



Integrating personality, context, relationship, and emotion type into a model of display rules ☆

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Abstract

This research sets out to examine individual variations in perceptions of display rules. Based upon Mischel and Shoda's [Mischel, W., & Shoda, Y. (1995). A cognitive-affective system theory of personality: Reconceptualizing situations, dispositions, dynamics, and invariance in personality structure. *Psychological Review*, 102, 246–268.] model of the Cognitive-Affective Personality System (CAPS), we proposed that extraversion and neuroticism would serve to explain within-cultural individual differences and within-individual differences in endorsement of display rules. To test this hypothesis, participants reported the expressivity level of the display rule they endorsed by responding to the revised version of the Display Rule Assessment Inventory. Multi-level analyses showed that compared to those of introverts, the display rules of extraverts tended to be more suppressive when the relationship was distant rather than close. Extraversion also enhanced a neurotic's degree of suppression in public compared to private situations. Processes describing how personality interacts with situations in personalizing display rules were offered in light of the CAPS model to account for these interactions between personality and situation in the operation of display rules for emotional expression.
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1. Introduction

Display rules are culturally informed guides about what facial expressions and other emotional displays for a certain emotion are allowed, suppressed, or exaggerated in a given situation (Colman, 2001; Denham & Mitchell-Copeland, 1993; Ekman & Friesen, 1969; Matsumoto, Yoo, Hirayama, & Petrova, 2005). Individuals are socialized to know and enact display rules for different emotions in different situations (Denham, McKinley, Couchoud, & Holt, 1990; Garner, Jones, & Minner, 1994; Michalson & Lewis, 1985), so that they may become socially appropriate interactants in a given culture. Display rules are thus conceptualized as a mechanism that explains emotion expression management (Matsumoto et al., 2005).

Though culture as a variable may explain some variation in adherence to display rules for emotional expressions, there is substantial within-cultural individual difference in display rules left to be explained (Matsumoto, *in press*). Apparently, individuals actively personalize display rules and express themselves idiosyncratically. Understanding such individual differences in endorsement of display rules may thus improve predictions of the corresponding individual differences in emotional expression.

Despite the rich cross-cultural research effort on the topic of display rules, between-individual differences and within-individual variations in adherence to display rules have been largely overlooked. According to Mischel and Shoda's model of Cognitive-Affective Personality System (CAPS; 1995, 1998), an individual's response tends to vary across situational cues, and responses to a given situation can also vary across individuals. Consistent with this argument, Matsumoto (*in press*) suggested that personality dispositions drive different adaptations to the implied requirements (e.g., role and norms) of a given immediate context. Individuals of disparate personality dispositions tend to develop different sets of self-disciplining rules for emotional expression. Accordingly, different individuals will show different emotional expressions in a given situation due to different sets of rules they have adopted for different situations. In this study, we adopt the CAPS model to understand how personality acts as a key determinant of between- and within-individual variations in personalized rules for displaying emotions.

1.1. Applying the CAPS in studying within-individual associations of display rules

According to the model of Cognitive-Affective Processing System (CAPS; Mischel & Shoda, 1995, 1998), a personality system consists of “mental representations whose activation leads to the behavioral consistencies that characterize the person” (Mischel, 2004, p.11). The mental representations include interconnected information or, in Mischel and Shoda's term, cognitive-affective units (CAUs) about the self, people, and situations, enduring goals, expectations-beliefs, feeling states, and memories. It is assumed that individuals have a stable network of connections or associations among CAUs such that a situation-cued CAU reliably activates associated cognitive-affective response in the well-known “if-then” fashion.

Consistent with the CAPS model, individuals endorse different sets of display rules in different situations, and the choice is dependent upon the relationship quality between the interactants (Campos, Mumme, Kermoian, & Campos, 1994; Fridlund, 1997) and the immediate interaction contexts (Jones, Abbey, & Cumberland, 1998; Zimmermann & Stansbury, 2003). For instance, display rules vary as a function of relationship closeness

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