

**CASE STUDY****2****First Impressions**

**Directions:** Read the following case study, then answer the questions that follow.

**Hypothesis**

Does your gender, race, or physical appearance affect the service you receive in stores? The hypothesis assumes that all three factors may affect the speed of service customers receive.

**Method**

To test the hypothesis, six assistants of diverse racial and ethnic origin were recruited. They consisted of:

- one Caucasian male
- one Caucasian female
- one African American male
- one African American female
- one Hispanic male
- one Hispanic female

The researchers chose two outfits for each sex: one casual and one business. The casual outfit for both the men and women consisted of faded jeans, an old sweatshirt, soiled athletic shoes, and a well-worn blue jean jacket. The business attire for the men consisted of a two-piece suit, a white button-down shirt, a tie, and leather dress shoes. The women's business attire included a skirted, two-piece business suit, a white blouse, leather pumps, and gold jewelry.

The researchers conducted the experiment in two nearby malls. Both malls were located in upper middle-class, predominantly white suburbs. The researchers obtained permission from the managers of various one-entrance stores to conduct the research. None of the stores' salesclerks were informed of the research study. The researchers classified the stores as male, female, or gender-neutral depending on the merchandise sold.

The six assistants entered the stores in one of the outfits described above. Each assistant wore both types of clothing. However, no assistant entered the same store in both types of clothing. The assistants carried a small stopwatch in the palms of their hands. When the assistants made eye contact with a salesclerk,

they started the stopwatch. The stopwatch ran until a salesclerk made an obvious attempt to provide service. For example, if the salesclerk approached and said "May I help you?", the watch was stopped.

**Results**

The analysis examined gender, race, type of store, and type of clothing as potential factors for delayed service. The results indicated the following significant factors and interactions of factors:

1. race
2. type of attire
3. gender and attire
4. gender and race and attire

The mean data for the interaction of gender, race, and attire is shown at the top of the next page. What do the charts show?

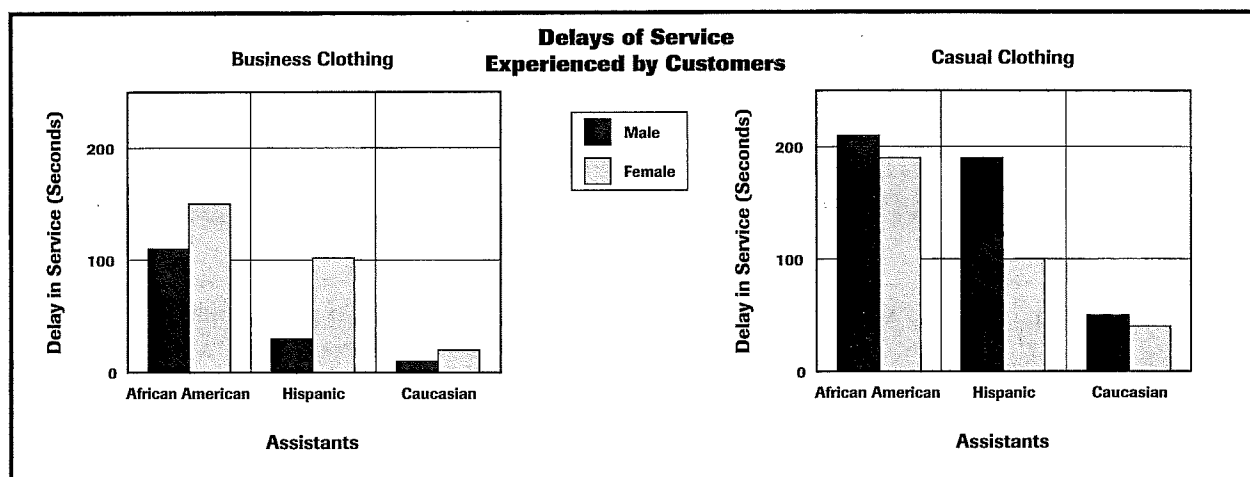
1. Men in business clothing were served more quickly than women.
2. Females in casual clothing were served more quickly than the men.
3. African Americans and Hispanics, regardless of dress, were served more slowly than Caucasians.
4. No matter the race, service was given more quickly to the assistants in business attire.

**Conclusions**

Salesclerks' first impressions do affect the speed of service. Upon examination, the researchers found that the majority of salesclerks were Caucasian. Apparent discrimination exists in the behavior of the salesclerks. The racial discrimination appears to be clear-cut. More subtle is the discrimination based on dress and gender. It is important to note, however, that this study only examined the delay in service, not the specific reasons for it.

Source: Kraus, M. et al. (1998). Latency to serve in stores: Effects of sex, race, and clothing. As cited in Horvat, J., & Davis, S. *Doing Psychological Research*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 14-9.

(continued)



### Understanding the Case Study

**Directions:** Answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. What were researchers attempting to determine?

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2. What types of stores were used for this study?

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3. What was being measured in this study?

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4. Who received the fastest service? The slowest?

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### Thinking Critically

**Directions:** Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

5. What are the independent variables in this study?
6. If you were managing one of these stores and were given the results of the study, what recommendations would you make to your salesclerks?
7. One study of this type cannot be generalized to assume that all salesclerks in all stores will react in the same ways. What factors should be changed in future studies to verify or dispute the study's conclusions?