When Clerks Meet Customers: A Test of Variables Related to Emotional Expressions on the Job

Anat Rafaeli
School of Business Administration
Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Interactions between 1,319 sales clerks and customers were observed. Clerk emotional behavior (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987), clerk sex, wearing a smock and a name tag, the presence of other clerks or other customers, and customer sex were coded. As predicted, female clerks displayed positive emotions more frequently than male clerks, suggesting that sex role socialization may generalize to behavior at work. Male clients, however, received more positive emotional expressions than female clients, suggesting that individuals of both genders attribute higher status to men. Clerks were more likely to display positive emotions when wearing a uniform, suggesting that an organizational identifier such as a smock or name tag may increase an employee's self-awareness. Consistent with Sutton & Rafaeli (1987), clerks were less likely to display positive emotions if a line of customers or a coworker was present. No relationship was observed between work shift (time of day) and the display of positive emotions.

Many modern occupations require incumbents to express particular types of emotions as part of doing the job (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). Hochschild (1983), for example, reported that flight attendants are expected to act friendly and cheerful on the job, whereas bill collectors are expected to convey anger. Similarly, Arther and Caputo (1959) described how police interrogators use hostility to gain confessions from criminals, and Bell (1984) reported that fellow physicians placed severe pressure on her to hide certain feelings, notably sadness.

Emotional expression is central to roles that entail serving others (Czepiel, Solomon, & Surprenant, 1985). Grocery clerks, bank tellers, and fast food servers are usually instructed to act friendly toward customers. This is because courtesy appears to play an important role in formulating clerk and customer perceptions of service quality (Schneider & Bowen, 1985; Schneider, Parkinton, & Buxton, 1980). Indeed, emerging research on the service encounter (cf. Czepiel et al., 1985) emphasizes the importance of careful attention to the emotional behavior of service employees as a part of the broader construct of climate for service.

To establish and maintain the desired organizational facade, service organizations often use selection and socialization practices that focus on displayed emotions; to illustrate, only "jolly" people are accepted for Santa Claus training ("Rules For Santas," 1984, p. 3). Moreover, formal (Ash, 1984; Komaki, Blood, & Holder, 1980; Walt Disney Productions, 1982) as well as informal socialization practices (Bell, 1984; Van Maanen, 1973) teach employees organizational norms about emotional expression on the job. Hochschild (1983) labeled such norms organizational feeling rules.

Nonetheless, little empirical evidence is available about factors related to emotional behavior on the job. This study attempts to enhance our understanding of this topic by testing hypotheses about the relationship between various variables and emotional displays of sales clerks. Because of the paucity of previous research, variables from four categories were included in the study as potential correlates of displayed emotions. These categories were clerk attributes, clerk behaviors, customer attributes, and attributes of the context in which clerks and customers meet.

Clerk Attributes: Sex Role Socialization and Conveyed Emotions

The first part of the study examined clerk sex and its relationship to the emotions conveyed on the job. Gender differences in nonverbal behavior are well-documented (Deaux, 1985). It is commonly argued that men tend to display nonverbal cues that reflect power and authority, whereas women typically display more warmth and liking cues (Bem, 1974; Frieze & Ramsey, 1976; Siegler & Siegler, 1976). A similar pattern of differences is also evident when verbal behavior is observed (Putnam & McCallister, 1980).

It is unclear, however, to what extent the results of previous studies on gender differences can be generalized to emotional behavior on the job. Previous research has described behavior...
in social settings. In contrast, the present study focuses on settings in which feeling rules emerge as part of an organizational or occupational socialization process. Thus, a first question of this study is whether gender differences—which have been documented in other settings—will be evident in the emotions conveyed when service employees interact with customers.

If gender differences due to sex role socialization transfer to behavior on the job, then female employees can be expected to display more warmth and friendliness cues than male employees. In contrast, managerial literature recommends the display of positive and esteem-enhancing emotion by all service employees (Ash, 1984; Peters & Austin, 1985). Thus, organizational feeling rules endeavor to suppress gender differences in emotional expressions. When organizational feeling rules are followed, female and male employees can be expected to smile and greet all customers to a similar extent.

Local feeling rules, however, may not overcome gender-linked differences in emotional expression. Sex role socialization is a lifelong process, supported by myriad sources including child rearing policies, parental masculinity and femininity, and other parental attributes and behaviors (Bem, 1974; Loof, 1973; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). In contrast, organizational socialization involves fewer sources of influence and pertains to a narrower domain of behaviors. Thus, it is expected that gender differences will be evident in emotional behavior on the job.

**Hypothesis 1:** Female service employees are more likely to display warmth and friendliness cues on the job than male service employees.

**Clerk Behavior: Wearing an Organizational Uniform and Emotional Expression**

A second category of factors that are likely to be related to emotional expressions on the job comprises other behaviors that an employee exhibits. In particular, because conveying organizationally prescribed emotions is an act of compliance with organizational feeling rules (Hochschild, 1983), employee behaviors reflecting compliance seem to be a promising start.

One indicator of compliance is the wearing of organizational symbols. The wearing of a name tag, for example, is often required in service organizations; this behavior may be perceived (by management and employees) as a cue to the employee that he or she has walked into or put on the work role. When wearing a smock or a name tag, an individual is clearly identified as a member of the organization and can also be expected to adopt local norms of behavior. In short, the wearing of a smock and a name tag may encourage employees to compare their behavior with local (organizational) standards of behavior (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Wicklund & Frey, 1980).

The wearing of a uniform may also reflect an employee's job satisfaction; wearing organizational identification may be an indicator that the employee is proud and content with the job. Such satisfaction with the job and the organization could spill over to cheerfulness and to positive emotional display on the job. Thus, among satisfied employees a greater frequency of positive emotional display, along with a greater frequency of uniform wearing, is not unlikely. In short, there are at least two reasons why uniform wearing can be expected to be related to the display of positive emotion. First, the uniform may enhance a comparison of the self to local (organizational) norms of behavior. Second, the uniform may reflect a generally positive attitude toward the organization.

**Hypothesis 2:** Employees wearing an organizational uniform are more likely to display positive emotions than their peers who are not wearing a uniform.

Wearing a uniform may also be related to the extent to which gender differences are evident in the emotional behavior on the job. An extension of the "walking into the role" metaphor is that, on adopting their work role, employees shed other roles. While comparing their behavior with local standards of behavior, employees may let go of alternative scripts of behavior, including those that have been structured by gender-linked socialization (Mandler, 1984). If this is true, gender differences are more likely to be evident among clerks who are not wearing a uniform than among their peers who are dressed according to the organizational code. This is the rationale for a third hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3:** Sex differences in emotional expressions will be stronger among clerks who are not wearing a uniform than among their peers who are wearing one.

It is interesting to note that the third hypothesis is, in a way, a competitive test of the two reasons offered for the second hypothesis. Hypothesis 3 is consistent with the local comparison rationale. If the uniform reminds clerks to compare their behavior with the local standards, then sex differences should be less apparent among clerks who are wearing a uniform. In contrast, if job satisfaction is an exogenous variable responsible for both the wearing of a uniform and the display of good cheer, then wearing a uniform is not likely to suppress gender differences. Obviously, however, only very clear results in support of Hypothesis 3 could shed light on these two competing explanations.

**Attributes of the Customer: Social Behavior Generalized to Job Behavior**

A third category of variables that may shape the emotional cues conveyed by a clerk includes attributes of the customer, the partner to the service interaction. Hester, Koger, and McCauley (1983), for example, found that the social-emotional behavior of the customer was the best predictor of clerk sociability. Along similar lines, Goodsell (1976) found customer appearance to affect postal clerks' behavior. Because clerk–customer encounters are "first and foremost social encounters" (McCullum & Harrison, 1985, p. 35), customer sex may be related to the clerks' emotional expressions.

Informal norms of social behavior include particularly warm and friendly expressions when encountering a person of the opposite sex, perhaps due to socialization for courting behavior. If such norms influence behavior during work-related encounters, clerks of either sex are likely to act more friendly toward clients of the opposite sex than toward customers of their own sex.

When an employee represents the organization, however, he or she should convey warmth to all customers, regardless of
their gender. Thus, if organizational expectations govern employees' behavior, all employees should act friendly toward all customers. It is reasonable to assume, however, that socialization toward behavior in social encounters is a longer and more powerful process than organizational socialization and is likely to penetrate behavior on the job in spite of organizational feeling rules. Hence, a fourth hypothesis:

_Hypothesis 4:_ Male and female clerks will display more positive emotional expressions toward customers of the opposite sex than toward customers of their own sex.

**Attributes of the Context in Which a Transaction Occurs**

The extent of compliance with organizational feeling rules may also be affected by various attributes of the context in which the interaction with a customer takes place. Three contextual attributes were selected for this study: the presence of other customers, the presence of other employees, and the timing of the interaction.

**Presence of Other Customers**

_Isenberg (1981)_ found that people under time pressure expect themselves to be more task oriented and less friendly than people working at their leisure. Moreover, the knowledge that other people are waiting for the clerk may create stress that hampers a clerk's ability to act friendly. Clerks in this study were also aware, however, that "mystery shoppers" (monitoring representatives of the parent organization) might be among the customers waiting in their line. Moreover, the presence of customers may enhance clerks' awareness of their organizational role and encourage compliance with organizational norms of behavior. Thus, there are conflicting hypotheses about the relationship between the presence of other customers and the display of good cheer.

**Presence of Other Employees**

Contradictory hypotheses can also be generated about the relationship between the presence of a coworker and the display of positive emotion. Coworkers may be a source of pressure for conformity to local norms. In contrast, coworkers may be a source of social entertainment in the sense that when coworkers are present, employees may prefer to focus their social skills on these coworkers rather than on customers. Thus, the presence of coworkers may be related to lower, or to higher, levels of displayed positive emotions.

**Timing of an Interaction**

The dynamics of the third contextual factor—timing of an interaction—are also unclear. During the day, management monitoring and control are often tighter. Thus, more compliance with organizational feeling rules may be expected. Furthermore, the loneliness and danger of crime associated with night work may arouse anxiety (Melbin, 1978) and may impair employees' ability to act friendly toward customers. Conversely, the influx of customer demands during day shifts often entails stress, which might hamper employees' compliance with organizational feeling rules. Night work may be more relaxed (Melbin, 1978) and may allow more room for pleasant social interaction between clerks and customers.

In short, there are competing hypotheses about the relationship between the various contextual factors and displayed emotions. Because of this ambiguity, no preliminary hypotheses were set here; the relationship between contextual factors and emotional expression was examined in an exploratory mode.

**Method**

**Sample and Overview**

The data were collected as part of an evaluation of employee courtesy by a large chain of grocery stores. Corporate executives were interested in knowing the level of courtesy in the organization. The evaluation project was therefore designed and implemented by the research staff of the corporation.

Corporate rules in the organization require positive emotional display, as well as smock and tag wearing, from all employees. One-day training sessions, which are compulsory for all newly hired personnel, include segments about these behaviors, in addition to technical issues such as pricing, stocking, and register operation. A training program for store managers also includes discussions about the importance of positive emotional display and the wearing of smocks and tags for maintaining the store image. Thus, these behaviors constitute strong norms endorsed by the parent organization, but no real sanctions exist against employees who violate them.

The sample comprised 11,716 clerk–customer transactions involving 1,319 clerks, who were employed in 576 small neighborhood stores. The stores sell groceries and small convenience items, and operate around the clock. All stores were visited twice: once during the morning shift and once during the swing shift. Twenty-five percent of the stores (144 stores, 577 clerks) were observed a third time during the night shift.

**Procedure**

In preparation for the data collection, observers made repeated visits to a sample of pretest stores. They watched and coded clerk behaviors and compared observations after each visit. Any differences in coding were discussed and clarified. This pretest was continued until a satisfactory level of interobserver reliability was confirmed. The data from the pretest were not included in the final analyses.

Store managers were notified that mystery shoppers might be visiting their stores during the spring or summer of 1985 to observe employee courtesy. No specific information was given about the timing of the visit or the exact information sought. Observers visited each store acting as regular customers. (Marketing information identified the latter as working class, 18- to 34-year-old men; observers were selected and instructed to dress accordingly.) Observers were "incognito participant observers" (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, Sechrest, & Grove, 1981), because they acted like typical customers.

All observations were noted on preformatted 3 in. × 5 in. cards. Only one clerk was observed during each visit, even if more than one register was operating. Observers walked around for a few minutes as if looking for what to buy; they noted the clerk's sex and whether he or she was wearing a smock and a name tag. They also noted the presence of employees other than the clerk observed. Typically, the observers then walked to the magazine rack because it is usually close to the cash registers. Clerk behaviors toward customers, customer gender, and attributes of the context were usually coded from this vantage point. The observers
then selected a small item, such as a bag of peanuts, and stood in line. While standing in line they continued to note employee behaviors toward other customers. Observers left the store after paying for their purchase.

The amount of time in each store varied from 4 to 12 min. This time could not be predetermined because observers were instructed to stay in each store as long as possible (in order to code the largest number of transactions possible). Yet, if there were only a few customers around, the visit was kept short; otherwise the clerk was likely to become suspicious. To eliminate a possible experimental effect, observers indicated when they thought that the clerk became suspicious. Observations coded as suspicious (less than 3%) were excluded from the analyses.

**Subject Informed Consent**

New employees of all stores are informed, in the course of corporate training, that their behavior toward customers is an important component of the job and that it may be observed and recorded by mystery shoppers. Thus, although specific informed consent was not obtained from each subject, the employees understood that encounters with mystery shoppers were a condition of employment. The use of incognito observers does not pose an ethical problem here, because the behaviors observed were clearly public and were a routine requirement in the employees' job. The names of individuals were not recorded, guaranteeing anonymity and confidence of the data (see Salancik, 1979, and Webb et al., 1981, for a discussion of related ethical issues).

**Dependent Variable: Clerk Emotional Behavior**

Quality emotional work by sales clerks entails displaying a warm and friendly facade so that customers feel good about the encounter. This can be done through verbal or nonverbal channels. Accordingly, the measure of the clerk's emotional behavior comprised two verbal behaviors (greeting and thanking) and two nonverbal behaviors (smiling and eye contact):

_Greeting:_ Whether clerk greeted customers. Only a "Hello," "How are you today?", or something to that effect was considered a greeting. A mere "Is that all for you?" was not coded as a greeting.

_Thanking:_ Whether clerk actually thanked the customer after the transaction. The word "Thank" or its derivative had to be used for a positive coding on this variable;

_Smiling:_ Whether clerk smiled at customers. Following Tidd and Lockard (1978), a smile was defined as a noticeable uptwist of the lips;

_Eye contact:_ Whether clerk attempted to establish eye contact. A direct gaze by the clerk was considered an honest attempt at establishing eye contact, regardless of the customers' reciprocation.

These behaviors were coded at the transaction level of analysis: The behavior of each clerk during each transaction was coded. A value of 1 was given for each behavior (smiling, greeting, etc.) if it was displayed, a value of 0 if it was not displayed. Four summary variables were then generated from these data. First, the four values observed for the same transaction were combined into an index of transaction emotional display by computing their mathematical mean (Cronbach's alpha = .74). Second, an index of clerk emotional display was created by averaging the ratings of all the transactions observed for the same clerk (Cronbach's alpha = .92). Third, an index of emotional display to male customers (Cronbach's alpha = .89) and an index of emotional display to female customers (Cronbach's alpha = .82) were created for each clerk.

**Independent Variables**

_Clerk sex._ Observers assigned a value of 0 if the clerk was a man, 1 if the clerk was a woman. Fifty-six percent of the observed clerks were women.

_Customer sex._ The same code was used to note the gender of the customer in each transaction. Twenty percent of the customers were women.

_Wearing the organizational uniform._ This variable included two components: wearing a smock and wearing a name tag. A value of 0 was assigned if neither was worn, 1 if only a smock or a name tag was worn, and 2 if both name tag and smock were worn.

_Timing of interaction._ Observers noted the time of day during which the observation had begun. Following Zedock, Jackson, and Summers (1983), as well as conventions of the organization, this variable was coded into a day shift value (7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.), swing shift (3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.), and night shift (11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.).

_Line length._ Observers recorded the number of customers waiting in line during each transaction. This variable was recoded into three categories: short line (0–2 customers), moderate line (3 customers), and long line (4 or more customers).

_Presence of other employees._ A value of 1 was assigned if any other employees were present next to the observed clerk, and a value of 0 if none were present.

**Results**

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of study variables are presented in Table 1. Note that, because each clerk was observed during interactions with more than one customer, the statistics about customer sex are based on a sample size of 11,716.

Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were used to test the hypotheses; the results are summarized in Table 2. All analyses were conducted at the clerk level of analysis, with clerk display of positive emotion as the dependent variable. Five separate analyses were conducted. First, the main effect of clerk sex was tested in a one-way ANOVA (Hypothesis 1). A second model included wearing the uniform, clerk sex, and their interaction. The main effects in this model offered a test of Hypothesis 2; the interaction term was a test of Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 4 was tested with a two-way ANOVA (clerk sex and customer sex as main effects); emotions displayed to men and emotions displayed to women were two values of a repeated factor (customer sex) in this analysis. In a fifth analysis the main effects of the three contextual variables were examined.

**Sex of Clerk and Emotional Expression**

As can be seen in Table 2, the main effect of clerk sex was significant, supporting Hypothesis 1, F(1, 1,302) = 38.44, p < .001. The cell means presented at the bottom of Table 3 confirm that the mean display of positive emotions was higher among female clerks than among male clerks, as predicted.

The observed sex differences may suggest to some readers that sex can be used to select employees for positions such as the ones observed here. It is therefore important to note that both male and female clerks were observed to display the complete range of displayed emotions. (The range for both groups is between 0.00 and 1.00.) Moreover, the standard deviation of both
EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS ON THE JOB

389

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Clerk emotional display</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Emotional display to men</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Emotional display to women</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Clerk sex</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Customer sex*</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>NRb</td>
<td>NRb</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Wearing the organizational uniform</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Timing of interaction</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Line length</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Presence of other employees</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 1,319.
* Statistics about customer sex are based on n = 11,716.  
** NR indicates a correlation that cannot be computed.

groups was similar (female SD = .280; male SD = .272). Thus, any one male or female clerk may display any value of positive emotion; women, however, are likely to display higher values of this variable.

Wearing the Organizational Uniform and Emotional Expression

The relationship between wearing the organizational uniform and the display of positive emotions was also significant, as suggested by Hypothesis 2, F(2, 1,298) = 14.96, p < .001. Clerks wearing smocks and name tags were more likely to act according to organizational feeling rules than clerks who were not wearing these corporate symbols. Scheffe’s post hoc analysis confirmed (p < .05) that the three levels of uniform wearing were significantly different from one another for the total sample and were in the order suggested by Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 was also confirmed. The interaction predicted between clerk sex and wearing a uniform was significant, F(2, 1,298) = 2.45, p < .01; Scheffe’s (p < .05) comparison of means revealed a somewhat unexpected pattern, however. At all levels of uniform wearing, men displayed significantly lower values than women. However, the difference between the male and female distribution was greatest among clerks wearing either aasmock or a name tag (D = .11 as compared with D = .05 and D = .06). Indeed, the difference between men and women not wearing any symbol was not significantly different from the difference between men and women wearing both symbols.

Among male clerks, the level of emotional display was highest (M = .43) when the clerk was wearing both a smock and a name tag. The other two levels of uniform wearing (neither corporate symbol; smock or tag) were not significantly different from each other in the sample of male clerks (Ms = .34 and .35, respectively; p > .05). In contrast, among female clerks, wearing no

Table 2
Analysis of Variance of Factors Related to Expressions of Positive Emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>Adjusted eta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clerk attribute</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk sex</td>
<td>38.44***</td>
<td>(1, 1,302)</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk behavior*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearing the organizational uniform</td>
<td>14.96***</td>
<td>(2, 1,298)</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk Sex X Uniform interaction</td>
<td>2.45**</td>
<td>(2, 1,298)</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer attributes*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer sex</td>
<td>988.87***</td>
<td>(1, 1,310)</td>
<td>53.67</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk Sex X Customer Sex interaction</td>
<td>3.34*</td>
<td>(1, 1,302)</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual attributes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line length</td>
<td>26.54***</td>
<td>(2, 1,309)</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of other employees</td>
<td>7.48**</td>
<td>(1, 1,309)</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing of interaction</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>(2, 1,309)</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 1,319.
* The clerk sex main effect was repeated in these analyses and was found significant.
** Sex of customer was a repeated factor in these analyses, because clerks frequently served more than one male or female customer. Each clerk was assigned a score on two dependent variables: emotion displayed to male customers and emotion displayed to female customers. These variables were two values of a repeated factor.
*** Because only 25% of the clerks were observed during the night shift, the sample size for this analysis is only 577.

*p < .10.  **p < .01.  ***p < .001.
Table 3
Mean Emotional Display Under Various Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total (n = 1,319)</th>
<th>Male clerks (n = 596)</th>
<th>Female clerks (n = 723)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clerk behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearing the organizational uniform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither smock nor tag</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either smock or tag</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both smock and tag</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion displayed to male customers</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion displayed to female customers</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual attributes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line length (in persons)</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of other employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others present</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others not present</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swing</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total, all categories</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

corporate symbol was associated with the lowest level of display of positive emotion ($M = .40$); however, the mean level of positive emotional display among women was not different when only one identifier or both identifiers were worn ($Ms = .46$ and $.48$, respectively, $p > .05$).

Thus, although Hypothesis 3 had predicted greater sex differences among clerks not wearing any corporate symbol, the results indicated that sex differences were greatest among clerks who were wearing at least one identifier (a smock or a name tag).

Sex of the Customer and Emotional Expression

Hypothesis 4 predicted that clerks of either sex would display more positive emotional expressions toward customers of the opposite sex than toward customers of their own sex. As indicated earlier, to test this hypothesis, two indexes—one of emotional behavior toward male customers and one of emotional behavior toward female customers—were generated for each clerk. The analysis for Hypothesis 4 included these two variables as two values of a repeated factor.

As can be seen in Table 2, a significant relationship was found between customer sex and clerk emotional display, $F(1, 1,310) = 988.87, p < .001$. The Clerk Sex × Customer Sex interaction (which was predicted by Hypothesis 4) was also significant, if one accepts the .10 level of significance, $F(1, 1,302) = 3.34, p < .07$. Scheffé’s post hoc analyses ($p < .05$) of the cell means reported in Table 3 indicated that the four cells in this analysis were significantly different from one another. The pattern of these relationships, however, was not exactly as predicted by Hypothesis 4. Female clerks were observed to offer higher levels of positive emotional display to male customers than to female customers, as expected. Male clerks, however, also displayed more positive emotions to male clients than to female clients.

Context of the Transaction and Emotional Expression

The relationships between three attributes of the context of a transaction and an employee’s display of positive emotions were examined: number of customers in line, presence of other employees, and timing of the interaction. A separate analysis was performed for each attribute.

The length of the line that a clerk faced bore a significant relationship to the display of positive emotions, $F(2, 1,309) = 26.54, p < .001$. Scheffé’s post hoc comparison of means confirmed ($p < .05$) that the three levels of the line length variable were significantly different from one another. An exploration of these means revealed that the average level of positive emotional display decreased as the length of the line of customers increased.

The presence of other employees also bore a significant relationship to the display of positive emotion, $F(1, 1,309) = 7.48, p < .01$. When other clerks were present, the average level of displayed positive emotion was lower than when no other employees were present.

A third test examined the relationship between the time of day and compliance with organizational feeling rules. Only 25% of the original sample of stores were visited during the night; therefore, a random sample of 25% of the day and swing shift
observations was selected, yielding a sample size of 577 for the
testing of this hypothesis. As can be seen in Table 2, the relation-
ship between shift and emotional display was not significant.

Finally, as a measure of methodological control, the three con-
textual variables (line of customers, presence of other em-
ployees, and time of day) were introduced as covariates into the
first four hypothesis-testing analyses. The introduction of these
covariates did not affect the pattern of the observed relation-
ships. That is, Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 were still confirmed,
and the results remained in the direction reported previously.

Discussion

This study offers some insight into the dynamics of emotional
expression on the job. The results suggest that female sales
clerks and employees wearing uniforms (smocks and name
tags) convey higher levels of positive emotions; the presence of
other clerks or a longer line of customers appears to be associ-
ated with a lower magnitude of displayed positive emotions.

The exact reason for the observed sex differences is still un-
clear. Sex role socialization is probably at least partially respon-
sible; women's socialization to act in a warm and friendly man-
ner (Deaux, 1985; Frieze & Ramsey, 1976) as well as women's
greater need for social approval (Hoffman, 1972) may encour-
ge them to heed polite social amenities. Alternatively, however,
when women's display of positive emotion may reflect their increased
tendency to conformity (cf. Wrightsman, 1977); in the context
examined here, smiling, greeting, and maintaining eye contact
are all acts of compliance with local feeling rules.

It could also be argued that the findings reflect women's
greater ability to encode their emotions (Hall & Halberstadt,
Both male and female clerks may be making honest attempts to
display the "right" emotions; female clerks may simply be more
successful. From an organizational standpoint, however, the
causes of the observed sex differences are immaterial. The ex-
ternal display of emotions is useful for an organization if, and
only if, these emotions are "gleaned by the observer" (Goffman,
1969), who in this case is the customer.

That only male observers collected data may be a threat to the
validity of the observed sex differences. If men are particularly
sensitive to emotional displays by women, the observers in this
study might have biased the results by noticing more of the
emotions displayed by female clerks than those conveyed by
male clerks.

The results with regard to customer sex were unexpected, yet
important. Male customers were offered more positive emo-
tions from both male and female clerks. This finding may reflect
the generally higher status attributed to men (Millet, 1970).
It may also reflect sex differences in courting behavior. Women
may generalize their courting behaviors to instances (such as
those observed here) where their jobs entail serving men. In
contrast, serving a woman may bother some men and therefore
might not be perceived as an appropriate setting for courting.
Clearly, these are only speculations.

The positive relationship between the wearing of an organiza-
tional uniform and the display of organizationally prescribed
emotions is thought-provoking. Uniform wearing is a prevalent
norm in organizations; yet this variable has not been addressed
in the organizational literature. The variable is clearly worthy
of further research, especially because it offers an interesting
opportunity to examine the implications of self-awareness the-
ory (Wicklund & Duval, 1971; Wicklund & Frey, 1980) for or-
ganizational behavior.

Self-awareness theory posits that under certain conditions
(e.g., when sitting in front of a mirror or a camera) subjects tend
to focus their attention on themselves and to examine their own
behavior. This self-examination includes a focus on whichever
dimension of the self is most salient, and a comparison of this
dimension with a standard or a frame of reference (Carver &
Scheier, 1981; Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Wicklund & Frey,
1980).

When an individual is at work, a salient dimension of his or
her self is likely to be the organizational self, that is, his or her
behavior as an employee. Thus, according to self-awareness the-
ory, when employees' self-awareness is aroused, they are likely
to focus on their behavior as employees and to compare this
behavior with the standards set by the organization. Employees
with increased self-awareness can therefore be expected to dis-
play greater compliance with organizational rules and regula-
tions.

Wearing an organizational symbol (a smock, a name tag, or
a tie with an apple on it) may increase employees' self-aware-
ess in the same way that a camera or a mirror have been found
to do so in the laboratory. Indeed, the positive relationship ob-
erved here between uniform wearing and emotional behavior
offers support for such a hypothesis. The pattern of behavior
stimulated by the self-directed focus depends, of course, on the
norms that prevail in a specific setting. But it may well be that
employees who wear a uniform take fewer breaks or act more
cautious in the same way that uniform-wearing subjects in this
study were more friendly.

The relationship between organizational identifiers and the
display of positive emotions was moderated by the sex of the
clerk. Only one corporate symbol (a smock or a name tag) was
necessary before a change in the emotional behavior of female
clerks was evident. In contrast, a more major form of organiza-
tional identification (i.e., both smock and name tag) was neces-
sary before a change of similar magnitude was evident among
male clerks.

This difference between men and women clerks may be due to
the observed sex differences in emotional behavior. Because
women's behavior is usually closer to the organizational norm,
they may need less self-awareness than males to bring about
their compliance. Other gender differences may also help ex-
plain the interaction between sex and organizational symbols.
One possibility is that sex differences in self-confidence and self-
estee (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974) are responsible for these
findings, because these variables are known to be related to the
propensity for increased self-awareness (Duval & Wickland,
1972). Following the logic that company symbols serve as re-
minders to gauge one's behavior, it may be that (perhaps be-
cause of higher self-confidence) men need a more comprehen-
sive reminder (i.e., smock and tag), whereas a smaller reminder
(i.e., smock or tag) is sufficient to make women compare their
behavior with the local norms.
There are plausible rival explanations for the uniform main effect. Tighter managerial control, for example, may be responsible for the simultaneous higher values of both emotional display and smock- and tag-wearing. Results of the data analysis offer some reason to dispute this rival hypothesis, because the presence of another employee suggests some form of social control, and the introduction of this variable as a covariate did not affect the significant relationship between emotional display and wearing a uniform. Nonetheless, only an experimental design in which smock- and tag-wearing are manipulated and controlled can completely refute this rival hypothesis.

It is also possible that wearing a uniform and the display of positive emotions both reflect the exogenous variable of job satisfaction. As mentioned earlier, satisfied employees may be proud to wear the organizational uniform and may also find it easier to comply with local feeling rules. That sex differences were observed in the pattern of the relationship between uniform wearing and emotional display makes this hypothesis somewhat less likely. The results with regard to Hypothesis 3 were not sufficiently clear, however, to completely rule out this explanation.

Considering an integration of job satisfaction with the set of variables examined in this study offers some new insights into the enigmatic relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. To illustrate, emotional behavior and uniform wearing may be components of what Organ and his colleagues labeled good citizenship behaviors, that is, behaviors that reflect general compliance with organizational norms (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Organ, 1977; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). Existing measures of organizational citizenship do not include emotion work or uniform wearing; however, the concepts are clearly conceptually related, because good citizenship does include prosocial gestures and activities that help promote company image. Because positive links between job satisfaction and good citizenship have been documented (cf. Smith et al., 1983), future research should examine the relationship between the display of positive emotions, the wearing of a uniform, good citizenship, and job satisfaction.

Future research may also seek additional variables that can predict level of emotional display. In particular, employers would likely appreciate knowledge about predictors that can be legitimately used for personnel selection. Several clerk characteristics seem promising. To illustrate, extraversion (vs. introversion) may be helpful, because extraverted clerks are probably more likely to act in a friendly and social manner toward their customers. Individual needs may also be related to the inclination to convey positive emotions. Puffer (1987), for example, reports that need for achievement is positively related to prosocial behaviors among commissioned salespeople. In a similar vein, high needs for affiliation may be related to emotional expression among other service employees, especially those who do not get paid according to their sales.

In closing, it should be noted that this study does not offer any information about the desirable levels of emotional display. This is a broad and complex issue calling for data from both organizations and clients. Sutton and Rafaeli (1988), for example, describe how the pace of a store determines the types of emotions that customers and clerks seek. Moreover, Rafaeli (1989) found meaningful variation in customers' expectations from supermarket cashiers.

Along similar lines, attributes of a sales clerk may govern the formulation of clients' expectations. To illustrate, customers may expect less positive emotional displays from men than from women. Alternatively, customers may expect a particular pattern of behavior from service employees encountered at different times of day or in different types of stores. All these are interesting questions for further research.

References

EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS ON THE JOB

(Eds.), The service encounter (pp. 35–63). Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.


Received November 10, 1986
Revision received May 12, 1988
Accepted May 23, 1988
