007). While the present research does not directly concern *improving* customer-service behaviors, Study 2 (see Overview) used OBM techniques to observe the performance of

employees in the field which may indirectly improve customer-service behaviors. OBM is unique in that researchers employ direct observations of service behaviors, rather than surveys, to collect information pertinent to their organizations (Crowell, Hantula, & McArthur, 2011; Rivard, Johnson, & Kephart, in review).

Overview

Two studies were conducted to determine the policies and practices used by customers in their evaluation of employee service at various restaurants. Study 1 was an experimental policy-capturing study designed to determine the factors that comprise customer evaluations. Undergraduate students completed surveys consisting of scenarios that differed on several different variables that have been shown to relate to customer-service satisfaction.

Study 2 was largely a confirmatory observation field study using techniques from the OBM perspective by replicating the results drawn from Study 1 using a different sample in the field. Inconspicuous observers collected data on overt behaviors performed by customer-service employees at various restaurants in Mount Pleasant, MI, while a researcher surveyed customers concerning their satisfaction of their service encounter.

Policy-Capturing Methodology

The policy-capturing methodology is a research design and statistical approach in which participants of a study are asked to make decisions about multiple scenarios which differ on several key variables (or cues). Researchers employing the policy-capturing methodology are interested in determining how individual or groups of decision makers use the available information to make judgments or decisions about a certain scenario (Zedeck, 1977). The

participant's decision outcomes are then regressed on the various cue values. These resulting regression weights are analyzed in order to determine which of the cues are most salient to the participants when making the decision about the scenarios (Aiman-Smith, Scullen, & Barr, 2002).

A policy-capturing methodology can eliminate concerns of response bias of customer-service satisfaction data. Gathering customer-service satisfaction information from the field with questionnaires raises questions about the characteristics of customers that respond to the questionnaire compared to characteristics of nonresponders (Brown & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1994). The majority of the studies conducted on response bias have used employees as a sample and are not concerned with customer service, especially not in a restaurant setting (e.g., Spitzmuller, Glenn, Sutton, Barr, & Rogelberg, 2007); these studies show attitudinal differences between responders and "active" nonresponders (individuals who consciously decided not to respond) (Rogelberg, Luong, Sederburg, & Cristol, 2000). Thus, an experimental randomized sample, as in the present study, increases the confidence that customer-service satisfaction policies of typical nonresponders to field surveys were captured by the study. While this methodology is hampered by a convenience sample of college students as the only participants, its generalizability can be defended because most college students are customers of the restaurants used in the two studies.

Overall response rate of customer-service satisfaction questionnaires hinders the results of previous studies measuring customer-service satisfaction. Schneider and Bowen (1985) reported a response rate of 22% for a mailed customer service satisfaction questionnaire involving bank customers, while Brown, Malott, Dillon, and Keeps (1980) reported an

admittedly unlikely response rate of 0% out of 500 customer satisfaction questionnaires sent to department store customers, even with the incentive of being entered into a lottery for a \$100 gift certificate. Babin, Lee, Kim, and Griffin (2005) achieved a 46% response rate at restaurants by approaching customers after paying for their bill but before leaving. Brown and Sulzer-Azaroff (1994) garnered a response rate of 99% by asking customers to place a chip in a slot to indicate their level of satisfaction with the service as they left. When the researcher is interested in only one piece of information per customer, this seems to be a very effective data collection method; but when *multiple* pieces of data are desired, a traditional paper-and-pencil survey is likely the best method. However, restaurant customers (especially fast-food customers) tend not to respond after experiencing the customer-service encounter due to personal busyness. Voluntary experimental research is generally not hampered by response rate concerns involving “active” nonresponders as most volunteer participants want to respond and participate in the study. Thus, an experimental policy-capturing methodology is appropriate for this kind of research to avoid response bias and low response rate concerns.

Policy-capturing studies should be designed to fit into one of two categories of research questions: idiographic or nomothetic (although studies can combine both questions). Idiographic policy-capturing studies look at the decision-making tendencies of individuals or groups of individuals. Most research using the idiographic method of policy-capturing are interested at determining the between-group or between-individual differences that affect how people make decisions about a certain situation. Sanchez and Levine (1989), for example, employed an idiographic approach to policy-capturing to determine the between-group differences in job type regarding what tasks were important to the job. (e.g., engineering technician).

Conversely, a nomothetic research design (such as the present study) focuses specifically on the cues used by the overall group of decision makers. Generally, responses from all participants are combined and analyzed as a whole, looking for general tendencies in the decisions of the entire sample. Then, results are generalized to the entire population to determine what cues are the most salient for the specific decision identified in the study (Aiman-Smith, Scullen & Barr, 2002). For example, Rotundo and Sackett (2002) used a nomothetic approach to look at the relative importance of different kinds of work performance to any manager when making global ratings of performance.

Orthogonality of the different levels of the independent variables (cues) is a key to a successful policy-capturing experimental design (Aiman-Smith, Scullen & Barr, 2002). For the best interpretation of the regression results associated with a policy-capturing design, a researcher should strive for minimal correlations between the cues. This provides for a clearer interpretation of the results because correlations between predictors can make it difficult to determine which predictor explains the variation in the dependent variable (Karren & Barringer, 2002). When correlations are present between predictors, standardized regression coefficients differ from the coefficients resulting from uncorrelated predictors, even though raw-score regression coefficients are similar (Lane, Murphy, & Marques, 1982). Thus, standardized regression coefficients are only interpretable when the research design uses orthogonal cues. In the present study, a fully factorial design was used, assuring orthogonality of the cues.

Rather than simply asking participants or decision makers to complete self-report attribute ratings (rating/ranking the variables of interest), the policy-capturing methodology allows researchers to avoid pitfalls associated with this self-report type of research design. The

validity of self-report attribute ratings is harmed by unintended variables like social desirability (Karren & Barringer, 2002), which can account for the occasional discrepancies between observed decisions and stated decision policies. Stumpf and London (1981) only found an average observed correlation of .67 between statistically-derived weights through policy-capturing and subjectively-derived self-report weights in a study to determine rater policies of the evaluation of candidates for promotion, while Sherer, Schwab, and Heneman (1987) found similar correlations ($r = .62$ to $r = .64$) in the evaluation of rater policies for raise decisions.

Thus, policy-capturing is arguably one of the most effective research designs and statistical strategies available aimed at providing insight into what mental processes are used by decision makers to make judgments (Donnelly & Bownas, 1984). In the industrial and organizational (I/O) psychology discipline, researchers have used the methodology to assess certain research questions that otherwise would have been impossible to appropriately answer. However, policy-capturing studies typically do not take any form of external validity into account by measuring actual decisions made by the sample in the field. Thus, the present studies are unique in that actual decisions made by customers can be compared to policies captured from the lab.

Hypothesis Development

Employee Affective Delivery

Previous research has found that customer-service behaviors related to employee affective delivery (EAD) (i.e., friendliness; affective service display), or the emotions portrayed by a service provider (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993), affect customer satisfaction. Brown and

Sulzer-Azaroff (1994) found that service employee smiling, greeting, and eye contact all had positive correlations with overall customer satisfaction, although only greeting was significant. A review of published controlled experiments found that greeting, smiling, and eye contact were the most measured employee behaviors in OBM service studies (Kephart, Rivard, & Johnson, 2006). Service employee thanking also increased customer-service satisfaction in some contexts (Neale & Murphy, 2007).

Other customer service literature investigated relationships between EAD in a customer-service setting and other outcomes. Luong (2005) found in an experimental lab setting of a cashier of a bookstore that positive EAD improves customers' positive moods, which in turn leads to higher evaluations of service. Tsai (2001) determined that positive EAD was related to customer purchase decisions, customer's willingness to return, and customer's willingness to recommend in retail shoe stores. Thus, the emotional displays of service employees seem related to various customer-related outcomes.

Note that the concept of EAD has been studied in various fields under different names. EAD is typically identified as "friendliness" when positive (e.g., Brown & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1994), but it also has been labeled "affective service display" (Luong, 2005). However, all of these terms seem to represent the same construct.

Hypothesis 1: Positive EAD will have a significant positive relationship with customer-service satisfaction.

Latency

The amount of time between order placement and reception (order latency) is included in this study as an independent variable because latency has been shown to negatively affect

customer service satisfaction in past research, such as at a doctor's office and a research facility (Groth & Gilliland, 2006). Thus, variation in order latency at restaurants should also affect customer service satisfaction ratings (Rivard, Johnson, & Kephart, in review).

Hypothesis 2: Order latency will have a significant negative relationship with customer-service satisfaction.

Type of Restaurant

The present study incorporated two types of restaurants: fast food and family restaurants (Baraban & Durocher, 1992). Each scenario (see Method) occurred at one type and the service employee changed dependent upon the restaurant: a cashier at the fast food restaurant or a waiter/waitress (depending on gender, see below) at the family restaurant.

Fast food restaurants are described as establishments in which customers line up, give their requests to a cashier, and pay for the order at a counter. Typically, fast food restaurants are designed to provide the service just as their names suggest: fast. Family restaurants are characterized in which portions of food are served to customers seated at tables on serving trays (Baraban & Durocher, 1992; Johnson & Masotti, 1990). Typically, customers are greeted by a host/hostess, seated at a table, and give orders to a different employee, known as a waiter/waitress. Payment is generally made at this table, but occasionally customers make payments at a separate cash register.

Hypothesis 3: The type of restaurant will moderate the relationship between the predictors and customer service satisfaction; such that EAD will have a stronger relationship with satisfaction for family restaurants than fast food restaurants, and latency will have a stronger relationship with satisfaction for fast food restaurants than family restaurants.

Customer/Transaction Busyness

Customer busyness should exacerbate relationships between latency and customer-service satisfaction at restaurants. Customers who have limited time are unlikely to be concerned with positive EAD and more likely to be concerned with latency during their service encounter.

The busyness of the restaurant during the transaction predicts EAD in the sense that employees use less positive EAD during busy times. This phenomenon has been found in both banks (Pugh, 2001) and grocery stores (Rafaeli, 1989). Johnson and Masotti (1990) also measured transaction busyness as a moderator in determining the amount of suggestive selling used at a restaurant. Transaction busyness was used as a proxy for customer busyness in Study 2 because busy customers of a restaurant were unlikely to take time to complete a survey, and thus was difficult to measure.

Hypothesis 4: Customer busyness will moderate the relationship between latency and customer service satisfaction; such that latency will have a stronger relationship with satisfaction for customers who are busy when patronizing the restaurant.

Gender

The gender of the employee may affect perceptions of customer-service satisfaction. Overall, female staff tend to display more positive friendliness-related emotions (greeting, etc.) than male staff (Rafaeli, 1989), indicating some benefit in employee selection decisions. Female service employees portraying negative emotions are rated more negatively than males portraying any emotion and females portraying positive emotions (Luong, 2007). This indicates that gender

may have a moderating effect on the relationship between EAD and customer satisfaction, which in turn would likely affect sales and customer retention.

Hypothesis 5: Gender of the service employee will moderate the relationship between EAD and customer-service satisfaction, such that neutral EAD females will result in lower customer-service satisfaction ratings than other employees.

CHAPTER III

STUDY 1 – METHOD

Participants

Participants were 181 undergraduate students from Central Michigan University and recruitment occurred through the Psychology Department Subject Pool. After data cleaning (removing respondents for non-purposeful responding and incomplete responses), the final sample size was 174. Participants must have been at least 18 years of age to be eligible for participation. They were asked to complete a consent form (see Appendix A) prior to commencement, clearly stating the voluntary nature of the study. The consent form was developed to meet the guidelines established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and thus, data collection did not begin until IRB approval was received. No other restrictions were made on the characteristics of participants. Individuals earned extra credit in their courses for completion or partial completion of the study.

No personally identifying information was gathered throughout the study which could have been linked to any of the participants. Anonymity was guaranteed to participants both verbally prior to the study and within the aforementioned consent form. In order to grant participants extra credit, sign-in sheets were used that participants entered their names on upon entering the study room. These sign-in sheets were destroyed once extra credit is granted.

Materials

Participants were provided with a computer open to a website (www.surveymonkey.com) of the survey. The first page (see Appendix B) contained instructions on how to complete the

survey and definitions of the three types of restaurants (see below) depicted in the scenarios. The following 72 pages (see Appendix C) each contained one scenario depicting a customer-service encounter (see *Scenarios* for descriptions) and two questions designed to measure customer-service satisfaction. These 72 scenarios were randomized to prevent the threat to internal validity of testing and presented in two distinct orders, randomly provided to participants. The last page (see Appendix D) contained various questions concerning objective measures of customer-service satisfaction and demographic information. The demographic information questions did not request any personally identifying information in order to guarantee anonymity.

Procedure

Participants were provided with 72 scenarios detailing customer-service encounters at various fast food and family restaurants. Each scenario contained a different arrangement of levels of the five independent variables: EAD, latency, type of restaurant, customer busyness, and gender of employee. Each participant received every possible scenario, providing for a fully-factorial design. Vignettes detailing customer service were in second-person narrative, using the participants as the focus. Aside from the parts related to the independent variables, the text remained constant across scenarios, except when it needed to be changed to maintain realistic scenarios.

Independent Variables

Scenarios varied across levels of five independent variables, each with two or three levels: EAD (three levels), latency (three levels), type of restaurant (two levels), customer

busyness (two levels), and gender of employee (two levels). For EAD, employees in the scenarios exhibited positive EAD, neutral-positive EAD, or neutral EAD. For latency, the scenarios were conceptualized as short latency encounters, medium latency encounters, or long latency encounters. For type of restaurant, the scenarios took place at fast food restaurants or family restaurants. For customer busyness, the customer was busy or not busy. For gender, the employee was male or female.

Positive EAD employees greeted the subject of the written scenario, made eye contact, smiled, and thanked the subject after the food had been delivered. Positive-neutral EAD employees greeted the subject and made eye contact with the subject, but did not smile or thank the subject. Neutral EAD employees behaved in a more negative manner: no greeting, limited eye contact, no smiling, and no thanking the subject. Making each employee-service behavior distinct from one another would have provided for more accurate results; for example, a service employee could smile and make eye contact with the customer while refraining from greeting or thanking him or her. However, this would have increased the number of cues from five to eight; thus the number of scenarios would have needed to increase from 72 to 256. Aiman-Smith, Scullen, and Barr (2002) suggest that to decrease boredom and fatigue, policy-capturing studies should limit the number of scenarios to 80. Thus, EAD was represented by three levels: positive EAD, neutral-positive EAD, or neutral EAD.

There were three levels of latency in this study: short, medium, and long. Because normal order latencies differ depending on type of restaurant, exact latencies (with number of seconds or minutes waited) could not be used, even though this would have likely increased ecological validity. Also, providing vague descriptions of order latency prevents participants

from making personal judgments based on past history and eliminated a source of potential error. For example, one participant may decide that a wait time of 30 seconds at a fast food restaurant is “long”, while another participant may decide that the same wait time is “short”, introducing unintentional error variance in this independent variable. Thus, using vague adjectives assured appropriate manipulation of this independent variable because different participants did not judge the same latency differently.

Some text was different for the scenarios because the nature of the service encounter at a family restaurant is different than at fast food restaurants. At family restaurants, the customer has several encounters with the service employee throughout the encounter: seating at the table, placing drink orders, placing meal orders, etc. At fast food restaurants, the customer generally has only two encounters with the service employee: placing the order and receiving the order. Thus, scenarios differed only in descriptions of these inconsistencies (see Appendix C).

Dependent Variable

Customer-service satisfaction was assessed with a two-item scale for each scenario designed to assess the participant’s *estimated level of satisfaction* with the customer-service encounter depicted in the scenario and the *likelihood of return* to the restaurant described in the scenario. Estimated level of satisfaction was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*very dissatisfied with this encounter*) to 5 (*very satisfied with this encounter*), and likelihood of return was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*very unlikely to return to this location*) to 5 (*very likely to return to this location*). Because of the limited information being given in the scenario, no other questions comprised the dependent variable.

Other Measures

Participants completed demographic information, including age ($M = 19.73$ years, $SD = 3.64$), gender (71.7% female) and class standing (freshman – 49.7%, sophomore – 18.5%, junior – 12.6%, and senior – 18.5%). Participants also quantitatively rated and ranked the measures related to customer-service satisfaction as a manipulation check (see Appendix D). In order to assure that the participants react appropriately to the different cues, there should be strong correlations between these quantitative rankings and ratings and the appropriate data from the scenarios. Participants rated the level of importance to their customer service encounter of the first three independent variables (EAD, latency, and gender) at each type of restaurant on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*very important*). Similarly, participants rank-ordered the three independent variables on level of importance to their customer-service encounter at each type of restaurant.

Protocol

Upon arrival, the researcher instructed participants to sit in a provided desk and chair. The researcher provided each participant with two copies of the consent form (and a writing utensil, if necessary) and asked that they read and sign both, keeping one and returning the other to the researcher. At this time, participants were informed that at any point in the study, they were free to refuse to participate and leave the study or read and review the selected journal article.

After completion of the consent form, the researcher provided the participants with the website link to the scenarios. The number of participants completing the study in each of the 15 sessions varied across sessions ($M = 12.07$, range = 1-19). The researcher dictated the

instructions for completing the materials and asked if participants had any questions. Once all questions were answered, the participants were allowed to begin reading the 72 scenarios. Participants did not have to complete all of their individual scenarios but were urged to do so. When all scenarios were completed (or as many as the participants wished to complete), the participants were provided with the final questionnaire with demographic information and objective measures of customer-service satisfaction.

When the final questionnaire was completed, the researcher debriefed the participants on the nature of the study and asked if there were any final questions. Participants were thanked, dismissed and given two extra credit points for their participation. Completion of the packet and study was estimated to take approximately 30 minutes.

Data Analysis

Hypothesis 1 and 2, that EAD (H1) and latency (H2) will have a significant effect on customer-service satisfaction scores, was tested using the traditional policy-capturing methodology of calculating standardized regression coefficients for each individual participant and averaging the resulting beta values. This assessed the effects of each of the independent variables on the composite of customer-service satisfaction. Interaction effects were also analyzed to test Hypothesis 3 (location will moderate the EAD-customer service and the latency – customer service relationships), Hypothesis 4 (customer busyness will moderate the latency – customer service relationship) and Hypothesis 5 (gender will moderate the EAD – customer service relationship) by analyzing the absolute values of the standardized regression coefficients across scenarios. For Hypothesis 3, the average of the participants' standardized regression coefficients for satisfaction scores on the study variables were compared across scenarios taking

place at a fast food restaurant versus a family restaurant. For Hypothesis 4, the latency standardized regression coefficients were compared across scenarios when the scenario described a busy customer-service encounter versus a not busy customer-service encounter. For Hypothesis 5, the EAD standardized regression coefficients were compared across scenarios when the scenario described an interaction with a male employee versus a female employee.

CHAPTER IV
STUDY 1 – RESULTS

To test Hypotheses 1 and 2, that EAD (positively) and latency (negatively) would predict customer-service satisfaction scores, customer-service satisfaction scores (the composite of level of satisfaction and likelihood to return) were regressed on EAD and latency. Individual standardized regression coefficients were calculated for each participant. Because of the full factorial nature of the study, the cues were orthogonal from one another; thus, the standardized regression coefficients represent the individualized effects of the predictors on the dependent variable.

Table 1. *Average Standardized Regression Coefficients – Study 1 Hypothesis Testing*

Hypothesis	EAD <i>B</i>	Latency <i>B</i>
Hypothesis 1 (EAD→Satisfaction)*	.57	-
Hypothesis 2 (Latency→Satisfaction)*	-	-.49
Hypothesis 3 (Fast Food)*	.53	-.54
Hypothesis 3 (Family)*	.62	-.45
Hypothesis 4 (Busy)*	-	-.52
Hypothesis 4 (Not Busy)*	-	-.47
Hypothesis 5 (Male)	.58	-
Hypothesis 5 (Female)	.58	-

Note. *N* = 174. *EAD* = employee affective delivery. Standardized regression coefficients were calculated by regressing the dependent variable (satisfaction score) on the independent variables (*EAD* and Latency) for each individual participant then averaging the resulting beta values. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were calculated using 72 scenarios, whereas betas from Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5 were calculated from 36 scenarios each.

* = hypothesis was supported

Table 1 presents the results of the regression analyses. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported, as the average standardized regression coefficients were strong for EAD (average $B = .57$) and latency (average $B = -.49$). Although no test of significance exists for policy-capturing studies employing this methodology, it is noted that 172 of the 174 standardized regression coefficients were significant predictors of satisfaction for EAD (at $p < .05$), and 165 of the 174 standardized regression coefficients were significant predictors of satisfaction for latency.

Hypothesis 3 was fully supported; that EAD would be a stronger predictor of customer-service satisfaction scores at family restaurants and latency would be a stronger predictor of customer-service satisfaction scores at fast food restaurants, as evidenced in Table 1. The average of the standardized regression coefficient values for EAD as stronger for family restaurants (average $B = .62$) than for fast food restaurants (average $B = .53$). This difference was confirmed with a within-subjects, repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA), $F(1, 173) = 98.28, p < .001$. The average of the standardized regression coefficient values for latency was stronger for fast food restaurants (average $B = -.54$) than for family restaurants (average $B = -.45$). This difference was confirmed with a within-subjects, repeated measures ANOVA, $F(1, 173) = 108.55, p < .001$.

Hypothesis 4 was supported; that latency would be a stronger predictor of customer-service satisfaction scores when the scenarios described a situation involving a busy customer than a not busy customer, as evidenced in Table 1. The average of the standardized regression coefficient values for latency was stronger for busy customer scenarios (average $B = -.52$) than for not busy customer scenarios (average $B = -.47$). This difference was confirmed with a within-subjects, repeated measures ANOVA, $F(1, 173) = 23.44, p < .001$.

Hypothesis 5 was not supported; that EAD would be a stronger predictor of customer-service satisfaction scores when the scenarios described a situation involving a female service provider than a male service provider, as evidenced in Table 1. The average of the standardized regression coefficient values for EAD were similar for female service providers (average $B = .58$) and male service providers (average $B = .58$). No significant difference was found between the values using a within-subjects, repeated measures ANOVA, $F(1, 173) = .01, p > .05$.

CHAPTER V
STUDY 1 – DISCUSSION

Study 1 was designed to provide an experimental analysis of the determinants of customer-service satisfaction. A policy-capturing methodology was employed by providing participants with a series of customer-service encounter based scenarios at restaurants which differed slightly based on the service provider's friendliness (or EAD), the speed at which they received their order (or latency), the type of restaurant (fast food or family), how busy the customer was, and the gender of the service provider. By using a policy-capturing methodology, response bias concerns from using a field sample were eliminated; in other words, no range restriction occurred from only surveying very satisfied or very dissatisfied customers.

In this college student sample, EAD and order latency both significantly predicted customer-service satisfaction scores. Additionally, it was found that EAD is more important to overall satisfaction than latency at family restaurants, and latency is more important to overall satisfaction at fast food restaurants. Furthermore, when customers are busy, latency is more important to overall satisfaction than when customers are not busy. Lastly, the importance of EAD does not differ based on the gender of the service provider.

These results provide practical implications for restaurant managers. Managers of fast food restaurants should provide slightly more training to improve transaction latency, and managers of family restaurants should provide slightly more training to improve EAD. Additionally, during busy times (such as the lunch hour), customers are also likely to be busy. Managers should train their employees to not sacrifice service latency for EAD when necessary to maintain customer-service satisfaction.

Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation associated with all policy-capturing studies involves the realism of the study design and scenario presentation. In the present study, scenarios only differed across five cues. In an actual customer-service encounter, many more external variables may impact a customer's determination of his or her level of satisfaction. For example, product or service price can be an important determinant of customer-service satisfaction (e.g., Ralston, 2003). Additionally, all EAD-related behaviors varied together; future studies could determine if specific EAD-related behaviors have differential effects. However, since customers can only attend to a certain number of external variables during one service encounter (Karren & Barringer, 2002), it is possible that the five cues selected in this study are salient enough to be representative of an actual service encounter.

Another limitation revolves around the sample used in Study 1. Because of the nature of the convenience sample, the generalizability of the study is limited. There may be characteristics of the college student population, or specifically the freshman college student population (which this sample dominated), that differ from the general population that would cause a differential response pattern. This factor could explain the lack of support for Hypothesis 5 if college students are not affected by a gender bias when determining their level of customer-service satisfaction. Additionally, although it was assumed that all of the participants had eaten at both fast food and family restaurants in the past, no measures were taken to assure this fact. Future policy-capturing studies can avoid these limitations through active recruiting of a more generalized population by asking actual customers of restaurants to participate in the policy-capturing study or excluding participants from data analysis that indicate they have not eaten at

either type of restaurant. Moreover, Study 2 was conducted to confirm the results of Study 1 in a field setting.

Overview

Study 2 was designed and executed to confirm the results of Study 1 in an applied setting. Surveys were administered to the general public at two restaurants in Mount Pleasant, MI concerning their most recent customer-service encounter at the location in which they were surveyed. Meanwhile, an OBM-based approach to measuring customer service was employed in the same restaurant to assess actual customer-service behaviors. Trained observers indicated whether or not certain behaviors and service-latency encounters related to customer-service satisfaction were present in the service encounter. Customer-service behaviors were correlated with subjective satisfaction measures accumulated from the survey, and whenever possible, surveys were linked to observer ratings of customer-service behaviors. The feasibility of using transaction busyness as a proxy for customer busyness was also determined with a short pilot test.

CHAPTER VI

STUDY 2 – METHOD

Settings

Study 2 was conducted in various restaurants, primarily in Mount Pleasant, MI. Study 1 designated two types of restaurants to analyze; thus, data were collected for Study 2 at these two types: fast food restaurants and family restaurants. Three fast food restaurants were chosen: Restaurant A (survey location), and Restaurants B and C (control locations). Three family restaurants were chosen: Restaurant D (survey location), and Restaurants E and F (control locations). A wide range of restaurants was used to minimize the presence of any variable confounding the results gathered from one restaurant as well as to increase external validity or the generalizability of the results. Since the observational data being collected were public behaviors, restaurant managers did not need to be contacted to obtain permission. However, managers of the survey locations were contacted to obtain permission to administer surveys to customers.

Participants

Customers

Participants included customers ($n = 205$) surveyed by the researcher. Customers were asked to fill out a short, one-minute survey when they sat at a table after receiving their food. At fast food restaurants, this occurred directly upon seating after receiving food or prior to leaving the restaurant; whereas at family restaurants this occurred directly after the customers paid their bill at their table, but before receiving their change or receipt for credit or debit card transaction.

At Restaurant A, customers were offered a coupon for a free product during their next visit, and at Restaurant D, customers were offered a coupon for a free dessert during their next visit. Both coupons were provided by the restaurants' managers.

Managers

General managers of each survey restaurant were approached independently to obtain permission to collect surveys in their restaurants. Additionally, the two survey restaurants were owned by one management group; thus, the Human Resources manager of the management group was also contacted to obtain consent from a corporate perspective. They were asked to fill out a consent form (see Appendix E), and were presented with a short, one-page summary (see Appendix F) detailing the author's credentials and previous research (O'Rourke, 2008) as well as the benefits associated with participating in this study. After obtaining consent, managers were instructed to limit revealing the method and purpose of this study to only the owners, co-managers, and/or assistant managers. This reduced potential contamination of the purpose to customers and employees. In order to maximize consent, the researcher explained the benefits of this study to managers. These included receiving beneficial information concerning workplace service behaviors of their cashiers and waitstaff, as well as information on what customer-service behaviors were important to customer satisfaction in the managers' businesses. The managers also provided the researcher with coupons for free and discounted menu items to give to customers that were willing to take the survey.

Employees

Employees were limited to persons working at the respective restaurant during the timeframe of this study. Several cashiers/waitstaff were employed and present at each restaurant at any given time. The purpose of the study did not concern individual employee tendencies; thus, anonymity was protected because managers were not given information on specific employees' service behaviors.

Observers

Observers ($n = 12$) consisted of students from Central Michigan University and were trained to make inconspicuous observations of customer-service behaviors by the employees, as well as measures of latencies during these transactions. Observers avoided repeat observations of the same customer during separate visits or sessions. Observers were recruited by the researcher and were offered extra credit for psychology courses, if applicable. Additionally, observers were reimbursed \$8 for each family restaurant visit and \$5 for each fast food restaurant visit. Because the observers all came from the same general population that participated in Study 1, the results from Study 1 can be generalized to this study with more confidence.

Materials and Measures

Observation Sheet

Observers recorded data on an observation sheet (see Appendix G) and were trained to measure customer-service behaviors related to EAD, service latency, transaction busyness, and gender of the employee/customer. They unobtrusively recorded observations while seated at the restaurant, acting like a regular customer. Most measures were recorded using a yes-or-no

format, while other measures involved recording an individual whole number, the date of the observation, or the gender of the employee/customer.

To determine latency, observers discretely either used a stop watch or recorded the time the customers placed their order and the time the customers received their order. To determine transaction busyness at fast food restaurants, observers counted the number of people in line behind the customer being followed at the time of the transaction (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1990; Pugh, 2001). To determine transaction busyness at family restaurants, observers noted if there were open tables or not during the transaction and these data were measured dichotomously (Johnson & Masotti, 1990). Observers appeared like normal customers by bringing along other work (such as a laptop computer or textbook) to conceal the observation sheet.

EAD

EAD was measured by a composite of actual behaviors known to be related to perceptions of EAD: greeting, smiling, eye contact, and thanking. This composite was artificially trichotomized into positive EAD, neutral-positive EAD, and neutral EAD to allow for comparison between results of the two studies. These three categories were chosen because the occurrence of a “negative” EAD transaction is very rare in a service setting, likely because consistent unfriendly behavior would lead to termination of the employee. This artificial trichotomization was performed post-hoc in accordance with the data within each restaurant.

Greeting. Greeting was defined as execution of a short sentence welcoming the customer to the restaurant and asking for their order. If the employee simply asked for his or her order (e.g., “May I help you?” or “Next”), this was not counted as a greeting. The employee must have made extra effort to make the customer feel welcome in the restaurant prior to asking for

the order (e.g., “Welcome to *****, how are you today?” or “Thank you for choosing *****, what would you like to order?”).

Smiling. Smiling was defined as the act of bending the corners of the mouth at an upward angle to anywhere higher than in line with the center of the lips. Using this definition, a small smirk counted as a smile, just as a large, toothy smile counted the same. If at any time during the transaction the employee smiled, the observers recorded it as a “yes” observation.

Eye Contact. Eye contact was defined as the employee looking into the eyes of the customer for at least one second during the transaction. The time period was used to avoid counting a quick glance as a “yes” observation. The eye contact occurred any time during the transaction.

Thanking. Thanking was defined as any method of closing the purchase or transaction by the employee aside from simply telling the employee the change they are owed. This included, but was not limited to, statements such as, “Have a good day” or “Thank you for stopping in”.

Latency

Observers, using a wristwatch or another time-keeping device, tracked the duration of the customers’ transactions, measured in seconds from when they placed their order to when they received their order. Reception of the order occurred when the main part of the order was delivered. For example, family restaurants often deliver portions of the order at different times. Drinks and salads are often brought prior to delivery of the main course. Thus, latency was recorded when the main course was delivered to the customer.

Transaction Busyness

Transaction busyness was measured at fast food restaurants by recording the number of people in line behind the customer during the transaction. If multiple registers served one line, the number of people in line was divided by the number of registers open. Observers recorded both the number of people and the number of registers open during the transaction.

The robustness of this construct as a proxy for customer busyness was pilot tested (see Appendix H). During this pilot test, the researcher stood outside of one fast food and one family restaurant and approached customers as they were leaving. During busy times (e.g., lunch hour), customers were reluctant to complete the survey, with the majority claiming they were “too busy”. Thus, transaction busyness is an appropriate proxy for customer busyness because when restaurants are busy, customers are generally busy.

At family restaurants, transaction busyness was measured dichotomously as busy/not busy based on the availability of tables during the beginning of the customer’s transaction. If multiple tables at the family restaurant were available, the transaction busyness was recorded as “not busy”. Similarly, if a few tables (one to four, depending on the restaurant’s size) or no tables were available, the transaction busyness was recorded as “busy”. The maximum number of tables available for the restaurant to be considered busy was dependent on the size of the restaurant; in smaller restaurants (Restaurant F), only one or two available tables was considered as busy. However, in larger restaurants (Restaurant D and E), this criterion increased to three or four. The number of tables available to determine busyness was determined by the researcher and explained to the observers for each restaurant once the restaurants were finalized. Dirty tables, which were defined as tables with used plates and napkins that were not ready for the next

group of customers, were not considered “available”. Interobserver agreement of 100% was found for this variable, which was collected across 23 observations during the baseline period.

Customer Service Behaviors and Satisfaction Survey

A survey was developed with questions pertaining to the customer’s perception of service of the current visit to the restaurant (see Appendix I). Questions included the satisfaction the customer had with each of the service behaviors in question (four questions – greeting, smiling, eye contact, and thanking), the latency of the transaction (two questions – time to counter/waiter arrival and time to receive order), and one overall satisfaction question. Additionally, customers were surveyed as to the importance of the service behaviors, transaction latency, and the gender of the employee that served them during the majority of their customer service encounter. The gender of the customer was also recorded.

Protocol

Study 2 was executed in a two-stage process. First, inconspicuous observers collected baseline observational data at all six restaurants. Then, once IRB and managerial approval were obtained, surveys were administered to customers about their service experience at Restaurant A (fast food) and Restaurant D (family-style) while observers collected more customer-service observational data at all restaurants. Because presence of the researcher may be a potential confounding variable if employees deciphered the purpose of the survey, results from stage one and stage two were compared to establish consistency across stages; thus, Restaurants B, C, E, and F were treated as control sites. Similarly, observers collected data during stage two when the

surveyor was not present to determine if carryover effects were present from the surveyor's recent presence.

Stage 1

Observers entered the location disguised as a regular customer, placed an order, and sat down at a table in view of the counter at fast food restaurants. At most family restaurants, observers were not able to choose their table; however, since the customer service encounter being studied involved the interactions between waitstaff and customers, observers were able to collect data on service encounters near where they were seated.

Observers collected data on customer-service behaviors for an appropriate amount of time each session. Since customers typically stay longer at family restaurants compared to fast food restaurants, observers were trained to limit their stay at fast food restaurants to 30 minutes, but sessions at family restaurants lasted at least 60 minutes.

Stage 2

After obtaining permission from the manager of the restaurant, the researcher began administering the Customer Service Behavior and Satisfaction Survey to customers of the survey restaurants. At Restaurant A, the researcher stood near the counter, approaching customers (walk-in only, not drive-through) directly after their order had been received or as they sat at a table. At Restaurant D the researcher approached customers after receiving their bill, but before paying (if possible). Waiting to survey customers of either restaurant when they were leaving likely would have reduced response rates because they wanted to leave and would have introduced concerns with customers forgetting how their waiter/waitress performed. Since

customers were surveyed temporally close to their customer-service encounter, they were more likely to recall their level of customer-service satisfaction with *specific* aspects of the encounter (e.g., greeting, smiling, etc.).

During each observation session when surveys were being administered, observers collected data on customer-service behaviors before each survey. In order to facilitate linking surveys to actual behaviors, the researcher and observer recorded the time the customer completed the survey. The observer and researcher also recorded the number of people in their party, in case surveys were completed temporally close to each other. This process was field tested by the researcher and observers during training to assure its feasibility.

Data Analysis

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested by regressing customer-service satisfaction data on perceptions of actual customer-service behaviors from the survey. Because of limited sample size, multiple regressions could not be conducted using matched observational data with surveys; however, exploratory analyses were also conducted using observational data of customer-service behaviors. As mentioned previously, EAD behaviors were formed into an equal-weighted composite and trichotomized into positive, neutral-positive, and neutral EAD. Thus, 33% of the customer-service encounters were categorized as being positive EAD encounters, 33% of the encounters were categorized as being neutral-positive encounters, and 33% of the encounters were categorized as being neutral EAD encounters. Similarly, latency was trichotomized into short, medium and long. This trichotomization was determined post-hoc, similarly to the trichotomization of positive, neutral-positive, and neutral EAD. Each of these trichotomizations was conducted within each restaurant. Also, transaction busyness was dichotomized into busy

and not busy based on the mean number of people in line at fast food restaurants for the purposes of the exploratory analyses. These dichotomizations allowed for better comparison between studies. Moderated regressions were conducted to test Hypotheses 3 (restaurant) and Hypothesis 4 (busyness) using the original survey data. Hypothesis 5 (gender) could not be tested in Study 2 because waitstaff and/or cashier gender was not measured in the survey.

CHAPTER VII
STUDY 2 – RESULTS

Survey Analysis

Descriptive statistics for the survey are reported in Table 2, and intercorrelations between survey items are presented in Table 3. In total, 205 surveys were completed at the two survey restaurants ($n = 106$ for Restaurant A, $n = 99$ for Restaurant D). To test Hypotheses 1 and 2, a two-step process was followed. First, an equal-weighted composite was calculated from the four EAD-related survey items to form one overall EAD composite, and a latency satisfaction composite was calculated from the two latency-related survey items. Then, the overall satisfaction item was regressed on the two composites. As seen in Table 4, the two service composites explained 46.8% of the variance in overall satisfaction, $R^2 = .47$, $F(2, 202) = 89.00$, $p < .001$. Controlling for latency, EAD satisfaction significantly predicted overall satisfaction, $B = .59$, $t(202) = 10.69$, $p < .001$, indicating support for Hypothesis 1. Controlling for EAD, latency satisfaction significant predicted overall satisfaction, $B = .18$, $t(202) = 3.30$, $p < .01$, indicating support for Hypothesis 2. An exploratory regression was also conducted, regressing overall satisfaction on all six of the service behaviors without composites. Three of the six behaviors (greeting satisfaction, smiling satisfaction, and satisfaction with time to reach the counter/waiter arrival) significantly predicted overall satisfaction while controlling for the other predictors. These analyses can be found in Table 4.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for Customer Service Satisfaction Survey*

Survey Question	Restaurant A (Fast Food) (<i>n</i> = 106)		Restaurant D (Family) (<i>n</i> = 99)		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	
Greeting Satisfaction	4.86	.38	4.80	.55	.13
Smiling Satisfaction	4.84	.50	4.74	.76	.16
Eye Contact Satisfaction	4.90	.34	4.87	.42	.08
Thanking Satisfaction	4.82	.47	4.68	.82	.21
EAD Satisfaction	4.85	.30	4.77	.55	.18
Speed to Counter/Waiter Satisfaction	4.77	.44	4.73	.60	.08
Speed to Receive Order Satisfaction	4.82	.47	4.66	.74	.26
Latency Satisfaction	4.80	.35	4.69	.57	.23
Overall Satisfaction	4.89	.32	4.77	.53	.27
Greeting Importance	4.28	.84	4.59	.76	-.39
Smiling Importance	4.21	.89	4.41	.80	-.24
Eye Contact Importance	4.50	.73	4.49	.77	.01
Thanking Importance	4.18	.83	4.37	.82	-.23
Speed to Counter/Waiter Importance	4.50	.73	4.67	.65	-.25
Speed to Receive Order Importance	4.62	.65	4.71	.66	-.14
Gender of Employee Importance	1.62	1.17	1.84	1.29	-.18

Note. EAD = employee affective delivery. Satisfaction items were on a 5-point Likert scale (very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5)). Importance items were on a 5-point Likert scale (very unimportant (1) to very important (5)). EAD satisfaction = equal-weighted composite of greeting, smiling, eye contact, and thanking satisfaction. Latency satisfaction = equal-weighted composite of speed to counter/waiter arrival and speed to order satisfaction.

Table 3. *Intercorrelations between Study 2 Survey Items and Scales*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Greeting Sat.	-								
2. Smiling Sat.	.65**	-							
3. Eye Contact Sat.	.58**	.44**	-						
4. Thanking Sat.	.55**	.66**	.41**	-					
5. EAD Sat.	.83**	.88**	.68**	.85**	-				
6. Speed to Counter/Waiter Sat.	.36**	.28**	.12	.44**	.39**	-			
7. Speed to Receive Order Sat.	.18**	.22**	.12	.25**	.25**	.33**	-		
8. Latency Sat.	.33*	.30**	.15*	.41**	.38**	.78**	.85**	-	
9. Overall Sat.	.62**	.57**	.41**	.54**	.66**	.41**	.27**	.41**	-

Note. $N = 205$. EAD = employee affective delivery. Satisfaction items were on a 5-point Likert scale (very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5)). Importance items were on a 5-point Likert scale (very unimportant (1) to very important (5)). EAD satisfaction = equal-weighted composite of greeting, smiling, eye contact, and thanking satisfaction. Latency satisfaction = equal-weighted composite of speed to counter/waiter arrival and speed to order satisfaction.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 4. *Multiple Regression of Overall Satisfaction on Service Behaviors— Study 2 Hypotheses 1 and 2*

	R^2	F	b	SE	B	t
Model 1	.47***	89.00	-	-	-	-
EAD	-	-	.59	.06	.59***	10.69
Latency	-	-	.17	.05	.18**	3.30
Model 2	.47***	89.00	-	-	-	-
Greeting Satisfaction	-	-	.30	.07	.32***	4.19
Smiling Satisfaction	-	-	.13	.05	.19*	2.51
Eye Contact Satisfaction	-	-	.07	.07	.06	.94
Thanking Satisfaction	-	-	.09	.05	.13	1.76
Reach Counter/Waiter Arrival Sat.	-	-	.13	.05	.15*	2.50
Receive Order Satisfaction	-	-	.06	.04	.08	1.46

Note. $N = 205$. EAD = employee affective delivery; equal-weighted composite of greeting, smiling, eye contact, and thanking satisfaction. Latency = equal-weighted composite of time to reach counter/waiter arrival and time to receive order satisfaction.

*** $p < .001$

** $p < .01$

* $p < .05$

Two separate moderated regressions were conducted to test Hypothesis 3; that EAD would be a stronger predictor of overall satisfaction at family restaurants and latency would be a stronger predictor of overall satisfaction at fast food restaurants. First, predictors were centered to reduce multicollinearity and increase meaningful interpretation of the interaction effects (Aiken & West, 1991). Table 5 presents the results of the two moderated regressions. Restaurant type did not moderate the relationship between EAD and overall satisfaction, $B = -.03$, $t(200) = -.08$, $p > .05$. However, restaurant type marginally moderated the relationship between latency and overall satisfaction, $B = -.10$, $t(200) = -1.69$, $p < .10$. Figure 1 presents this moderation graphically; latency was a stronger predictor of overall satisfaction for customers of fast food restaurants than for customers of family restaurants. Thus, there was marginal support for Hypothesis 3.

Table 5. *Interaction between Restaurant Type and Service Behaviors– Study 2 Hypothesis 3*

	R^2	F	b	SE	B	T
Model 1&2 – Step 1	.47***	59.91	-	-	-	-
EAD	-	-	.58	.06	.59***	10.62
Latency	-	-	.16	.05	.18**	3.19
Restaurant Type	-	-	-.05	.05	-.06	-1.18
Model 1 – Step 2	.47***	44.71	-	-	-	-
EAD	-	-	.58	.06	.59***	9.24
Latency	-	-	.17	.05	.18**	3.18
Restaurant Type	-	-	-.05	.05	-.06	-1.17
EADXRRestaurant Type	-	-	-.01	.12	-.00	-.08
Model 2 – Step 2	.48***	46.06	-	-	-	-
EAD	-	-	.59	.06	.60***	10.77
Latency	-	-	.20	.06	.22***	3.61
Restaurant Type	-	-	-.05	.05	-.06	-1.09
LatencyXRRestaurant Type	-	-	-.18	.11	-.10 ⁺	-1.69

Note. $N = 205$. EAD = employee affective delivery; equal-weighted composite of greeting, smiling, eye contact, and thanking satisfaction. Latency = equal-weighted composite of time to reach counter/waiter arrival and time to receive order satisfaction. Restaurant type: fast food coded as 1, family coded as 2. Predictors were centered.

*** $p < .001$

** $p < .01$

* $p < .05$

⁺ $p < .10$

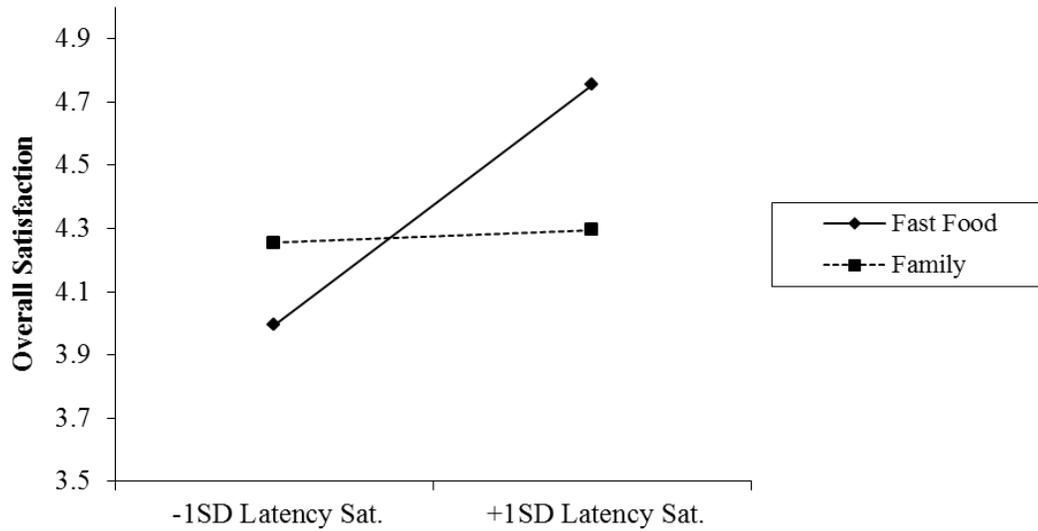


Figure 1. *Interaction of Latency and Restaurant Type on Overall Satisfaction.*

To test Hypothesis 4, that latency would be a stronger predictor of overall satisfaction when customers were busy, moderated regression with centered predictors was used. Table 6 reports the results of this analysis. Customer busyness did not moderate the relationship between latency and overall satisfaction, $B = -.00$, $t(200) = -.57$, $p > .05$. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was not supported in Study 2. Hypothesis 5 could not be tested using survey data because waitstaff gender was not measured on the survey.

Table 6. *Interaction between Customer Busyness and Service Behaviors— Study 2 Hypothesis 4*

	R^2	F	b	SE	B	t
Step 1	.47***	59.07	-	-	-	-
EAD	-	-	.58	.06	.59***	10.57
Latency	-	-	.17	.05	.18**	3.29
Customer Busyness	-	-	-.01	.05	-.01	-.20
Step 2	.47***	44.71	-	-	-	-
EAD	-	-	.59	.06	.60***	10.28
Latency	-	-	.17	.05	.19**	3.32
Customer Busyness	-	-	-.01	.05	-.01	-.18
LatencyXBusyness	-	-	-.06	.10	-.03	-.57

Note. $N = 205$. EAD = employee affective delivery; equal-weighted composite of greeting, smiling, eye contact, and thanking satisfaction. Latency = equal-weighted composite of time to reach counter/waiter arrival and time to receive order satisfaction. Customer busyness: busy coded as 1, not busy coded as 2. Predictors were centered.

*** $p < .001$

** $p < .01$

Observational Analysis

Control Sites

Because of small sample sizes, control site observations were collapsed across the two control sites at each restaurant type. Thus, Restaurant B and Restaurant C's observations were combined, and Restaurant E and Restaurant F's observations were combined. A total of 41 observation sessions were completed at the control sites (22 for fast food, 19 for family) and 271 unique observations were collected (175 for fast food, 96 for family).

Independent-samples t -tests and chi-square tests were conducted to determine if any differences existed across the study variables from baseline to survey period at the control sites. Table 7 presents the results of these tests. Since no surveys were given at the control sites, it was expected that no significant differences would be found across study periods. At the family restaurant control sites (Restaurants E and F) no significant differences were found across the four EAD-related behaviors, the two latency-related behaviors, or the two composites (EAD and

latency). Significant differences were found in five of the behaviors at the fast food restaurant control sites (Restaurants B and C). Cashiers smiled more often, $\chi^2(1, N = 169) = 4.83, p < .05$, thanked more often, $\chi^2(1, N = 170) = 20.84, p < .001$, and were more friendly overall based on the composite, $t(164) = 3.04, p < .01$, at the control sites during the survey period. Customers waited in line for a longer period of time, $\chi^2(2, N = 175) = 79.79, p < .001$, and waited overall for a longer period of time based on the composite, $t(164) = -7.44, p < .001$, at the control sites during the survey period.

Table 7. Independent Samples T-Tests and Chi-Square Tests for Control Site Differences between Periods

	Fast Food				<i>t</i> or χ^2	<i>df</i>	Family				<i>t</i> or χ^2	<i>df</i>
	Baseline (<i>n</i> =96–105)		Survey (<i>n</i> =61–70)				Baseline (<i>n</i> =63–69)		Survey (<i>n</i> =21–26)			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Greeting	1.36	.48	1.33	.47	.21	1	1.04	.21	1.00	.00	1.17	1
Smiling	1.59	.50	1.41	.50	4.83*	1	1.30	.46	1.08	.45	.12	1
Eye Contact	1.18	.39	1.13	.34	.87	1	1.06	.24	1.27	.27	.09	1
Thanking	1.76	.43	1.41	.50	20.84***	1	1.19	.39	1.10	.30	1.01	1
EAD Composite	1.47	.28	1.32	.34	3.04**	164	1.15	.20	1.11	.19	.93	86
Latency Wait	1.51	.70	2.66	.45	-79.79***	2	2.02	.83	2.04	.85	.05	2
Latency Order	1.97	.80	2.08	.84	1.47	2	2.00	.77	2.12	.91	4.59	2
Latency Composite	1.74	.50	2.34	.50	-7.44***	164	1.98	.63	2.10	.71	-.74	87

Note. Surveys were not distributed at control sites. EAD = employee affective delivery; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation. For EAD-related behaviors, a “yes” observation was coded as 1, a “no” observation was coded as 2. For latency-related measures, a 1 represents short latency, and a 3 represents long latency. Independent-samples T-tests were conducted for continuous variables, and chi-squares were calculated for categorical variables.

*** $p < .001$

** $p < .01$

* $p < .05$

Survey Sites

A total of 18 observation sessions were conducted at Restaurant A during the study (nine during the baseline period, nine during the survey period), and 22 observation sessions were conducted at Restaurant D during the study (nine during the baseline period, twelve during the survey period). A total of 165 unique observations were recorded at Restaurant A during the study (82 during the baseline period, 83 during the survey period), and 128 unique observations were recorded at Restaurant D during the study (49 during the baseline period, 79 during the survey period). In total, including the control and survey sites, there were 564 unique observations spread throughout 81 observation sessions.

Independent-samples *t*-tests and chi-square tests were conducted to determine if surveyor presence had any effect across the study variables. If the presence of the surveyor acted as a confound, some significant differences may be found with regards to the observational data because employees may act friendlier or serve the customers more quickly in order to generate better survey responses. As shown in Table 8, at Restaurant A (fast food) employees smiled less often during the survey period compared to the baseline period, $\chi^2(1, N = 164) = 3.91, p < .05$. At Restaurant D (family), the waitstaff thanked the customers more often during the survey period compared to the baseline period, $\chi^2(1, N = 118) = 7.90, p < .01$, and delivered the customers' orders more quickly, $\chi^2(2, N = 125) = 7.62, p < .05$. On the surface, it appears there was a small effect of surveyor presence on some of the customer service behaviors at the two survey locations. However, considering the fact that employees smiled *less* often during the survey period at Restaurant A, it is more likely that these results stem from the increased likelihood of Type I error when using multiple tests of significance.

Table 8. *Independent Samples T-Tests and Chi-Square Tests for Survey Site Differences between Periods*

	Fast Food				<i>t</i> or χ^2	<i>df</i>	Family				<i>t</i> or χ^2	<i>df</i>
	Baseline (<i>n</i> =82)		Survey (<i>n</i> =82-83)				Baseline (<i>n</i> =45-49)		Survey (<i>n</i> =71-79)			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Greeting	1.16	.37	1.08	.28	2.13	1	1.12	.33	1.06	.25	1.35	1
Smiling	1.27	.45	1.41	.50	3.91*	1	1.29	.46	1.36	.48	.61	1
Eye Contact	1.11	.32	1.22	.42	3.59	1	1.18	.39	1.10	.31	1.71	1
Thanking	1.29	.46	1.34	.48	.38	1	1.43	.50	1.19	.40	7.90**	1
EAD Composite	1.21	.24	1.26	.28	-1.33	162	1.27	.31	1.18	.23	1.78	114
Latency Wait	2.10	.81	1.93	.82	1.84	2	2.06	.78	2.01	.86	.279	2
Latency Order	1.94	.87	2.09	.77	5.33	2	2.22	.74	1.87	.84	7.62*	2
Latency Composite	2.02	.67	2.01	.58	.06	162	2.14	.53	1.94	.59	1.95	122

Note. EAD = employee affective delivery; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation. For EAD-related behaviors, a “yes” observation was coded as 1, a “no” observation was coded as 2. For latency-related measures, a 1 represents short latency, and a 3 represents long latency.

** $p < .01$

* $p < .05$

Matched Survey/Observational Analysis

In total, 40 surveys were able to be matched the corresponding observation provided by the trained observers (20 from Restaurant A, 20 from Restaurant D). There was not sufficient power to conduct multiple regression analyses, including the moderation hypotheses. Therefore, simple bivariate correlations were calculated between the observations and the survey data. In order to boost power, results were combined across the two sites (no significant correlations

were found when looking at the correlations at each site). Independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted to determine if any of the 17 variables differed significantly across sites. Only one, greeting satisfaction, was significantly different across sites, $t(38) = -2.14, p < .05$. However, since 17 *t*-tests were conducted, it would be expected that 85% of the time, a Type I error would be committed (17 tests X 5% chance of Type I error). Therefore, it is likely that this finding was spurious.

Table 9 contains the results of the correlational analyses. Of the 72 possible correlations, only two were significant, and neither correlation made theoretical sense. It would be expected that the survey questions would be related to their observational counterpart (e.g., there should be a strong correlation between smiling satisfaction as reported on the survey and smiling observations). There was a significant relationship between thanking satisfaction and the composite of the two latency measures from the observations ($r = .34, p < .05$). There was also a significant relationship between the satisfaction with the time spent waiting in line (or for the first arrival of the waitstaff) and the observational measure of the time spent waiting, but in the opposite direction as expected ($r = .32, p < .05$; a positive correlation indicates an increase in satisfaction as latency increases). Additionally, since the alpha level was set at .05, it was expected that approximately 5% of the correlations would be significant due to Type I error alone. Therefore, out of 72 correlations, it would be expected that 3-4 of the correlations would be significant because of Type I error. Therefore, it can be concluded that the significant correlations found in this exploratory analysis are likely spurious in nature and do not reflect any meaningful relationship.

Table 9. *Intercorrelations between Observational Data and Matched Survey Data*

	Greet Obs.	Smiling Obs.	Eye Contact Obs.	Thanking Obs.	EAD Composite	Latency Wait Obs.	Latency Order Obs.	Latency Composite
Greet Sat.	.17	.20	.17	-.18	.16	.05	-.02	.04
Smiling Sat.	.02	.02	.01	-.14	-.05	-.03	.07	.04
Eye Contact Sat.	.18	.25	.18	-.14	.16	.17	-.16	.04
Thanking Sat.	.07	.17	.20	.07	.22	.31	.15	.34*
EAD Sat.	.14	.21	.18	-.11	.17	.18	.03	.17
Speed to Counter Sat.	-.17	-.13	.14	-.06	.03	.32*	.12	.31
Speed to Order Sat.	-.15	.04	.22	-.02	.11	.20	-.11	.09
Latency Sat.	-.18	-.04	.22	-.04	.09	.29	-.02	.22
Overall Sat.	.02	.02	.18	-.18	.07	.10	-.08	.04

Note. $N = 38 - 40$. EAD = employee affective delivery. All satisfaction (survey) items are coded so that higher numbers indicate more satisfaction. Higher latency observations indicate longer latency. Bolded correlations indicate theoretically related variables.

* $p < .05$

CHAPTER VIII

STUDY 2 – DISCUSSION

Study 2 was designed to confirm the results of Study 1 using an OBM-based approach in the field. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were confirmed based on the survey results alone; both EAD and latency satisfaction predicted overall satisfaction in both types of restaurant. There was very limited support for Hypothesis 3 based on survey data: EAD did not more strongly predict overall satisfaction and family restaurants compared to fast food restaurants, but there was a marginal interacting effect of restaurant type on the relationship between latency satisfaction and overall satisfaction; latency satisfaction was a better predictor of overall satisfaction at fast food restaurants compared to family restaurants. There was no support for Hypothesis 4; that busy customers would be more affected by latency at all restaurants; and Hypothesis 5 (involving lowered satisfaction when being served by a less-friendly female employee) could not be tested due to the small number of matched observations.

Some exploratory analyses were conducted based on the observational data. First, it is possible that surveyor presence may affect some observational outcomes in OBM-style research of this kind, similar to a Hawthorne effect (Landsberger, 1958). A few observational variables improved at the survey locations while the surveyor was present, even though there was no change at the family restaurant control sites. Moreover, the lack of consistency of the data at the fast food restaurant control sites is likely due to the time period of when the survey period occurred. The majority of employees at one of the fast food control sites (Restaurant B) were students, and because of the massive turnover that occurred between periods due to the end of the semester and students returning home, it is possible that many of the employees were new

during the survey period. This could explain the improvement in EAD-related behaviors (new employees putting forth more effort to impress their supervisor) and the slowing of latency-related behaviors (new employees are still being trained and cannot complete their job duties as quickly as experienced employees). This, however, does not invalidate the observational data at the survey fast food site. The manager of this restaurant indicated that very little turnover occurred between periods; thus, a vast majority of employees at this restaurant were employed during both periods. Thus, any change in employee behavior at the survey locations between study periods is likely due to either surveyor presence or Type I error.

Limitations and Future Directions

The most important limitation of Study 2 involves the inability to accurately test some of the hypotheses with the appropriate statistical measures because of the small number of matched observations and surveys. When both survey sites became busy, many customers were not offered to take the survey because the surveyor was occupied with another customer taking the survey. Additionally, the observers were trained to focus on a maximum of two customers at any given time in order to achieve reliable observations. Therefore, many transactions were not observed by the observers even though the customers were surveyed. Lastly, the family survey restaurant was split into two sections. Depending on where the observer was seated, some transactions would have been outside of the observer's viewpoint. These situational variables led to only 19.5% of the surveys having an observational match. Future studies should incorporate a signal system that the observer and surveyor can use to communicate as to which customer is being observed at any given time so the surveyor can always attempt to survey these customers.

Another limitation involves observer attrition. Because of the conclusion of the university semester, six of the observers had to withdraw following the baseline period. More observers were added to replace these observers; however, any idiosyncratic differences that may have existed across the observers would be magnified with the addition of new observers. However, all observers did receive the same standardized training, so it is likely that this limitation was minimized. Furthermore, using many observers maximizes the generalizability of this study and minimizes the chance that restaurant employees recognize observers. Future studies should structure the baseline and survey periods to avoid any events that may cause unplanned observer attrition. Additionally, it is possible that paying observers more in terms of reimbursement may motivate observers to refrain from attrition. Although the reimbursement was typically sufficient to account for meal expenses, it was not enough to pay for the observers' time.

Furthermore, survey restaurant choice was a limitation. The two survey sites that were chosen were owned by the same management group. This management group is known around the community for its strong customer service reputation; thus, the majority of the survey satisfaction measures may have been affected by range restriction. Additionally, many of the customers were self-identified as "regulars" to the restaurants. When some customers were told that the survey being offered was a survey about customer service, they often made remarks involving the fact that "the service is always good here." Even though it was expressed that these survey responses should only reflect their most recent service encounter at the restaurant, it is possible that customers provided blanket high ratings simply because of past positive experiences at the restaurant. This limitation, however, represents a positive for these

restaurants; that is, having a large number of repeat customers assures future business. Future research could choose restaurants as survey locations that are known to be frequented by tourists or travelers in order to reduce the chances of encountering repeat customers.

Lastly, the limited scope of the study raises questions about the performance of service-related variables in different contexts and different cultures. Customer service is a necessity of many different industries and business functions, including retail stores, banks, and technical support. The external validity of this study to these industries and functions is unknown. Additionally, the importance of certain service-related behaviors in different cultures could be an avenue for research. Fast-paced cultures may prefer speed of service in all contexts, whereas slower-paced cultures may prefer EAD.

CHAPTER IX

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Overall, these studies illuminate the importance of using experimental control and observational data when studying customer service satisfaction. Looking solely at survey data alone, it would appear that although EAD and latency are important across all family and fast food restaurants, there are no situational differences in terms of restaurant type or customer busyness. However, using an experimental policy-capturing study, it was found that EAD better predicts customer-service satisfaction in family restaurants, latency better predicts customer-service satisfaction in fast food restaurants, and latency better predicts customer-service satisfaction when customers are busy. Additionally, it appears that surveyor presence alone affects some customer-service behaviors gathered from observational data. These factors, along with the previously-discussed response bias issue (see Introduction), provide credence to the conception that customer-service satisfaction data gathered by survey alone suffers from numerous statistical and methodological concerns.

Future Directions

In addition to the limitations and future directions addressed in the previous study discussions, future studies could determine if any EAD-related behaviors in addition to the four behaviors measured in the current studies (greeting, smiling, eye contact, and thanking) affect customer-service satisfaction. For example, Tsai (2001) measured the effects of the same four EAD-related behaviors in addition to “asking customers to wait for a while” and “speaking in a rhythmic tone” (p. 503).

Furthermore, future studies could identify different criteria to assess rather than an overall measure of customer-service satisfaction (Study 2) or a composite of two specific measures (Study 1). It is possible that more targeted criterion measures could have different results than the general measures used in the current studies; therefore, a future policy-capturing study could measure satisfaction with greeting, smiling, eye contact, and thanking specifically rather than just a gross measure of overall customer-service satisfaction. Additionally, future studies could also avoid measures related to customer-service satisfaction directly, instead measuring more peripheral variables. For example, Luong (2007) measured employee sincerity as a dependent variable in her study, in addition to an overall measure of customer-service satisfaction.

Conclusion

The current studies provide an excellent picture of the predictors of customer-service satisfaction at both family restaurants and fast food restaurants. Both EAD and latency are important for customer-service satisfaction at both kinds of restaurants. However, managers of fast food restaurants should focus somewhat on improving waiting time in line and waiting time to receive the order to increase customer-service satisfaction, and managers of family restaurants should focus somewhat on improving EAD among their waitstaff. Furthermore, employees should be trained to increase transaction speed during busy times when customers are likely to be in a hurry, sacrificing EAD if necessary. Moreover, it appears that employee gender does not affect customer-service satisfaction in any manner. Without using the policy-capturing study, these findings would not have been uncovered. The dissemination of these results can be used as

a guide for customer-service training programs at family and fast food restaurants, improving all customers' experiences during their dining experiences.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ADULT CONSENT FORM – STUDY 1



Study Title: Perceived Customer Service: A Policy-Capturing and Organizational Behavior Management Approach

Research Investigators' Names and Departments:

Eric O'Rourke, Department of Psychology

Advisor: Carl Johnson, Department of Psychology

Contact information for researcher:

Eric O'Rourke: orour1em@cmich.edu

Carl Johnson: johns1cm@cmich.edu

Introductory Statement

You are invited to take part in a study to examine what customers value when evaluating their customer service at a restaurant. Your participation is voluntary, and if you decide to take part, you may request a brief report at the end of the study. If you have any questions or concerns please contact the persons listed on this form.

What is the purpose of this study? The purpose of this study is to determine what customers value when evaluating their experienced customer service at a restaurant.

What will I do in this study? Participation will involve completion of a survey involving hypothetical customer service encounters and brief demographic items.

How long will it take me to do this? Participation will take approximately 45 minutes to complete the survey.

Are there any risks of participating in the study? There are no known risks or discomforts associated with participation in this study

What are the benefits of participating in the study? You will gain knowledge about certain techniques and practices used in customer service research. Unfortunately, instant results are not available, though you are free to contact the researcher after the study to obtain a feedback report.

Will anyone know what I do or say in this study (Confidentiality)? Your responses to all questions will be completely anonymous. The information that you provide in this study will be combined with that of other participants. Responses of individual participants will not be published and will be available only to the researchers. Any data under the investigator's control will, if disclosed, be presented in a manner that does not reveal your identity, except as may be required by law.

Will I receive any compensation for participation? You will receive two extra credit points through Central Michigan University's SONA System.

Is there a different way for me to receive this compensation or the benefits of this study? You may read a related journal article provided by the researcher and write a short reaction/review paper. Also, as you are free to refuse to participate at any time, you may discontinue participation and still receive this compensation.

Who can I contact for information about this study?

Department: Psychology

Researcher: Eric O'Rourke Phone: (989) 274-5320 E-mail: orour1em@cmich.edu
Graduate Student

Advisor: Carl Johnson Email: johns1cm@cmich.edu
Professor

You are free to refuse to participate in this research project or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your participation will not affect your relationship with the institution(s) involved in this research project.

My return of this survey implies my consent to participate in this research and I have been given a second copy of this form to keep for my records.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to the Institutional Review Board by calling 989-774-6777, or addressing a letter to the Institutional Review Board, 251 Foust Hall Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859.

APPENDIX B

CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY - INTRODUCTION – STUDY 1

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. Please read all instructions carefully and complete every page of the survey. In order to maintain confidentiality, please *do not* include your name on this survey.

In the following pages, you will find various hypothetical scenarios detailing customer service encounters at restaurants. In each of the scenarios, picture yourself as the customer experiencing the customer service encounter. Pay close attention to the specific details of the scenarios; while they will be very similar to each other, they have small differences among them.

Please use the following definitions of the restaurants when reading the scenarios:

- *Family restaurant*: Restaurants in which portions of food are served to customers seated at tables on serving trays. Typically, customers are greeted by a host/hostess upon entry, seated at a table, and give orders to a different employee (a waiter/waitress). Examples are Applebee's, Red Lobster, Big Boy, etc.
- *Fast food restaurant*: Restaurants in which the customers line up at a counter and give their orders to a cashier and make payment for the order during the same transaction. Examples are McDonald's, Burger King, Taco Bell, etc.

Following each scenario, you will be asked to give two ratings to evaluate the quality of customer service. Please respond as if you actually just experienced the encounter and as honestly as possible. Once you have completed all scenarios, there will be one more section of the survey asking for your demographic information as well as a few other questions involving customer service.

When you have completed the survey, please inform the administrator. Thank you in advance for your participation! You will be granted your extra credit soon.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE SCENARIO – STUDY 1

Scenario #:

(It is your lunch break and you are in a hurry to make a meeting/It is in the evening and you have no plans after the meal). You enter a fast food restaurant (and are immediately greeted by the cashier/but are not greeted by the cashier) upon entry. After waiting in line, you approach the counter to order your meal. The (male/female) cashier (making direct eye contact with you/looking at the cash register), asks for your order. After ordering, (he/she) (happily and with a smile) tells you the cost of the order (but does not smile or appear to be happy). You pay and receive your change. Your order is ready (very shortly thereafter/after a reasonable period of time/after a long and frustrating delay. You find yourself getting bored because you have to wait for such a long time). (He/She) (thanks you, hands you your order, and says "Have a great day!"/ silently hands you your order). You sit down and begin eating your food.

Please rate *how satisfied you would be* with this customer service encounter if it actually happened to you by circling the appropriate response:

1	2	3	4	5
Very dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Very satisfied

Please rate *how likely you would be to return to this exact restaurant* based solely on the information given in the scenario by circling the appropriate response:

1	2	3	4	5
Very unlikely to return to this restaurant	Slightly unlikely to return to this restaurant	Neither likely nor unlikely to return to this restaurant	Slightly likely to return to this restaurant	Very likely to return to this restaurant

Scenario #:

You enter a family restaurant and are seated at a table. (It is your lunch break and you are in a hurry to make a meeting/It is in the evening and you have no plans after the meal). The (waiter/waitress) approaches your table (and welcomes you to the restaurant/but does not welcome you). (He/She), while (making/not making) direct eye contact with you, asks for your order. After you give (him/her) your order, (he/she) (smiles and thanks you before walking away/walks away without saying another word). (Shortly thereafter/After a reasonable period of time/After a long and frustrating period of time), your (waiter/waitress) brings your food (while smiling/without smiling). (He/She) (thanks you again/does not thank you) and places your bill on the table. You begin eating your food.

Please rate *how satisfied you would be* with this customer service encounter if it actually happened to you by circling the appropriate response:

1	2	3	4	5
Very dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Very satisfied

Please rate *how likely you would be to return to this exact restaurant* based solely on the information given in the scenario by circling the appropriate response:

1	2	3	4	5
Very unlikely to return to this restaurant	Slightly unlikely to return to this restaurant	Neither likely nor unlikely to return to this restaurant	Slightly likely to return to this restaurant	Very likely to return to this restaurant

APPENDIX D

RATINGS/RANKINGS – STUDY 1

Please rate the following characteristics with regards to their importance to you in a customer service encounter in a family restaurant by circling the appropriate response.

The waiter's/waitress's friendliness:

1	2	3	4	5
Very unimportant	Slightly unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Slightly important	Very important

The speed at which you receive your food after you order it:

1	2	3	4	5
Very unimportant	Slightly unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Slightly important	Very important

The gender of the waiter/waitress:

1	2	3	4	5
Very unimportant	Slightly unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Slightly important	Very important

Please rate the following characteristics with regards to their importance to you in a customer service encounter in a fast food restaurant by circling the appropriate response.

The cashier's friendliness:

1	2	3	4	5
Very unimportant	Slightly unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Slightly important	Very important

The speed at which you receive your food after you order it:

1	2	3	4	5
Very unimportant	Slightly unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Slightly important	Very important

The gender of the cashier:

1	2	3	4	5
Very unimportant	Slightly unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Slightly important	Very important

Please rate the following characteristics with regards to their importance to you in a customer service encounter in any restaurant by circling the appropriate response.

The employee's friendliness:

1	2	3	4	5
Very unimportant	Slightly unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Slightly important	Very important

The speed at which you receive your food after you order it:

1	2	3	4	5
Very unimportant	Slightly unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Slightly important	Very important

The gender of the employee:

1	2	3	4	5
Very unimportant	Slightly unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Slightly important	Very important

Now, please rank-order the characteristics of a customer service encounter from most important to least important at each restaurant. Place a "1" by the most important characteristic for each restaurant, a "2" by the second most important, and a "3" by the least important. Each restaurant should have its own rank-order.

<u>Family restaurant</u>	<u>Fast food restaurant</u>	<u>Any restaurant</u>
___ Waiter's/Waitress's Friendliness	___ Cashier's friendliness	___ Employee's friendliness
___ Speed receiving food	___ Speed receiving food	___ Speed receiving food
___ Gender of waiter/waitress	___ Gender of cashier	___ Gender of employee

1. Your age: _____ years

2. Your gender (circle one):

Male

Female

3. Your class standing (circle one):

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Graduate Student

APPENDIX E

ADULT CONSENT FORM – STUDY 2



Adult Consent Form

Study Title: Perceived Customer Service: A Policy-Capturing and Organizational Behavior Management Approach

Research Investigators' Names and Departments:

Eric O'Rourke, Department of Psychology

Advisor: Carl Johnson, Department of Psychology

Contact information for researcher:

Eric O'Rourke: orourlem@cmich.edu

Carl Johnson: johnslcm@cmich.edu

Introductory Statement

You are invited to take part in a study to examine what customers value when evaluating their experienced customer service at a restaurant. Participants for this study are being recruited from restaurants in Mt. Pleasant, MI. Your participation is voluntary, and if you decide to take part, you may request a brief report at the end of the study. If you have any questions or concerns please contact the persons listed on this form.

What is the purpose of this study? The purpose of this study is to determine what customers value when evaluating their experienced customer service at a restaurant and what actual customer service behaviors are exhibited by employees.

What will I do in this study? Participation will entail allowance of the researcher to administer surveys to customers of your business. You will not have to do anything.

How long will it take me to do this? Surveys will be administered until enough have been gathered to accumulate meaningful results.

Are there any risks of participating in the study? There are no known risks or discomforts associated with participation in this study

What are the benefits of participating in the study? You will gain knowledge about certain techniques and practices used in customer service research. You will also receive a report

detailing the findings of what customer service behaviors your customers like as well as anonymous information about your competitors.

Will anyone know what I do or say in this study (Confidentiality)? Your restaurant will never be personally identified in any written report derived from the results of this study. Any data under the investigator's control will, if disclosed, be presented in a manner that does not reveal your identity, except as may be required by law. In written reports, restaurants will be labeled, for example, "Fast food restaurant A" or "Family restaurant B".

Will I receive any compensation for participation? You will not receive direct monetary compensation for your participation; however, you will receive a written report of the results of this study.

Is there a different way for me to receive this compensation or the benefits of this study? No, there is not any different way to receive compensation of the benefits of this study.

Who can I contact for information about this study?

Department: Psychology

Researcher: Eric O'Rourke Phone: (989) 274-5320 E-mail: orour1em@cmich.edu

Graduate Student

Advisor: Carl Johnson

Email: johns1cm@cmich.edu

Professor

You are free to refuse to participate in this research project or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your participation will not affect your relationship with the institution(s) involved in this research project.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to the Institutional Review Board by calling 989-774-6777, or addressing a letter to the Institutional Review Board, 251 Foust Hall Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859.

My signature below indicates that all my questions have been answered. I agree to participate in the project as described above.

Signature of Subject

Date Signed

A copy of this form has been given to me. _____ Subject's Initials

Signature of Responsible Investigator

Date Signed

APPENDIX F

WHITE PAPER FOR MANAGERS – STUDY 2



Researcher: Eric O'Rourke
Email: orour1em@cmich.edu; Cell: (989) 274-5320
Central Michigan University- Industrial and Organizational Psychology Program

- Customer service is vital to any restaurant's survival. Dissatisfied customers *rarely* return to a restaurant if they have a poor customer service experience. And with the cost of bringing in new customers estimated at five times as costly, restaurants do not have room for error.
- Thus, retaining customers through high-quality and consistent customer service should be the number one priority for restaurants of all kinds. Previous research has shown that customers generally focus on two things in terms of customer-service satisfaction:
 - Friendliness
 - SpeedLuckily, these can both be improved through employee training.
- Little research has been completed that scientifically focuses on customer service specifically in a restaurant setting. Previous research¹ by this researcher has found that customer service behaviors, like *eye contact* and *speed of receiving the order*, can be improved through training; while other research has shown that these behaviors lead to higher customer-service satisfaction.



- However, none of this research has combined an experimental study with a field study in a restaurant setting. Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine what customers value when determining how satisfied they are with the customer service they receive at restaurants. The results of this survey will be compared with the results of a study performed in a more controlled, experimental setting. Once these values have been established, employee customer-service training programs can be better tailored toward specific

restaurants, increasing the number of satisfied customers and retention of those customers, which will ultimately increase profits. These

aggregate results (no individuals will be identified) will be shared with you at no cost.

APPENDIX G

OBSERVATION SHEET – STUDY 2

Name: _____									
Location: _____									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Date									
Sex of customer (M or F)									
Sex of cashier/waiter (M or F)									
Number of people in line behind customer when register is reached (fast food)/There were no more than a few tables open (family)									
Number of registers open (fast food)/Number of seconds from seating to waitstaff arrival(family)									
The cashier/waiter greeted the customer (Y or N)									
The cashier/waiter made eye contact with customer (Y or N)									
The cashier/waiter smiled at the customer (Y or N)									
The cashier/waiter thanked customer/said "Have a good day", etc (Y or N)									
Time spent waiting for order (in seconds)									
Comments (put description of customers if surveys are being administered):									

APPENDIX H

PILOT TEST FOR BUSYNESS MEASURE – STUDY 2

Customer Gender _____ Location _____ Time of Day _____

Please respond to the following statements with regards to the extent to which you agree with them, using the scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) based on your experience at this restaurant today.

1. I was satisfied with the friendliness of the cashier/waiter.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I was satisfied with the speed at which I received my order *after* I ordered it.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Overall, I was satisfied with my customer service experience at this restaurant today.

1 2 3 4 5

4. I have something I need to do or somewhere I need to be right now and am in a hurry.

1 2 3 4 5

Customer Gender _____ Location _____ Time of Day _____

Please respond to the following statements with regards to the extent to which you agree with them, using the scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) based on your experience at this restaurant today.

1. I was satisfied with the friendliness of the cashier/waiter.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I was satisfied with the speed at which I received my order *after* I ordered it.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Overall, I was satisfied with my customer service experience at this restaurant today.

1 2 3 4 5

4. I have something I need to do or somewhere I need to be right now and am in a hurry.

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX I

CUSTOMER SERVICE BEHAVIORS SURVEY – STUDY 2

Customer Service Behaviors Survey

This survey is part of a master's thesis designed to determine what customers value at restaurants. Your responses to this survey will be completely confidential and anonymous. Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate if you wish. While you will not receive any direct compensation, your responses will be combined with other customers in order to improve customer service at restaurants like this.

Please respond to the following statements based on this visit to **this fast food restaurant** on a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) in terms of:

	Very dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Very satisfied
The cashier greeted me	1	2	3	4	5
The cashier smiled at me	1	2	3	4	5
The cashier looked at me	1	2	3	4	5
The speed at which I reached the counter to place my order	1	2	3	4	5
The speed at which I received my food after I ordered it	1	2	3	4	5
The cashier thanked me	1	2	3	4	5
The customer service overall	1	2	3	4	5

Please respond to the following statements with regards to their importance to your satisfaction at ANY fast food restaurant (McDonald's, Burger King, Taco Bell, etc.) on a scale from 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important) in terms of:

	Very unimportant	Slightly unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Slightly important	Very important
The cashier greets me	1	2	3	4	5
The cashier smiles at me	1	2	3	4	5
The cashier looks at me	1	2	3	4	5
The speed at which I reach the counter to place my order	1	2	3	4	5
The speed at which I receive my food after I order it	1	2	3	4	5
The cashier thanks me	1	2	3	4	5
The gender of the cashier	1	2	3	4	5

Would you consider yourself busy right now? That is, do have something you need to do immediately after this meal that would cause you to be in a hurry?

Yes No

Have you taken this survey before at this restaurant or another fast food restaurant?

Yes No

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey. Your responses will be used to improve customer service behaviors and the overall quality of restaurants. We know your time is valuable, so thank you!

Score: _____	FOR RESEARCHER ONLY	T: _____
Date: _____		G: _____

Customer Service Behaviors Survey

This survey is part of a master's thesis designed to determine what customers value at restaurants. Your responses to this survey will be completely confidential and anonymous. Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate if you wish. While you will not receive any direct compensation, your responses will be combined with other customers in order to improve customer service at restaurants like this.

Please indicate your satisfaction with the following statements based on this visit to **this family restaurant** on a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) in terms of:

	Very dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Very satisfied
The waiter/waitress (not host/hostess) greeted me	1	2	3	4	5
The waiter/waitress smiled at me	1	2	3	4	5
The waiter/waitress looked at me	1	2	3	4	5
The speed at which the waiter/waitress first came to my table	1	2	3	4	5
The speed at which I received my food <i>after</i> I ordered it	1	2	3	4	5
The waiter/waitress thanked me	1	2	3	4	5
The waiter/waitress was personal with me	1	2	3	4	5
The waiter/waitress seemed authentic with his/her actions	1	2	3	4	5
The customer service overall	1	2	3	4	5

Please respond to the following statements with regards to their **importance** to your satisfaction at **ANY family restaurant** (Applebee's, Big Boy, Red Lobster, etc.) on a scale from 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important) in terms of:

	Very unimportant	Slightly unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Slightly important	Very important
The waiter/waitress greet s me	1	2	3	4	5
The waiter/waitress smiles at me	1	2	3	4	5
The waiter/waitress looks at me	1	2	3	4	5
The speed at which the waiter/waitress first comes to my table	1	2	3	4	5
The speed at which I receive my food <i>after</i> I order it	1	2	3	4	5
The waiter/waitress thanks me	1	2	3	4	5
The waiter/waitress is personal with me	1	2	3	4	5
The waiter/waitress seems authentic with his/her actions	1	2	3	4	5
The gender of the waiter/waitress	1	2	3	4	5

Would you consider yourself busy right now? That is, do have something you need to do immediately after this meal that would cause you to be in a hurry?

Yes No

Have you taken this survey before at this restaurant or another family restaurant?

Yes No

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey. Your responses will be used to improve customer service behaviors and the overall quality of restaurants. We know your time is valuable, so thank you!

S: _____ D: _____ FOR RESEARCHER ONLY T: _____ G: _____

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