Fibbing about your feelings: How feigning happiness in the face of personal hardship affects trust

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Emotional misrepresentation
Trust
Affect
Social cognition

ABSTRACT

Individuals who experience personal distress face a dilemma when they enter the workplace: should they authentically express their negative emotions when conversing with colleagues, or feign happiness? Across six experiments, using face-to-face interactions, as well as video and scenario-based stimuli, we explore how feigning happiness in the face of personal hardship affects trust among colleagues. We find that individuals who feign happiness in professional contexts are more likely to be hired and are trusted more by others, despite also being perceived as more dishonest. Our results suggest that these trust benefits are unique to professional (rather than personal) contexts, and are driven by perceptions of resilience, rather than conformity to display rules. This research deepens our understanding of emotion regulation, authenticity, and trust by exploring the consequences of feigned happiness in mixed motive settings and by demonstrating that emotional misrepresentation, unlike many other forms of misrepresentation, can increase trust.

1. Introduction

Imagine you are going through a heart-breaking divorce. You feel distracted and overwhelmed at work, and often experience negative emotions despite trying to stay focused on the job. When one of your coworkers – who knows about the divorce – sees you in the office and asks how you are doing, what should you do? On the one hand, people value positivity, particularly in professional settings (Wolf, Lee, Sah, & Brooks, 2016), suggesting you should put on a happy face if you want to be seen as a competent worker. On the other hand, people also value authenticity and honesty, particularly in close relationships (DePaulo, Ansfield, Kirkendol, & Boden, 2004; Ford, King, & Hollender, 1988; Lehman, O’Connor, Kovács, & Newman, 2019; McCormack & Levine, 1990; Pillemer, 2018), suggesting you should speak openly about your distress if you want to be seen as a friend and trusted confidante.

The present research sheds light on this tension by exploring how observers react to individuals who express authentic distress or feign happiness in the face of personal hardship. In doing so, we make three central contributions to research on emotion regulation, authenticity, and interpersonal trust. First, we deepen our understanding of the social consequences of emotion regulation by exploring the social perception of emotion regulation in mixed motive settings. Existing research on the consequences of feigned happiness has primarily explored judgments of authentic versus inauthentic expressions of the same emotion within service contexts (Chi, Grandey, Diamond, & Krimmel, 2011; Grandey, 2003; Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005; Houston, Grandey, & Sawyer, 2018; Hülsheger, Lang, Schewe, & Zijlstra, 2015; Wang et al., 2017; see Appendix A for a review of this research). Although display rules in service contexts are fairly unambiguous (e.g., “service with a smile”, Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987; Tidd & Lockard, 1978), display rules in routine workplace interactions are much less clear. In routine workplace conversations, coworkers have competing preferences for both professionalism and vulnerability (Pillemer, 2018). The present research unearths the consequences of feigned happiness in this mixed-motive context, and explores how the salience of different relational goals moderates these consequences.

We also provide new insights on judgments of authenticity. Existing research examines perceived authenticity based on the nature of one’s outward emotional expression (Cheshin, Amit, & van Kleef, 2018; Frank, Ekman, & Friesen, 1993; Groth, Hennig-Thurau, & Walch, 2009; Porter, ten Brinke, & Wallace, 2012; Wang et al., 2017). However, in many real-world contexts, particularly among familiar relational partners, observers not only have knowledge of a target’s outward expression, but also of the target’s personal experience (e.g., whether the target is experiencing stress or hardship). From these two pieces of information, observers make inferences about the target’s emotional experience and authenticity, which subsequently influence interpersonal trust. We explore this inferential process in the current...
research.

Finally, this research deepens our understanding of the relationship between honesty and trust. Although dishonesty is often assumed to be antithetical to trust, very little research has explored the boundaries of this assumption (see Levine & Schweitzer, 2015 for an exception). This is important to consider because subtle forms of deception that pervade social life – such as feigned happiness – are often essential to, rather than detrimental to, interpersonal trust.

2. Feigning happiness in the face of personal hardship

In organizational contexts, emotion regulation is ubiquitous; individuals frequently regulate their experience and expression of emotion in order to perform organizational duties and conform to organizational display rules (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983). Expressing happiness when one does not actually feel happy is particularly common, given that happiness is often expected in service encounters and is linked with beneficial social impressions (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Pugh, 2001; Tsai & Huang, 2002). Indeed, a pilot study (N = 146) revealed that working adults feign happiness about once per week and they feign happiness more frequently than any other emotion (sadness, anger, fear, or excitement; see Pilot 1 in supplemental online materials (SOM 1) for more details).

Importantly, observers often detect targets’ attempts at feigning happiness. A large body of research has documented observers’ ability to detect authentic (versus inauthentic) happiness based on a target’s smile (e.g., Ekman & Friesen, 1982; Gunnery & Ruben, 2016; Surakka & Hietanen, 1998), tone of voice (Scherer, Banse, Wallbott, & Goldbeck, 1991) and body language (Wallbott, 1998). Consistent with this body of research, we found that 82% of working adults (N = 100) have suspected their colleagues of misrepresenting their emotions in workplace conversations. Importantly, however, 55% of those suspicions were driven by contextual information (e.g. knowledge of a negative life event that the colleague had experienced) that contradicted the colleague’s expressed emotions, rather than the actual emotional expression (see Pilot Study 2 in SOM 2 for more details). Thus, although existing research primarily focuses on perceptions of emotional authenticity based on the emotional expression itself, in the present research, we examine perceptions of emotional authenticity (and misrepresentation) based on the context of the expression.

We focus on how individuals react to a coworker’s decision to feign happiness when the coworker is experiencing distress due to personal hardship. Consistent with recent research (Wolf et al., 2016), we define distress as a broad negative emotional state that subsumes several discrete emotions such as sadness and anxiety. When individuals experience challenging personal hardship, the distress associated with such circumstances often bleeds into their experience at work (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1990). Therefore, individuals experiencing personal distress face the difficult decision of whether to openly share their feelings with others, or to pretend that they are happy when they are not. This is a particularly difficult decision given that colleagues often learn of each other’s distressing circumstances – for example, through social media (Marder, Calvard, Kowalski, Lambert, & Archer-Brown, 2015), gossip (Kurland & Pelled, 2000), or through observation – and therefore, completely ignoring one’s distress is often not feasible.

3. Social judgments of feigned happiness in the face of personal distress

Human beings navigate their social worlds by trying to decode the personality and intentions of those around them, and they often use minimal cues to do so. One cue that individuals frequently rely on is others’ emotional expressions (Frijda, 1986; Van Kleef, 2009; Weisbuch & Adams, 2012). Emotions not only have meaning for those who feel them, but also for those who witness their expression (Côté, 2005; Elfenbein, 2007; Fischer & Manstead, 2008; Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Van Kleef, 2009). Upon observing a target’s emotional expression, individuals often engage in a reverse appraisal process (Ames & Johar, 2009; De Melo, Carnevale, Read, & Gratch, 2014; Hareli & Hess, 2010; Scherer & Grandjean, 2008). That is, they try to understand the source of a target’s emotion and infer what the target’s emotional response says about the target’s character (Van Kleef, 2009). For example, when observers see a target expressing positive emotions, they might infer that the target appraises their situation as consistent with their goals. Alternatively, when observers see a target expressing negative emotions, they might infer that the target appraises their situation as inconsistent with their goals (Ames & Johar, 2009). In the present research, we focus on these inferential processes rather than affective processes (e.g., emotional contagion; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993; Pugh, 2001).

We posit that observers make different inferences from outward emotional displays when they have reason to believe that the outward display is incongruent with the target’s underlying state (Côté, Hideg, & Van Kleef, 2013; Grandey, 2003; Grandey et al., 2005; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). Imagine interacting with a coworker who you know is coping with the loss of a family member. When you talk to him and ask him how he is, he smiles, says that he is good, and walks away. You are unlikely to make the same set of inferences from his smile that you would have made if you did not have knowledge of his recent loss. So, what inferences would you make about this individual? Perhaps you would think that he is simply trying to focus on his job, and conclude that he is perseverant and competent. Or, perhaps you would think that he is trying to spare you from an uncomfortable social interaction, and conclude that he is benevolent. However, you might also wonder if he is broadly dishonest. We suggest that feigned happiness, relative to authentic distress, sends a mix of both positive and negative signals. In particular, we consider how this behavior influences perceptions of the target’s competence, benevolence, and honesty, and how these inferences influence trust.

We propose that feigned happiness in the face of personal distress increases perceptions of competence for (at least) three reasons. First, feigning happiness may signal conformity to organizational display rules. Organizations often have implicit and explicit display rules mandating expressions of happiness, and those who conform to such display rules are often perceived to be high-performers (e.g., Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Pugh, 2001; Snyder, 1987; Tidd & Lockard, 1978). For example, service providers who appear cheerful are seen as providing higher quality service (Pugh, 2001), which can increase customer loyalty. Thus, the performance gains associated with conformity to display rules may cause individuals to judge those who feign happiness as more competent at performing their jobs.

Second, feigning happiness signals a person’s ability to engage in emotion regulation, which is an act of self-control that requires social skill and restraint (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998). Restraint has long been considered a virtue that is necessary for effective cooperation, thinking, and societal functioning (Aristotle, 1850). Furthermore, work has both theorized (Geddes & Callister, 2007) and empirically demonstrated (Gaertig, Barasch, Levine, & Schweitzer, 2019; Wolf et al., 2016) that individuals who regulate their emotions are perceived to have higher self-control, which can lead to perceptions of increased competence.

Third, feigned happiness may signal perseverance and commitment to the goals of the organization. By demonstrating the will and ability to focus on the demands of the job rather than one’s personal needs, individuals who feign happiness may be perceived as resilient, which is an important antecedent of competence (e.g. Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). These three mechanisms, which we disentangle in Studies 3 and 4, all suggest that feigned happiness will lead to perceptions of competence.

In addition to signaling competence, we predict that feigned happiness signals benevolence. Social interactions are easier and smoother
when individuals feign happiness rather than express negative emotions. Thus, feigned happiness may be interpreted as an act of polishness (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1967), indicative of one’s concern for social harmony. Furthermore, despite knowing that a display of happiness is inauthentic, people may assume that a target who feigns happiness is warmer and more affiliative (the inferences typically associated with happiness; Hess, Adams, & Kleck, 2005; Knutson, 1996) than a target who expresses distress.

However, feigned happiness is also likely to undermine perceptions of integrity. Indeed, existing research demonstrates that individuals who misrepresent their emotions are often seen as less authentic (Grandey et al., 2005) and less honest (Côté et al., 2013) than individuals who express authentic emotions.

4. Trust in those who feign happiness in the face of personal distress

These three social inferences – competence, benevolence, and honesty – are central antecedents of trust (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). We define trust as the willingness to be vulnerable based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010; Kramer, 1999; Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). Because feigned happiness influences these inferences in opposing directions, it is unclear how feigned happiness affects trust overall. However, this question can be resolved if we consider the context in which the expression of feigned happiness occurs.

Consistent with the Emotions-as-Social-Information (EASI) model (Van Kleef, 2009), we hypothesize that the strength of these inferences, and their ultimate relationship with interpersonal trust, depends on social-relational factors, such as the relational context in which the emotion is expressed. In professional contexts, individuals have the common goal of efficiently completing workplace tasks. As a result, self-regulation and resilience are particularly important. Self-regulation – particularly feigned happiness – creates social harmony (Vohs, Baumeister, & Ciarocco, 2005) and allows employees to maintain focus on this goal (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). Therefore, feigned happiness is likely to be strongly associated with both competence and benevolence in professional contexts. Because feigned happiness is likely to be attributed to these positive motives, it is unlikely that it will trigger suspicion and be perceived as a signal of general dishonesty. Therefore, we hypothesize that feigned happiness will increase trust in professional contexts.

However, we expect that observers will perceive feigned happiness differently in personal contexts. Within personal contexts, individuals have the shared goal of establishing intimacy and comfort (Clark & Mills, 1979; Clark & Taraban, 1991). A failure to openly express oneself, therefore, may be viewed with suspicion. As a result, we predict that feigned happiness will be more likely to signal general dishonesty, and less likely to signal competence and benevolence in personal contexts. Therefore, we expect the benefits of feigned happiness will be attenuated in personal contexts.

5. Overview of current research

We test these hypotheses and explore potential boundaries in six experiments. In Study 1, we examine behavioral trust toward individuals who indicate that they routinely feign happiness at work. In Studies 2a and 2b, we extend our investigation by studying feigned happiness within face-to-face (Study 2a) and computer-mediated (Study 2b) interactions. In Study 3, we explore whether the benefits of feigned happiness (at work) are driven by judgments of self-regulation or conformity to display rules. In Study 4, we explore the consequences of both effective and ineffective attempts at feigned happiness. In Study 5, we examine the consequences of feigned happiness in both professional and personal contexts. In each study, we decided our sample size or the duration of data collection in advance, and we report all measures and conditions we collected. All data, syntax, and materials from our study are available on the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/9ybk2/).

6. Study 1: Hiring those who feign happiness

In Study 1, we investigate how feigned happiness influences trust behavior. Specifically, we use a modified trust game that models an organizational hiring decision. We manipulate feigned happiness in a fictitious survey in which a target indicates that he routinely feigns happiness or expresses authentic distress at work. This stimulus allows us to capture how observers make judgments of the type of individual who misrepresents their emotions. By examining judgments of an individual who intends to feign happiness, rather than judgments of actual expressions of happiness, we eliminate possible halo effects toward expressed happiness (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977) or potential emotional contagion effects (Hatfield et al., 1993; Pugh, 2001) and isolate the cognitive inferences observers make about individuals who feign happiness (Van Kleef, Homan, & Cheshin, 2012; Van Kleef, 2009).

6.1. Participants

We intended to recruit at least 100 students and community members through a university laboratory pool in the midwestern United States. Due to unexpectedly high foot traffic in the laboratory during our recruitment period, we ended up with a sample of 126 adults (50.0% female, mean age = 30 years, mean work experience = 11 years). We conduct analyses using the full sample. We preregistered this study at AsPredicted.org: https://aspredicted.org/chi9cf.pdf.

6.2. Procedure and materials

In Study 1, participants had to make a decision about whether or not to hire a (fictional) former participant (in the role of “employee”) to complete a workplace task. The decision to hire the employee reflects workplace trust (Ferrin, Kim, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004; Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2006, 2007; Kim, Dirks, Cooper, & Ferrin, 2004). Before making the hiring decision, participants learned that the employee either did or did not routinely misrepresent their emotions. We randomly assigned participants to one of two Emotional Misrepresentation conditions in a between-subjects design: feigned happiness vs. authentic distress.

6.2.1. Trusting behavior

We used a hiring task adapted from Gunia and Levine (2019). When participants entered the study, they learned that they were assigned to the role of manager and that they would have the opportunity to hire a former participant (the employee) to complete a workplace task. Specifically, participants read that: “The workplace task could involve solving a problem in a group, delivering a persuasive speech, writing a report, or negotiating for a product. Completing the task will require the participant to be creative, stay focused, and communicate well with others.” Participants also learned that at least 50 participants in the employee role would complete the workplace task and that a judge would rate their performance.

Participants then learned that their hiring decision would influence their bonus. If a participant did not hire the employee, they earned three lottery tickets, each of which entered them into a raffle for a $10 bonus. If a participant did hire the employee, the number of lottery tickets they earned depended on the employee’s performance: if the employee performed in the top 50% of all employees, the participant earned six lottery tickets, but if the employee performed in the bottom 50% of employees, the participant earned one lottery ticket. See Appendix B for details.

This task models a risky hiring decision. Managers routinely face
these types of decisions. For example, a manager could decide to either do a task himself or hire another employee to do it. If he does the task himself, he faces few risks because he has direct control over the task performance. If he hires another employee, however, he becomes vulnerable to this employee’s performance. Thus, hiring reflects a trusting decision: making oneself vulnerable based on positive expectations of another person (Rousseau et al., 1998).

Participants had to pass a comprehension check on the game in order to proceed with the study. We designed the study so that participants who failed the comprehension check after five attempts would be automatically kicked out of the study. Every participant passed the comprehension check by the fifth attempt.

After participants passed the comprehension check for the hiring task, they learned about their partner, the employee. Specifically, participants learned that the employee had completed a survey, and that they would see the employee's responses to this survey. The survey featured three demographic questions and three questions about workplace behavior. We held all information constant except the employee's response to the question, “Do you typically express negative emotions at work? For example, if you were feeling sad or distressed because of something that was happening in your personal life, would you let others know about it?” In the authentic distress condition, the employee wrote:

Yeah, I usually do. I’m kind of an open book. I’d probably seem sad and would tell others what was going on.

In the feigned happiness condition, the employee wrote:

No, not really. I usually keep my personal feelings to myself. I’d probably just try to stay upbeat and act like everything was fine.

Fig. 1 depicts an example stimulus.

After seeing the employee’s survey responses, participants made a hiring decision and rated the employee on competence, benevolence, and honesty.1 We measured competence using five items: capable, competent, resilient, perseverant, high in self-control (1 = Not at all, 7 = Extremely; α = 0.91). We measured benevolence using four items: benevolent, kind, good-natured, well-intended (1 = Not at all, 7 = Extremely; adapted from Levine & Schweitzer, 2014; α = 0.88). We measured honesty using four items: honest, authentic, sincere, and truthful (1 = Not at all, 7 = Extremely; α = 0.91). As a manipulation check, we asked participants, “To what extent does this person routinely misrepresent their emotions?” (1 = Not at all, 7 = Extremely). After participants submitted their responses, we collected demographic information.

One participant was selected to receive a $10 bonus one week after the study ended. To select a winner for the bonus, we ran an actual lottery based on participants’ decisions in the hiring task. Every participant who had chosen not to hire the target received 3 lottery tickets. Every participant who had chosen to hire the target was randomly assigned to either receive 1 ticket or 6 tickets. In other words, it was randomly determined whether their “partner” performed in the top 50% or the bottom 50%.

6.3. Results

As indicated in our preregistration, we report a chi-square test of proportions to analyze trust (i.e., hiring), and we report one-way ANOVAs using Emotional Misrepresentation as a factor to analyze the remaining dependent variables. Table 1 depicts the descriptive statistics for all measures, except the manipulation check, which we report below.

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1 In this study, we also explored judgments of the employee’s propensity to trust others. We report these results in the online supplemental materials (see SOM 12).
target was judged to be significantly less honest in the feigned happiness condition than in the authentic distress condition.

6.3.6. Mediation analyses

To examine how judgments of competence, benevolence, and honesty affected the decision to hire the target who feigned happiness, we ran an exploratory bootstrapped mediation analysis with 10,000 samples (Hayes, 2013; PROCESS Macro for SPSS, Model 4). In our model, we entered Emotional Misrepresentation as the independent variable, perceived competence, benevolence, and honesty as simultaneous mediators, and the hiring decision as the dependent variable. We find evidence that perceived competence mediates the effect of emotional misrepresentation on hiring (the 95% confidence interval around the indirect effect excluded zero: 95% CI = [0.44, 2.65]), but that benevolence (95% CI = [−0.14, 0.23]) and honesty (95% CI = [−0.41, 0.90]) do not.

6.4. Discussion

Study 1 provides initial evidence that feigned happiness increases trusting behavior in an incentive-compatible context. Individuals were more likely to hire targets who indicated that they routinely feign happiness at work than targets who indicated that they routinely express authentic negative emotion at work. This study also provides initial evidence that judgments of competence, rather than benevolence or honesty, drive trust in workplace contexts. We ran an additional study using both male and female targets (see Study S5 in the supplemental online materials, SOM 20) and do not find any evidence that gender moderates our effects.

A potential limitation of this study is that people typically do not indicate the frequency with which they express authentic negative emotions during the hiring process. However, we believe it is valuable to examine judgments of emotional misrepresentation in this context because employees may eventually become responsible for hiring a colleague (e.g., hiring a person to a team, or for a promotion), and the colleague’s reputation for both positivity and authenticity may influence such a decision. Indeed, recent research demonstrates that judgments of authenticity influence interactions between job candidates and employers (Moore, Lee, Kim, & Cable, 2017). However, in our subsequent studies, we examine judgments of trust directly, rather than hiring decisions, in order to overcome the limitations of this context.

7. Study 2: Feigned happiness during social interactions

In Study 2, we investigate the consequences of feigned happiness in live social interactions. In Study 2a, we use a face-to-face interaction, in which participants interact with a distressed confederate who either feigns happiness or expresses authentic sadness. In Study 2b, we use computer-mediated chat. Furthermore, our manipulation of emotional misrepresentation is more explicit; targets in Study 2b explicitly state that they feel an emotion that is known to be either consistent or inconsistent with their true emotion. In both studies, participants knew that their relationship with the confederate was primarily professional in nature; participants knew they could be asked to engage in decision-making tasks with the confederate after their initial conversation.

8. Study 2a

8.1. Participants

We set the a priori goal of recruiting as many participants as possible in a three-day laboratory session at a university in the northeastern United States. We ultimately recruited 157 adults (62.3% female, mean age = 23 years, mean work experience = 5 years) who participated in the study in exchange for a $10 show-up fee.

8.2. Procedure and materials

We recruited participants for this study in groups of 4–7. When participants entered the study, we assigned them a Study ID number. We always assigned Study ID number 4 to the confederate involved in the study. We randomly assigned every other Study ID number to participants.

The study involved three parts. First, participants completed a paper “Emotional Inventory” (see Fig. 3). Participants were seated in individual cubicles, equipped with computers, pen, and paper, and could not see each other during this section of the study. We informed participants that their Emotional Inventory would be exchanged with another participant in the session. The Emotional Inventory consisted of demographic questions (Gender, Age, Hometown) and three questions about their emotions. For the first two emotion-related questions, participants were instructed to circle emoticons to describe 1) how they felt today, and 2) how they felt over the past week. Participants could choose from five emoticons that ranged from a full frown to a full smile. The Emotional Inventory also included the question, “How happy are you today?” for which the response options ranged from 1 = Very unhappy to 7 = Very happy. The Emotional Inventory then asked participants to explain their choices to the emotion questions (free response). Each Emotional Inventory was marked with each participant’s Study ID number.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Study 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Perceived Competence</th>
<th>Perceived Benevolence</th>
<th>Perceived Honesty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feigned Happiness</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Distress</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. d denotes Cohen’s d.

Fig. 2. Trusting behavior (hiring) in Study 1. Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.
After participants completed the Emotional Inventory, a research assistant collected the Emotional Inventories and informed participants that they would each receive an Emotional Inventory that had been completed by another participant in the room. In reality, all participants received a pre-populated, hand-written Emotional Inventory that was labeled with Study ID number 4 (the confederate’s study ID number). The pre-populated Emotional Inventory always depicted a 22-year-old male from Birmingham, Alabama who was feeling unhappy. In the free-response, the confederate explained “Beginning of school sucks. OCR is stressful. I hope I get a job.” OCR refers to “on-campus-recruiting,” the process students at the university use to apply for internships and jobs. OCR was occurring while the study was running, and the stress of job-hunting is a realistic aspect of student life. Fig. 3 depicts the stimuli we used in Study 2a.

After participants had some time to study the confederate’s Emotional Inventory, they were instructed to go into another room for a group discussion. Participants knew that they would have to judge the person whose Emotional Inventory they had received (the confederate) after the group discussion, and that they might be assigned to complete a decision-making task with the confederate.

There was a table set up in the discussion room, and each seat was labeled with a Study ID number. Each participant was instructed to sit at the seat labeled with his or her Study ID number. The confederate always sat at seat 4. We depict the set-up of the discussion room in Fig. 4.

A research assistant, blind to the study conditions and hypotheses, then led participants in a group discussion. Participants were instructed to introduce themselves and share one personal fact. After all participants introduced themselves, the research assistant asked participants to tell everyone their favorite hobby and then to tell everyone about their plans for fall break. Then, the research assistant informed participants that the group conversation was over and instructed participants to return to their computers.

8.2.1. Emotional misrepresentation manipulation

The confederate always provided the same information during the
8.2.4. Honesty

“I am comfortable having this person in a critical role” would feel uneasy if I needed to depend on this person’s abilities” reflects the willingness to rely on someone as a colleague or teammate: “I would believe that the confederate actually felt happier in the feigned happiness condition than he did in the authentic distress condition, \( M = 2.17, SD = 1.02 \) than in the authentic distress condition \( M = 1.84, SD = 0.76 \), \( \chi^2(1) = 4.29, p = .038 \).

8.2.5. Manipulation check

As a manipulation check, we asked participants to rate how the confederate actually felt and what the confederate expressed in the group discussion. Participants rated the extent to which the confederate felt happy, sad (reverse-scored), positive emotion, and negative emotion (reverse-scored) \( (1 = \text{Not at all}, 7 = \text{Extremely}) \). We combined these items into one measure of felt happiness \( (\alpha = 0.82) \). Participants also rated the extent to which the confederate expressed happiness, sadness (reverse-scored), positive emotion, and negative emotion (reverse-scored). We combined these items into one measure of expressed happiness \( (\alpha = 0.91) \).

At the end of the study, we asked participants to describe the confederate (free response), and then we asked participants if they knew the confederate prior to the experiment (yes or no). Then, we collected demographic information.

8.3. Results

Three participants indicated that they knew the confederate prior to the experiment. We eliminated these participants from the data set before conducting any analyses. No other participants expressed any suspicion about the confederate. We conduct all analyses on the final sample of 154 adults.

Because this data involves individuals nested within groups, we analyze the data using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (e.g., Barsade, 2002) using Stata’s xtmixed procedure. Hierarchical Linear Modeling accounts for the non-independence of individuals who belonged to the same group. Using ANOVA yields qualitatively identical results.

8.3.1. Manipulation check

Consistent with the intent of the manipulation, participants believed that the confederate expressed more happiness in the feigned happiness condition \( (M = 4.62, SD = 1.09) \) than in the authentic distress condition \( (M = 2.87, SD = 1.13) \), \( \chi^2(1) = 46.35, p < .001 \). Participants also believed that the confederate actually felt happier in the feigned happiness condition \( (M = 2.17, SD = 1.02) \) than in the authentic distress condition \( (M = 1.84, SD = 0.76) \), \( \chi^2(1) = 4.29, p = .038 \).

8.3.2. Trust

Importantly, the confederate engendered greater trust in the feigned happiness condition than he did in the authentic distress condition, \( \chi^2(1) = 11.39, p < .001 \). Descriptive statistics for trust and honesty in Studies 2a and 2b are reported in Table 2.

8.3.3. Honesty

The confederate was perceived to be less honest in the feigned happiness condition than in the authentic distress condition, \( \chi^2(1) = 34.01, p < .001 \).

8.4. Ancillary analyses

8.4.1. Are perceptions of the target’s actual happiness driving these results?

The manipulation check results demonstrate that emotional misrepresentation affected participants’ perceptions of the confederate’s felt happiness. To rule out the possibility that our main results were driven by perceptions of how happy the confederate was perceived to feel, rather than perceptions of emotional misrepresentation, we conducted another series of multi-level models in which we controlled for perceptions of the confederate’s felt emotion. We find a similar pattern...
of results, such that emotional misrepresentation was perceived to be dishonest ($p < .001$), and increased trust ($p = .001$). Thus, although the ability to regulate one’s emotional expression does signal that a target’s negative emotion may be less intense, it is unlikely that this fully explains the effect of emotional misrepresentation on trust.

8.4.2. Do observers’ own emotions influence their reactions to emotional misrepresentation?

We also explored whether or not participants’ own initial levels of happiness influenced our results, using participants’ own responses to the Emotional Inventory. Because the questions on the Emotional Inventory did not all use the same response scale (see Fig. 2), we first standardized responses to the three questions (How do you feel today, How have you felt over the past week, and How happy are you today) and then created a composite measure of participant happiness ($\alpha = 0.77$). Controlling for the participants’ own happiness did not attenuate any of the effects: Feigned happiness was perceived to be dishonest ($p < .001$) and increased trust ($p = .003$).

9. Study 2b

9.1. Participants

We set the a priori goal of recruiting as many participants as possible in a three-day laboratory session at a university in the northeastern United States. We ultimately recruited 190 participants (57.4% female, mean age = 23 years, mean work experience = 4 years) who participated in the study in exchange for a $10 show-up fee.

9.2. Procedure and materials

Participants completed all parts of the study in individual cubicles in front of a computer. The study involved four stages. First, participants wrote an essay about their day. Second, participants exchanged essays with a (fictitious) partner. Third, participants participated in an online chat with their partner and learned that they would complete a problem-solving task with their partner later in the session. Finally, participants rated their partner. In the first stage of the study, participants received a prompt instructing them to write a short essay about their day. Participants had three minutes to hand-write their essay on a sheet of paper. After participants completed their essays, a research assistant collected the essays and informed participants that they would each receive an essay that had been written by another participant in the room. In reality, all participants received a pre-populated, hand-written essay that had been composed by a confederate. The confederate’s essay explained that the confederate did not get much sleep last night, was having a fight with his girlfriend, and was stressed about school. Overall, the confederate was depicted as feeling quite sad as the result of several personal issues (see SOM 8 for the essay prompt and the confederate essay). After participants finished reading the essay, participants learned that they would have the opportunity to chat online with the person who wrote the essay (their “partner”). We told participants that they would complete a problem-solving task with their partner after the chat.

We then gave participants five minutes to chat freely online with their partner, who was actually a confederate. The confederate followed a controlled script. The confederate always began the chat by saying, “hey, whatsup?” The confederate then waited for the participant to reciprocate the question (e.g., “nothing, you?”). When the confederate was asked about himself, he either responded “eh, not so good” (authentic distress condition) or “things are good, can’t complain” (feigned happiness condition). We randomly assigned participants to one of these two conditions. This single response was our manipulation of emotional misrepresentation. The confederate was given a list of other neutral topics he could discuss and questions he could ask, such as, “what year are you?” and “taking any good classes?” If the participant did not explicitly ask the confederate about him/herself, the confederate ended the conversation by saying either “not feeling great today, let’s just get started” (authentic distress condition) or “feeling good today, let’s get started” (feigned happiness condition). The chat automatically expired after five minutes. We conducted a pilot study with a non-overlapping sample ($N = 44$) to ensure that the content of the essay and chat were believable and reflected the appropriate emotions (see SOM 5).

9.3. Dependent variables

9.3.1. Trust

After the five-minute chat, participants indicated their trust in their partner. We used the same items to measure trust in Study 2b as those we used in Study 2a ($\alpha = 0.68$).

9.3.2. Honesty

We adapted our honesty measure from Study 2a to fit the context of Study 2b. Specifically, we collected the following four items ($\alpha = 0.74$): “My partner revealed his/her true feelings during our chat,” “My partner misrepresented his/her emotions during our chat” (reverse-scored), “My partner tried to hide personal information from me” (reverse-scored), and “My partner’s behavior during our chat matched the emotion he conveyed in his/her essay.”

9.3.3. Manipulation check

We collected the same manipulation check items in Study 2b as we did in Study 2a. We created one measure of how happy the partner felt (i.e. described in his essay; $\alpha = 0.78$) and one measure for how happy the partner appeared during the chat ($\alpha = 0.87$). After participants submitted their responses, we collected demographic information.

9.4. Results

We conducted a one-way ANOVA on all of our dependent variables. We report results using the data from all participants who responded to each measure.

9.4.1. Manipulation check

Consistent with the intent of the manipulation, participants believed that their partners expressed more happiness in the feigned happiness condition ($M = 5.01, SD = 1.07$) than the authentic distress condition ($M = 2.78, SD = 1.12$). $F(1,166) = 174.36, p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.51$. Participants also believed that their partners actually felt happier in the feigned happiness condition ($M = 2.37, SD = 0.91$) than in the

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3 As an exploratory measure, we also examined how emotional misrepresentation influenced behavior in a problem-solving task, which we report in the online supplemental materials (see SOM 14).
authentic distress condition \((M = 2.00, SD = 0.75)\), \(F(1, 166) = 8.32, p = .004, \eta^2_p = 0.05\).

9.4.2. Trust

Consistent with the results of Studies 1 and 2a, partners engendered greater trust when they feigned happiness during the online chat than when they authentically expressed distress, \(F(1, 188) = 7.91, p = .005, \eta^2_p = 0.040\).

9.4.3. Honesty

Importantly, partners who feigned happiness were perceived to be less honest than partners who expressed authentic distress, \(F(1, 188) = 93.78, p < .001, \eta^2_p = 0.33\).

9.5. Ancillary analyses

As in Study 2a, the emotional misrepresentation manipulation also influenced how happy participants believed their partner actually felt. Consequently, we conducted a series of analyses in which we controlled for perceptions of the partner’s actual happiness. Controlling for perceived happiness did not attenuate any of the effects: Emotional misrepresentation was perceived to be less honest \((p < .001)\) and increased trust \((p = .024)\).

9.6. Discussion

In Studies 2a and 2b, we manipulate emotional misrepresentation within live social interactions, situated in professional contexts (i.e., group tasks among strangers). Consistent with Study 1, we find that individuals who misrepresented their emotions engendered greater trust, despite being perceived as dishonest. Across both studies, we also find that these results are not driven by perceptions of the target’s underlying emotion.

10. Study 3: Disentangling emotional misrepresentation from conformity to display rules

In Study 3, we disentangle adherence to display rules from self-regulation. If conformity to organizational (or interpersonal) norms drives the association between feigned happiness and trust, then we would expect this link to attenuate when organizations have norms encouraging authentic emotional expression. If, on the other hand, the relationship between feigned happiness and trust is primarily driven by the association between feigned happiness and either resilience or self-control, then feigning happiness should increase trust relative to authentic distress regardless of an organization’s explicit display rules. In Study 3, we test these competing explanations by examining the consequences of feigned happiness when it is either consistent or inconsistent with organizational display rules.

10.1. Participants

We intended to recruit 240 participants and ended up with a final sample of 237 adults, 133 of which were recruited by a large university in a Midwestern U.S. city (43.6% female, mean age = 35 years, mean work experience = 15 years) and 104 of which were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (39.4% female, mean age = 34 years, mean work experience = 14 years). Results were consistent across these two samples, and thus we report all analyses collapsed across both samples. We preregistered this study at AsPredicted.org (https://aspredicted.org/a99r7.pdf).

10.2. Procedure and materials

We randomly assigned participants to one of eight conditions in a 2(Emotional Misrepresentation: feigned happiness vs. authentic distress) × 4(Display Rule: happiness vs. neutral emotion vs. authenticity vs. control) between-subjects design.

In this scenario study, participants learned about Joe, an analyst at Zenon Pharmaceuticals. We manipulated the organizational display rules at Zenon, such that employees were either expected to express positive emotion (happiness condition), were expected to express little emotion (neutral emotion condition), or were expected to express authentic emotion (authenticity condition). In these conditions, participants also saw a picture of a sign that Zenon hung on its walls to reinforce the relevant display rule (e.g., in the happiness condition, the sign displayed smiling employees and read “A happy worker is a productive worker.”). In the control condition, participants did not learn anything about Zenon’s emotional display rules.

After learning about Zenon’s display rules, participants learned that Joe was feeling sad. They watched a short video about Joe in which he voiced his distress about his recent divorce. Then, they watched a video of Joe’s behavior during a work meeting. During the meeting, Joe either misrepresented his emotions by feigning happiness, or expressed his authentic sadness. We provide the exact stimuli in the online supplementary materials (see SOM 9). We used two different actors to portray Joe to ensure our results were not specific to any one actor.

10.3. Dependent variables

10.3.1. Trust

Participants rated Joe using the same trust scale we used in Studies 2a and 2b \((\alpha = 0.82)\).

10.3.2. Hiring & promotion intentions

In this study, participants also rated the extent to which they would be willing to recommend Joe for a promotion, the extent to which they would be willing to recommend hiring Joe (reverse-scored), and the extent to which they would be willing to hire Joe at a different company \((1 = Not at all, 7 = Very much; \alpha = 0.69)\).

10.3.3. Perceived competence, benevolence, and honesty

We used the same items to measure benevolence in this study as we used in Study 1 \((\alpha = 0.86)\). We measured competence using an extended scale \((\alpha = 0.90)\), which included: “This person is resilient,” “This person is lacking self-control (reverse-scored),” “This person is perseverant,” and “This person is determined” \((1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)\), as well as the items, “competent,” “skillful,” “intelligent,” and “capable” \((1 = Not at all, 7 = Extremely)\). We measured honesty using five items that were tailored to the scenario \((\alpha = 0.89)\): “Joe revealed his true feelings during the meeting,” “Joe misrepresented his emotions during the meeting” (reverse-scored), “Joe’s behavior during the meeting matched the emotion he felt about his personal life,” “Joe honestly expressed himself during the meeting,” and “Joe acted deceptively during the meeting” (reverse-scored) \((1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)\).

10.3.4. Manipulation check

As a manipulation check, we asked participants to answer three multiple-choice questions: “How was Joe actually feeling?” (Choices: Happy/good, Angry/frustrated, Sad/not so good) and “How did Joe say he was feeling?” (Choices: Happy/good, Angry/frustrated, Sad/not so good, No info), and “How are people at Joe’s organization encouraged to express themselves?” (Choices: Happy/Express positive emotion, Neutral/Not express emotion, Authentic/Be themselves, There was no information about this in the scenario/I’m not sure).

After participants submitted their responses, we collected demographic information.

10.4. Results

Below, we present the results of two-way ANOVAs using Emotional
Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Studies 3 and 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions of Emotional Misrepresentation</th>
<th>Conditions of Other Factors</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Hiring Intentions</th>
<th>Perceived Honesty</th>
<th>Perceived Competence</th>
<th>Perceived Benevolence</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>0.01</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note.
* Measure of honesty refers to emotional honesty.
** Measure of honesty refers to global honesty.

Misrepresentation and Display Rule as factors on each of our dependent variables. We find consistent effects of Emotional Misrepresentation across both stimuli (the actor who portrayed Joe), and thus, we collapse across stimuli in our main analyses. Table 3 presents all descriptive statistics.

10.4.1. Manipulation check
94% of participants correctly answered, “How was Joe actually feeling?”, 74% of participants correctly answered, “How did Joe say he was feeling?”, and 84% of participants correctly answered, “How are people at Joe’s organization encouraged to express themselves?” The second question, “How did Joe say he was feeling?” did not clarify whether it referred to Joe’s response in the interview or the meeting, which could explain the relatively low recall rate.

10.4.2. Trust
There was a main effect of Emotional Misrepresentation, F(1,229) = 80.04, p < .001, η² = 0.259, such that individuals who feigned happiness engendered higher trust than individuals who expressed authentic distress. There were no main or interaction effects of Display Rule (ps > .61). Fig. 5 depicts these results.

10.4.3. Hiring and promotion intentions
A two-way ANOVA also revealed a main effect of Emotional Misrepresentation, F(1,229) = 90.13, p < .001, η² = 0.28, such that individuals who feigned happiness were more likely to be hired and promoted than individuals who expressed authentic distress. There were no main or interaction effects of Display Rule (ps > .50).

10.4.4. Competence
There was a main effect of Emotional Misrepresentation, F(1,229) = 111.90, p < .001, η² = 0.33, such that individuals who feigned happiness were perceived to be more competent than individuals who expressed authentic distress. There was also a marginal effect of Display Rule, F(3,229) = 2.36, p = .072, η² = 0.03, such that individuals were perceived to be more competent in the Happiness display rule condition than the other three display rule conditions (ps < .04). There was no Emotional Misrepresentation × Display Rule interaction (p = .74).

10.4.5. Benevolence
There was a main effect of Emotional Misrepresentation, F(1,229) = 34.17, p < .001, η² = 0.13, such that individuals who feigned happiness were perceived to be more benevolent than individuals who expressed authentic distress. There was also a marginal effect of Display Rule, F(3,229) = 2.31, p = .077, η² = 0.03, such that individuals were perceived to be more benevolent in the Happiness display rule condition than in the control condition (p = .010). There was no Emotional Misrepresentation × Display Rule interaction (p = .85).

10.4.6. Perceived honesty
There was a main effect of Emotional Misrepresentation, F(1,229) = 353.46, p < .001, η² = 0.61, such that individuals who misrepresented their emotions were perceived to be less honest than individuals who expressed authentic emotion. There were no main or interaction effects of Display Rule (ps > .21).

10.4.7. Mediation analyses
To examine how judgments of competence, benevolence, and honesty affected trust, we ran the same bootstrapped mediation analysis we had run in Study 1 (Hayes, 2013; PROCESS Macro for SPSS, Model 4). In our model, we entered Emotional Misrepresentation as the independent variable, perceived competence, benevolence, and honesty as simultaneous mediators, and trust as the dependent variable. We collapsed across Display Rule, given that we found no effect of Display
Rule on trust. We found that perceived competence mediated the effect of emotional misrepresentation on trust (95% CI = [−.86, 1.49]), but that benevolence (95% CI = [−.22, 0.06]) and honesty (95% CI = [−.55, 0.04]) did not.

10.5. Discussion

In Study 3, feigned happiness increased trust, regardless of the organizational display rule. This result suggests that self-regulation is more important than adherence to organizational display rules (norms) for signaling competence, and thus, trustworthiness, in organizational contexts.

11. Study 4: Effective versus ineffective emotional misrepresentation

Study 3 suggests that feigned happiness increases trust because it signals self-regulation. In Study 4, we explore how effective that self-regulation needs to be in order for feigned happiness to increase trust. In doing so, we also explore how verbal and nonverbal signals uniquely influence trust.

We conceptualize effective self-regulation as displays of happiness in which both verbal and nonverbal expressions are congruent. In contrast, we conceptualize ineffective self-regulation as displays of happiness in which verbal expressions and nonverbal expressions are incongruent. For example, a target may verbally state that they are doing well, yet still show signs of distress through nonverbal cues (e.g. avoiding eye contact, using closed off body language; Ekman et al., 1980; Wallbott, 1998). This is similar to surface-acting, as it has been operationalized in prior research (e.g. Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Côté, 1980; Wallbott, 1998). This result suggests that self-regulation is more important than adherence to organizational display rule. This result suggests that self-regulation is more important than adherence to organizational display rules (norms) for signaling competence, and thus, trustworthiness, in organizational contexts.

11.1. Participants

We intended to recruit 240 participants from a survey panel (Prolific: https://prolific.ac/) and ended up with a final sample of 227 (48.5% female, mean age = 35 years, mean work experience = 15 years). We preregistered this study at AsPredicted.org: https://aspredicted.org/gm629.pdf.

11.2. Procedure and materials

Participants were told to imagine that they were an employee at a mid-size corporation. Then they were told that they would watch two videos depicting firsthand interactions with their coworkers. In the first video, participants were told by their coworker that one of their mutual colleagues, Mike, had lost his father last month, and that Mike had been having a difficult time coping with the loss. Subsequently, participants viewed a video of Mike, in which Mike responded to questions about how he was doing, and also responded directly to a reference to his father’s death. We used three different professional actors to create the video stimuli to ensure that our results were not due to the effects of any one actor.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions based on a 2(Verbal Misrepresentation: feigned happiness vs. authentic distress) × 2(Nonverbal Misrepresentation: feigned happiness vs. authentic distress) between-subjects design. In the verbal misrepresentation conditions, Mike used positive language (e.g. “I’m fine”), downplayed his experience of the loss (“It was expected; he was getting to that age, and he had been sick for a while before that”), and quickly changed the subject to something unrelated. In the verbal authentic expression conditions, Mike used language to indicate his distress (e.g. “I’d say I’ve been better”) and described in detail the difficulty he had been having as a result of the loss (e.g. “I’m still finding it difficult to focus at work and keep up with everything”). He did not change the subject to something unrelated. In the conditions involving nonverbal misrepresentation, Mike presented himself with positive nonverbal

4Our preregistration for this study indicated that we would recruit 200 participants; however, after we filed the preregistration, we decided to recruit 240 in order to increase the power of our study given that we used 3 different actors for stimulus sampling purposes. We did not analyze any data until all 240 responses were collected. Our reported results include all participants who passed the attention check (227). When we analyze the data with only the first 200 who completed the study, all results remain qualitatively unchanged.
cues, including smiling, straightening his posture at the beginning of the interaction, and using an upbeat voice. In the conditions involving nonverbal authentic expression, Mike instead used negative nonverbal cues such as slouching, frowning, showing signs of having cried, and using a strained tone of voice. Participants viewed one of the four possible combinations of these expressions.

We created the stimuli for this study based on responses from a pilot study. In the pilot, we collected vivid written descriptions of verbal and nonverbal behaviors reported by individuals who experienced a significant negative life event while employed, and, as a result, engaged in feigned happiness and/or authentic expression of their distress to coworkers (see SOM 4 for full pilot study details and SOM 10 for links to the videos used in the main study).

11.3. Dependent variables

11.3.1. Trust

We used the Mayer and Davis (1999) measure of overall trust, which consisted of four items (e.g. “I would be comfortable giving Mike a task or problem even if I could not monitor his action,” 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree; α = 0.68). We provide this exact scale in Appendix C.

11.3.2. Competence, benevolence, and honesty

We used the same items as we used in Study 1 to measure Competence, Benevolence, and Honesty (α’s ≥ 0.77).

11.3.3. Manipulation checks

Participants rated their agreement with two manipulation check statements: “Mike verbally expressed positive feelings and thoughts” (perceived verbal misrepresentation) and “Mike used positive nonverbal expressions (e.g. direct eye contact, smiles)” (perceived nonverbal misrepresentation). Each question was measured with a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree). Participants also responded to one item about general misrepresentation, which we report in SOM 15.

After participants provided these ratings, we collected demographic information.

11.4. Results

We conducted two-way ANOVAs using verbal and nonverbal misrepresentation as factors on each of our dependent variables. Since results did not differ significantly between actors, we collapsed all analyses across actors. We report the descriptive statistics in Table 3.

11.4.1. Manipulation checks

11.4.1.1. Perceived verbal misrepresentation. As intended, there was a main effect of Verbal misrepresentation on perceived verbal misrepresentation such that participants perceived the target as using more positive verbal expressions in the verbal feigned happiness condition (M = 4.45, SD = 1.59) than in the verbal authentic distress condition (M = 2.87, SD = 1.56), F(1,223) = 61.78, p < .001, ηp2 = .22. There was, however, also a main effect of Nonverbal misrepresentation on perceived verbal misrepresentation, such that participants in the nonverbal feigned happiness conditions also perceived the target as using more positive verbal expressions (M = 4.08, SD = 1.64) than in the nonverbal authentic distress conditions (M = 3.21, SD = 1.78), F(1,223) = 19.03, p < .001, ηp2 = .08. Notably, the effect of Verbal misrepresentation on perceived verbal misrepresentation was much larger than the effect of Nonverbal misrepresentation on perceived verbal misrepresentation, consistent with the intent of our manipulations. There was not a significant Verbal × Nonverbal interaction (p = .50).

11.4.1.2. Perceived nonverbal misrepresentation. Consistent with the intent of our manipulation, there was a main effect of Nonverbal misrepresentation on perceived nonverbal misrepresentation, such that participants in the nonverbal feigned happiness conditions perceived the target as using more positive nonverbal expressions (M = 4.72, SD = 1.42) than in the nonverbal authentic distress conditions (M = 2.89, SD = 1.76), F(1,223) = 75.94, p < .001, ηp2 = .25. There were no main or interaction effects of Verbal misrepresentation (ps > .077).

11.4.2. Trust

There was a main effect of Verbal misrepresentation on trust, F(1,223) = 24.86, p < .001, ηp2 = 0.10, such that participants viewed Mike as more trustworthy when he verbally feigned happiness than when he verbally expressed authentic distress. There was also a main effect of Nonverbal misrepresentation, F(1,223) = 28.37, p < .001, ηp2 = 0.11, such that Mike was perceived as more trustworthy when he nonverbally feigned happiness than when he nonverbally expressed authentic distress. There was no Verbal × Nonverbal interaction (p = .41).

These results suggest that verbal and nonverbal signals of self-regulation are additive. Although the combination of both verbal and nonverbal feigned happiness was the most effective display for increasing trust (and the only condition in which trust was greater than the midpoint of the scale; r(54) = 8.59, p < .001), an employee did not need to be a perfectly effective regulator to garner trust. Feigning happiness through nonverbal cues while still admitting personal struggle increases trust (r(114) = 3.02, p = .003), and feigning happiness through verbal cues while still appearing upset increases trust (r(112) = 2.76, p = .007). Fig. 6 depicts these results.
11.4.3. Competence

There was a main effect of Verbal misrepresentation on perceived competence, \( F(1,223) = 21.47, p < .001, \eta^2_p = 0.09 \), such that participants perceived Mike to be more competent when he verbally feigned happiness than when he verbally expressed authentic distress. There was also a main effect of Nonverbal misrepresentation on perceived competence, \( F(1,223) = 37.24, p < .001, \eta^2_p = 0.14 \), such that Mike was perceived to be more competent when he nonverbally feigned happiness than when he nonverbally expressed authentic distress. There was no significant Verbal \( \times \) Nonverbal interaction (\( p = .20 \)).

11.4.4. Benevolence

Interestingly, there was no main effect of Verbal misrepresentation on perceived benevolence, \( F(1,223) = 0.53, p = .47, \eta^2_p < 0.01 \). There was, however, a main effect of Nonverbal misrepresentation on perceived benevolence, \( F(1,223) = 5.85, p = .016, \eta^2_p = 0.03 \); Mike was perceived as more benevolent when he nonverbally feigned happiness than when he nonverbally expressed authentic distress. These results suggest that judgments of benevolence are more sensitive to one’s nonverbal cues than one’s words. There was no significant Verbal \( \times \) Nonverbal interaction (\( p = .54 \)).

11.4.5. Honesty

There was a main effect of Verbal misrepresentation on honesty, \( F(1,223) = 14.08, p < .001, \eta^2_p = 0.06 \), such that verbally feigned happiness was perceived to be less honest than verbally expressing authentic distress. There were no main or interaction effects of Nonverbal misrepresentation on honesty (\( p > .61 \)). These results suggest that unlike judgments of benevolence, judgments of honesty are more sensitive to one’s words, rather than one’s nonverbal cues.

11.4.6. Mediation analyses

To examine how judgments of competence, benevolence, and honesty influence the relationship between nonverbal and verbal emotional misrepresentation and trust, we conducted mediation analyses (Hayes, 2013; PROCESS Macro for SPSS, Model 4). Given that there was no interaction between verbal and nonverbal misrepresentation, we ran two separate models: one in which Verbal misrepresentation was the IV and Nonverbal misrepresentation was a covariate (Model 1, Table 4) and one in which Nonverbal misrepresentation was the IV and Verbal misrepresentation was the covariate (Model 2, Table 4). As can be seen in Table 4, competence mediates the effect of both verbal and nonverbal misrepresentation on trust, but benevolence and honesty do not.

11.5. Discussion

In Study 4, we extend our investigation by examining emotional misrepresentation in a vivid and realistic setting: participants watched videos of professional actors who feigned happiness at work after the loss of a loved one (through a combination of verbal and nonverbal cues). Study 4 demonstrates that any attempt at feigned happiness (even an imperfect attempt) is sufficient to increase trust, suggesting that resilience, not self-regulation ability per se, underlies the relationship between feigned happiness and trust. Our findings are consistent with prior research on surface-acting and deep acting in that complete regulation (consisting of positive verbal and nonverbal cues) is the most effective strategy for increasing trust, but also reveal the novel insight that positive verbal and nonverbal cues independently influence perceived competence and trust.

12. Study 5: Feigning happiness inside and outside of work

Studies 1–4 provide evidence that feigned happiness increases trust in professional contexts. Study 5 tests whether this effect persists in personal contexts. In Study 5, we examine the consequences of feigned happiness among friends, inside and outside of work.

12.1. Participants

We recruited 400 employed adults from a nationally representative sample, using a Qualtrics panel (69.8% female, mean age = 38 years, mean work experience = 18 years, 42% manage others).

12.2. Procedure and materials

Participants started by providing demographic information. Then, we asked participants to write down the initials of a colleague whom they know well and interact with often. We then asked participants to imagine that this colleague was experiencing a personal hardship and was feeling sad and distracted. We randomly assigned participants to one of four conditions from a 2×2 design: feigned happiness vs. authentic distress) × 2 (Context: inside of work vs. outside of work) between-subjects design.

In the inside-of-work conditions, we asked participants to imagine they had a meeting scheduled with the colleague on Wednesday during work hours. During that meeting, their colleague either chose to open up and tell them about their personal problems (authentic distress) or chose not to open up and pretended everything was fine (feigned happiness). In the outside-of-work conditions, we asked participants to imagine they had personal plans scheduled with the colleague on Wednesday during happy hour. During happy hour, the colleague chose to either open up or pretend everything was fine. We provide the exact stimuli in the online supplementary materials (see SOM 11).

12.3. Dependent variables

Participants rated the coworker using the same scale we used in Studies 2a, 2b, and 3 to measure trust (\( \alpha = 0.73 \)), and the same scales we used in Studies 1 and 4 to measure honesty, competence and benevolence (\( \alpha > 0.79 \)).

12.4. Results

We conducted two-way ANOVAs using Emotional Misrepresentation and Context as factors on each of our dependent variables. Table 5 depicts all descriptive statistics and the simple effects of Emotional Misrepresentation within each Context condition.

12.4.1. Trust

There was a main effect of Emotional Misrepresentation, \( F(1,396) = 4.12, p = .043, \eta^2_p = 0.01 \), such that feigned happiness engendered greater trust than authentic distress, and a main effect of Context, \( F(1,396) = 6.37, p = .012, \eta^2_p = 0.02 \), such that the colleague was generally trusted more outside of work than inside of work.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediators</th>
<th>Lower CI</th>
<th>Upper CI</th>
<th>Lower CI</th>
<th>Upper CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Results are from SPSS Process Macro, Model 4. Competence, Benevolence, and Honesty were entered as simultaneous mediators. CIs are 95% confidence intervals around the indirect effect of each mechanism.
Importantly, there was also a significant Emotional Misrepresentation × Context interaction, $F(1,396) = 8.02$, $p = .005$, $\eta^2_p = 0.02$, such that feigned happiness increased trust inside of work ($p < .001$), but had no effect outside of work ($p = .57$).

### 12.4.2. Competence

There were no main effects of Context, $F(1,396) = 0.17$, $p = .681$, $\eta^2_p < 0.01$, or Emotional Misrepresentation, $F(1,396) = 1.36$, $p = .244$, $\eta^2_p < 0.01$. There was, however, a significant Emotional Misrepresentation × Context interaction, $F(1,396) = 4.36$, $p = .037$, $\eta^2_p = 0.01$; feigned happiness increased perceptions of competence inside of work ($p = .021$), but not outside of work ($p = .52$).

### 12.4.3. Benevolence

There were no main effects of Context, $F(1,396) = < .01$, $p = .93$, $\eta^2_p < 0.01$, or Emotional Misrepresentation, $F(1,396) = 0.11$, $p = .74$, $\eta^2_p < 0.01$. There was, however, a significant Emotional Misrepresentation × Context interaction, $F(1,396) = 6.11$, $p = .014$, $\eta^2_p = 0.02$; feigned happiness increased perceptions of benevolence inside of work ($p = .047$), but not outside of work ($p = .13$).

### 12.4.4. Honesty

There was a main effect of Emotional Misrepresentation, $F(1,396) = 31.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.07$, such that feigned happiness was perceived to be less honest than authentic distress. There was no effect of Context, $F(1,396) = 0.94$, $p = .33$, $\eta^2_p < 0.01$, but there was a marginal Emotional Misrepresentation × Context interaction, $F(1,396) = 3.78$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2_p = 0.009$, such that emotional misrepresentation was perceived to be less dishonest inside of work ($p = .01$) than outside of work ($p < .001$).

### 12.4.5. Mediation analyses

To examine how judgments of competence, benevolence, and honesty affected trust inside and outside of work, we ran a bootstrapped moderated mediation analysis (Hayes, 2013; PROCESS Macro for SPSS, Model 7). In our model, we entered Emotional Misrepresentation as the independent variable, perceived competence, benevolence, and honesty as simultaneous mediators, trust as the dependent variable, and Context as the moderator. Inside of work, we find evidence that perceived competence (95% CI = [0.04, 0.43]) and honesty (95% CI = [−0.15, −0.003]) mediate the effect of feigned happiness on trust, but that perceived benevolence (95% CI = [−0.11, 0.03]) does not. However, outside of work, we find no evidence of mediation through perceived competence (95% CI = [−0.26, 0.13]), benevolence (95% CI = [−0.02, 0.10]), or honesty (95% CI = [−0.27, 0.003]). Therefore, we find evidence of moderated mediation (95% CI around index of moderated mediation = [0.02, 0.59]), but not benevolence (95% CI = [−0.16, 0.06]), or honesty (95% CI = [−0.001, 0.21]).

### 12.5. Discussion

Study 5 demonstrates that the benefits of emotional misrepresentation hinge on the context in which an emotion is expressed. Feigned happiness increases trust in professional, but not personal, contexts. Consistent with our theorizing, we find that this occurs because feigned happiness elicits different attributions in these settings. In professional contexts, feigned happiness is attributed to competence and benevolence, presumably because it signals one’s commitment to professional goals. However, in personal settings, feigned happiness is not attributed to competence or benevolence; it simply signals dishonesty.

### 13. General discussion

Across six experiments, we explore the consequences of feigning happiness in the face of personal hardship. We find that in professional settings, feigning happiness increases trust, even though it seems dishonest. Individuals who feign happiness are more likely to be hired (Study 1), and are judged to be more trustworthy (Studies 2a and 2b), relative to individuals who express authentic distress. We find that these benefits are primarily driven by perceptions of competence, and we explore when and why. Within professional settings, feigning happiness signals resilience and commitment, rather than one’s ability to effectively regulate one’s emotions or follow explicit display rules. Therefore, individuals who feign happiness are seen as competent and trustworthy, even in the presence of display rules that encourage authenticity (Study 3), and when their feigned displays are imperfect (Study 4). However, in personal settings, feigning happiness does not increase trust, in part, because it fails to signal competence (Study 5).

We document these results across several different trust measures including hiring (Study 1), willingness to take risks in one’s relationship (Study 4; Mayer & Davis, 1999), cognitive trust (Studies 2a, 2b, 3, and 5; Dunn et al., 2012), and total trust (see SOM 13), using a range of stimuli including face-to-face interactions, computer-mediated chat, scenario studies, and videos, and within the context of many different personal hardships including personal stress (Study 2a), relational conflict (Studies 2b and 3), and the death of a loved one (Study 4). This research has important theoretical and practical implications for emotion expression, deception, and interpersonal trust. First, this research expands our understanding of emotional labor by exploring its consequences within routine workplace interactions, rather than service encounters. In doing so, we shed light on how people make inferences about a target’s emotions based on their knowledge of the...
target's life circumstances. Second, this research provides new insights on the social judgment of deception and misrepresentation. Most existing research on the consequences of deception focuses on material misrepresentations motivated by the desire for personal gain or the desire to undermine others. Many of the most common forms of deception, however, are much more innocuous. Emotional misrepresentation is not seen as ill-intended, and therefore, is not as damaging to social relationships as other forms of deception. Yet emotional misrepresentation is also not seen as a particularly strong signal of benevolence. That is, individuals do not necessarily view lies about one's feelings as prosocial lies (Levine & Schweitzer, 2014, 2015). Emotional misrepresentation uniquely signals competence, a consequence of deception that has thus far received very little attention (for an exception, see Gunia & Levine, 2019). Thus, this research unearths new consequences of deception and expands our taxonomy of lies.

Practically, this research informs how individuals should express their emotions in both professional and personal contexts. In accordance with the EASI model (Van Kleef, 2009), our findings suggest that individuals should consider their social-relational goals when deciding whether to feign happiness or express authentic distress. In professional settings, in which individuals have the goal of making progress on joint tasks, individuals might be well-served to display happiness while experiencing distress. On the other hand, in personal contexts, in which individuals have the goal of establishing intimacy and connection, individuals are unlikely to build trust by feigning happiness.

14. Limitations and future directions

The present research has a number of limitations that point to important directions for future research. First, we used trained confederates, actors, and vignettes to study emotional misrepresentation in controlled settings, which has both strengths and weaknesses. This approach afforded us experimental control and also provided a conservative test of the rewards of misrepresentation. In every study, participants knew that the emotional expression was discordant with the personal hardship the target faced. However, this approach may not be particularly insightful for situations in which individuals do not have knowledge of a target’s personal circumstances. We encourage future research to study the consequences of feigned happiness with other methods that might allow for greater realism, such as experience sampling.

In the present research, we also examined feigned happiness within single interactions. It is possible, however, that misrepresenting different emotions may have different consequences. One ancillary study finding that feigned empathy increases trust, but feigned anger decreases trust (see SOM 16), suggests that the benefits of emotional misrepresentation may depend on the prosocial nature of the expression. Furthermore, it is possible that emotional misrepresentation has costs over time. Individuals who never express their authentic distress may be perceived as untrusting of others, which could damage trust, given that reciprocal sharing boosts trust over time. Indeed, in several ancillary studies, we do find that emotional misrepresentation can signal distrust of others (see SOM 17–19, and also SOM 12). This is likely to be particularly damaging in personal relationships. Future research should explore this possibility by examining judgments of emotional misrepresentation, and inauthenticity, across multiple interactions.

In addition, even when observers are given contextual information indicating that a target is undergoing distress, it is possible that observers might not always assume that the target is misrepresenting their emotions. Instead, there may be some circumstances in which observers believe that the target is truly experiencing happiness in that particular moment, even though there may be an indication that they were very recently experiencing sadness. Studies 2a and 2b suggest that this may be the case, though perceptions of increased felt happiness do not seem to drive the effects of feigned happiness on trust. Nonetheless, future research should examine when people assume that others are misrepresenting their emotions versus experiencing momentary, but authentic, emotional changes. Overall, we hope that future work will build upon the findings presented in this paper in order to expand our understanding of the social consequences of feigning happiness in a variety of contexts.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Maurice Schweitzer, Jessica Kennedy, Elizabeth Baily Wolf, Jeremy Yip, T. Bradford Bitterly, and Crystal Reeck for their feedback and advice, as well as Graham Overton, Sanna Johnson, Adam Picker, Emory Richardson, Sindhu Gnanasambandan, Jeremy Pagan, and Michael White for their research assistance. We are also grateful for Craig Schultz’s assistance with Study 4. Studies were conducted at the University of Pennsylvania, The Wharton School (the first author’s former institution) and the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. We are grateful for financial support from the Charles E. Merrill Faculty Research Fund at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, The Wharton Behavioral Lab and the Russell Ackoff Fellowship of the Wharton Risk Management and Decision Processes Center.

Appendix A. Emotion regulation and emotional labor literature review

We used Google Scholar to compile all articles that contained the terms “emotion regulation” or “emotional labor” in the past twenty years (1998–2018) and were published in the following fourteen management and psychology journals:

- Academy of Management Journal
- Academy of Management Review
- Administrative Science Quarterly
- Emotion
- Journal of Applied Psychology
- Journal of Experiment psychology: General
- Journal of Experimental Social Psychology
- Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
- Organization Science
- Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes
- Personality & Social Psychology Review
- Psych Bulletin
- Psych Review
- Psychological Science
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amsden and Jackson (2009)</td>
<td>General workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin, Levine, and Elfenbein (2009)</td>
<td>Social interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barger and Grandey (2003)</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barger and Grandey (2006)</td>
<td>General workplace and negotiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beal et al. (2006)</td>
<td>Cheerleading instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheshin et al. (2018)</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi et al. (2011)</td>
<td>General workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cote and Miners (2006)</td>
<td>General workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côté et al. (2013)</td>
<td>E Negotiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gosserand and Diefendorff (2005)</td>
<td>C General workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandey (2003)</td>
<td>C Retail/Service work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandey et al. (2009)</td>
<td>C General workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant (2013)</td>
<td>C Social interactions (college students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross (1998)</td>
<td>E Social interactions (college students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty years of research on the social perception of emotion regulation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target positive emotion (vs. negative or neutral emotion) and perceived action (vs. harmful action) Target intense emotion (vs. moderate emotion)</th>
<th>Focal finding(s)</th>
<th>Main IV</th>
<th>Main DV(s)</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Citation Method Context Main IV Main DV(s) Focal Finding(s)**

**Ames and Johar (2009)**
- General workplace
- Target positive emotion (vs. negative or neutral emotion) and perceived action (vs. harmful action)
- Focal finding: Targets who display positive emotions after acting were seen as more trustworthy.

**Barasch, Levine, and Schweitzer (2016)**
- General workplace and negotiations
- Target positive emotion (vs. negative or neutral emotion) and perceived action (vs. harmful action)
- Focal finding: Targets who display happy emotions after acting were seen as more trustworthy.

**Beal et al. (2006)**
- Cheerleading instructor
- Employee emotion/mood, affective delivery, perceived affective delivery
- Focal finding: Instructors' negative emotions were negatively associated with supervisor's perception of their affective delivery, and this relationship became weaker as regulation increased.

**Barger and Grandey (2006)**
- Retail/Service work
- Employee emotion/mood, perceived service quality/performance, and perceived affective delivery
- Focal finding: Participants' suppression (vs. expression) and cultural values (Eastern vs. Western) moderated the relationship between deep acting targets and face demands in negotiations.

**Cheshin et al. (2018)**
- Retail/Service work
- Target intense emotion (vs. moderate emotion)
- Focal finding: Intensely happy or sad targets were perceived to be more authentic, trustworthy, and likable than moderately happy or sad targets.

**Chi et al. (2011)**
- General workplace
- Employee deep vs. surface acting
- Focal finding: Employees' deep acting was positively associated with customer reports of service effectiveness and higher amounts of tips; employees' surface acting was positively associated with tips, but only when the employee was extraverted.

**Cote and Miners (2006)**
- General workplace
- Employee emotional intelligence, cognitive intelligence, and perceived service quality/performance
- Focal finding: Greater emotion regulation knowledge was associated with more surface-acting, more deep-acting, the greater use of voice, and higher performance evaluations.

**Diefendorff and Richard (2003)**
- E Habitual behavior and social interaction
- Focal finding: Participants' suppression (vs. reappraisal vs. control) of disgust was positively related to perceived emotion expression.

**Gosserand and Diefendorff (2005)**
- C General workplace
- Employee perception of display rule and perceived service quality/performance
- Focal finding: Employees' perception of display rules was positively associated with their own perception of employees' positive emotions and supervisors' perception of employees' positive emotions, but only when commitment to it was high.

**Grandey et al. (2005)**
- C General workplace
- Employee deep vs. surface acting
- Focal finding: Employees' deep acting was positively associated with coworkers' perception of employees' positive emotions and perceived authenticity, and employees' surface acting was negatively associated with coworkers' perception of employees' positive emotions and perceived authenticity.

**Grant (2013)**
- C Social interactions (college students)
- Focal finding: Participants' suppression (vs. reappraisal vs. control) of positive emotions was positively associated with perceived service quality and customer satisfaction.

**Gross (1998)**
- E Social interactions (college students)
- Focal finding: Participants' suppression (vs. reappraisal vs. control) of positive emotions was positively associated with perceived service quality and customer satisfaction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Main IV</th>
<th>Main DV(s)</th>
<th>Focal Finding(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groth et al. (2009)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
<td>Employee deep vs. surface acting</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance</td>
<td>Employees’ deep acting (but not surface acting) was positively associated with perceived customer orientation, and was marginally positively associated with perceived service quality. Employee surface acting was not associated with perceived customer orientation nor perceived service quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halbesleben and Bowlar (2007)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>General workplace</td>
<td>Employee emotional exhaustion</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance</td>
<td>Employees’ emotional exhaustion was negatively related to job performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston et al. (2018)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
<td>Target authentic positive emotion (vs. inauthentic positive emotion); Participant (customer) race</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance; Trust in target</td>
<td>Targets who displayed authentic emotions were seen as more trustworthy and generated higher customer satisfaction than targets who displayed inauthentic emotion; the relationships were stronger for white (vs. Black) participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hülsheger et al. (2015)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
<td>Deep acting intervention (vs. control)</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance</td>
<td>Participants in the deep acting intervention group received significantly more tips than those in the control group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lam, Huang, and Janssen (2010)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
<td>Service climate</td>
<td>Perceived emotion expression</td>
<td>More positive service climates were positively associated with supervisors’ perceptions of employees’ positive emotional display.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lopes, Salovey, Côté, Beers, and Petry (2005)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Social interactions (college students)</td>
<td>Participant’s emotion regulation abilities</td>
<td>Perceived prosocial tendencies and perceived interpersonal sensitivity</td>
<td>Participants’ emotion regulation abilities were positively associated with self/peer reports of their prosocial tendencies and interpersonal sensitivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelis et al. (2011)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Negotiations</td>
<td>Emotional competence intervention (vs. control)</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance</td>
<td>In the short term, participants in the intervention increased their emotional competence, regulation and understanding, and became more extraverted. In the long term, participants in the intervention increased their agreeableness and decreased their neuroticism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pugh (2001)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
<td>Employee emotion/mood</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance; Perceiver mood</td>
<td>Employees’ positive displays were positively related to customers’ positive emotions and customers’ ratings of service quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rothbard and Wilk (2011)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
<td>Employee start of workday mood</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance</td>
<td>Employees’ start-of-workday moods were positively associated with their perceptions of customers’ affective displays. Employees’ start-of-workday moods were positively associated with employees’ affect subsequent to workday event, which affected work productivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rupp and Spencer (2006)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
<td>Customer fairness or unfairness</td>
<td>Perceived affective delivery</td>
<td>Participants who perceived the environment as fair were more likely to engage in helping behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srivastava et al. (2009)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Social interactions (college students)</td>
<td>Participant’s suppression vs. expression</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance</td>
<td>Greater levels of suppression were associated with less social support and less closeness from new college friends as well as less satisfaction in life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan, Foo, and Kwek (2004)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
<td>Customer mood/emotion</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance</td>
<td>Customer agreeableness was positively associated with the employees’ display of positive emotions. Customers’ negative affect was negatively associated with employees’ display of positive emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trougakos, Beal, Green, and Weiss (2008)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Cheerleading instructor</td>
<td>Employee breaks</td>
<td>Perceived emotion expression</td>
<td>The was a positive association between instructors engaging in respite behaviors during breaks and others rating them as having more positive displays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trougakos, Jackson, and Beal (2011)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
<td>Positive display rule (vs. neutral display rule)</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance; Perceiver mood</td>
<td>Neutral display rules led to lower task persistence and to task avoidance, and to lower customer (survey respondent) mood and rating of employee (pollster) service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsai &amp; Huang (2002)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
<td>RA rating of employee affective delivery</td>
<td>Perceiver mood; Perceived friendliness</td>
<td>Employee affective delivery was positively associated with customer in-store positive mood and customers’ ratings of employees’ friendliness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsai, Chen, and Liu (2007)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>General workplace</td>
<td>Employee emotion/mood</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance; Perceiver mood</td>
<td>Employee positive mood was positively associated with receiving help from coworkers and task performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Kleef et al. (2009)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>General workplace and negotiations</td>
<td>Target happiness (vs. anger)</td>
<td>Perceiver mood</td>
<td>Leaders who displayed happiness (vs. anger) elicited greater positive affect in team members. If a team’s epistemic motivation was low, leader displays of happiness led to better performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This review reveals several key findings. First, the expression of positive emotions generally leads to positive service encounters (e.g., Barger & Grandey, 2006; Tsai et al., 2007) and the expression of negative emotions harms perceptions of competence in the workplace (e.g., Wolf et al., 2016).

Second, emotions are perceived more positively when expressed authentically (e.g., via deep acting) than inauthentically (e.g., via surface acting; Beal, Trougakos, Weiss, & Green, 2006; Cheshin et al., 2018; Côté et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2017; Groth et al., 2009). However, there are a number of important moderators of this effect, such as the observer’s race (Houstan et al., 2018), the experimenter’s extraversion (Chi et al., 2011), the busyness of the workplace (Grandey et al., 2005), and the nature of the services being offered (Wang & Groth, 2014). Importantly, scholars have recently called for research that more deeply examines reactions to surface acting. For example, Houston et al. (2018) note that existing work implicitly assumes that “emotional displays that appear inauthentic always lead to less favorable customer service outcomes,” but that this negative effect is by no means a universal phenomenon.

Third, there is evidence that suppressing negative emotions is harmful for social connection in personal relationships (e.g., Srivastava, Tamir, McGonigal, John, & Gross, 2009) and service satisfaction within customer-employee relationships (e.g., Wang & Groth, 2014).

Collectively, this work suggests that both positivity and authenticity are important. However, existing research does not directly compare inauthentic positivity to authentic negativity, and thus does not provide direct insight into the question of the current investigation: what are the consequences of feigning happiness, relative to expressing authentic distress? Furthermore, most existing research on the social consequences of emotion regulation is situated within service interactions. As discussed in the introduction, there are a number of reasons that the social consequences of emotion regulation would differ in service interactions, relative to inter-colleague interactions. In the present research, we focus on two key differences: (1) the norms of emotional expression are much murkier in inter-colleague interactions than in service interactions, and (2) targets and observers typically have longer social histories and more background information about each other in inter-colleague interactions than in service interactions.

### Appendix B. Competence-based trust game in Study 1

In this study, you will have the opportunity to hire a participant to complete a workplace task.

The workplace task could involve solving a problem in a group, delivering a persuasive speech, writing a report, or negotiating for a product.

Completing the task will require the participant to be creative, stay focused, and communicate well with others.

We will recruit at least 50 participants to complete the workplace task, and we will have a panel of judges rate the performance of each participant.

You will act as the manager and have the opportunity to hire a participant (the employee) to complete the workplace task. Your hiring decision will influence your bonus payment.

Specifically, your hiring decision will influence how many lottery tickets you earn. Each lottery ticket will give you one chance to earn a $10 bonus.

If you choose to hire the employee, the number of lottery tickets you earn will depend on the employee’s performance.

- Specifically, If the employee performs in the top half of performers (i.e., receives a higher rating than at least 50% of the other participants completing this task), you will receive 6 lottery tickets.

### Table A1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Main IV</th>
<th>Main DV(s)</th>
<th>Focal Finding(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wang &amp; Groth (2014)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Retail/Service work</td>
<td>Employee faked positive emotion, employee suppression of negative emotion</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance</td>
<td>Employees with positive emotion intensity were associated with positive customer emotion; authenticity was associated with perceptions of service quality, aridity was associated with perceptions of service quality, and social closeness was related to trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolf et al. (2016) E General workplace</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Target authentic positive emotion (vs. inauthentic positive emotion) and intense emotion (vs. moderate emotion)</td>
<td>Perceived service quality/performance</td>
<td>Employees who attributed their distress to passion were perceived as more competent and hireable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Formatting emphasis is on studies that examine IVs or DVs that are similar to the present research. Studies with IVs related to perceived competence have “Main IV” in bolded non-italicized font. Studies with IVs related to DVs related to trust, authenticity, and social closeness have “Main IV” in bolded-italicized font. In the “Method” column, E = Experimental, C = Correlational.