EMOTION MANAGEMENT IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE: “SMILE TRAINING” IN JAPANESE AND NORTH AMERICAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a cross-cultural examination of emotion management in two service organizations: a Japanese specialty shop and a chain of grocery stores in the US. Building on an overview of service culture in the US and its domestication in Japan, we provide an analysis of the two organizational case studies, focusing on their common initiation of a “behavior campaign,” its normative character, perceptions, and repercussions. The paper concludes by focusing on the comparative aspect of the analysis, locating the organizational management of emotions in the context of national culture, and focusing on the organizational use of broader emotional blueprints of socialization related to collectivism and individualism, such as “shame” (in Japanese culture) and “guilt” (in North American culture).
The First World shift from manufacturing to service has attracted much economic, political, and sociological attention. According to Daniel Bell (1973), “postindustrial” society begins when employment in tertiary industries, such as the service sector, exceeds 50 percent of the total workforce. This process took place in the US in the 1960s, and reached Japan in the 1980s (Sano, 1995, p. 40). For employers, part-time labor offers savings in wages, a solution to labor shortages (of permanent workers), and flexibility in responding to fluctuations in the work pace and in the demand for a product or service. For employees, the opportunity to work on a part-time basis accommodates needs to earn supplemental income without disturbing a focus on family or school. Employers, in turn, generally cite these attitudes to justify the low pay and dead-end nature of part-time work.

The service sector has high rates of part-time employment as well as turnover. Such institutional conditions call for a specific organizational culture. Service should involve courtesy, and it therefore requires emotion management. Many companies in the North American service sector have developed forms of emotion management as a hallmark of their service culture (for a review, see Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). The service sector has become a fertile ground for the emergence and crystallization of normative controls for the proper display of emotions. This paper offers a cross-cultural examination of emotion management in two service organizations: Tokyo Dome (a Japanese specialty shop) and a chain of convenience stores in the US. The paper is in three parts. First, we provide an overview of emotion management in the US and its domestication in Japan. We also explain the importance of studying emotion management in cross-cultural perspective. The ensuing part provides a synopsis and analysis of the two organizational case studies. The paper concludes with a comparative analysis, analyzing the organizational management of emotions in the context of national culture.

EMOTION MANAGEMENT IN THE US AND JAPAN

In The Managed Heart, Arlie Hochschild (1983) coined the term “emotion management” to describe the work of flight attendants in Delta Airlines. Emotion management, as defined by Hochschild, is a transmutation of three basic elements of emotional life: emotion work, feeling rules, and social exchange. These elements are part of everyday emotional life, but employees of service companies are taught to manage them in a specific way. The formalization of service production (human interaction included) brought
about recognition of the importance of emotion management. The global
diffusion of emotion management in service organizations has followed
what George Ritzer (1996) called “McDonaldization.” This process, which
not surprisingly bears the name of a fast-food chain, features such basic
elements as efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. As Robin
Leidner (1993, p. 82) noted, “McDonald’s pioneered the routinization of
interactive service work and remains an exemplar of extreme standardiza-
tion.”

The McDonald’s formula has proved successful around the world. The
keyword is turnover – of customers, products, and front-line workers.
Turnover in the service industry in the US (about 60 percent annually) is the
highest of all employment sectors. The need to deal with the high turnover
rate has generated an emphasis on “design”: the engineering of an efficient
service transaction (cf. Shostack, 1987; Czepiel, Solomon, & Surprenant,
1985). Management often sees this transaction as the one stable framework
in a world of rushing customers and temporary employees. The logic of high
customer turnover promoted a return to Taylorism and its “efficiency ex-
pertise” and an emphasis on work standards and assembly lines (Kelly,
1982), which in turn also evoke high employee turnover.

The influence of the introduction of part-time and temporary workers is
particularly pronounced in Japan, where the traditional “three pillars” of
Japanese-style management – seniority, lifetime employment, and enterprise
unionism – are all limited to regular (or full-time) workers. In general, the
part-time labor market has grown considerably in Japan, particularly with
the increased entry of unmarried and, later, married women, into the paid
labor force, usually as part-time workers and usually into the retail and
service sectors (Ichino, 1989; Rōdōshō, 1996). To many Japanese managers,
the introduction of a North American style service culture was a “fall from
grace.” Traditional service in Japan, the argument goes, developed in in-
timate, one-on-one situations. Traditional service professionals, in this view,
served apprenticeships and received many years of training and were con-
sequently committed to and took pride in their work (Takahashi, 1994).

However, the ideology of self-cultivation through work, still very much alive
in Japan, has diminished and faded in many contemporary Japanese service
organizations, particularly in the context of part-time employees. The story
of Japan’s incorporation of the service manual in the 1980s is a replay of
Japan’s domestication of scientific management in the 1920s and 1930s. In
both cases, lip service to the beautiful customs of tradition was coupled with
pragmatic implementation of imported managerial systems of control (Raz,
2002).
While emotions have been equated with individual intentionality by philosophers (Goldie, 2002) and psychologists (Griffiths, 1997), this equation cannot be presumed absolute or taken for granted. It is not our intention here to discuss the “true” or “correct” nature of emotions, but we do propose that when individual emotions reflect an organization’s intentionality – i.e., when employee emotions are managed by the organization – this is likely to produce, in an individualistic culture (such as the US), a dissonance between the cultural ideal of emotional intentionality and the organizational scripting of emotions at work. This is because Western socialization regards emotions as individual, voluntary, and intentional. The standardization of service smiles has therefore depreciated their value, leading to the negative connotations of the idea of “smile training” in the US. Karl Albrecht and Ron Zemke, the prophets of service management, for example, warn readers away from smile training:

By all means, let’s use training ... But let’s not insult our employees with “smile training” or “be nice” training. Let’s treat them like adults (1985, pp. 181–182).

The “Disney University” (training center) was similarly disdained by Schickel for “training employees in the modern North American art forms of the frozen smile and the canned answer delivered with enough spontaneity to make it seem unprogrammed” (1968, p. 318). Some North American workers indeed respond to “smile training” as a form of deskilling that promotes alienation (Van Maanen, 1989, 1991). Critical North American sociologists, from Hochschild to Ritzer, regard service management as a hegemonic program that subjects individuality and emotion to organizational structure and instrumental rationality.

In contrast, “smile training” as a method was readily implemented by Japanese managers and workers alike (Raz, 1999), probably facilitated by a local, pre-existing cultural construction of “the smile” as the primary mask of emotion (Matsumoto, 1996, p. 60). The Japanese, in general, responded to “smile training” not as being shallow and infantile, but as being too weak rather than too strong. Trainers and managers look down on service culture (săbisu bunka) and criticize North American service manuals as lacking discipline and formal character training (Raz, 1999, 2002). Such criticism has not stopped managers and trainers in the Japanese service industry from using service manuals.

However, this explanation over-emphasizes the power of globalization and downplays the local motivation of Japanese employers. Pragmatic implementation of an imported rationalization model, which paid lip service to the “beautiful local customs” of tradition, did not begin with service
delivery. A similar process characterized the Japanese domestication of scientific management (Taylorism), German-inspired work councils, quality control, and many other Western models. In other words, the domestication of the service manual is not merely an outcome of the globalization of North American management in late capitalism, but also denotes a particular propensity of the Japanese for cultural hybridization. Indeed, the service manual changed as it was culturally translated to fit the local surrounding culture in Japan, as the ensuing analysis will show. Moreover, the local context of implementation dressed the implemented changes in local attire. In Japan, the need for the service manual was thus justified, for example, within the local construction of a divide between the “old” (regular) and “new” (part-time) generations of employees.

The smile has become such a standard hallmark of global service culture, that cultural differences in the motivation and social structuring associated with it have been ignored. Hochschild’s path-breaking study was the first to use the term emotion management. Yet Hochschild’s generalizations, in a manner typical of the studies that followed her, were biased towards the national culture of the US although being presented as universal. Little research focused on emotion management in cross-cultural perspective. This provides a point of departure for our study. As we hope to show, socio-logical and managerial constructs of emotions at work, such as “emotional dissonance” and the “false self,” are not universal responses to the commercialization of human feelings in late-stage capitalism. Rather, they are cultural responses conditioned on certain discourses. We illustrate this claim through an analysis of emotion management in a cross-cultural context by focusing on two service organizations, one in the US and the other in Japan.

“SERVICE WITH A SMILE”: A NORTH AMERICAN CONVENIENCE STORE CHAIN

The emotions at work in a large nationwide chain of convenience stores in the US provide us with a point of departure for the ensuing comparison. Inspired by Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman’s In Search of Excellence (1982), the human resources staff of the corporation which owns the chain conducted a chain-wide effort to enhance employee courtesy. The human resources staff had revised the employee handbooks and the classroom training provided for new recruits. The changes consisted of instructing the clerks to greet, smile at, establish eye contact with, and say “thank you” to
every customer. Store managers received new handbooks, entitled, for ex-
ample, “Effective Customer Service Increases Sales,” and containing lec-
tures, readings, and suggestions for role-playing exercises and group
discussions. In addition, clerks were informed that “mystery shoppers”
would be used to observe them.

In some regions, clerks who were found displaying the required good
cheer received a $25 bonus. The corporation also held a contest, costing over
$10 million, in which store managers could qualify to enter a drawing for a
$1 million if their clerks consistently offered good cheer to customers. The
corporation also awarded a bonus of 25 percent of base salary to regional
managers when a high percentage of sales clerks in the stores in their region
were observed displaying good cheer to customers. These individual incen-
tives are themselves a cultural difference (or a difference in organizational
culture) between the United States and Japan. In Japanese service organ-
izations (including the Tokyo Dome discussed below) no individual incen-
tives were offered to managers or employees.

The campaign was evaluated one year after its initiation. “Incognito
participant observers” (or mystery shoppers, as they are called in the in-
dustry) who coded clerks’ behavior during transactions with customers
measured the display of emotions. The firm did not hire special observers for
this task but used members of its human resources staff. Observers visited
each store in pairs. They acted independently and did not communicate with
each other while in the store. They walked around the store for a few
minutes, noting how well it was stocked and whether the clerk was wearing a
name tag and a clean smock and then walked to the magazine rack and
observed the clerk’s behavior from that vantage point. The observers then
selected a small item like a candy bar and stood in line, continuing to note
the employee’s behavior toward customers until they paid for the item and
left the store. The amount of time in each store varied from 4 to 12 min.

The company required its clerks to express a “warm outward demeanor”
during transactions with customers. The performance of this requirement
was formalized in handbooks and manuals that broke the task down into
four required elements: greeting, thanking, eye contact, smiling. This is
Taylor’s “job analysis” at work: finding the one best way of performing a
particular task by dividing it into its basic units. In fast-food chains, for
example, front-line employees are similarly instructed that every transaction
with a customer must follow seven orderly stages: (1) establishing eye con-
tact, (2) greeting, (3) taking the customer’s order, (4) calculating the bill and
informing the customer, (5) collecting the order, (6) collecting the payment,
and (7) saying “thank you.” These checklists epitomize Taylor’s scientific
management. The checklist deals with “devotion” in the form of “design” with no implicit or explicit ideology of self-fulfillment.

In the North American chain of grocery stores described by Rafaeli and Sutton (1990), the formalization of feeling rules was matched by the quantitative measurement of displayed emotions. Only “Hello,” “How are you today,” or another polite phrase at the outset of a transaction was considered a greeting. Anything else was not coded as greeting. In thanking the customer, the clerk had to use the word “thank” or a derivative. A smile was defined as a noticeable upturning of the lips. A direct gaze by a clerk counted as a sincere attempt at eye contact.

For each store, a score was computed for each of the four emotional expressions by calculating the proportion of transactions in which the behavior was displayed to the total number of transactions coded. Observers also gathered data on the average length of the lines at the cash registers, and the criterion variable used in the study was total store sales. Multiple regression analyses then determined the relationship between the display of positive emotion and total store sales. The direction of the observed relationship, however, contradicted the original hypothesis – higher levels of displayed positive emotion were associated with lower, rather than higher levels sales. Qualitative observations as well as a modest positive relationship between line length and sales and a modest negative relationship between line length and the display of positive emotions, led the researchers to consider the difference between busy and slow settings as predictors of the emotions displayed by employees (see also Rafaeli, 1989).

It transpired that convenience store clerks in this chain were less courteous when the store was crowded and busy. During busy times, the researchers describe a case of a customer asking “Can I please have a plastic bag for my merchandise?” and a sales clerk answering: “Lady, we don’t have time for your ‘please’ and ‘thank you.’ Can’t you see how busy we are? Just say what you want.” Sales clerks, as well as many of their store managers, hence contended that friendliness and warmth were unnecessary when customers “just want to get in and out quickly.”

We do not have data about the aftermath of the campaign. However, we believe that the contest did continue for a while. Top management is not quick or happy to dispose of the ideal belief that smiles bring good sales, or to accept the premise that employees cannot smile and be highly efficient at the same time. But Rafaeli and Sutton suggest that at the store level both managers and employees shared a tacit agreement that revenues depend on speed rather than courtesy.
THE WARM HEART: TOKYO DOME’S BEHAVIOR CAMPAIGN

It would have been interesting to compare the North American study with the organizational culture of 7/Eleven, Japan. 7/Eleven convenience stores entered Japan around 1974, where they were operated by the Ito-Yokado Company under license from The Southland Corporation. The convenience store (conbini) has been a huge success in Japan. 7/Eleven Japan actually got so big and rich it took over the American chain in 1990. However, we did not have access to Japan 7/Eleven stores. Moreover, the conbini are quite different from the American stores as nearly all franchise operations are typically held by a married couple and do not rely on company-owned distribution centers but rather uses Japan’s regular wholesale network (for additional comparisons, see Sparks, 1995).

Our comparative analysis here concerns The Tokyo Dome Corporation, founded in 1936 as Kôrakuen Company, Ltd., for the purpose of constructing and operating Japan’s first baseball stadium (Tokyo Dome Corporation, 1995, p. 1). In the early 1950s, the Kôrakuen amusement park – Japan’s first urban amusement park – was built near the stadium. The company was a pioneer in the leisure industry and a typical representative of that tradition (Yoshimitsu, 1970). In 1995 Tokyo Dome had 1,200 regular employees and about 5,000 part-timers.

On November 16, 1992, Tokyo Dome’s Service Division launched a “Behavior Campaign.” A special memorandum, issued that day, described the campaign’s objective of establishing a service code and the schedule for implementing that code. Every three months another theme would be declared. The first was “the smile,” to be followed by greetings (aisatsu), appearance (midashinami), behavior (taido), manner of speech (kotobazukai), cleanliness, safety, customers’ complaints, and so on. Three videos were produced for the campaign, and various newsletters, posters, stickers, and telephone cards were published. The campaign has been reenacted every year. The posters for the 1994 campaign were especially impressive. On one, half of the poster was occupied by a large title in gold, reading: “Declaration of Customer Principles” (kasutoma-nizumi sengen). Below the title, over a white illustration of the Tokyo Dome, a diagonal question printed in yellow challenges the reader: “Are you customanist?” (kasutomanisuto ka? This is a Japanese idiom that can be explained as “customer-oriented”). Below that, a salariiman (the Japanese term for
regular – “salaried” – worker) standing in an Uncle-Sam-Wants-You pose, points his finger at the viewer.

The Behavior ‘93 poster was more modest. A vertical sentence printed in black over a background of red hearts stated: “To begin with, warm heart” (hajimari wa, wōmi hāto). The extensive use of katakana North Americanisms (“warm heart,” “behavior campaign,” “customer”) as well as “Japanized Americanisms” (e.g., “customanist”) illustrates how the new service culture is being reproduced and marketed in Japanese organizations. Wōmi hāto (“warm heart”) is not an original Japanese idiom. It is a borrowed Americanism, rendered in katakana. Tokyo Dome’s “warm heart” is a diluted version of the sunao na kokoro (“naive heart,” the traditional ideal of cultivating selfhood through work). Like Taylorism in the 1920s and quality control circles in the 1960s, “CS” (customer satisfaction) and “service manuals” are the North American imports of the 1990s in Japan.

Tokyo Dome’s Behavior Campaign coincided with a labor-management incident that took place in 1994, after the campaign had been under way for two years. The backdrop for the incident can be briefly described. In 1994, sales at the Tokyo Dome baseball specialty shop outside the stadium fell 10 percent, despite an increase in the number of visitors to the games (Tokyo Dome Corporation, 1995). Yamada (a pseudonym), then a young regular employee of Tokyo Dome, who was appointed to study the problem, told the first author in a personal interview that

 [...] There was a problem with service, because shop personnel did not say “ira-saihaimase” (please come in) or “arigatō gozaimashita” (thank you very much) – at least they didn’t say it when a large number of customers was coming in after the baseball game in Tokyo Dome.

As described earlier, this was also the situation in the above-mentioned North American case, where shop staff also changed their service attitude according to number of customers in line. However, while the workplace reality was similar – probably reflecting the structural similarities in global service culture – the managerial reaction to it was different. In the Japanese company, a meeting was organized with invited representatives from a consulting company, the department chief, several Tokyo Dome service trainers, and the shop’s staff. The employees were embarrassed in public by a video presentation of their behavior. Yamada (personal interview with first author):

They were really ashamed. I edited the video, pasting in all the material that showed unprofessional behavior among the workers. Many lowered their heads because they were too ashamed to look at it.
The word used by Yamada as well as by the shops’ front-line employees was *hazukashii*, a semantically loaded term in Japanese that may be translated as “embarrassed” or “ashamed.” According to McVeigh (1997, p. 53), such a reaction makes sense in Japan, where “breaches in manners, besides eliciting embarrassment, may also cause shame.” Yamada’s disciplinary strategy vividly exemplifies the Japanese “culture of shame” (to be further discussed later) as an important emotional vehicle for fostering commitment. Following the video presentation, the department chief announced an “off-JT” seminar for the shop’s personnel. “Off-JT” (off-the-job training) refers to unpaid, mandatory, after-hours training. The seminar consisted of voice lessons, training in the correct use of greetings, role-playing, and the use of scripts to explain goods. In addition, customers were invited to leave their feedback on customer-satisfaction forms placed in the shop. Employees were also informed that as part of the new behavior campaign, a competition is to be held during the year with a group bonus for the winning shop. A year later, business had returned to normal. In 1995, Yamada and another trainer involved in the campaign were transferred to other jobs, following the usual career-development procedures for white-collar workers in Japan, and lost contact with the shop. Apparently the shop’s revenues increased enough to direct the management’s attention to other, more pressing problems.

**SMILE TRAINING IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

The two organizations we studied were different in many terms. The North American business is a convenience store chain, whereas the Japanese business is a single specialty store. However, we believe that the comparison is still valuable for highlighting the interplay between a global service culture of emotion management (“smile training”) and its local scripting and interpretation by workers. Although emotion management takes place in both US and Japanese service organizations, its practices, ideologies, and forms of reception are very different. Thus, our analysis illustrates how organizational and workplace cultures are two different entities that operate in the context of a local, surrounding national culture. “Managerial Culture” denotes the inter-connectedness of values, norms, and artifacts within managerial ideology. “Workplace Culture” stands for the on-the-job and off-the-job implementation (or subversion) of organizational values and norms, as
well as their interpretation by workers. “Surrounding Culture” consists of the relevant values and norms that play a role in broader, cultural processes of socialization. The concept of “culture” is extended in this way to serve as an independent variable.

From the perspective of “cultural contingency” suggested by Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990, p. 18), organizations seek to maximize their fit with their cultural environments as a way of enhancing their viability. In Japan, for example, the company is regarded as a microcosm of Japanese society and an important agent of adult socialization in national values (Yoshino, 1992). However, although values may constitute management’s favorite rhetoric, it is through labor disputes and status conflicts that “ideologies” are translated into (or resisted by) shop-floor norms. In addition, the rhetoric of values may be a facade that masks shop-floor realities. The “fit” that contingency theory speaks of can therefore be part of the ideological facade maintained by management. It is therefore important to separate, phenomenologically and analytically, between the realities of managerial culture and workplace culture.9

This threefold view of culture – managerial, workplace, and surrounding – can be modeled by three overlapping circles (see Fig. 1). Each circle denotes analytically different yet practically interrelated discursive fields. There is no order of precedence here, but rather a dynamic interplay. The first circle represents the formal Managerial Culture: the ideology of management and its top-down messages, systems, norms, and artifacts. Managerial culture often serves as the reference point or the point of departure for the study of workplace cultures. The second circle encompasses Workplace Culture – the everyday practices of organizational life as well as their interpretation from the workers’ point of view. These two circles, which together constitute the organizational culture, only partially overlap. The common area designates congruity and acceptance, or “devotion” in management parlance. The second circle also provides room for “countercultures” and for workers’ subversion of managerial ideology.

A model suggesting a structure somewhat similar to these two circles is advanced by Martin (1992). Martin described the processes of “cultural differentiation” and “cultural fragmentation” as going against the dominant view in managerial/functionalist rhetoric of organizational scholars of one integrative organizational culture (e.g., Trice & Beyer, 1993, 1984). “Cultural differentiation” in Martin’s analysis represents consistency and consensus within sub-cultures (specific departments, or jobs, for example), but differences between different units (departments or jobs). “Cultural fragmentation” represents the loss of consistency and consensus in
organizations as a whole. However, Martin’s conceptualization does not refer to the surrounding culture, and is therefore insufficient for analyzing the differences between the two cases on which we focus here. In addition, in Martin’s view different perspectives on organization culture represent the researcher’s subjective experience in the field. We suggest here that these perspectives manifest the complexity and multilayered nature of organizational culture.

To integrate the influence of surrounding culture, our model includes a third circle which represents the values, norms, and socialization of the local culture, which can influence both acceptance of and resistance to managerial culture. Although Fig. 1 can be regarded as depicting a particular situation of partial overlapping of all three circles, in reality the relations among the three circles are dynamic and their borders always depend on the situation being studied.

The model can be used as a framework that enhances analysis of case studies and allows for comparison among cases. We show here how it can help analyze “smile training” or emotion management in the service industry. We first show how smile training can be generally analyzed through the

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**Fig. 1.** Managerial Culture, Workplace Culture and Surrounding Culture, and the Emotional Transaction (adapted from Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989, p. 17).
model, then follow this up with a specific analysis of the cases presented here.

In the general context of smile training, the circle of managerial culture represents the North American management system, which has become part of a global service culture. Managerial culture prescribes three major facets of emotion management: (1) emotion as an objective expression – the smile; (2) emotion as employee motivation – the expectation that front-line service employees display certain (positive) emotions; and (3) emotion as social structure – the institutionalized practice of smile training as part of standard human resource management.

The circle of workplace culture in regards to general smile training is evident in the Japanese domestication and implementation of service training. Smiles are universally reproduced as an expression, but the reproductions are domesticated. A Japanese manual for smile training differs from a French or North American counterpart, for example. The motivation of Japanese employees fits local considerations of the “smile” as public performance which means, for example, that Japanese front-line employees are less concerned, compared with their North American counterparts, about “being phony.” This is a part of Japanese employees being more receptive, in general, of the concept of “show” and “keeping up appearances” (Raz, 1999).

The third circle, of surrounding local culture, builds on the construction of the “smile” in a particular culture. In Japan, for example, the smile is a primary emotion mask, implying that Japanese culture might be a source of positive socialization for emotion management at work. The cultural construction of emotional masks such as the smile also affords expression, social glue, and motivation.

Using the model to analyze the two cases of smile training in North America and Japan offers further illuminations on the content and logic of similarities and differences in the two cases. In North America, the managerial culture embodied the expressed rationale of service management in and its implementation through training workshops, for example. The workplace culture circle embodied actual performance and interpretation of the smile campaign by store managers and employees. There was only partial overlapping between these circles since store managers and employees performed and interpreted correctly the campaign during non-busy times only. The third circle – surrounding culture – involves both the expectations of customers and the norms and values of North American culture with regard to smile training and emotion management.
Comparing the clerks at Tokyo Dome and in the US convenience store finds that both were less courteous when the store was crowded and busy. Like the Tokyo Dome clerks, US clerks contended that friendliness and warmth were unnecessary when customers “just want to get in and out quickly.” Can we therefore conclude that the norms of the surrounding cultures give way, in the service context, to a common global culture, whose “carriers” are service employees? We suggest that the answer is not clear-cut because in spite of common features, there are also important cultural differences, for example in the reaction of customers and management.

In both studies and countries – Japan and the United States – store pace emerged as the cause, rather than an effect, of expressive behavior. For both North American and Japanese sales clerks, the number of customers in the store provided a cue for workplace norms about expressed emotions. But customers and managers did not perceive this cue in the same way in the two countries.

In the US study, during busy times both clerks and customers tacitly agreed that the expression of pleasant emotions was not essential, whereas both clerks and customers tacitly expected that pleasant emotions should be expressed during slow times. In Tokyo Dome, however, customers appeared to expect clerks to be courteous even during busy times. Similarly, Japanese managers reacted differently than US managers to what they saw as the failure of clerks to display positive emotions during busy times. US managers tacitly accepted that at busy times customers are inputs to be processed rapidly. US managers also tacitly encouraged employee to forgo the programmed courtesies during busy times by redefining the resulting behavior as being more “task-oriented” rather than being “less friendly.” While managers and marketing people had put up an argument that it would not cost employees anything to just smile as they do the work, in practice in the US there was compromise of the displayed emotion during busy times. Apparently, for managers and clerks in US convenience stores, efficiency overrides courtesy during busy times.

Conversely, managers in Japan, at the Tokyo Dome Corporation, thought that clerks should always remain courteous. The off-JT that followed the slack of smiling during busy times, with its shaming sanctions, was uniquely Japanese, much as the individualized bonus system initiated in the 7/11 stores was uniquely North American. The annual behavior campaign practiced in Japan, although a ritualized importation of a North American organizational practice, was also strikingly different from the individual incentives used by the North American corporation.
That front-line employees in Japan failed to display the expected courtesy in busy times, in a manner quite similar to their counterparts in North America, contradicts the argument that Japanese employees are always and already “pre-socialized” for emotion management because of their surrounding local culture. Japanese managers in Tokyo Dome noted that such “loose behavior” could be expected of part-timers, who do not share the mature attitude of regular workers, which reflects the organizational construction, characteristic of Japan, of a clear division between part-timers and regular workers. This construction also reflects a generational divide in Japan, since part-timers, who are usually younger, are often called “the new breed” (shinjinrui) by older-generation managers and trainers.

These differences demonstrate how emotion management can serve to integrate or differentiate employees from their work group. The display rule variation in different national cultures suggests that one culture (old-timer culture in Japan) may rely more explicitly on certain social conventions than another culture (part-timers or young people in Japan as well as all US employees. People make sense of another person’s behavior through their perceptions and interpretations of the other’s intentions, a process arguably mediated by emotional intelligence (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002). The rejection by US service employees of the organizational message to be courteous at all times may be due to the individual and group interpretation which saw a conflict between this management and other facets of management training – the drive for efficiency and profit.

In the Japanese case, the management ideology of consistent smiling including at busy times was clarified through the meeting, off-JT, and the renewed “behavior campaign.” This message was apparently understood and internalized by employees. In interviews conducted with Tokyo Dome’s part-time employees after the campaign, no one expressed any inconvenience with the prescribed emotion management. To the contrary, many of the respondents explained their previous failure as stemming from a misunderstanding of the rules. Managerial culture and workplace culture have thus been re-aligned. This differed from the US case, where the rules dictated by top management were subverted by the “rules” established within the workplace culture of stores. The only inconvenience expressed in Japanese interviews had to do with the shameful experience the situation had created, an emotional process completely non-existent in the US case.
SMILE TRAINING IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIVIDUAL (GUILT) AND COLLECTIVIST (SHAME) CULTURES

We have described and compared two examples of organizational explicit and intentional attempts to influence the emotions of work group members and of the work group as a whole. These examples contain similar processes of intentional affective induction – smile training – which reflect the globalization of “service culture.” The examples also demonstrate differences in the local effect of surrounding culture. The interplay between emotions at work and broader cultural processes of socialization is our goal here, and deserves further elaboration. Anthropology has centered on the Japanese “culture of shame” as the main emotional vehicle for fostering commitment to social values (Benedict, 1946; Sakuta, 1967; Doi, 1973) as a part of a distinction maintained by anthropologists between shame and guilt cultures (for a review, see Creighton, 1990). This distinction draws on the basis of which emotion, shame or guilt, was used as the primary social sanction, wherein Japan was characterized as a shame culture.

Shame is an emotion holding an outward orientation, a consciousness of others and what they will think and feel (Tangney, 2003; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). One can be shamed by one’s family, neighbors, friends, co-workers, and managers. That many Japanese white-collar employees take only half the paid holidays to which they are entitled has been explained, in this vein, as reflecting an unwillingness to be seen as less committed to his job than his co-workers. In this sense, committing a wrong in Japan involves losing face in relation to others. Shame represents an ethnocentric, relativist universe of morality, a cultural blueprint manifested itself in the organizational shaming of employees in the meeting. For example, the organizational manager invited representatives of an external consulting company to the meeting with the explicit intent (related later to the author of the study) of increasing the shame imparted upon employees. Both the senior manager and the consultant noted after the meeting that there was no intent to involve the consultants in the off-JT activities. The representatives were doing Yamada a favor, since shame in public (i.e., in the presence of outsiders) is more effective in Japanese eyes.

In contrast, guilt cultures (such as, arguably, the US), use individual guilt as a primary means of maintaining social order. In guilt cultures, one is expected to answer to oneself and to control one’s own behavior so that it conforms to the behavior one expects from others. This is probably why
both managers and employees in North America were not ashamed to justify, in interviews with the researchers who were clearly affiliated with management, a relapse to “no-nonsense” task-oriented behavior during busy times. A logic of a “guilt culture” also explains the use of personal incentives to promote the required emotional display: The employee is not sanctioned to feel ashamed for not displaying the required demeanor, but rather, because of a presumed Protestant Worth Ethic might feel guilty for losing a bonus.

A focus on guilt rather than shame may also be the reason for no public sanction following the improper behavior of front-line employees in the US, as opposed to the intense public sanction in Japan. Such public sanctions would strongly contradict the individualist US culture. In the use of shame and guilt we therefore see the social properties of culture evident in the emotions that implicitly govern any case of “emotion management.” A motivational and a narrative (or “deep-structure”) issue of emotion underlies each case: A motivation to not feel ashamed in Japan and to not feel guilty in the US. The mere use of shame which is powerfully effective in Japan would be highly inappropriate in the US.

“Emotion management” is therefore offered by our analysis another general interpretation that integrates the context of national culture. To North American scholars inspired by Hochschild’s work, emotion management has negative connotations. This is because, as Charles Cooley (1922) argued, emotions in Western culture are a sign of the “I,” the personal/private side of identity, rather than of the “me,” the social/public aspect of identity. Organizational attempts to manage employee emotions are therefore viewed as a violation of the border between the private (“I”) and the public (“me”), which generates anti-feelings (Rafaeli & Worline, 2001). For Mumby and Putnam (1992, p. 472), “Emotional labor, similar to bounded rationality, alienates and fragments the individual.” Hochschild (1983) speaks about “being phony” and about the alienation from a “false self.” Ferguson (1984, pp. 53–54) comments that “the flight attendant’s smile is like her makeup,” continuing to note that, “like prostitutes, flight attendants often estrange themselves from their work as a defense against being swallowed by it, only to suffer from a sense of being false, mechanical, no longer a whole integrated self.”

Reactions of US sociologists to the commercialization of human feeling have been framed in previous work without recognition of a cultural context. Lacking is an acknowledgement that such criticism can and does hinge on cultural assumptions. The reactions of North American researchers, employees, and managers to emotion management should be read in the
broader context of local surrounding culture. The US and Western view of
emotion as “something natural rather than cultural, irrational rather than
rational, chaotic rather than ordered, subjective rather than universal,
physical rather than mental or intellectual, unintended and uncontrollable,
and hence often dangerous” (Lutz, 1990, p. 69) is not absolute or culture
free.

The importance of recognizing the cultural contingencies, as evident in
our analysis, becomes important only when an emotion management effort
in another culture is examined. In Japan, emotion has typically been viewed
as part of culture (society, the “me”) and not just nature (personality, the
“I”) because, as (Matsumoto, 1996, p. 63) described, Japanese culture
depends, in large measure,

On the strict adherence by all members to display rules .... Many native Japanese believe
that one cannot be considered a ‘full-fledged’ Japanese until one has mastered the art of
managing one’s emotions in all aspects of life.

Emotion norms in Japan overpower gender differences since both men and
women are equally regarded as emotional beings.

SUMMARY

Feeling rules exist in every culture. Yet their implementation and manifes-
tation can vary between cultures. Japanese culture differs from North
American culture in the type and extent of its feeling rules and in the way
that organizations implement emotion display rules. Western society toler-
ates, and to a great extent fosters, a wide range of emotional behavior, even
though it also has its display rules. The Japanese allow less variety and are
less tolerant of transgression of display rules. The resulting appearance of
conformity in Japanese emotional display does not mean however that in-
dividual variation or transgression does not exist. Nor does it mean that the
Japanese do not experience emotions (Matsumoto, Kudō, Schere, & Wallb-
ott, 1988; Scherer, Matsumoto, Wallbott, & Kudoh, 1988). Yet for Japa-
nese, men and women alike, emotion socialization involves different
processes of controlling emotions – in public rather than in private, through
shame rather than through guilt, for example. Future research on emotion
in organizations should incorporate the influence of these broader, national
scripts for a further understanding of emotional behavior in organizations.
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NOTES

1. Service industries account for the significant expansion in the number of part-time workers. Over 40 percent of the part-time workers found in the US and Canada are engaged in service sector activity (Robinson, 1993; somewhat lower estimates are given by Polivka, 1996). In the early 1990s, three sectors, restaurants and hotels, retail trade, and education accounted for more than 44 percent of part-time jobs. In retail trade, 71 percent of part-timers were employed in sales clerk or service worker occupations; in restaurants and hotels, 79 percent of part-timers were employed in service worker occupations; in education, nearly half were in clerical and service worker jobs (Robinson, 1993). However, it is possible that researchers have focused disproportionately on lower-paid, less-skilled temporary workers rather than highly paid independent contractors, thus highlighting the prevalence of part-time work in service organizations (Smith, 1997).

2. In Japan, data collected by Japan’s Ministry of Labor on the job tenure of part-time workers (workers whose contracted working hours are shorter than those of regular workers), show that 30.8 percent of male part-timers and 25.8 percent of female part-timers keep a job for one to three years; the next largest group (20 percent of the men, 12.5 percent of the women) stay for six months to one year. The average job tenure of part-time workers is 2.6 years for men and 4.3 years for women (cited in Wakisaka, 1997, p. 146).

3. Schickel’s criticism of Disney is linked to the outlook of the Frankfurt School’s critical view of the culture industry. Theodor Adorno, for example, saw Disney as the site for American cultural imperialism and called it the ‘iron bath of fun.’

4. See Ekman and Friesen (1982, p. 239) for an experiment that demonstrated that Japanese and Americans showed the same facial expressions when experiencing fear, disgust, and distress if they were alone. However, when they were in social situations, quite different expressions were evident. The Japanese covered negative emotions with a smiling mask much more often than did the Americans.

5. Discussion of the convenience stores case is based on secondary analysis of the original study (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988; Rafaeli, 1989). At the time of the original research (1984), the chain of stores was owned by a corporation, with about 7,000 stores in the US and Canada, 36 percent of which were franchises. The research was based on observations conducted in a sample of 576 of these stores. The typical store had 8–10 part-time employees who worked in 38-h shifts (morning shift, swing shift, and night shift).

6. This break-up is taken from a McDonald’s’ training manual for front-line employees in Israel.

7. This exchange, quoted in Sutton and Rafaeli (1988, p. 473), reflects a transaction between one of the researchers and a clerk in a busy store. At this stage, the
study was conducted using qualitative methods, i.e., interviewing and unstructured observations.

8. The description of the Tokyo Dome case is based on secondary analysis of the original ethnographic study, which was based on interviews and observations conducted in Tokyo during 1995–1996 and later in 2000 (see Raz, 2002).

9. In contrast, conventional theories of organizational culture hinge on a top-down, functionalist model where “culture” is a managerial project. In Edgar Schein’s (1990) well-known model, organizational culture is represented through “a pyramid” of premises, values, and artifacts. Such a view is committed to managerial functionalism and does not give much importance to workers’ voices. Organizational culture is seen as an autonomous managerial project and the role of surrounding culture is downplayed.

10. Japan as a “society of shame” has been discussed by both American and Japanese scholars, but fewer studies have discussed “shame culture” in the context of Japanese workplace cultures. One exception is Cole (1971, pp. 180–185). Others are Rohlen (1974), Roberts (1994), and Kondo (1990) who describe the ritual of the public apology (hansei), which is an important organizational practice of “shame culture.”

11. Some anthropologists, such as Anthony Giddens (1991), argue that it is shame, and not guilt, that characterizes the social organization of the late and modern US, because “shame bears directly on self-identity .... It is essentially anxiety about the adequacy of the narrative by means of which the individual sustains a coherent biography” (ibid., p. 65). This reverse picture illustrates that (1) generalizations regarding “shame” or “guilt” cultures can easily be misconstrued (Creighton, 1990), and that (2) grand theories do not merely express representations of reality but also mirror their own theoretical lineage.

12. It is no coincidence that Doi’s amae, one of the most famous psychological constructs of “Japanese mentality,” refers to codependence – a state of bounded emotionality.

REFERENCES


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