



The Role of Personality in Predicting Display Rules

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Abstract

Individuals' behaviors are influenced by both culture and personality. The relative contribution of each is moderated by aspects of the situation, such as type of interactant. The current study investigated the strength of personality and cultural factors as predictors of individuals' norms regarding emotional expressivity towards different interactants. Personality traits, including extraversion and neuroticism, have been linked with emotional expressivity. However, culture may play a role in determining behaviors when there is greater uncertainty associated with the situation. When expressing emotions towards more distant interactants versus close interactants, individuals' behaviors may be guided by culture in order to maintain social coordination. The purpose of this study was to compare personality and endorsement of cultural values as predictors of display rules towards various interaction partners.

Research Question and Variables

To test whether collectivistic and individualistic cultural values predict display rules towards distant others, while personality predicts display rules towards close others.

- **Collectivism:** a cultural value that emphasizes relational harmony
- **Individualism:** a cultural value that emphasizes achieving personal goals
- **Display rules:** cultural norms about how individuals should express their emotions in different social contexts
- **Extraversion:** a trait of being talkative and sociable
- **Neuroticism:** a trait of being anxious and tending to worry

Personality, Culture, and Display Rules

- A previous study on display rules found a positive association between overall expressivity endorsement and individualism, which was driven by the association between individualism and positive emotions (Matsumoto et al., 2008)
- This association could be an artifact of the relationship between extraversion with expressivity. That is, countries that score high on individualism could also be made up of a higher proportion of extraverted individuals.
- The current study looks within a single culture to examine the differential roles of personality and cultural values in predicting display rules.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

| | Mean | SD |
|-------------------|---------|--------|
| DRAI Parent | -0.3677 | 0.2332 |
| DRAI Acquaintance | -0.4645 | 0.2651 |
| DRAI Boss | -0.5553 | 0.2348 |

Note: DRAI responses were averaged across emotions, including anger, contempt, disgust, fear, sadness, happiness, and surprise.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Personality factors, including extraversion and neuroticism, will predict display rules towards close others (i.e., parents), while cultural factors, including endorsement of collectivistic and individualistic values, will predict display rules towards more distant others (i.e., acquaintances & bosses).

Rationale: There is greater uncertainty involved in interacting with others with whom one does not share a close relationship. In order to maintain social coordination, individuals will rely on cultural norms for guiding their judgments of appropriate behavior in these contexts.

Methods

Participants: n = 176 (113 females, 63 males) (Mean age = 37.86)

Participants completed online surveys assessing their endorsement of individualistic and collectivistic values, personality, and their display rules towards parents, acquaintances, and bosses.

- **Individualism and Collectivism Scale** (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) , $\alpha = .70$
 - Scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)
 - “If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud.”
 - “My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.”
- **Display Rules Assessment Index** (Matsumoto, Yoo, Fontaine, et al., 2008). $\alpha = .92$
 - Possible responses: Show more than you feel it, Express it as you feel it, Show less than you feel it, Show it but with another expression, Hide your feelings by showing nothing, Hide your feelings by showing something else
 - “What should you do if you are with a parent in a room by yourselves and you feel the following emotion toward them: anger.”
 - “What should you do if you are with an acquaintance in a room by yourselves and you feel the following emotion toward them: contempt.”
 - The DRAI was scored using the Homogeneity Analysis via Alternating Least Squares (HOMALS) technique. The response options on the DRAI correspond to the following values:
 - Amplify -> .5651, Express -> .3842, Qualify -> .1218, Deamplify -> .1545, Masque -> -.3828, Neutralize -> -.5338
 - DRAI responses for each interactant were averaged across all seven emotions
- **Neo Five-Factor Inventory** (Costa & McCrae, 1992). $\alpha = .65$
 - Scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)
 - Extraversion: “I like to have a lot of people around me.”
 - Neuroticism: “I often feel inferior to others.”

Descriptive Statistics Cont.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

| | Mean | SD |
|---------------|--------|--------|
| Extraversion | 2.1476 | 0.3990 |
| Neuroticism | 1.6944 | 0.4921 |
| Collectivism | 5.1735 | 0.9701 |
| Individualism | 4.9338 | 0.7935 |

Regression Analysis

Table 3. Regression Analysis

| | Extraversion | Neuroticism | Collectivism | Individualism |
|-------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| DRAI Parent | $b^* = .19,$ $p = .03$ | $b^* = -.04,$ $p = .68$ | $b^* = .09,$ $p = .31$ | $b^* = .06,$ $p = .47$ |
| DRAI Acquaintance | $b^* = .17,$ $p = .05$ | $b^* = -.12,$ $p = .17$ | $b^* = -.14,$ $p = .11$ | $b^* = .08,$ $p = .34$ |
| DRAI Boss | $b^* = .14,$ $p = .11$ | $b^* = .04,$ $p = .67$ | $b^* = -.03,$ $p = .75$ | $b^* = .02,$ $p = .81$ |

Note. All of the predictors were entered simultaneously into the respective regression models.

Discussion

- Regression analysis revealed that extraversion positively predicted display rules towards parents, $b^* = .19, p = .03$, and marginally predicted display rules towards acquaintances, $b^* = .17, p = .05$.
- Individual-level endorsement of collectivistic values, individualistic values, and neuroticism did not predict display rules towards parents, acquaintances, or bosses.
- The results of this study indicate that personality plays a role in influencing how emotionally expressive individuals think they should be towards others across various situational contexts.
- The results also indicate that personal endorsement of collectivistic or individualistic values may not play a role in shaping individuals' ideas about how to appropriately express emotions towards different types of interactants.
- However, other measures of culture should be investigated in order to see if it is other aspects of culture that influence the development of individuals' display rules.

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