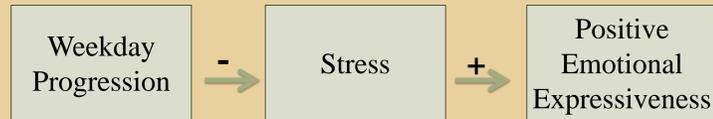


# THANK GOODNESS IT'S FRIDAY

## Weekday Stress and Positive Emotional Displays in the Service Industry

Kira Schabram

MSc. in Administration, Management



Moderator: Gender  
Moderator: Location

### ABSTRACT

Popular culture, through expressions like “Thank God It’s Friday” (T.G.I. Fridays; Global TV) or “a case of the Mondays” (Office Space- 1999), has long expressed the notion that employees are more stressed at the beginning than the end of the week. Evidence in the literature indicates that stressors will decrease pro-social behavior and emotional expressiveness. Collecting observational data at three outlets of a two Canadian coffee chains, this study set out to test the effect of weekday stress on emotional expressiveness. Results indicated that there was no significant difference between customers emotional expressiveness on Mondays and Fridays; employees, however, showed significantly higher levels of expressiveness on Fridays at T1. Location was found to have a moderating effect, gender was not. Results could not be replicated at T2. Conclusions and suggestions for future research are discussed.

### ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

The present research model builds its assumptions on empirical support from four separate research streams.

- **WEEK PROGRESSION CORRELATES TO STRESS:** A variety of disciplines, including psychology, medicine, and neurology have demonstrated a link between work and elevated stress levels (Sparks et al., 1997; Frankenhauser, 1989). In addition, they have shown a distinct progression in stress levels, both across a few workdays (Schlotz et al., 2004) and across several consecutive work weeks (Pittman et al., 1996). A limitation is that little research has compared the difference between particular weekdays.
- **STRESS CORRELATES TO PROSODIES BEHAVIOR:** Experimental designs in psychology starting from Mathews and Canon landmark design (1975) employing diverse external stressors as the independent variables e.g. loud noise vs. white noise, high-density city environments vs. rural locations, white collar work stress, all demonstrated a strong link between stress and decreased pro-social behavior. (Moser and Corroyer, 2001; Fritz and Sonnentag, 2007).
- **GENDER AS A MODERATOR:** Gender may have several interesting impacts on this study and must be considered as a potential moderator. Gender may lead to inflated politeness scores as females have been shown to be more emotionally expressive (Deaux, 1985; LaFrance & Banaji, 1992). On the other hand, research on which gender is more susceptible to work stress has been mixed, depending on the independent variable employed (Frankenhauser et al., 2001; Irie et al., 2001)
- **LOCATION AS A MODERATOR:** Location is presumed to have a moderating effect because of the previously established stressful effect of certain locations (Moser and Corroyer, 2001). Data will be compared between higher-stress locals (a low-cost chain in the business district, a low cost chain in a casual location, a high-cost chain in a casual location)

### METHODOLOGY

**Pilot Study:** The experimenter and one collaborator measured a sample of 50 interaction at two locations. The settings were deemed adequate in terms of eye line to the register and lack of observer influence on subjects. interrater correlation of .87 (p=.01) offered strong support for the reliability of the measure.

#### DATA COLLECTION

**LOCATION:** Because of its representative nature of the service sector, the first study was conducted at two outlets of a national Canadian fast food chain. In 2005, the chain accounted for 22.6% of all fast food industry revenues in Canada (reference available upon request, left out of submission to hide company identity).

**MEASURES:** All dependent variable measures were adapted from Pugh’s (2001).

coding:	Location	Gender	Weekday	smile	thank you
1	Business setting	male	Monday	yes	yes
0	Casual setting	female	Friday	no	no

**TIME 1 SUBJECT POOL:** *Customers-* n= 240: 123 female/ 17 males  
*Servers:* n=16; 240 comprised of 10 female/230 male servers

**PROCEDURE:** Time 1 data collection ran from March 23rd until April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and comprised a total of eight separate sessions on four days i.e. two sessions per day. For each location, data was collected consecutively on two Mondays and two Fridays. All collections occurred between 8:00 and 9:15am to avoid any confounding effect based of time of day. In addition, the experimenter rotated which location to visit first. Data collection followed a standard protocol. The experimenter, disguised to match the local dress code, sat at the counter nearest to the cash registers. Observations of customer/server interactions were systematically rotated between registers to double the server subject pool. Information was marked for thirty customers at each location. The average collection for 30 data points took 18.8 minutes, a shorter period than expected.

**FOLLOW UP:** A second data collection was conducted at one location of a more upscale coffee service chain in October 2009 to see if results would hold. Data was collected for 90 customer-employee interactions on two Fridays and one Monday for a total of three collections. Procedure was identical to time 1. Hypothesis testing was identical except for H4 in which data from T1 locations was combined and contrasted with T2.

### CONCLUSION

Results offered mixed support for the model. Why was employee emotional expressiveness affected by weekday progression but customer expressiveness was not? Ultimately, I argue that these results do not weaken the model but instead point to a flaw in the study design. Employees who are on the job experience higher stress level on a Monday than on a Friday in line with the model. For customers, on the other hand, the researcher was not able to determine occupation, especially not at the casual location where choice of customer outfit offered no indication of their work; no link can be drawn between customer emotional expressiveness and the potential cause of related stress. The follow-up study was interesting in that T1 employee results could not be replicated, and in fact, while not significantly, employee emotional expressiveness was higher on Mondays. This points to the location’s moderating effect or perhaps the second coffee chain has a script that demands politeness behaviors. Noticeable was also that positive emotional expressiveness was higher for all conditions at time 2, leaving the question of how the relative prestige of the second coffee chain affects stress levels.

**STRENGTHS:** Strengths included the study’s large sample size, high ecological validity, high pre-test reliability, and T1 and T2 quick data collection (time-related validity).

**LIMITATIONS:** Limitations included lag time between T1 and T2 collections; the study’s correlational design; no reliability test past pilot study; politeness measurement limitation (smiling and thanking only) and inference that politeness is voluntary and not work mandated; lack of measurement of subject stress level.

**PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS:** The US economy is steadily changing from a service to a manufacturing economy. It is estimated that three out four American employees will soon be working in a service capacity (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). This change will mean an increase in customer/employee contact and consequently a greater need for research and training on human interactions. It is important to how employee politeness, a variant of organizational citizenship behavior (Podsakoff et al., 2000) is affected by time stressors? Insight is important particularly for training and development purposes.

**PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS:** In light of T1 findings we recommend three future research approaches: 1. lab experiment to determine causality; 2. larger studies (increasing number of locations, variables, and subjects); 3. inclusion of surveys.

### HYPOTHESES

### RESULTS: TIME 1

### RESULTS: TIME 2

Customer positive emotional expressiveness will be lower on Monday than Friday.

**Not supported:**  
Monday (M=.54,SD=.68)  
Friday (M=.58, SD=.75)  
n=120, (t= .36, p=.72)

**Not supported:**  
Monday (M=.70,SD=.72)  
Friday (M=.68, SD=.69)  
n=90, (t= .13, p=.90)

Employee positive emotional expressiveness will be lower on Monday than Friday.

**Supported:**  
Monday (M=.58,SD=.64)  
Friday (M=.77, SD=.67)  
n=120, (t= 2.16, p=.03)

**Not supported:**  
Monday (M=.93,SD=.78)  
Friday (M=.86, SD=.70)  
n=90, (t= .42, p=.67)

Gender will be a significant moderator on the relationship between weekday and customer reaction.

**Not supported:**  
Male Monday n= 63 (M=.52,SD=.74)  
Friday n= 54 (M=.65, SD=.85)  
(t= .85, p=.40)  
Female Monday n=57 (M=.56,SD=.63)  
Friday n=66 (M=.52, SD=.66)  
(t=.40, p=.69)  
Moderator Analysis: Z= 1.57

**Not supported:**  
Male Monday n= 8 (M=.75,SD=.70)  
Friday n= 28 (M=.82, SD=.72)  
(t= .25, p=.81)  
Female Monday n=19 (M=.68,SD=.75)  
Friday n=35 (M=.57, SD=.61)  
(t=.60, p=.52)  
Moderator Analysis: Z= 0.74

Location will be a significant moderator on the relationship between weekday and customer reaction.

**Supported:**  
casual: (M=.46,SD=.65)  
business: (M=.66, SD=.77)  
n=120, (t= 2.18, p=.03)

**Not supported:**  
T1: n=240 (M=.56,SD=.72)  
T2: n=90 (M=.69, SD=.68)  
n=120, (t= 1.49, p=.137)

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