
Research Digest

To Suppress or Not to Suppress, That Is the Question

Two recent articles in *Emotion* present provocatively different views on the costs and benefits of displaying emotion. In the first, a quintet of authors describe the downside of appearing to be “the cat that ate the canary.”

Through a series of experiments, the authors set out to determine whether there are interpersonal costs to expressing positive emotion when winning. They note their hypothesis runs counter to the large body of literature on the positive social benefits of expressing positive emotion, including that happier people are rated more positively in areas such as likability, warmth, and intelligence.

Their experiments found, however, that inexpressive winners were evaluated more positively and that people were more interested in forming friendships with them than with expressive winners because they were seen as consciously tempering their positive emotion to protect the loser’s feelings.

But in the next issue of *Emotion*, three different researchers demonstrated how suppressing one’s feelings may also have a negative impact. These researchers set out to determine if facial affect sensitivity — the speed and accuracy with which one can identify the emotion expressions displayed by another person — is affected by expression suppression and mimicry. They used a computerized facial affect morphing program and measured participants’ electromyographic (EMG) activity. Their results indicate deliberate mimicry enhances recognition of emotion, while suppressing emotion does the opposite, thus highlighting the importance of free expression in facilitating personal interactions.

Sources: Kalokerinos, E., K. Greenaway, D. Pedder, and E. Margetts. 2013. Don’t grin when you win: The social costs of positive emotion expression in performance situations. *Emotion* 14(1): 180–186.

Schneider, K., R. Hempel, and T. Lynch. 2013. That “poker face” just might lose you the game! The impact of expressive suppression and mimicry on sensitivity to facial expressions of emotion. *Emotion* 13(5): 852–8666.

How Women Are Perceived

Cultural norms allow men to be more aggressive and demanding than women. A recent paper by Emily Amanatullah and Catherine Tinsley acknowledges this fact, but provides nuance by illuminating how status is part of the equation.

Through two experimental studies, they found that women who had a higher status were perceived as having more legitimate claims to resources

and were less likely to be perceived negatively. For women with higher achieved status, their resource requests are viewed as more consistent with their (higher) achievement status than with their (lower) gender status.

In another issue of *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, Imen Benharda, Jeanne M. Brett, and Alain Lempereur reported that women may have an advantage when it comes to managing disputes, at least in some circumstances, particularly when they *lack* status. This study collected data from a third-party-mediated dispute resolution simulation involving MBA students from a major French business school. The results showed that women who lacked authority over disputants and played third-party roles were able to facilitate more successful outcomes than men or than women with authority in third-party roles. The women were more successful, they found, because they were more sensitive to their leadership role.

Sources: Amanatullah, E., and C. Tinsley. 2013. Ask and ye shall receive? How gender and status moderate negotiation success. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research* 6(4): 253-272.

Benharda, I., J. M. Brett, and A. Lempereur. 2013. Gender and role in conflict management: Female and male managers as third parties. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research* 6(2): 79-93.