

## In-group and out-group emotional displays in the workplace: The impact of self-construal

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Independent and interdependent self construals have been shown to relate to a variety of intrapersonal and interpersonal facets (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Of recent interest is the impact on emotional display norms. Culture has been shown to impact the extent to which individuals express different emotions. A large multinational study (Matsumoto et al, 2008) found that individualists reported higher emotional expressivity with in-group members (“close friends”) as well as higher emotional expressivity for happiness and surprise with out-group members (“acquaintances”). Display norms have been examined and measured outside of the workplace, but only a small body of research has examined display norms and expression strategies that exist within organizations (e.g., Diefendorff & Greguras, 2009 and Grosserand & Diefendorff, 2005). Further, research has demonstrated the need to include culture within the framework of workplace display norms, however to date research has only used country as a proxy for social culture (see Gullekson & Vancouver, 2010 and Mann, 2007).

The current research examines the nature of emotional display norms in organizations. Interpersonal interactions in organizations are variations of social interactions, but employee interactions are not purely social in nature. Anger, in particular, has received particular attention in the organizational literature (see, for example, Geddes & Callister, 2007 and Gibson et al, 2009). One positive (happiness) and one negative (anger) emotions were examined, to determine the norms regarding the extent to which culture affects how much of each emotion it is considered appropriate to display to an organizational in-group member (“colleague”) and an organizational out-group member (“customer”).

A sample of 225 employed students from a Canadian university was used. As previous findings have suggested that the basis for more positive emotional expression to social out-group members on the part of individualists may be due to egalitarianism (see, for example, Matsumoto et al, 2008), only those who endorsed a horizontal cultural orientation were included in the analyses, leaving an *n* of 84 (50% female, mean age of 23). Participants completed the Display Rule Assessment Inventory (Matsumoto et al, 2005), adapted for the workplace. A groups by trials ANOVA was performed with member group (in-group colleague, out-group customer) and emotion felt (anger, happiness) as within subject factors and

horizontal culture orientation (independent, interdependent) as the between subjects factor on the dependent variable of expressivity of emotion. A three way interaction (member group by emotion by cultural orientation) was found. For anger, there was no interaction between the member group and cultural orientation, such that both independent and interdependent participants express less anger towards their out-group and more anger toward their in-group (with the overall level of expressivity of anger being higher for independent self-construal). However, for happiness, expressivity did not change across member groups for those with an independent self-construal (i.e., they express the same level of happiness for both their out-group and their in-group). Conversely, the impact of member group significantly impacted the level of expressivity for those with an interdependent self-construal, such that they expressed more happiness toward their out-group and less toward their in-group.

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