Emotion display rules at work in the global service economy: the special case of the customer

Alicia Grandey
*Department of Psychology, Pennsylvania State University,
University Park, Pennsylvania, USA*

Anat Rafaeli and Shy Ravid
*Faculty of Industrial Engineering and Management,
Technion-Israel Institute of Technology,
Haifa, Israel*

Jochen Wirtz
*Department of Marketing, National University of Singapore,
Singapore, and*

Dirk D. Steiner
*Laboratoire de Psychologie Expérimentale et Quantitative,
Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis,
Nice, France*

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how emotion display rules are influenced by relational, occupational, and cultural expectations.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors compare these influences by assessing anger and happiness display rules toward customers, coworkers, and supervisors across four cultures.

Findings – Overall, the findings suggest that anger can be expressed with coworkers, can be slightly leaked to supervisors, but must be almost completely suppressed with customers. In contrast, happiness expression is most acceptable with coworkers. Moreover, though culture dimensions (i.e. power distance and collectivism) do predict display rules with organizational members, display rules with customers are fairly consistent across culture, with two exceptions. French respondents are more accepting of anger expression with customers, while American respondents report the highest expectations for expressing happiness to customers.

Practical implications – The results support that several countries share the "service with a smile" expectations for customers, but these beliefs are more strongly held in the USA than in other cultures. Thus, importing practices from the USA to other culturally distinct countries may be met with resistance. Management must be aware of cultural differences in emotions and emotion norms, as outlined here, to improve the experience of employees of globalized service organizations.

Originality/value – The authors integrate social, occupational, and cultural theoretical perspectives of emotional display rules, and build on the small but growing research identifying variation in display rules by work target, specifically speaking to the globalized "service culture."

Keywords Emotional intelligence, Emotional dissonance, Employee behaviour, Culture, Service industries

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Customer: "In America, all the cashiers smile."

Cashier: "So go to America. What do you want from me?" (Rafaeli, 1989, p. 263).

An assumption in service research is that both management and customers expect front-line staff to be friendly, caring, and perhaps even enthusiastic (Hochschild, 1983). These expectations are communicated via formal internal policies (e.g. selection, monitoring, and training) in addition to informal social rewards and punishments, and guide what are appropriate emotional displays (Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987). Such display rules for emotional expressions help guide employee behavior and interpersonal performance (Diefendorff and Gosserand, 2003), since there will inevitably be situations when employees do not feel such positive emotions (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2007, pp. 314-5). Such emotional requirements have been proposed to increase employee job strain by requiring emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983). However, to date there is mixed evidence on whether display rule perceptions are associated with job performance and job strain in the ways proposed (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Côté and Morgan, 2002; Diefendorff and Richard, 2003; Diefendorff et al., 2006; Grandey, 2003); we argue that more attention is needed to how workplace display rules vary by emotion, target, and cultural context.

First, display rules research often asks about "positive" or "negative" emotions, but this obscures variability within each category. We focus on display rules for two emotions important for the work environment – anger and happiness – because they motivate anti- and pro-social action tendencies, respectively, (Fitness, 2000; Geddes and Callister, 2007; Sloan, 2004). Second, much of the display rules research (cited above) has either focused only on display rules toward customers or "at work" in general. The former ignores the possibility of emotional requirements for within-organization interactions, and the latter obscures variations in display rules by target (e.g. colleagues, supervisors, and customers). According to Hochschild (1983), the customer target involves stronger display rules than would a general norm for "niceness" within the organization, but this is rarely tested. Finally, although research on workplace display rules has been conducted across the globe, there is little attention comparing cultural norms in service contexts. Cultural norms create shared conceptions about how members of a given culture should behave (Schein, 1992), and as shown in the opening quote, displays during service interactions may vary by culture.

We integrate three perspectives: a dyadic relational perspective, occupational perspective, and socio-cultural perspective, to predict variations in anger and happiness display rules at work. First, social science research has demonstrated that display rules, particularly for anger, take into account relative social power and familiarity in the dyad (Ekman, 1993). Second, we build on the small but growing research identifying distinct display rules by work targets (Diefendorff and Greguras, 2009; Sloan, 2004; Tschan et al., 2005), arguing that customers have distinct display rules due to their unique status and familiarity characteristics compared to other work targets. Finally, literature on cultural norms – maxims and values – are known to influence acceptance of certain emotional expressions, and that this may also depend on the status and familiarity of the target (Ekman, 1971; Matsumoto, 1993; Matsumoto et al., 1998, 2008). We contrast the view that cultural norms explain workplace display rules with the idea that the globalized service culture results in cross-cultural similarity in display rules

with customers. These questions have implications for the growing understanding of when emotions are acceptable to be shown at work (Geddes and Callister, 2007), and implications for the increasingly global service economy in which we work.

Display rules for anger and happiness at work

Display rules are norms or expectations that tell individuals whether and how to express emotion in social interactions (Ekman, 1971; Ekman and Oster, 1979). Workplace display rules research has focused on the expectations for integrative display rules: expressing positive and suppressing negative emotions (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; van Maanen and Kunda, 1989), or managing anger emotions with coworkers (Fitness, 2000; Geddes and Callister, 2007). The former approach ignores the role of specific emotions, and the possibility that positive suppression and negative expression may sometimes be warranted. The latter focuses on one emotion and one target to the exclusion of others. We examine display rules for two discrete emotions – anger and happiness – as key emotions of interest in the workplace (Diefendorff and Richard, 2003; Fitness, 2000; Geddes and Callister, 2007; Sloan, 2004). Anger and happiness are similar in that they both comprise high activation or arousal, coupled with an "approach" action tendency; however, anger motivates a desire to harm or engage in antisocial actions, while happiness communicates a desire to affiliate or prosocial actions (Averill, 1983; Fredrickson, 1998). Thus, display rules regarding communicating these emotions are critical for workplace dynamics.

With a focus on display rules for anger and happiness, we first review how relational characteristics – status and familiarity – are thought to influence these display rules, and how this literature explains display rules with customers versus organizational members. Second, we show how the broader cultural context may influence and interact with those target characteristics to influence display rules. It should be noted that we are examining the display rules from the employees' perspective, since they are the key actors in the service interaction and thus their perception of job expectations are critical.

Display rules by target characteristics

Social-relational characteristics influence the acceptability of emotional expression in any social context, including work. Two main relational dimensions are status (also called power or dominance) and familiarity (also called solidarity or intimacy) (Locke, 2003). Importantly, these target characteristics of status and familiarity have been shown to influence the display rules that are held about different targets.

Status represents a social characteristic that communicates the extent that one is seen as valued – often due to control over resources or desirable outcomes (Locke, 2003). Similarly, anger is an action-oriented emotion that communicates the potential to harm or influence another, and thus communicates power (Averill, 1983; Tiedens, 2001; Tiedens *et al.*, 2000). As such, expressing anger is least acceptable from lower status toward higher status targets (Allan and Gilbert, 2002; Côté and Moskowitz, 2002; Keltner *et al.*, 2003; Lively and Powell, 2006; Ridgeway and Johnson, 1990). Though, expressing felt happiness has been proposed as more likely toward higher status targets, as a way of showing deference and obtaining favor from those with status, this has received limited support (Hecht and LaFrance, 1998; Hall and Horgan, 2003). There are few risks to expressing felt happiness, thus status characteristics tend to be less influential on display rules for happiness.

Familiarity with the target also influences display rules; we constrain expressing felt emotions with strangers, while sharing our "real" selves with those whom we know well (Averill, 1983; Matsumoto, 1991). In fact, though norms for expressing anger and happiness were stronger toward acquaintances than friends, the effect was even stronger for anger than for happiness (Matsumoto *et al.*, 2005). Anger expressed in a familiar relationship may be used to recognize an issue and repair the situation, in contrast to anger from a stranger (Averill, 1983; Glomb, 2002). Again, happiness display rules do not tend to be as strongly influenced by target characteristics.

How do these relational characteristics apply to workplace targets? Customers have been viewed as a "second manager" in that they hold power through organizational policies and practices; for example, through training that "the customer is always right," gathering performance feedback from customers, and customers' impact on tips or commissions (Hochschild, 1983; Lynn and Latane, 1984; Lynn *et al.*, 1993; Rafaeli, 1989; Wirtz *et al.*, 2008; Wirtz and Lee, 2003). Thus, customers are viewed in research and in practice as higher in status and power than the employee serving them (Côté and Moskowitz, 2002; Sloan, 2004). At the same time, though some employees develop ongoing relationships with customers, on average, customers tend to be less familiar to employees than organizational members with whom they work on a day-to-day basis (Gutek *et al.*, 1999). In comparison, supervisors are higher status and power targets within the organizational hierarchy, thus similar to customers, but the employee is more likely to have an ongoing relationship with supervisors than customers. Finally, coworkers have by definition the same status in the organizational hierarchy, but are typically more familiar and likely to serve as a source of intimacy and support than managers (Sloan, 2004). Thus, on average, customers are higher status but the least familiar to the employee, supervisors are higher status and moderately familiar, and coworkers are same status and the most familiar targets. This suggests a specific pattern of display rules for anger, such that it should be least expressed toward (higher status and least familiar) customers, whereas happiness should show less variance by target and be more acceptable to be displayed toward customers.

Some current research has supported this pattern based on target characteristics. In an experience sampling study of French Swiss employees, display rules for controlling emotions were more likely to be perceived with customers (89 percent of interactions) than with coworkers (31 percent of interactions) (Tschan *et al.*, 2005). With the USA and Australian samples, anger was much less likely to be expressed toward (higher status) customers and supervisors than toward coworkers (Fitness, 2000; Sloan, 2004). Finally, American masters of business administration students reported that expressing felt anger was more acceptable with supervisors than with customers, consistent with the familiarity prediction (Diefendorff and Greguras, 2009). Overall, there is less support for variability by target for expressing happiness norms. There may be a desire for positive expressions regardless of target, consistent with ideas of the non-complaining "good citizen" at work (Organ, 1997).

None of the above studies considered the effects of distinct emotions, targets, and cultures simultaneously. Across four cultures, we examine whether display rules for anger are viewed as least acceptable toward customers due to them being a higher status but also the least familiar target compared to the other two organizational members. We do not make predictions for happiness display rules given the

inconsistent prior research findings, but rather look at the evidence we collect about happiness in an exploratory way:

H1. Expressing felt anger is less acceptable toward customers than toward supervisors or coworkers.

Cultural differences in display rules by target

Our predictions above focus on within-person variability in display rules, based on the status and familiarity of the target. However, comparative cross-cultural research argues that cultural norms influence the feeling and expression of emotions (Eid and Diener, 2001; Ekman, 1971; Markus and Kitayama, 1991), and such variations by culture in emotion display rules have been shown with non-work targets (Matsumoto, 1993; Matsumoto *et al.*, 1998, 2005). In particular, the prominent cultural dimensions of power distance (PD) and individualism/collectivism (Hofstede, 1991) are thought to be relevant to emotion displays at work (Cooper *et al.*, 2003). We first argue that these cultural dimensions interact with specific status characteristics to influence display rules, and then suggest that the global "service culture" may supersede these influences when focusing on the customer as target (Byrman, 1999; Russ-Eft, 2004; Strudy, 2000).

Though display rules to suppress felt anger should be more strongly held with persons of higher status than with same status partners, there are cultural differences in the value placed on status that may create variability in the display rules for high-status targets. The cultural dimension PD is "the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a culture expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 28). Countries holding values consistent with a high PD culture believe that behavior should show respect to those with more status, thus negative emotions should be controlled or suppressed with high status others. In countries with lower PD cultures, status is less likely to influence display rules compared to personal tendencies or other factors (Cooper *et al.*, 2003). These effects are particularly likely to occur with anger compared to other negative emotions, since expressed anger highlights and can create power differences (Tiedens, 2001; Tiedens *et al.*, 2000). Thus, expressing felt anger toward higher status targets should be more acceptable in low PD countries compared to high PD countries. There is no reason to expect that PD influences happiness display rules, as prior evidence has not supported status effects on smiling behavior (Hall and Horgan, 2003; LaFrance and Hecht, 1999). Thus, happiness is examined in an exploratory way. Hence, we predict that PD of the country should impact display rules with customers and supervisors as follows:

H2. There is a target by culture interaction, such that anger expression is less acceptable toward higher status targets (e.g. supervisors and customers) in high PD cultures than in low PD cultures.

Generally, the familiarity of a target person means more expression of emotion is appropriate. At the same time, the importance of familiarity to influence display rules may depend on values for one's social group, or the individualism-collectivism of the culture (Hofstede, 1991). Some countries espouse more individualistic values, such as the autonomy and uniqueness of individuals, and emphasize individual needs, wishes, and desires over collective concerns; countries with more collectivistic cultures value social harmony and emphasize the concerns of the group over those of the individual (Hofstede, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Thus, whether a target is considered a member of one's

"in-group" or "out-group" should be important to predicting display rules (Triandis *et al.*, 1988). Emotion expressions, especially anger, are individualistic by expressing personal needs; as such emotion expressions may be viewed as damaging to harmonious social relations (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Matsumoto, 1991). Collectivistic cultures expect individuals to modify personal needs or behaviors when it is beneficial to their in-group. Thus, expressing felt anger to one's in-group may be less acceptable in collectivistic cultures where members would want to protect group harmony, compared with individualistic nations (Hui *et al.*, 1991).

In support of this view, a study of college students from 33 countries showed that collectivism was negatively associated with acceptance of anger expression toward members of one's in group (i.e. close friends), while unrelated to anger expression with members of an out-group (i.e. acquaintances) (Matsumoto *et al.*, 2008). Although expression of happiness suggests a desire for affiliation and social harmony, and thus seems likely for members of collectivistic cultures, this study found that collectivism meant less happiness expressions toward close friends. We examine happiness in an exploratory way. Thus, we compare anger display rules of collectivistic and individualistic nations for the "in-group" (i.e. coworkers) and "out-group" (i.e. customers) targets. We predict:

H3. There is a target by culture interaction, such that in collectivistic countries compared to individualistic countries, anger expression is less acceptable to high familiarity targets (i.e. coworkers) but similarly acceptable to low familiarity targets (i.e. customers).

Above, we suggest how cultural differences might influence display rules toward customers based on target characteristics and social-relational theories of emotions. An alternative view is also possible, such that there are distinct display rules for customers that cut across cultural differences (Friedman, 2005) due to the globalized "service culture." The institutionalization of common business norms has been shown to transcend national borders (Erez and Gati, 2004; Friedman, 2005; Schneider and White, 2004), and norms about service quality and positive treatment of customers is one such practice. In fact, display rules may have originated in North American managerial practices and notions of service quality (Byrman, 1999; Russ-Eft, 2004; Schneider and White, 2004), then were likely transferred to other countries by global USA-based service organizations (e.g. Starbucks and McDonald's), evoking what Erez and Gati (2004) described as "a top-down process." At the same time, customer expectations were also influenced by interactions with employees of globalized firms, and likely influenced the behavior of employees as well.

This globalization of service culture has been suggested to occur with display rules. Byrman (1999) described "Disneyization," suggesting that the principles exemplified by the American Disney theme parks, such as forced cheerfulness, have come to dominate the rest of the customer service world (van Maanen and Kunda, 1989). This globalization of service culture may then result in consistent display rules toward customers across distinct cultures. At the same time, there are certainly examples of resistance to these display rules. Rafaeli and Sutton (1989, p. 627) noted that in Israel "corporate guidelines for cashiers do not mention a requirement to smile" and in fact rudeness is common; however, this study was published 20 years ago and the service culture may be more widely held now. The "service with smile" policy of the American-based Four Seasons Hotels encountered some resistance in France due to

cultural differences in forced smiling (Hallowell *et al.*, 2002), yet the display rules with customers were still expected from the employees of this hotel.

Thus, we propose a differentiated view based on work target. Whereas national culture may help to explain display rules with supervisors and coworkers based on status and familiarity characteristics, national culture is less likely to explain display rules with customers due to the globalized expectation of friendly service. Hence:

H4.   There is a target by country interaction such that culture has a weaker effect and fewer country-level differences for display rules toward customers compared with organizational members for (a) anger and (b) happiness.

Method
We conducted a survey in four culturally distinct countries with similar levels of industrialization. The survey asked about appropriateness of expressing felt anger and happiness toward customers, supervisors and coworkers. Consistent with Matsumoto *et al.* (2008), we recruited college students from four cultures to hold constant status-related factors such as age and education, but due to our research question, we focused our analyses on those who had recent paid employment.

Respondents
A total of 541 undergraduate students were surveyed in exchange for partial course credit. They were all in management or industrial psychology courses in large universities, but from four different countries in four distinct geographical areas: the USA (North America), Singapore (Far East), France (Europe), and Israel (Middle East). We limited our analyses to participants who had held a paid job in the last 12 months ($n = 411$, 76 percent of sample), to ensure their responses accurately represent the work display norms in their respective countries. Of these, 34.9 percent had supervisory experience in service firms, and the majority (66.3 percent) had experience in service jobs. Of those with service jobs, about two-thirds wrote in their job titles, which included administrative assistant, bank teller, caddy, cashier, computer technician, hotel clerk, lifeguard, manager, receptionist, retail clerk, reservation clerk, sales, teacher, telemarketer, tour guide, and waitstaff. Though these jobs vary widely, it should be noted that they fit into the typical service interactions where integrative displays are expected, rather than differentiating (negative) or neutralizing (neutral) displays. Demographic details by country are reported in Table I.

Variable	Singapore ($n = 82$)		France ($n = 149$)		USA ($n = 101$)		Israel ($n = 79$)	
Service experience (%)	65.90		57.70		78.20		63.30	
Supervisor experience (%)	30.50		22.10		40.60		58.20	
Employee gender								
Male (%)	38.00		35.00		46.50		47.00	
Female (%)	62.00		65.00		53.50		53.00	
Age	21.6	(1.31)	23.9	(6.40)	21.2	(1.12)	24.9	(2.74)

Notes: All respondents had paid work experience that year or currently; values are percentages or means with SDs in parentheses

Table I.
Demographic attributes of sample of respondent country

Procedures
Participants were told that a group of researchers was studying "how people express their emotions in different situations, especially in the work context." They were instructed to think of their current or most recent job when answering the survey questions. To ensure common understanding, participants were given a definition of anger ("A feeling of displeasure resulting from injury, mistreatment, or opposition and usually expressing itself in a desire to fight back at the supposed cause of this feeling") and happiness ("A feeling of great pleasure, contentment and joy"). Surveys were administered in the local language in each country: English in the USA and Singapore, French in France, and Hebrew in Israel. The emotion terms used were "anger" and "happiness" in English, "la colère" and "le bonheur" in French; "ka'as and "simcha" in Hebrew.

We followed established protocols to ensure cultural equivalence of the survey instruments (Hofstede, 1980). The translation process involved four steps:

(1) All authors agreed on the survey items and scales in English, producing a version to be used in the USA and Singapore.

(2) Native French and Hebrew speakers translated from English to French and Hebrew.

(3) Native English speakers translated back from French and Hebrew into English.

(4) Authors reviewed the back-translation to ensure it is equivalent to the original meanings.

Slight modifications were made following this process and the final version of the survey was used to collect data in the four countries during the same four week period.

Measures
Display rules. We used an adapted version of Matsumoto *et al.*'s (2005) display rules assessment inventory (DRAI). Respondents were asked to think of a specific target and then asked: "What do you believe you should do if you were interacting with [work target] and you feel [anger/happiness]?" Unlike Diefendorff and Greguras (2009), we used the instruction "should" rather than "would" based on suggestions by Matsumoto *et al.* (2008) who noted that "should" assesses optimal or acceptable behavior (i.e. display rules), while "would" assesses individuals' behavioral tendencies.

Respondents could select one of six expression strategies from Matsumoto *et al.* (2005), arranged linearly from least expressed to most expressed: "Hide it by showing nothing," "Hide it by showing something else," "Show it but with another expression," "Show it less than I feel it," "Show it as I feel it" "Show it more than I feel it." Though others have used these as individual categories, then describing the modal response (Diefendorff and Greguras, 2009; Matsumoto *et al.*, 2005), recent work by Matsumoto *et al.* (2008) supports using these items as a continuum from suppression to amplification of the emotional display. Thus, we assigned these responses numerical codes 1-6, where higher values indicate the felt emotion should be expressed, and lower values indicates it should be suppressed.

Target characteristics. We followed Matsumoto *et al.*'s (2005, 2008) approach to modify the DRAI for different targets: customer/client, supervisor/manager, and coworker/colleague. For each target, respondents were asked to think about a specific person from their work experience, as suggested by Matsumoto *et al.* (2005). As is

typical in the literature, customers and supervisors represent higher relative status, with coworkers as equal status (Côté and Moskowitz, 2002; Sloan, 2004).

To assess whether the targets varied in familiarity as expected, we conducted a manipulation check that compared the three targets in terms of the frequency of contact. This is consistent with Gutek *et al.*'s (1999) approach to distinguishing service relationships from encounters, and was also Matsumoto *et al.*'s (2008) approach to establishing familiarity among non-work targets. In the survey, after being asked to identify a specific target customer, coworker or supervisor, respondents were asked how often they interacted with each target (rarely = 0, monthly = 1, weekly = 2, daily = 3, hourly = 4). We conducted a mixed-model analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) on reported familiarity, with the three targets as the within-person variable, country as the between-subject variable, and age, gender, service experience and supervisory experience as covariates. Coworkers were the most familiar ($M = 2.77$, standard deviation (SD) = 0.93), followed by supervisors ($M = 2.39$, SD = 1.07) and then customers ($M = 1.54$, SD = 93). All means were significantly different ($p < 0.01$) and in the expected direction. Only the effect of target was significant, with no interactions, suggesting consistent perceptions across country [within-subject $F(2, 786) = 6.03$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$].

Cultural differences. We surveyed respondents in four countries that represented different levels of Hofstede's (1991) values of PD and individualism/collectivism (House *et al.*, 2004). In particular, Israel represented the lowest PD (9), followed by the USA as moderately low PD (35), and then France (62), and Singapore (70) as moderately high. For individualism/collectivism, Singapore represented collectivism (17), with moderate individualism represented by Israel (49) and France (65), and high individualism represented by the USA (87). As shown in Figure 1, the four countries represent the four quadrants of these two dimensions.
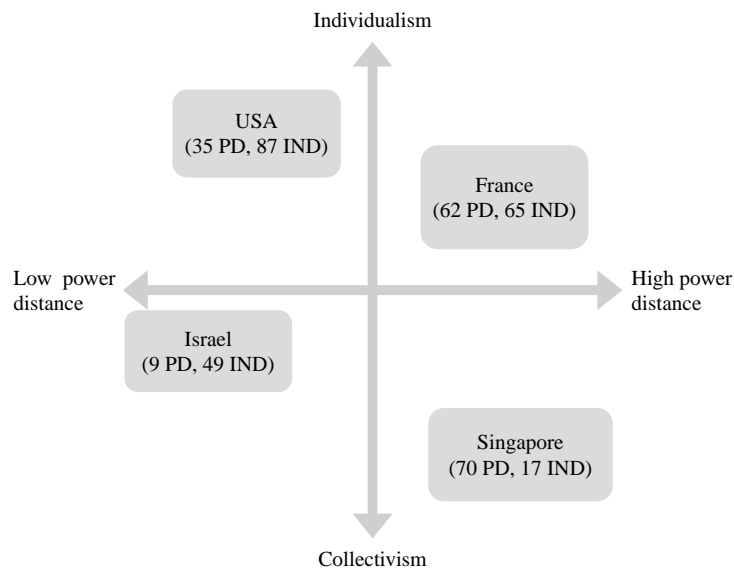

Figure 1.
Cultural values of the four
countries in the study

Notes: PD = power distance; IND = individualism
Source: Values for each of the countries on the two culture dimensions are taken
from Hofstede (1991)

Control variables. Demographic variables can create differences in social status, and there was some variability by country in these demographics (Table I), so we controlled for age, gender, service experience, and supervisory experience in all of the ANCOVAs reported below.

Results

We conducted two mixed-model ANCOVA to predict anger and happiness display rules. We included customer, supervisor, and coworker targets as the within-person variables, country as the between-person variable, and age, gender, service experience, and supervisory experience as covariates (Table II). This analytic approach provided an omnibus test for a within-person effect by target (*H1*), and a target by country interaction (*H2-H4*). We then conducted univariate ANCOVAs and mean comparisons as more specific tests of the predictions.

Anger display rules

The omnibus ANCOVA results for all three targets are summarized in Table II. Consistent with our predictions, for anger display rules there was a significant effect of target [$F(2, 776) = 8.30$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$], suggesting possible support for *H1*, and a significant interaction effect of target by country [$F(6, 776) = 2.95$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$], suggesting possible support for *H2-H4* (Table II). There was also a significant main effect for country [$F(3, 388) = 12.27$, $p < 0.01$], which showed some general country-level differences in expressiveness of anger (Table III). Mean comparisons were conducted to test the specific predictions.

Anger display rules by target. *H1* predicted that anger expression would be least acceptable towards customers compared with supervisors or coworkers, given customers' high status and low familiarity. Paired comparisons of target means were significantly different as predicted (Table III). In particular, anger expression norms were lower for customers than for supervisors ($M_{customers} = 2.21$, SD $= 1.30$, $M_{supervisors} = 2.79$, SD $= 1.41$, $p < 0.001$; 95 percent confidence interval of the difference 0.46, 0.80), and for coworkers ($M_{coworkers} = 3.91$, SD $= 1.27$, $p < 0.001$, 95 percent confidence interval of the difference 1.54, 1.88). Also as expected, it was less acceptable to show anger to higher status supervisors than coworkers ($p < 0.001$,

	η^2	Anger display rule F (df)		η^2	Happiness display rule F (df)	
Covariates						
Respondent age	0.01	5.57	(1, 386)	0	0.04	(1, 388)
Respondent gender	0	1.24	(1, 386)	0	0.75	(1, 388)
Service job experience	0	0.46	(1, 386)	0	0.76	(1, 388)
Supervisory experience	0	0.34	(1, 386)	0.02	7.16**	(1, 388)
Between subject						
Country	0.09	12.28**	(3, 386)	0.09	12.27**	(3, 388)
Within subject						
Target	0.01	2.06	(2, 772)	0.02	8.30**	(2, 776)
Target × country	0.03	3.38*	(6, 772)	0.02	0.95*	(6, 776)

Notes: *$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.001$; there were no significant interaction effects with the covariates

Table II.
Mixed-model ANCOVA
of anger and happiness
display rules

| Target | Country | | | | | Significant mean differences |
	France	Singapore	USA	Israel	Overall	
Customer	2.52	1.91	1.96	2.27	2.21	France > USA, Singapore
	(1.30)	(1.20)	(1.22)	(1.41)	(1.30)	
Supervisor	2.88	2.49	2.55	3.32	2.79	Israel, France > USA, Singapore
	(1.45)	(1.39)	(1.33)	(1.32)	(1.41)	
Coworker	4.11	3.27	3.86	4.24	3.91	Israel > USA
	(1.15)	(1.51)	(1.58)	(1.15)	(1.27)	Singapore < Israel, USA, France
Overall	3.22	2.58	2.73	3.21		USA, Singapore < Israel, France
						Customer < super < coworker

Table III.
Means for anger expression display rules by target and country

Notes: Values shown are means, with SDs in parentheses; higher mean values represent expectations that one should express the felt emotion; lower mean values represent expectations to suppress the emotion

95 percent confidence interval of the difference 0.92, 1.26). Thus, across four countries, display rules differ by target in a way consistent with *H1*. See Figure 2 to see how the relative mean levels are consistent in each culture for anger.

Anger display rules by target and country. *H2* predicted that anger expression is less acceptable toward higher status targets (i.e. supervisors and customers), particularly for those in high PD cultures compared with low PD cultures. We see evidence for this effect with supervisors, but not for customers (Table III). Expressing anger toward supervisors was significantly less acceptable to respondents in the highest PD culture (Singapore; $M = 2.49$, SD = 1.39) compared with a moderate PD country – the USA ($M = 2.55$, SD = 1.32, $p < 0.01$, 95 percent confidence interval of the difference 0.25, 1.11) and the lowest PD culture (Israel; $M = 3.32$, SD = 1.32, $p < 0.001$, 95 percent confidence interval of the difference 0.40, 1.26). However, anger display rules toward
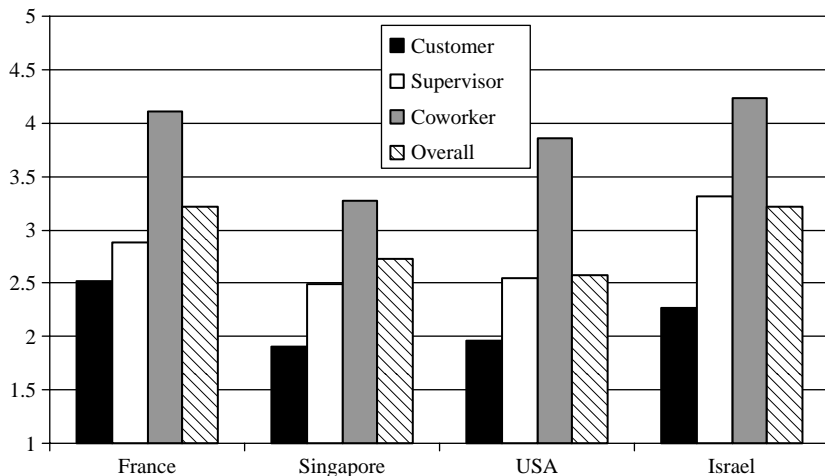

Figure 2.
Express anger display rules by target and culture

Note: Bars show the average level to which it was acceptable to express felt anger to each target, with responses ranging from completely hide the emotional expression (1) to show the emotion more than it is felt (6)

customers did not vary in any consistent way by PD, with the highest PD country (Singapore) rating anger display rules similarly to moderate (the USA) and low (Israel) PD countries (Singapore: $M = 1.91$, the USA: $M = 1.96$, and Israel: $M = 2.27$, $p > 0.10$, ns). Thus, *H2* regarding anger display rules varying by PD and target status is only supported for supervisors, but not for customers.

H3 proposed that the individualism/collectivism of a country would help explain differences in display rules toward familiar versus unfamiliar targets; coworkers versus customers, respectively. Consistent with *H3*, employees of the one collectivistic nation (Singapore; $M = 3.27$, SD $= 1.51$) were less accepting of expressing anger toward coworkers (i.e. in-group members) compared with all three other countries who tended to be individualistic ($M_{USA} = 3.86$, SD $= 1.58$, $p < 0.01$, difference 95 percent CI $= 0.23, 0.95$; $M_{France} = 4.11$, SD $= 1.15$, $p < 0.01$, difference 95 percent CI $= 0.61$, 1.30; $M_{Israel=} 4.24$, SD $= 1.15$, $p < 0.01$, difference 95 percent CI $= 0.65$, 1.44). Moreover, collectivistic respondents were not different in their display rules toward customers (i.e. out-group members) compared to the individualistic respondents. Thus, *H3* is supported.

H4 proposed that the effect of country would be weaker toward customers than toward organizational members, due to the globalized service culture superseding country-level norms. Beyond the covariates of sex, age, service and supervisory experience, country explained a significant portion of variance in anger expression rules for customers [$F(3, 388) = 5.43$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.04$], supervisors [$F(3, 389) = 4.16$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.03$], and coworkers [$F(3, 389) = 12.06$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.09$]. Looking at the η^2 as the effect size comparison, country explained less of the variability in display rules with customers (4 percent), compared to coworkers (9 percent), in support of *H4*. However, the variance explained for customers was similar to the 3 percent of the variability explained with the other higher status target, supervisors. Looking at the mean comparisons as evidence, only one country differed from the others in display rules toward customers: anger expression toward customers was significantly more acceptable in France ($M = 2.52$, SD $= 1.30$) compared with the USA ($M = 1.96$, SD $= 1.96$, $p < 0.001$, 95 percent confidence interval of the difference 0.29, 1.01), and Singapore ($M = 1.91$, SD $= 1.20$, $p < 0.01$, 95 percent confidence interval of the difference 0.23, 0.95). At the same time, Singapore, the USA, and Israel were not significantly different from each other for display rules toward customers, though these three countries do vary in display rules for supervisors and coworkers (Table III). Given that the effect of country was weaker as a predictor of customer than coworker (though not supervisor) display rules, and that customer display rules were statistically similar for three of the four countries, *H4a* is partially supported. See Figure 2 for a graphic representation of these comparisons.

Happiness display rules
For the omnibus test for happiness, the ANCOVA revealed a significant country by target interaction [$F(6, 772) = 3.38$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.03$], as predicted in *H4b*. Other predictions were exploratory. Target did not have a significant effect [$F(2, 772) = 2.06$, $p = 0.12$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$], though country [$F(3, 386) = 12.28$, $p < 0.01$] did (Table IV). To provide specific evidence, we conducted specific mean comparisons for each target.

Target	Country					Significant mean differences
	France	Singapore	USA	Israel	Overall	
Customer	4.11	4.46	5.09	4.48	4.48	USA > Israel, Singapore, France
	(1.40)	(1.51)	(1.16)	(1.23)	(1.37)	
Supervisor	4.23	4.41	5.06	4.62	4.53	USA > Israel, Singapore, France
	(1.18)	(1.20)	(0.88)	(0.88)	(1.11)	Israel > France
Coworker	4.83	4.93	5.05	4.89	4.91	None
	(0.70)	(0.94)	(0.55)	(0.81)	(0.77)	
Overall	3.89	4.60	5.07	4.67		USA > Israel, Singapore > France
						Coworker > customer, manager

Table IV.
Means for happiness
expression display rules
by target and country

Notes: Values shown are means, with SDs in parentheses; higher mean values represent expectations
that one should express the felt emotion; lower mean values represent expectations to suppress the
emotion

Display rules by target. We did not pose a specific hypothesis for happiness display rules to vary by target, given the mixed results in prior research, and the omnibus test did not support a within-person effect of target on happiness display rules (Table II). Generally, the means for expressing happiness were high across all three targets (Figure 3). However, exploratory paired-comparisons revealed that display rules for expressing happiness toward coworkers ($M = 4.93$, SD $= 0.75$) were more strongly supported than toward customers ($M = 4.58$, SD $= 1.30$; $p > 0.001$; 95 percent confidence interval of difference 0.25, 0.53) or supervisors ($M = 4.54$, SD $= 1.11$, $p > 0.001$; 95 percent confidence interval of difference 0.23, 0.46). In other words, felt happiness was more acceptable to be expressed to familiar/same-status targets (i.e. coworkers), while for the two higher status targets there was no difference in happiness norms despite differences in familiarity (i.e. supervisor is more familiar than customer).
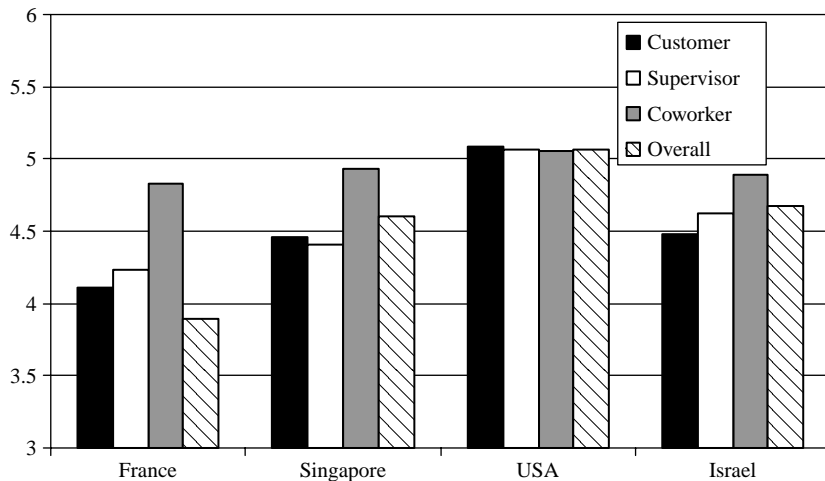

Figure 3.
Express happiness display
rules by target and culture

Note: Bars show the average level to which it was acceptable to express felt happiness to each
target, with responses ranging from completely hide the emotional expression (1) to show the
emotion more than it is felt (6)

Display rules by target and country. H4b suggested that cultural differences in happiness display rules is minimized when customers are the target. First, univariate ANCOVAs determined whether country predicted happiness display rules toward customers [$F(3, 388) = 7.44, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.05$]. The amount of variability explained by country for customer display rules (5 percent) was smaller than for supervisors (7 percent), consistent with predictions, but larger than for coworker (0 percent). Examining the mean differences of display rules for happiness with customers, we found differences for the country effect on customer display rules were again driven by one country. The USA had higher expectations for displays of happiness to customers ($M = 5.07$, SD = 1.16) than Singapore ($M = 4.46$, SD = 1.51. $p < 0.01$, difference 95 percent CI 0.16, 0.94), Israel ($M = 4.48$, SD = 1.23, $p < 0.01$, difference 95 percent CI 0.19, 0.98) or France ($M = 4.11$, SD = 1.40, $p < 0.01$, difference 95 percent CI 0.56, 1.23). Given that the effect of country on customer display rules was similar to that for supervisors and larger than the one for coworkers, *H4b* was not supported. However, the mean comparisons suggest that customer display rules are consistent across most countries, except that the norms in the USA are stronger than in other cultures.

We examined the effect of culture on happiness display rules for the other targets in an exploratory way. We do not find support that higher PD countries hold higher expectations for showing happiness to higher status targets as a sign of deference. Expressing happiness to supervisors was significantly less expected in the high PD country of France compared with the low PD country of Israel ($p > 0.01$, 95 percent confidence interval of the difference 0.12, 0.74). In fact, overall happiness expressions toward supervisors was significantly more acceptable in the moderate PD the USA ($M = 5.06$, SD = 0.88) compared to all three other countries ($p < 0.05$; Table IV). Moreover, there were no individualism/collectivism effects on familiarity of target: country did not have a significant effect on display rules with coworkers and there were no significant differences and all confidence intervals included zero.

Additional analyses. Gender is a factor that can communicate status and it is argued to influence display rules in non-work settings. In addition to controlling for gender in our analyses, we examined whether gender interacted with target or culture to explain the display rules of happiness and anger. We found no gender-related effects, consistent with Diefendorff and Greguras (2009) in their study of American MBAs. Thus, the immediate work context exerts greater influence on display rules than the social norms for gender.

It is possible that, within customers, there is variability in the familiarity with the target (e.g. service relationships versus transactional encounters, Gutek *et al.*, 1999) that explains display rules. Using the manipulation check item, we examined whether variability in the frequency of interactions with the targets was associated with display rules. This was not the case. Extent of interactions with the customer was non-significantly associated with anger expression norms ($r = -0.05$, $p < 0.10$) and with happiness expression norms ($r = 0.096$, $p = 0.055$), and the magnitude of the correlations explained <1 percent of the variance. Thus, interacting more often with a customer did not impact anger or happiness display rules. As a conservative follow-up analysis, we included frequency of interaction with all three targets as covariates when conducting the repeated-measure ANOVAs for happiness display rules, which showed a marginally significant effect for familiarity. Including the frequency of interaction

covariates did not change the effect of culture by target, nor have a significant effect beyond the main effects and other covariates.

Discussion

Display rules are a social necessity – they guide human behavior and inform people about appropriate emotional behavior in various situations. In customer service, display rules are presumed to be an economic necessity to create satisfied customers. We consider emotion display rules in an integration of three possible perspectives: relational characteristics (Locke, 2003), occupational/customer service perspective (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Diefendorff and Greguras, 2009), and cultural differences (Matsumoto et al., 2005; Matsumoto et al., 2008; Ekman, 1971). In merging these perspectives we predicted that display rules are unique with customers due to their relational characteristics, and that cultural differences influence customer display rules differently than display rules with supervisors and coworkers.

Workplace display rules as a function of target characteristics

Overall, our findings suggest that anger can be expressed with coworkers, can be slightly leaked to supervisors, but must be almost completely suppressed with customers. Consistent with emotional labor research (Hochschild, 1983), our findings support that anger display rules toward customers are uniquely constraining, requiring more emotional control and regulation compared with other work interactions (Tschan et al., 2005). These results were found with respondents from four different cultures; however, there was also culture-specific variability in display rules by target. These results with young, mostly service employees from four countries replicate previous findings from a USA sample of MBAs (Diefendorff and Greguras, 2009; Sloan, 2004). We argue that the customer has unique target characteristics – a combination of high status (due to service practices) and low intimacy (due to the lack of an ongoing relationship) – which explain these unique results. It is interesting that anger can be more expressed to supervisors, who by definition hold higher status and power over the employee, and we argue that this is due to the ongoing relationships that permit some slight expression of felt emotions in order to repair or improve conditions in the future (Averill, 1983).

The norm of "service with a smile" has certainly been communicated through popular media and management (Heracleous et al., 2009, p. 147), suggesting the need to fake or put on a smiling face (Hochschild, 1983). In fact, Diefendorff and Greguras (2009) reported stronger happiness display rules for customers than supervisors. However, our participants did not think that felt happiness should be shown more to customers than to organizational members, but rather that happiness should be freely expressed with familiar and same-status coworkers and reduced slightly with supervisors and customers. Thus, this younger and lower occupational status sample is less likely to believe that customers should see our true positive feelings, and our multi-cultural sample varied in the perceived appropriateness of expressing happiness to customers. Given the other mixed evidence regarding smiling toward higher status targets (Hall and Horgan, 2003; Hecht and LaFrance, 1998), this suggests that additional evidence is needed to unravel the contextual factors that may be at play. The different results for display rules by work targets suggest that customer service and emotional labor

research asking about "display rules *at work*" in general rather than differentiated by target will yield ambiguous data.

Emotion display rules at work

403

Workplace display rules as a function of national culture
Based on established dimensions of culture (Hofstede, 1991), we proposed that the mean levels of display rules vary between-cultures based on distinct cultural dimensions and their relevance to the characteristics of status and familiarity. However, we also proposed that customers are a unique work target for which national culture may have less impact, given the globalization of the service culture. In support of this idea, we find that cultural dimensions of PD and individualism/collectivism help predict display rules of organizational members, but are less effective for predicting customer display rules.

The PD dimension positions certain cultures as more accepting of, and concerned with, status differences (Hofstede, 1991). Given the strong association between anger and status (Keltner *et al.*, 2003; Tiedens, 2001), we predicted that countries higher in PD would also be more likely to support suppressing anger with high-status targets than those lower in PD. We found some support for our prediction. Respondents from Israel, the country with the lowest PD rating, were significantly more accepting of expressing felt anger toward supervisors compared with respondents from moderate (the USA) and high (Singapore) levels of PD. However, anger display rules toward customers did not follow this pattern, suggesting something unique about this assumedly high-status target.

Furthermore, we proposed that expression of anger would be more likely toward familiar targets (e.g. coworkers) than toward less familiar targets, but argued that this would depend on the extent that the country values social harmony (e.g. collectivistic cultures) versus valuing individual achievements and self-expression (e.g. individualistic cultures) (Matsumoto *et al.*, 2005). This prediction was supported in that the highly collectivistic nation (Singapore) showed significantly less acceptance of expressing anger to the in-group (coworkers) than the other three countries. In contrast, collectivism did not explain display rules toward the out-group (customers). These findings are consistent with research with non-work targets (Matsumoto *et al.*, 2008).

Thus, PD and individualism/collectivism do not explain customer display rules. In fact, we predicted that the globalization of the service economy means generalized rules about emotion displays toward customers, such that there would be few differences by country overall. We proposed that managerial practices are transmitted between nations and cultures as the economic markets expand over different countries (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), and display rules for interactions with clients and customers are a managerial-controlled business practice (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987). Overall, respondents reported similar "integrative" display rules (Wharton and Erickson, 1993) for customers despite cultural differences: low acceptance of anger expression and high acceptance of expressing happiness.

However, follow-up analyses revealed that for both anger and happiness display rules, there was one exception to each rule. First, respondents from the USA held higher standards for expressing felt happiness to customers (as well as supervisors). Second, respondents from France were significantly more likely to accept expressing felt anger to customers than the other three countries, suggesting less rigid control over negative emotions toward customers. The USA and France have been argued to be distinct in

display rules toward customers in several other articles (Grandey *et al.*, 2005; Hallowell *et al.*, 2002). The USA has norms for smiling to others, even strangers on the street, in ways that are seen as inappropriate in other cultures (Hall and Hall, 1990). In the workplace, the USA has been argued to hold a "Mickey Mouse culture" of good cheer (Byrman, 1999), where phony smiles are encouraged, a fact that is mocked by managers in France in one article (Hallowell *et al.*, 2002). The USA respondents hold higher standards for expressing happiness to customers, consistent with our opening quote, and also consistent with the globalization proposal: one would expect the values for "service with a smile" norm to be highest where the norm originated (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). This suggests, however, that over time this norm may gradually become the same across cultures, another testable prediction in the future.

Another explanation for the distinction in customer display rules is that France has a more "impulsive orientation" toward emotions and the USA has a more "institutional orientation" (Gordon, 1989). In other words, in the USA emotion expression is guided by institutional (e.g. organizational, occupational, and contextual) rules about acceptable emotions, while in France there is value in expressing authentic – even negative – emotions (Grandey *et al.*, 2005). A similar concept mentioned by House *et al.* (2004), building on Schwartz (1999), suggests a cluster of nations which includes Israel and France as having a distinct "affective autonomy" (Ronen, 2006). Consistent with this view, respondents from Israel and France showed the highest acceptance of revealing felt anger to customers. Thus, considering unique emotion-focused cultural dimensions, rather than the typical Hofstede dimensions, may be more beneficial in understanding emotion display rules at work.

Limitations and future research

Our data present perceptions of display rules from university students from four different countries; our sampling strategy was intended to collect responses from people who are as similar as possible, a strategy recommended in comparative research on emotion (Eid and Diener, 2001). All our respondents had some employment experience in service jobs, yet whether our results can be generalized to an older (and likely more career-focused) working population is an open question. Students have typically held lower status jobs, particularly entry-level customer service roles, so their beliefs about display rules may only be generalized to other lower status employees. We included service experience as a control variable in all our analyses, and it did not influence beliefs about display rules, nor did age or gender, other status-related variables. In fact, our results mirror another display rule study with American MBAs, who are older and more likely to hold higher status positions (Diefendorff and Greguras, 2009), except that display rules toward supervisors and customers were more similar for our sample than theirs. Thus, our sample is likely to represent the lower status employee who has contact with customers, adding important insight to display rule literature.

We surveyed participants in only four countries, so an illuminating extension of our work would be to assess newer and growing service economies, such as China or India. The question is when, whether, or how quickly integrative display rules toward customers surface in these cultures. Cultures also differ in the frequency and intensity with which individuals feel angry (Eid and Diener, 2001; Markus and Kitayama, 1991), which may have somehow contaminated our findings; we asked people how one should act while feeling anger. Thus, although rules prescribing suppression of anger toward

customers in Israel may be similar to those in the USA or Singapore, more instances of feeling anger may occur in Israel and the USA than in Singapore. How such differences in frequency and intensity impact display rules at work should be examined in future research.

We relied on traditional perspectives of supervisors, coworkers, and customers as being distinct in status in the workplace, but did not directly measure perceived status or power. Future research is needed to directly assess the perceived power and status of customers in comparison with other work targets. For example, a different explanation for our results is that in France the unionization and policies that protect employees (Hallowell *et al.*, 2002) result in lower perceived status of the customer, and thus fewer constraints and consequences for expressing negative emotions. If France does view customers as lower in status than the USA, then the results for anger expression are consistent with the PD cultural perspective. There is some evidence that the USA and French respondents perceive and react to power differently (Mondillon *et al.*, 2005), but to our knowledge, there has yet to be a direct test of perceived power or status of customers cross-culturally. Thus, examining cultural differences in power and status perceptions of work targets, and what this means for work outcomes, is a necessary next step.

It should be noted that our comparisons of display rules and what one "should" do are from the employee perspective. It is possible that supervisors or customers may have a different perspective about what is appropriate; however, evidence supports that supervisors and employees agree on display requirements (Diefendorff *et al.*, 2006), and that customers tend to rate employee behavior similarly to the ratings of other employees (Schneider and Bowen, 1985). Moreover, in our own data set, the inclusion of 33 percent of participants who did not hold service jobs did not change the results. Thus, it seems that the norms for emotional displays toward customers are widely understood, but future research could directly compare these different perspectives.

We focused in this study on variation in display rules due to dyad-level target characteristics and macro-level culture; however, display rules can also vary by group, job/occupation, and organizational culture (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). We do not assess these factors in the current paper, which likely would help explain more of the variability in display rules. For example, though we control for service job experience, even within service jobs there is much variation in the displays expected (e.g. bill collectors versus educators versus food services). Another important factor, we cannot examine is the internationalism of the company that employs these respondents. Companies that are located in different cultures (e.g. Four Seasons Hotels, McDonalds, and Disney) face unique issues in requiring and enforcing display rule policies across locations, which has been discussed elsewhere (Hallowell *et al.*, 2002; van Maanen and Kunda, 1989), so that was not the focus of our paper. Examining a multi-level comparison of display rules, comparing culture, organization, job, and group influences to determine which have the most robust effects is an interesting next step to undertake in this research.

Finally, our analysis compared responses at the aggregated, country level. As Schaffer and Riordan (2003) noted, a country may be a suitable and convenient indicator of a culture. Yet using this as the sole operationalization of culture may mask any incongruence between or complexity embedded in the distinctions between country and culture. Hofstede's values are often used in culture research (Matsumoto *et al.*,

2008), but individual level variations in these values may exist within cultures. A multi-level approach with individual measurement of cultural values in addition to national aggregation may be informative for future research.

Summary and contribution
Emotion display rules are influenced by social/relational, occupational, and cultural expectations. We integrate these perspectives to argue that display rules toward customers are unique compared to other work targets, and that these display rules are consistent across culturally distinct nations due to the globalized "service culture." With over 400 respondents from four culturally distinct nations (Israel, the USA, France, and Singapore), we found that anger expression is least acceptable with customers, while happiness expression is most acceptable with coworkers. Furthermore, cultural variation did predict display rules with organizational members, but as hypothesized, display rules with customers were fairly consistent across culture.

Our study extends available research in three important ways. First, we focus on specific emotions in organizational interactions (Barsade *et al.*, 2003), recognizing that the typical study of "positive display rules" that lumps together expressing positive and hiding negative emotions may obscure differences. In fact, we demonstrate that display rules for anger and happiness are distinct in how they vary by target and by culture. We focus on anger and happiness given their centrality in the study of emotion and customer service, but leave the door open for future research about display rules of other specific emotions (e.g. pride, contempt, or shame).

Second, we propose that target characteristics of status and familiarity aid in predicting emotion display in organizations, and argue that customers hold a unique combination of these characteristics that explain display rules. In particular, we show that though customers have been called the "second manager" and seen as high status like a manager, the display rules are even stronger with customers than management, on average. In general, with few exceptions (Diefendorff and Greguras, 2009; Tschan *et al.*, 2005), previous research does not takes into account that display rules vary by work targets. Our findings show the importance of clarifying the target when asking about work display rules, an important implication for future research. In fact, there is mixed evidence regarding outcomes of display rules (e.g. job burnout, satisfaction, and service delivery) that may be explained by the lack of specificity about display rules to whom? In other words, display rules to coworkers and supervisors may be more voluntary based on personal or social norms, while with customers they are based on work practices and compensation. Voluntary versus reward-focused motives for display rules may have very different outcomes, according to Hochschild's (1983) original ideas about emotional labor.

Finally, we bring a cultural angle to the analysis of emotion display rules, which adds important practical implications given our global economy. As Arnett (2002) suggests, individuals blend local values with global values; some behaviors are based on local values, as evident in our local culture-dependent rules about expressing anger toward coworkers, while other behaviors draw on occupational values such as toward customers (Shokef and Erez, 2006). In the globalized service economy, understanding the intersection of local and occupational values is critically important for service practices. As shown in the case of the Four Seasons Hotel moving from the USA to France (Hallowell *et al.*, 2002) and supported in our data, management must take into

account there are different emotional expectations and norms that may create challenges for customer service practices. Our results support that other countries share the emotional service expectations for customers, but these beliefs are still more strongly held in the USA than other cultures. Thus, importing practices from the USA to other culturally distinct countries may be met with resistance. Management must be aware of cultural differences in emotions and emotion norms, as we outline here, to improve the experience of employees in globalized service organizations.

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About the authors

Alicia Grandey earned her PhD in Psychology at Colorado State University in 1999, and is currently an Associate Professor and Chair of the Industrial-Organizational Psychology Program at Pennsylvania State University. Her primary research is on emotional labor and its link to both employee well-being and job performance. Grandey has conducted research with call centers, food services, and hospitals, and published in over 25 articles and chapters, including outlets such as the *Journal of Applied Psychology* (*JAP*), *Academy of Management Journal* (*AMJ*), *Journal of Service Research*, and *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* (*JOHP*). Her work has been cited in over 400 scholarly articles, and presented in the practitioner-oriented outlet the *Harvard Business Review*. Grandey is on the editorial boards for *AMJ*, *JAP*, and *JOHP* and the inaugural board of the journal *Organizational Psychology Review*. Alicia Grandey is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: aag6@psu.edu

Anat Rafaeli is a Professor of Organizational Behavior and holds the Harry Lebensfeld Chair of Industrial Engineering and Management at the Technion-Israel's Institute of Technology in Haifa, Israel. Her research interests include emotions in organizations and their effects on employees, on customers and on organization performance, the dynamics of service delivery and service interactions between employees and customers, organizational symbols such as employee dress, workstation design, or organization logos, and customer waiting queues. She co-edited (with Mike Pratt) the book *Artifacts and Organizations* (published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates). And she has published papers in the *AMJ*, the *Academy of Management Review*, *Organization Science*, *JAP*, the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, and among other places. She currently studies the effects of customer anger expressions on the performance of service employees and the effects of anger expressions of one team member on the feelings, behavior and performance of other members of the team.

Shy Ravid is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Industrial Engineering and Management at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. His research deals with anger in customer service and with the role of shared understanding in distributed project teams. His forthcoming publication includes: "Expression of anger in Israeli work places: the special place of customer interactions" *Human Resource Management Review*, 2009 (forthcoming, with A. Rafaeli and A. Grandey) and "Sensemaking in virtual teams: the impact of emotions and support tools on team mental models and team performance" *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 2009 (with A. Rafaeli and A. Cheshin).

Jochen Wirtz is an Associate Professor of Marketing with the National University of Singapore (NUS), founding Academic Director of the University of California, Los Angeles –

NUS Executive MBA Program, Fellow at the NUS Teaching Academy (the NUS think-tank on education matters) and an Associate Fellow in Executive Education at the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford. His research focuses on services marketing and has been published in over 80 articles in academic journals. His books include *Services Marketing – People, Technology, Strategy* (co-authored with Christopher Lovelock, 2010, 7th ed., Prentice-Hall), *Essentials of Services Marketing* (co-authored with Lovelock and Chew, 2009, Prentice-Hall), and *Flying High in a Competitive Industry: Secrets of the World's Leading Airline* (co-authored with Heracleous and Pangarkar, 2009, McGraw-Hill). For further information see: www.jochenwirtz.com

Dirk D. Steiner is a Professor of Social Psychology of Work and Organizations at the Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis since 1996. He directs the Master's program in Work Psychology and Human Resources Management at this university. Prior to moving to France, he was on the Faculty in the Psychology Department at Louisiana State University where he directed the doctoral program in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. His research is primarily concerned with applications of organizational justice to various human resources practices, including selection, employee evaluation, and management practices. He currently has a particular interest for using organizational justice knowledge to contribute to reducing employment discrimination. He publishes scholarly articles in both French and in English, and is one of the editors of the series, *Research in Social Issues in Management*, published by Information Age Publishing.