


Is Being Emotionally Inexpressive Cool?

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Despite a recognition that consumers want to be cool and value cool brands, the literature has only just begun to delineate what makes things cool. Writing by scholars, quotes by celebrities, and norms in fashion advertising are consistent with the view that people become cool by being emotionally inexpressive. The relationship between emotional expression and coolness, however, has not been empirically tested. Our research uses an experimental approach to examine whether being emotionally inexpressive makes people seem more or less cool than smiling. In contrast to the belief that being inexpressive is cool, we find that in noncompetitive contexts—an endorser in a clothing advertisement and an athlete interacting with fans—being inexpressive makes people seem cold rather than cool. On the other hand, in competitive contexts—such as an athlete facing his opponent—being inexpressive makes people seem cool by making them appear dominant. Our results have important implications for marketers, advertisers, and consumers trying to cultivate a cool image.

Keywords Coolness; Emotion; Expression; Impression formation; Branding; Attitudes

Understanding what makes people cool is important for consumer psychologists. The pursuit of coolness influences the shoes consumers wear, the bands they listen to, and the people they emulate (Belk, Tian, & Paavola, 2010; Gladwell, 1997; Pountain & Robins, 2000). Consumers buy and do things in attempt to be cool because being seen as cool tends to make them feel better about themselves (Heath & Potter, 2004; Quartz & Asp, 2015). Understanding what makes people cool is also important for marketers trying to cultivate a cool brand image because brands become cool (or uncool) through associations with cool (or uncool) people (Gladwell, 1997; Nancarrow, Nancarrow, & Page, 2002; Southgate, 2003). For example, endorsements from cool athletes such as Michael Jordan helped Nike develop a cool image, having a cool CEO (Steve Jobs) contributed to Apple's coolness, and adoption by urban hipsters helped make Pabst Blue Ribbon a cool alternative to Budweiser, Miller, and other mass-marketed beer brands. The disproportionate

influence cool consumers have on others has even led to practices, like coolhunting and trendspotting, in which marketers try to find and mimic cool people before their behaviors turn into popular trends (Gladwell, 1997; Lopiano-Misdorn & De Luca, 1997; Southgate, 2003).

In practice, people try to be cool by being emotionally inexpressive (Danesi, 1994; Wang & Dalton, 2014). Models and endorsers conceal emotion in fashion advertisements, celebrities strike expressionless poses on magazine covers, and teens don an indifferent demeanor all in an attempt to be seen as cool. The belief that being emotionally inexpressive increases coolness pervades academic literature as well, where scholars argue that actors, such as James Dean, and musicians, such as Tupac Shakur, became cool by hiding or internalizing their feelings (Connor, 1995; Pountain & Robins, 2000; Stearns, 1994).

We investigate the following research question: do people seem more cool when they are emotionally inexpressive than when they smile? In contrast to assertions that being inexpressive is cool, we demonstrate that people seem more cool in non-competitive social interactions when they smile than when they are inexpressive. Endorsers in

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advertisements and an athlete meeting his fans seem less cool when they are inexpressive (compared to when they smile) because being inexpressive makes them seem less warm, and lacking warmth decreases perceived coolness. In contrast, being inexpressive in competitive social interactions, such as an athlete facing an opponent before a fight, makes people seem dominant, which increases perceptions of coolness.

Our research contributes to a growing literature on coolness (Belk et al., 2010; Bruun, Raptis, Kjeldskov, & Skov, 2016; Dar-Nimrod et al., 2012; Warren & Campbell, 2014) by identifying how, why, and when emotional expression shapes perceptions of coolness. Specifically, our research makes four contributions. One, it shows that the belief that people become cool by being emotionally inexpressive is often inaccurate. Two, it identifies competing processes by which emotional expression influences perceptions of coolness. Being inexpressive can make a person seem more dominant, which is cool. But being inexpressive can alternatively make a person seem less warm, which, empirically, is not cool. Three, it identifies a contextual factor, whether a person is in a cooperative or competitive interaction, that moderates whether being inexpressive makes a person seem dominant (and hence more cool) or cold (and hence less cool). Four, it demonstrates that associating with cool people, rather than uncool people, benefits brands. Specifically, brands linked with cool people (e.g., an endorser in a clothing ad) tend to be liked more than brands associated with less cool people.

Is Being Emotionally Inexpressive Cool?

Coolness is defined as a “socially constructed positive trait attributed to cultural objects (people, brands, products, trends, etc.) inferred to be appropriately autonomous” (Warren & Campbell, 2014, p. 544). The socially constructed nature of coolness implies that coolness is not an inherent trait, but an attribution or perception held by an audience. People are only cool if others think they are cool (Connor, 1995; Gurrieri, 2009; Quartz & Asp, 2015). Thus, to understand what makes things (people, brands, behaviors, etc.) cool, it is necessary to identify the factors that influence people’s perceptions of coolness.

What influences perceptions that a person is cool or uncool? The literature suggests that perceptions of coolness depend on whether a person expresses or conceals his or her emotions, for example, by

keeping a straight face rather than smiling (Danesi, 1994; Majors & Billson, 1992; Stearns, 1994). Pountain and Robins (2000, p. 26) argue that a core characteristic of coolness involves “concealing one’s feelings.” Stearns (1994, p. 1) echoes this sentiment stating, “being a cool character means conveying an air of disengagement.” Scholars in African-American studies similarly argue that coolness emerged as a style adopted by black Americans to control and internalize emotions (happiness, love, anger, etc.) in an environment in which expression could increase vulnerability to disappointment or sanction (Connor, 1995). A “cool pose,” accordingly, shows that one is emotionless and aloof (Majors & Billson, 1992).

Celebrities and consumers similarly intuit that being emotionally inexpressive is cool. Rapper Kanye West, for example, told the press that he doesn’t smile in photographs because “it just wouldn’t look as cool” (Bradley, 2015). Like Kanye, many teens attempt to be cool by adopting a “nonchalant and unflappable countenance” (Danesi, 1994, p. 38). In fact, 79% of an undergraduate student sample thought that showing less emotion would be cooler than showing more emotion (Wang & Dalton, 2014). The belief that being emotionally inexpressive increases coolness also permeates industry, especially in fashion advertisements, which attempt to portray a cool brand image through expressionless models. In a content analysis of the May 2015 issues of three popular fashion magazines (Vogue, Elle, and InStyle), we found that a majority (64%) of the 363 advertisements featured inexpressive endorsers. Smiling was the most common expression in the ads (32%), although endorsers were approximately twice as likely to be inexpressive as they were to smile ($\chi^2 = 38.44; p < .001$).

Despite the prevalence of the belief that being inexpressive is cool, studies have not systematically tested whether people are perceived to be cooler when they are inexpressive compared to when they express emotion. And, ultimately, whether being inexpressive makes a person seem more or less cool is an empirical question. Because the most common type of emotional expression in our content analysis was smiling, our research examines whether people seem more (or less) cool when they are inexpressive compared to when they smile.

Emotional Expressions as Social Information

Although the literature has not tested how being inexpressive influences perceptions of coolness, it

has investigated how emotional expression influences other reactions toward a person. Emotions convey information about the person expressing them, including the person's beliefs, social intentions, and orientation toward others (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2006). Observers thus rely on a person's emotional expression, or lack thereof, in order to understand his or her motives and intentions, and to judge his or her character (Van Kleef, 2009; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2010).

A prevalent finding in the literature is that compared to smiling, being inexpressive makes people seem less warm. Warmth refers to the impression that a person is kind, friendly, and helpful (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007; Wang, Mao, Li, & Liu, 2016). Smiling and expressing emotion tends to foster interpersonal trust (Boone & Buck, 2003; Stouten & De Cremer, 2010), whereas intentionally concealing emotions disrupts communication, reduces rapport, inhibits relationship development, and generally makes a person seem cold (Butler et al., 2003; DePaulo, Blank, Swaim, & Hairfield, 1992). People with a chronic tendency to inhibit the expression of emotion are considered less likable (Friedman, Riggio, & Casella, 1988; Sabatelli & Rubin, 1986). On the other hand, people with more expressive facial features (e.g., high eyebrows, large pupils, big smiles) tend to be evaluated more favorably than people with less expressive facial features (Cunningham, 1986; Cunningham, Barbee, & Pike, 1990). Moreover, people are perceived to be warmer when they exhibit a broad, expressive smile than when they exhibit a less expressive, slight smile (Wang et al., 2016).

Although smiling tends to increase warmth, being inexpressive tends to increase the perception that a person is dominant. Dominance refers to the ability to acquire and control-valued resources in the presence of others (Emerson, 1962; Hawley, 1999). Being inexpressive can make people seem more dominant by communicating a lack of interest in forming reciprocal relationships with others (Vigil, 2009). Professional fighters, for example, were judged to be more dominant when they concealed emotion than when they smiled in preflight photographs (Kraus & Chen, 2013). Similarly, football players who were inexpressive in website photographs were perceived to be more dominant (but also less likable) than players who expressed either happiness or embarrassment (Ketelaar et al., 2012). Moreover, men who have higher levels of testosterone, a hormone associated with dominance, tend to be less expressive than men with lower levels of testosterone (Dabbs, 1997).

As we explain in the next section, both impressions of warmth and impressions of dominance likely influence the extent to which a person seems cool.

Two Dimensions of Cool

Empirical studies have identified two sets of factors that influence the extent to which things (people, brands, behaviors, etc.) are perceived to be cool. The first set of factors relates to the extent to which someone (or something) seems positive, meaning that it is generally valued, desired, and liked. The second set of factors relates to the extent to which someone (or something) seems autonomous, meaning that it is independent and can do what it wants.

Coolness and Positivity

Studies report a close relationship between perceived coolness and positive traits. Cool brands possess a number of valued characteristics, including being esthetically appealing, exciting, and useful (Warren, Loureiro, Batra, & Bagozzi, 2017). Cool products tend to be perceived as more desirable (Sundar, Tamul, & Wu, 2014; Yin, Pol, & Tellis, 2014) and receive more favorable evaluations than uncool products (Im, Bhat, & Lee, 2015). Qualitative studies similarly report that consumers often use the word cool to describe people and products that they approve of or like (Belk et al., 2010). Indeed, a series of experiments found that people and products are perceived to be cool only if their behavior seems appropriate, or desirable given the social context or situation (Warren & Campbell, 2014). Thus, one set of factors that influence perceptions of coolness relate to the extent to which something is generally evaluated positively.

Research on impression formation shows that the extent to which a person is judged favorably depends first and foremost on their warmth, which refers to the extent to which a person seems affable, friendly, and kind (Fiske et al., 2007). Indeed, early empirical studies on coolness (somewhat ironically) find a close connection between perceptions of coolness and warmth. When asked to name adjectives that they associate with coolness, North American participants most often mention characteristics related to warmth, including being friendly, attractive, and likable (Dar-Nimrod et al., 2012). In a follow-up study, the two descriptors that loaded

highest onto a multidimensional measure of coolness, friendliness, and attractiveness, were both closely related to warmth (Dar-Nimrod, Ganesan, & MacCann, 2018). In sum, empirically, people seem cooler when they come across as warm (nice, friendly, etc.) rather than cold (cruel, unkind, etc.).

Combining the literature on emotional expression, which shows that being inexpressive decreases warmth, with the literature on coolness, which shows that coolness is associated with warmth, yields a counter-intuitive prediction. People might actually seem less cool when they are inexpressive compared to when they smile. Being inexpressive makes people seem cold, which decreases perceptions of coolness. We thus predict that being inexpressive can indirectly decrease perceptions of coolness by making a person seem less warm.

Coolness and Autonomy

Being friendly and likable may make a person seem cooler than someone that is cold and unfriendly, but warmth alone does not by itself make a person cool (Pountain & Robins, 2000). Many people, including prototypical grandmothers and kindergarten teachers, are perceived to be warm, but not cool. The literature suggests that perceptions of coolness additionally depend on autonomy (Warren & Campbell, 2014).

Autonomy refers to the ability to follow one's own path rather than conform to the expectations or desires of others (Warren & Campbell, 2014). Autonomy cannot be directly observed, but instead must be inferred from one's behavior. One way that people can show that they are autonomous is by diverging from the norm (Bellezza, Gino, & Keinan, 2014; Warren & Campbell, 2014). Indeed, qualitative studies find that cool people and products are often associated with rebellion (Frank, 1997; Milner, 2004; Nancarrow et al., 2002). Similarly, Dar-Nimrod et al. (2012, 2018) found that in addition to being warm and having generally positive traits, cool people also have a set of "contrarian" traits, including being rebellious and unconventional. Experimental research confirms that brands that diverge from the norm are perceived to be cool, as long as the divergence seems appropriate rather than harmful or excessive (Warren & Campbell, 2014).

Another way that people can show that they are autonomous is by being dominant. Dominance, which refers to the ability to acquire valued resources in the presence of others, signals autonomy because dominant people have the ability to

get what they want without relying on help from anyone else (Emerson, 1962; Hawley, 1999). With less dependence on others, dominant people face fewer social constraints and have the freedom to do what they want. Although we are not aware of studies that have empirically tested the relationship between dominance and perceptions of coolness, several authors have suggested coolness comes from other characteristics that are closely related to dominance, including confidence, strength, and status (Connor, 1995; Heath & Potter, 2004; Quartz & Asp, 2015).

The literature linking coolness to autonomy suggests an alternative prediction about whether being inexpressive is cool. Being inexpressive can make people seem dominant, and dominance signals autonomy, which increases perceptions of coolness. We thus predict that being inexpressive can indirectly increase perceptions of coolness by making a person seem more dominant.

The Moderating Effect of Context

When will being inexpressive make a person seem cold, and hence uncool, and when will it make him or her seem dominant, and hence cool? The literature suggests that smiling and being inexpressive signal different information about a person depending on the social context (Van Kleef, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2016). For example, smiling on a date indicates romantic interest, whereas smiling at another's misfortune indicates antipathy. The effects of expression on warmth and dominance (and consequently coolness) likely depend on many different aspects of the context. Rather than attempt to identify every contextual factor that moderates the effect of expression on perceived coolness, we focus on one illustrative and relevant factor: whether the person being evaluated is competing or cooperating with others during a social interaction (Deutsch, 1949).

Emotional expression facilitates communication and coordination, whereas being inexpressive can impair social coordination by muting the signaling value of emotion (Keltner & Kring, 1998; Martens, Tracy, & Shariff, 2012). Smiling, in particular, facilitates cooperation by communicating agreement and the intent to work together (Abe, Beetham, & Izard, 2002; Wang et al., 2016). Because communication and coordination are critical in cooperative contexts, but are largely irrelevant in competitive contexts, we predict that being inexpressive will decrease warmth more in cooperative than in competitive

contexts. Consistent with this idea, being inexpressive is less likely to decrease warmth when a person is observed in a competitive context, such as triumphing over a competitor (Kalokerinos, Greenaway, Pedder, & Margetts, 2014). Relatedly, being reminded of money, which tends to put people in a more competitive mindset (Kouchaki, Smith-Crowe, Brief, & Sousa, 2013; Vohs, Mead, & Goode, 2006, 2008), makes experimental participants more willing to interact with emotionally inexpressive others (Jiang, Chen, & Wyer, 2014), which again suggests that the negative effect of being inexpressive on warmth will be greater in cooperative contexts than in competitive contexts.

In competitive settings, on the other hand, consumers are more likely to look for evidence that a person is dominant than evidence that a person is warm, because overcoming competitors depends on a person's ability to outmaneuver or overpower rivals. Indeed, studies show that individuals prefer leaders with a dominant physical appearance during times of conflict, but not during times of peace (Little & Roberts, 2012; Spisak, Homan, Grabo, & Van Vugt, 2012). Not only is dominance valued more in competitive settings, being inexpressive is more likely to increase impressions of dominance in these settings as well. Many of the studies demonstrating that smiling can decrease dominance asked for impressions of people with competitive occupations, such as professional fighters and college football players (Ketelaar et al., 2012; Kraus & Chen, 2013).

In sum, we predict that the competitiveness of the social context will moderate the effect of being inexpressive on both warmth and dominance, and

consequently perceived coolness (see Figure 1). Whereas being inexpressive in a cooperative context (e.g., the dinner table) should make people seem less warm, being inexpressive in a competitive context (e.g., the poker table) should make people seem more dominant.

Overview of Studies

We initially tested whether being inexpressive is cool in a context that has practical implications for marketers: fashion advertising. As our content analysis illustrates, most endorsers in fashion advertisements are inexpressive, but a nontrivial minority express emotion by smiling. Does being inexpressive in fashion advertisements make endorsers seem cooler? In contrast to the belief that being inexpressive is cool, our first four experiments (studies 1a–1d) find that endorsers are perceived to be more cool when they smile, because being inexpressive makes the endorsers seem less warm.

The first four experiments also examined whether the emotional expression of endorsers indirectly influences evaluations of associated brands by measuring participants' attitudes toward the advertised brand. The downstream effect of expression on brand attitudes has important implications because marketers can easily control whether an endorser is inexpressive or smiles, and the literature shows that the traits associated with endorsers often influence the image of associated brands (Batra & Homer, 2004; Campbell & Warren, 2012; McCracken, 1989). Because coolness is a positive

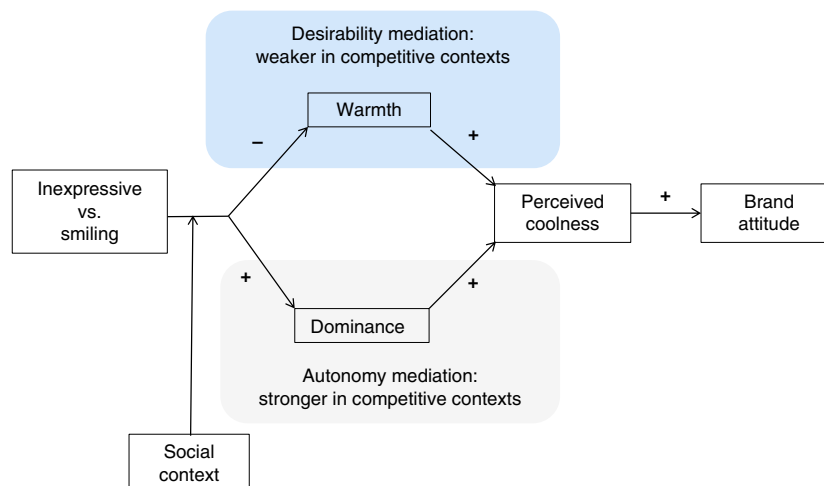


Figure 1. Conceptual model of how being inexpressive influences the extent to which a person seems cool and an associated brand is liked.

trait (Dar-Nimrod et al., 2012; Im et al., 2015), products and brands should cultivate more favorable attitudes when associated with endorsers who are perceived to be cool. Indeed, studies 1a–1d reveal that the perceived coolness of an endorser is positively associated with participants' attitudes toward the advertised brand.

A fifth experiment (study 2) investigated the processes by which being inexpressive influences perceptions of coolness by manipulating a theoretically relevant contextual variable that we expected would moderate the effects of expression. Specifically, the study tested if the effect of being inexpressive on perceptions of coolness depends on whether the person being evaluated is engaging in a competitive or cooperative social interaction. The study finds that in a competitive context, facing an opponent before a fight, being inexpressive makes an athlete seem dominant, which increases perceptions of coolness. In a cooperative context, interacting with fans before a fight, being inexpressive makes an athlete seem less warm, which decreases perceptions of coolness.

Studies 1a–1d: Inexpressive Advertisement Endorsers

Our first set of studies investigated whether being inexpressive makes advertisement endorsers seem more or less cool. Specifically, we created four studies (1a–1d) that manipulated whether or not an endorser expresses emotion in an advertisement. To affirm the robustness of the results across different types of endorsers and brands, we varied the familiarity of the advertised brand as well as the gender, fame, and race of the endorser across the experiments. We also tested whether the endorser's expression would indirectly influence participants' attitudes toward the advertised brand through perceptions of coolness.

Method







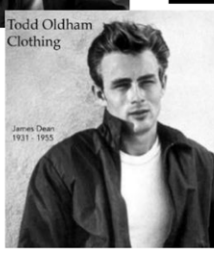

Studies 1a, 1c, and 1d recruited participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (all in the USA) in exchange for a small payment. Study 1b recruited participants from an undergraduate student subject pool at a Southwestern university in the United States. The studies conducted on MTurk began with a reading check and directed participants who failed the reading check (3 in study 1a, 4 in study 1c) out of the survey before assigning them to an experimental condition (see the methodological

detail appendix [MDA]). Study 1b did not include a reading check. No participants were excluded in studies 1b or 1d. The final sample sizes were 193 for study 1a (57 female; ages 19–70, $M = 30.4$), 149 for study 1b (51 female; ages 19–33, $M = 21.7$), 177 for study 1c (72 female; ages 20–73, $M = 33.4$), and 145 for study 1d (67 female; ages 18–67, $M = 33.1$).

Participants viewed a print advertisement for a clothing brand. Depending on random assignment, the endorser in the ad either smiled (expressive condition) or not (inexpressive condition). Study 1a featured an unknown, male endorser and unfamiliar brand (Franco Rossi). Study 1b featured an unknown, female endorser and unfamiliar brand (Decenio), study 1c featured a famous endorser (James Dean) and unfamiliar brand (Todd Oldham). Study 1d featured a famous endorser (Michael Jordan) and familiar brand (Nike). Table 1 displays edited versions of the ads (we cropped them to fit in the table; see the MDA for the unedited versions).

After viewing the advertisement, participants first rated the extent to which the endorser seemed cool or uncool using a pair of seven-point scale items adapted from Warren and Campbell (2014): "Do you personally think the spokesperson is cool or uncool?" and "Would your close friends consider the spokesperson cool or uncool?" ($r_{1a} = .90$; $r_{1b} = .76$; $r_{1c} = .65$; $r_{1d} = .84$; p -values $< .001$). The endpoints of the scales were "uncool" (scored as "1") and "cool" (scored as "7"). They next rated their impression of the endorsers' warmth on seven-point agree-disagree scale items: "the spokesperson seems nice" and "the spokesperson seems friendly" ($r_{1a} = .91$; $r_{1b} = .79$; $r_{1c} = .79$; $r_{1d} = .94$; p -values $< .001$). Subsequently, participants indicated their attitude toward the endorsed brand. Studies 1a–1c measured brand attitudes using seven-point agree-disagree scales (e.g., "I have a favorable opinion of the brand;" $\alpha_{1a} = .96$; $\alpha_{1b} = .89$; $\alpha_{1c} = .94$). Study 1d measured brand attitudes using seven-point semantic differential scale items: unfavorable/favorable, dislike/like, bad/good, not my kind of brand/my kind of brand ($\alpha = .96$). Participants in study 1d were also offered a hypothetical choice between a \$50 gift certificate for the advertising brand (Nike) or one of four other apparel brands (Reebok, Under Armor, Adidas, and New Balance). Finally, participants completed a three-item manipulation check ("The spokesperson did not show any emotion at all;" "The spokesperson controlled his/her emotions;" "It was difficult to tell what the spokesperson was feeling;" seven-point agree-disagree scales), reported their demographic information, and completed several other exploratory measures that we report in the MDA.

Table 1
Stimuli, Means, and Standard Deviations in Studies 1a–1d

	Study 1a (N = 193)		Study 1b (N = 149)		Study 1c (N = 177)		Study 1d (N = 145)	
								
								
	Smile	Inexpressive	Smile	Inexpressive	Smile	Inexpressive	Smile	Inexpressive
Fame ^a	3.47 (0.26)	2.74 (0.27)	3.67 (0.25)	3.74 (0.24)	5.56 (0.26)	5.37 (0.25)	6.09 (0.25)	6.21 (0.26)
Brand Fam. ^a	1.52 (0.32)	1.38 (0.34)	1.50 (0.30)	1.54 (0.30)	2.24 (0.32)	1.63 (0.31)	6.37 (0.31)	6.55 (0.32)
Inexpressive ^b	2.74 (0.93)	4.65*** (1.16)	3.22 (1.05)	4.35*** (1.13)	2.29 (0.94)	4.54*** (1.17)	2.37 (1.00)	4.43*** (1.13)
Warmth	5.45 (0.97)	3.69*** (1.27)	5.24 (1.23)	4.37*** (1.23)	5.57 (1.02)	4.43*** (1.31)	5.92 (1.18)	4.34*** (1.52)
Coolness	4.09 (1.39)	3.49*** (1.47)	5.36 (1.23)	4.72*** (1.23)	5.73 (1.16)	5.37** (1.24)	5.73 (1.22)	5.09*** (1.39)
Brand att.	4.75 (1.45)	4.24** (1.53)	4.49 (1.34)	4.18 (1.39)	4.91 (1.25)	4.64 (1.21)	5.62 (1.39)	4.89*** (1.60)
Brand choice	Not measured						61%	44%**
Coolness mediation ^c	Indirect effect = -1.01 95% CI = -1.35 to -0.73		Indirect effect = -0.42 95% CI = -0.70 to -0.23		Indirect effect = -0.51 95% CI = -0.81 to -0.31		Indirect effect = -0.90 95% C.I. = -1.29 to -0.62	
Brand att. mediation ^d	Indirect effect = -0.49 95% CI = -0.74 to -0.30		Indirect effect = -0.24 95% CI = -0.42 to -0.12		Indirect effect = -0.23 95% CI = -0.41 to -0.13		Indirect effect = -0.45 95% CI = -0.72 to -0.27	

Bold font indicates a significant indirect effect ($p < .05$).

^aResults from pretest ($N = 157$). ^bManipulation check. ^cIndirect effect of expression on perceived coolness through warmth. ^dIndirect effect of expression on brand attitude through warmth and perceived coolness.

Asterisks indicate a significant difference between expressive and inexpressive conditions within the context condition (* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$).

Pretest

The purpose of conducting the four experiments with different endorsers and brands was to examine whether the effects of being inexpressive would generalize across different types of endorsers and advertising brands. We thus conducted a pretest to confirm that the endorsers in the experiments

differed in fame and the brands differed in familiarity. One-hundred fifty-seven participants on MTurk rated the fame of the endorser and familiarity of the brand after viewing one of the advertisements in a 2 (expression: inexpressive, expressive) × 4 (study replicate/endorser:1a–1d) between-subjects design.

As intended, there was a main effect of the study replicate, $F(3, 149) = 61.13, p < .001$, such that the

endorsers in studies 1a ($M = 3.13$) and 1b ($M = 3.71$) seemed less famous than the endorsers in studies 1c ($M = 5.47$) and 1d ($M = 6.15$). The expression manipulation had neither a main, $F(1, 149) = 1.00, p = .32$, nor interacting effect, $F(3, 65) = 1.12, p = .34$, on ratings of fame. Additionally, a significant main effect of the replicate factor on ratings of brand familiarity, $F(3, 149) = 116.16, p < .001$, indicated that participants were more familiar with the brand in study 1d ($M = 6.46$) than the brands in studies 1a ($M = 1.46$), 1b ($M = 1.92$), and 1c ($M = 1.52$). The expression manipulation had neither a main, $F(1, 149) = .35, p = .55$, nor interacting effect, $F(3, 149) = .59, p = .62$, on brand familiarity. The means and standard deviations for the pretest are included in Table 1.

In sum, the pretest confirmed that the endorsers differed in fame and that the brands differed in familiarity. If we observe similar results across the four experiments, we will thus have more confidence that the effect of being inexpressive in print advertisements will generalize across different types of endorsers and brands.

Manipulation Checks

We checked the success of the expression manipulation by comparing the extent that participants rated the endorser as not showing emotion. The manipulation succeeded, as indicated by the perception that the endorser was less expressive in the inexpressive condition than the smiling condition in study 1a, $M = 2.74$ vs. 4.65 ; $F(1, 191) = 159.11, p < .001$, study 1b, $M = 3.22$ vs. 4.35 ; $F(1, 147) = 10.06, p = .002$, study 1c, $M = 2.29$ vs. 4.54 ; $F(1, 175) = 196.60, p < .001$, and study 1d, $M = 2.37$ vs. 4.43 ; $F(1, 143) = 135.22, p < .001$.

Results: Study 1a

Direct effects of expression. Inconsistent with the belief that being inexpressive is cool, the relatively unknown male endorser seemed less cool when he was inexpressive than when he smiled, $M = 3.49$ vs. 4.09 ; $F(1, 191) = 8.35, p = .004$. The endorser also seemed less warm when he was inexpressive than when he smiled, $M = 3.69$ vs. 5.45 ; $F(1, 191) = 15.84, p < .001$. Finally, participants had a less favorable attitude toward the advertising brand when the endorser was inexpressive than when the endorser smiled, $M = 4.24$ vs. 4.75 ; $F(1, 191) = 5.45, p = .02$.

Coolness mediation. We tested whether the impression that the endorser is warm mediated the

effect of being inexpressive on perceived coolness in studies 1a–1d using model 4 in the Process Macro (Hayes, 2013) with 5,000 bootstrap samples. The model included expression as the independent variable (smile condition = 0, inexpressive condition = 1), warmth as the mediating variable, and perceived coolness as the dependent variable. As previously noted, being inexpressive decreased warmth, $b = -1.75, t = -10.76, p < .001$. Warmth was positively related to perceptions of coolness, $b = .58, t = 7.09, p < .001$, resulting in a negative indirect effect of being inexpressive on perceived coolness through warmth, indirect effect = $-1.09, 95\% \text{ CI} [-1.35, -0.73]$.

To examine whether our hypothesized mediation path (i.e., expression \rightarrow warmth \rightarrow coolness) better fit the data than a plausible alternative path (expression \rightarrow coolness \rightarrow warmth), we ran an additional mediation analysis (model 4 in the Process Macro) with perceived coolness as the mediating variable and warmth as the dependent variable. The indirect effect of expression on warmth through perceived coolness was significant, indirect effect = $-0.22, 95\% \text{ CI} [-0.41, -0.08]$, but smaller than the hypothesized indirect effect on coolness through warmth, indicating that the data were more consistent with our hypothesized path from warmth to coolness.

Brand attitude mediation. We next examined the downstream effect of the endorser's emotional expression on attitudes toward the advertising brand using Model 6 in the Process Macro (Hayes, 2013) with 5,000 bootstrap samples. In studies 1a–1d, we entered expression as the independent variable, warmth as the first mediating variable, perceived coolness as the second mediating variable, and brand attitudes as the dependent variable. As predicted, the perception that the endorser was cool was positively related to participants' attitudes toward the advertising brand, $b = .48, t = 7.47, p < .001$, resulting in a significant negative indirect effect of being inexpressive on brand attitudes through both warmth and perceived coolness (expression \rightarrow warmth \rightarrow coolness \rightarrow brand attitude; indirect effect = $-0.49, 95\% \text{ CI} [-0.73, -0.30]$). In sum, being inexpressive made the endorser seem less cool, which hurt attitudes toward the brand.

Results: Study 1b

Direct effects of expression. As in study 1a, the inexpressive female endorser in study 1b was perceived to be less cool when she was inexpressive than when she smiled, $M = 4.72$ vs. 5.63 ; $F(1, 147) = 10.06, p = .002$. Also replicating study 1a, the

endorser seemed less warm when she was inexpressive than when she smiled, $M = 4.37$ vs. 5.24 ; $F(1, 147) = 16.94$, $p < .001$. Attitudes toward the advertised brand were directionally lower when the endorser was inexpressive than when she smiled, but the difference was not significant, $M = 4.18$ vs. 4.49 ; $F(1, 147) = 1.96$, $p = .16$. Although the direct effect of being inexpressive on brand attitudes did not replicate, the indirect effect through warmth and coolness (discussed below) did.

Coolness mediation. Replicating study 1a, the extent to which the endorser seemed warm mediated the effect of being inexpressive on perceived coolness. Specifically, being inexpressive decreased warmth, $b = -.87$, $t = -4.12$, $p < .001$, and warmth was positively related to perceptions of coolness, $b = .49$, $t = 7.21$, $p < .001$, which resulted in a negative indirect effect of being inexpressive on perceived coolness through warmth, indirect effect = -0.42 , 95% CI $[-0.70, -0.23]$. The alternative mediating path from expression to coolness to warmth was also significant, indirect effect = -0.34 , 95% CI $[-0.59, -0.13]$, but not as large as the hypothesized path from expression to warmth to coolness.

Brand attitude mediation. We again tested the downstream effects of being inexpressive using a serial mediation test with ratings of the endorser's warmth and coolness as sequential mediating variables and brand attitudes as the dependent variable. Replicating study 1a, the perception that the endorser was cool was positively related to participants' attitudes toward the advertising brand ($b = 0.56$, $t = 6.71$, $p < .001$), resulting in a significant negative indirect effect of being inexpressive on brand attitudes through both warmth and perceived coolness, indirect effect = -0.24 , 95% CI $[-0.42, -0.12]$. As in study 1, using an inexpressive endorser indirectly hurt brand attitudes because the endorser seemed less cool when she was inexpressive than when she smiled, and participants had less favorable attitudes toward the brand when they thought its endorser was uncool.

Results: Study 1c

Direct effects of expression. Replicating studies 1a and 1b, a famous endorser, James Dean, seemed less cool when he was inexpressive than when he smiled in the advertisement, $M = 5.37$ vs. 5.73 ; $F(1, 175) = 3.93$, $p = .049$. As before, the endorser also seemed less warm when he was inexpressive, $M = 4.43$ vs. 5.57 ; $F(1, 175) = 41.06$, $p < .001$. Attitudes toward the advertised brand were

directionally lower when the endorser was inexpressive than when he smiled, but the difference was not significant, $M = 4.66$ vs. 4.94 ; $F(1, 175) = 2.23$, $p = .14$.

Coolness mediation. Replicating studies 1a and 1b, the endorser's warmth mediated the effect of being inexpressive on perceived coolness. Being inexpressive decreased warmth, $b = -1.14$, $t = -6.41$, $p < .001$, and warmth was positively related to perceptions of coolness, $b = .45$, $t = 6.55$, $p < .001$, resulting in a negative indirect effect of being inexpressive on perceived coolness through warmth, indirect effect = -0.51 , 95% CI $[-0.81, -0.31]$. The alternative mediating path from expression to coolness to warmth was also significant, indirect effect = -0.16 , 95% CI $[-0.33, -0.002]$, but smaller than the hypothesized path, which again indicates that the data are more consistent with warmth mediating an effect of being inexpressive on perceived coolness rather than coolness mediating an effect on warmth.

Brand attitude mediation. As in studies 1a and 1b, the extent to which participants perceived the endorser to be cool was positively related to participants' attitudes toward the advertising brand ($b = 0.46$, $t = 6.99$, $p < .001$). Consequently, being inexpressive had a negative indirect effect on brand attitudes through both warmth and perceived coolness, indirect effect = -0.24 , 95% CI $[-0.41, -0.13]$. Again, being inexpressive made the endorser seem less cool, which led to less favorable attitudes toward the advertised brand.

Results: Study 1d

Direct effects of expression. Conceptually replicating the first three studies, Michael Jordan seemed less cool when he was inexpressive than when he smiled in the Nike advertisement, $M = 5.09$ vs. 5.73 ; $F(1, 143) = 8.70$, $p = .004$. The endorser also seemed less warm when he was inexpressive compared to when he smiled, $M = 4.34$ vs. 5.92 ; $F(1, 143) = 48.80$, $p < .001$. Replicating study 1a, participants had significantly less favorable attitudes toward the advertised brand when the endorser was inexpressive than when he smiled, $M = 4.66$ vs. 4.94 ; $F(1, 143) = 8.63$, $p = .004$. Moreover, the expression of the endorser influenced participants' likelihood of saying they would select a gift certificate to Nike rather than a competing brand: 61% selected the Nike gift certificate when the endorser smiled compared to only 44% when the endorser was inexpressive, $\chi^2 = 4.34$, $p = .037$.

Coolness mediation. Replicating the previous studies, the endorser's warmth mediated the effect of being inexpressive on perceived coolness. Being inexpressive decreased warmth, $b = -1.58$, $t = -6.99$, $p < .001$, and warmth was positively related to perceptions of coolness, $b = .57$, $t = 8.73$, $p < .001$, resulting in a negative indirect effect of being inexpressive on perceived coolness through warmth, indirect effect = -0.90 , 95% CI $[-1.29, -0.62]$. The alternative mediating path from expression to coolness to warmth was also significant, indirect effect = -0.39 , 95% CI $[-0.69, -0.14]$, but smaller than the hypothesized path, which again indicates that the data are more consistent with warmth mediating an effect of being inexpressive on perceived coolness rather than coolness mediating an effect on warmth.

Brand attitude mediation. As in studies 1a–1c, the extent to which participants perceived the endorser to be cool was positively related to participants' attitudes toward the advertising brand ($b = 0.50$, $t = 6.09$, $p < .001$). Consequently, being inexpressive had a negative indirect effect on brand attitudes through both warmth and perceived coolness, indirect effect = -0.45 , 95% CI $[-0.72, -0.27]$. Again, being inexpressive made the endorser seem less cool, which led to less favorable attitudes toward the advertised brand.

Discussion

Studies 1a–1d demonstrate that being inexpressive in print advertisements does not make endorsers cool. In all four studies, endorsers were perceived to be cooler when they smiled than when they were inexpressive. Being inexpressive was less cool than smiling regardless of whether the brand was familiar or unknown and whether the endorser was famous or unknown, male or female, or black or white. Even James Dean, who the literature describes as an example of a person who became cool by concealing his emotions (e.g., Pountain & Robins, 2000), seemed less cool when he was inexpressive than when he smiled. Moreover, the studies show that using an inexpressive endorser indirectly hurts the advertised brand. Inexpressive endorsers seemed less cool than smiling endorsers, and having a less cool endorser led to less favorable attitudes toward the brand.

The studies also provide initial evidence of one mechanism by which being inexpressive can influence perceptions of coolness. In each study, being inexpressive caused endorsers to seem less warm, and a lack of warmth was perceived to be uncool.

Although it may seem ironic that impressions of warmth are positively linked to perceptions of coolness, this result is consistent with prior studies that document a close connection between perceptions of coolness and other positive characteristics, including warmth, value, and general desirability (e.g., Dar-Nimrod et al., 2012, 2018; Quartz & Asp, 2015; Runyan, Noh, & Mosier, 2013). Coolness, however, comes not just from being warm or generally desirable but also from being autonomous (Warren & Campbell, 2014). Are there situations in which being inexpressive makes people cool by making them seem autonomous? We explore this question in study 2.

Study 2: Being Inexpressive with Fans and Foes

Study 2 examines whether there are situations in which being inexpressive is perceived to be more cool than smiling. Specifically, the study tests the hypothesis that the effect of expression on coolness depends on the social context. In situations that are not overtly competitive, such as an interaction between an athlete and his fans or the ads in our previous studies, we predict that people who are inexpressive seem cold, which makes them less cool. Conversely, we predict that in competitive situations, such as an athlete facing his opponent before a fight, people who are inexpressive seem dominant, which makes them more cool.

We tested this prediction by asking participants their impression of a professional fighter after reading an article about the fighter's emotional expression in either a cooperative or competitive press conference. There are two advantages of assessing impressions of a professional fighter at a press conference rather than an endorser in a print advertisement (the context for studies 1a–1d). One, a prefight press conference has the potential to be a more competitive interaction than would typically occur in most print advertisements, thereby enabling a stronger manipulation of whether an interaction is competitive or cooperative. Two, athletes often become cool icons (e.g., Muhammad Ali, Michael Jordan, David Beckham, Tony Hawk, etc.), and rely on off-the-field events, including press conferences, to craft their personal brand image. Muhammad Ali, for example, became cool as much for his behavior outside of the ring (e.g., protesting the Vietnam War, claiming to "float like a butterfly and sting like a bee," etc.) as for his boxing. An athlete's behavior at a press conference thus offers an

important and relevant context for understanding how people become cool.

In addition to measuring impressions of warmth and coolness, study 2 measured three other impressions that could potentially mediate the effect of emotional expression on perceived coolness: dominance, competence, and divergence. As previously explained, we hypothesized that impressions of dominance, along with warmth, would help explain why being inexpressive is less cool in cooperative contexts but more cool in competitive contexts. Specifically, we predicted that being inexpressive would be more likely to make a person seem dominant, and hence cool, in a competitive interaction than in a cooperative interaction. We also measured impressions of competence, which refers to a person's general ability, because competence is related to dominance, and studies have found that smiling can decrease competence impressions (Wang et al., 2016). However, the link between competence and autonomy is less clear than the link between dominance and autonomy. Thus, the theoretical rationale for a link between competence and coolness is weaker than the rationale for the link between dominance and coolness. We therefore predicted that impressions of dominance would better explain the effect of expression on perceived coolness than impressions of competence. Finally, the study also measured the extent to which the athlete seemed rebellious and divergent. As noted in the introduction, people can show that they are autonomous either by being dominant or by being different. However, because the literature documents a relationship between being inexpressive and dominance but not a relationship between being inexpressive and divergence, we predicted that the extent to which the athlete seems dominant would influence perceptions of coolness (and mediate the effect of expression) more than the extent to which the athlete seems divergent.

Method

Workers recruited from MTurk ($N = 489$; 231 female; ages = 19–72, mean = 35.7) participated in the online study for a small payment. We did not exclude any of the responses. The experiment used a 2 (expression: smile, inexpressive) \times 2 (context: cooperative, competitive) between-subjects design.

Participants read an article about Chris Johnston, who was ostensibly a mixed-martial arts (MMA) fighter in the Bellator league. The article described a press conference that Johnston had attended before his first fight with opponent Mads Burnell.

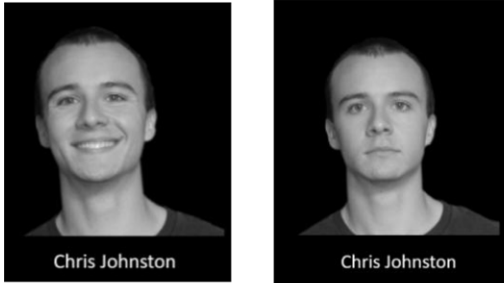
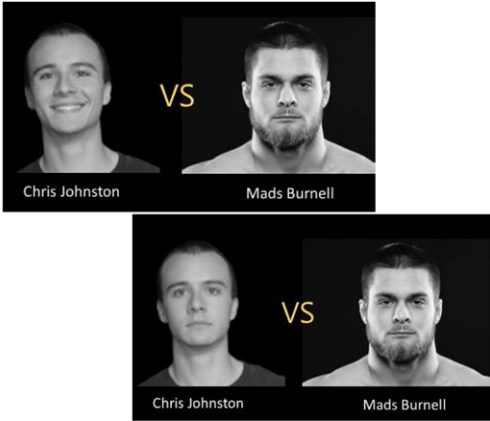
Depending on the context condition, the article either described Johnston as interacting with fans (cooperative condition) or his opponent (competitive condition) at the press conference. The article included a picture of Johnston either smiling or being inexpressive, depending on the expression condition, and either alone or next to his opponent, depending on the context condition. Table 2 includes the article headlines and pictures of Johnston. The complete articles are in the MDA.

After reading the article, participants reported the extent to which they considered Chris Johnston cool or uncool ($r = .88$; $p < .001$) and warm ($r = .95$; $p < .001$) on the seven-point scales described in study 1. They also rated the extent to which they perceived Johnston to be dominant, competent, and autonomous using the following seven-point agree-disagree items. We measured dominance using four items: "He seems like a dominant person," "He seems powerful," "He seems confident," and "He seems like a strong person" ($\alpha = .87$). We measured competence using four items from Wang et al. (2016): "He seems competent," "He seems intelligent," "He seems capable," and "He seems skillful" ($\alpha = .91$). We measured the extent to which Johnston seemed divergent using Warren and Campbell's six-item scale (e.g., "He breaks rules when he feels like it;" $\alpha = .84$). Participants also indicated the extent to which they perceived Johnston to be inexpressive on the three items described in studies 1a–1d, plus a fourth item, "He contained his emotions" ($\alpha = .89$). Finally, they reported their demographic information, and completed several other exploratory measures that we report in the MDA.

Pretest: Context Manipulation Check

We conducted a pretest with 97 participants recruited from MTurk to test the effectiveness of the context manipulation. After viewing one of the articles in the 2 (expression: smile, inexpressive) \times 2 (context: cooperative, competitive) experiment, participants indicated their impression of the interaction described in the article on six agree-disagree seven-point scale items (e.g., "The interactions were mostly competitive;" $\alpha = .92$). A significant main effect of the context manipulation confirmed that the interaction seemed more competitive in the competitive condition than in the cooperative condition, $M = 5.48$ vs. 2.62; $F(1, 97) = 151.83$, $p < .001$. The expression manipulation also had a smaller but still significant main effect, indicating that the interaction seemed more competitive when the athlete was inexpressive than when he smiled, $M = 4.34$

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Indirect Effects in Study 2

	Cooperative Context		Competitive Context	
	Expressive ($n = 120$)	Inexpressive ($n = 123$)	Expressive ($n = 123$)	Inexpressive ($n = 123$)
Headline	"Johnston meets fans at press conference"		"Johnston faces opponent at press conference"	
Image (article in MDA)				
Inexpressive ^a	3.05 (1.18)	5.92*** (0.98)	3.15 (1.22)	5.85*** (1.16)
Competitive ^b	2.07 (0.98)	3.15*** (1.32)	5.28 (1.22)	5.67 (1.01)
Coolness	5.60 (1.16)	3.31*** (1.69)	4.67 (1.64)	5.04** (1.37)
Likability	5.85 (1.12)	2.69*** (1.51)	5.46 (1.24)	4.08*** (1.27)
Dominance	5.08 (1.21)	4.63*** (1.30)	4.54 (1.35)	4.96*** (1.28)
Divergence	4.04 (1.13)	5.22*** (1.10)	4.94 (1.06)	4.95 (0.91)
Competence	5.60 (1.17)	4.36*** (1.23)	5.04 (1.18)	5.00 (1.03)
Exp>Warm>Cool ^c	-2.10; 95% CI = -2.72 to -1.54		-0.32; 95% CI = -0.58 to -0.10	
Exp>Dom>Cool ^d	-0.11; 95% CI = -0.26 to -0.02		0.31; 95% CI = 0.07 to 0.57	
Exp>Div>Cool ^e	-0.10; 95% CI = -0.25 to 0.04		-0.00; 95% CI = -0.03 to 0.02	
Exp>Com>Cool ^d	-0.11; 95% CI = -0.35 to 0.10		-0.00; 95% CI = -0.06 to 0.02	

Bold font indicates a significant indirect effect ($p < .05$).

^aManipulation check of the extent to which the fighter seemed inexpressive. ^bManipulation check of the extent to which the press conference seemed competitive from pretest ($N = 97$). ^cIndirect effect of expression on perceived coolness through warmth. ^dIndirect effect of expression on perceived coolness through dominance. ^eIndirect effect of expression on perceived coolness through divergence. ^fIndirect effect of expression on perceived coolness through competence.

Asterisks indicate a significant difference between expressive and inexpressive conditions within the context condition (* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$).

vs. 3.61; $F(1, 97) = 10.02$, $p = .002$. The interaction was not significant, $F(1, 97) = 2.20$, $p = .14$, indicating that the competitive context seemed more competitive regardless of whether the athlete smiled or was inexpressive.

Results

Expression manipulation check. A 2 (expression: smile, inexpressive) \times 2 (context: cooperative, competitive) ANOVA indicated that the expression

manipulation worked as expected. Expression had a main effect, such that the athlete seemed less expressive in the inexpressive condition than in the smile condition, $M = 3.10$ vs. 5.89; $F(1, 485) = 730.12$, $p < .001$. The context manipulation did not have a main effect, $F(1, 485) = .01$, $p = .93$, nor did it interact with the expression manipulation, $F(1, 485) = .74$, $p = .39$.

Perceptions of coolness. We assessed the effect of the manipulations on perceptions of coolness using a 2 (expression: smile, inexpressive) \times 2

(context: cooperative, competitive) ANOVA. Consistent with our hypothesis, the effect of expression on perceptions of coolness depended on the social context, as indicated by a significant interaction, $F(1, 485) = 98.92, p < .001$. When the athlete was inexpressive during a cooperative interaction—meeting fans at a press conference—he seemed significantly less cool ($M = 3.13$ vs. 5.60 ; $F(1, 485) = 145.30, p < .001$). On the other hand, when the athlete was inexpressive during a competitive interaction—squaring off with his opponent during a press conference—he seemed significantly more cool ($M = 5.04$ vs. 4.67 ; $F(1, 485) = 3.92, p = .048$).

Mediation tests: warmth and dominance. We predicted that being inexpressive in a cooperative interaction would be uncool because it would make the athlete seem less warm, but being inexpressive in a competitive interaction would be cool because it would make the athlete seem more dominant. If our prediction is correct, then we would expect the context manipulation to moderate the effect of expression on both warmth and dominance, such that being inexpressive should be less likely to reduce warmth and more likely to increase dominance in a competitive context than in a cooperative context. We would expect both of these variables to mediate the interactive effect of expression and context on perceptions of coolness.

We tested the hypothesized mediating effects of warmth and dominance by estimating a model (Hayes, 2013, model 8) with perceived coolness as the dependent variable, expression as the independent variable (smile = 0, inexpressive = 1), context as the moderating variable (cooperative = -1, competitive = 1), and the measures of warmth and dominance as mediating variables. As predicted, context moderated the effect of expression on both the extent to which the athlete seemed warm, $b = .88, t = 7.20, p < .001$, and dominant, $b = .43, t = 3.72, p < .001$. The interaction between context and expression on perceived coolness was in turn mediated by both warmth, indirect effect of interaction = $.68$; 95% CI $[0.42, 0.97]$, and dominance, indirect effect of interaction = $.44$; 95% CI $[0.21, 0.75]$. To interpret these results, we explored the effects of warmth and dominance in both the cooperative and competitive social context.

Being inexpressive in the cooperative context made the athlete seem less warm, $b = -3.34, t = -18.89, p < .001$. Warmth, in turn, influenced perceived coolness, $b = .63, t = 12.14, p < .001$, thereby mediating the negative effect of being inexpressive on coolness, indirect effect = -2.10 ; 95% CI $[-2.72, -1.54]$. Being inexpressive in the

cooperative context also unexpectedly made the athlete seem less dominant, $b = -0.44, t = -2.74, p = .007$. Dominance, in turn, had a positive effect on perceived coolness, $b = .24, t = 4.27, p < .001$, thereby complementing warmth by mediating the negative effect of expression on perceived coolness in the cooperative context, indirect effect = -0.11 ; 95% CI $[-0.26, -0.02]$. After controlling for warmth and dominance, being inexpressive did not have a significant direct effect on perceptions of coolness, $b = -0.08, t = -0.39, p = .70$. In sum, being inexpressive when interacting with fans made an athlete seem less cool by making him seem both less warm and less dominant.

In the competitive context, being inexpressive continued to make the athlete seem less warm, $b = -1.58, t = -9.40, p < .001$, although the effect was smaller than it was in the cooperative context. Conversely, being inexpressive significantly increased the extent to which the athlete seemed dominant, $b = .42, t = 2.53, p = .012$. Both warmth, $b = .20, t = 3.70, p < .001$, and dominance, $b = .73, t = 13.34, p = .001$, predicted perceptions of coolness. The effect of expression on perceived coolness was in turn mediated by both warmth, indirect effect = -0.32 ; 95% CI $[-0.58, -0.10]$, and dominance, indirect effect = $.31$; 95% CI $[0.07, 0.57]$, albeit in opposing directions. After controlling for warmth and dominance, being inexpressive had a positive direct effect on perceptions of coolness, $b = .38, t = 2.27, p = .024$. The positive direct effect of being inexpressive on coolness, combined with the positive indirect effect through dominance, was enough to overcome the negative indirect effect through warmth. In sum, a fighter confronting his opponent seemed cooler when he was inexpressive in part because concealing emotion made him seem more dominant.

Mediation test: competence and divergence. An alternative possibility is that being inexpressive boosts perceived coolness in competitive interactions not through dominance, but instead through either competence or divergence. We thus ran an additional moderated mediation test by estimating a model (Hayes, 2013, model 8) with perceived coolness as the dependent variable, expression as the independent variable (smile = 0, inexpressive = 1), context as the moderating variable (cooperative = -1, competitive = 1), and the measures of warmth, dominance, competence, and divergence as mediating variables. As in the previous model, the interaction between context and expression on perceived coolness continued to be mediated by both warmth, indirect effect of interaction = $.60$;

95% CI [0.36, 0.90], and dominance, indirect effect of interaction = .41; 95% CI [0.19, 0.72]. In contrast, neither competence, indirect effect of interaction = .17; 95% CI [-0.04, 0.44], nor divergence, indirect effect of interaction = .10; 95% CI [-0.02, 0.27], mediated the interactive effect of context and expression on perceived coolness. After controlling for the other impressions, divergence did not significantly influence perceptions of coolness, $b = -0.09$, $t = -1.70$, $p = .089$. Competence was positively related to perceptions of coolness, $b = .14$, $t = 1.99$, $p = .048$, but this effect was smaller in magnitude than the effect of both warmth, $b = .34$, $t = 7.78$, $p < .001$, and dominance, $b = .47$, $t = 7.99$, $p < .001$. In sum, impressions of warmth and dominance better explained why being inexpressive is cooler in a competitive than cooperative context than impressions of competence or divergence.

Discussion

Study 2 illustrates that being inexpressive can be cool or uncool, depending on the context. Although being inexpressive during a cooperative interaction made an athlete seem less cool than smiling, being inexpressive during a competitive interaction made him seem more cool. As documented in studies 1a–1d, smiling increases warmth, which increases perceptions of coolness, especially in cooperative contexts. Importantly, however, study 2 also documents a reason why being inexpressive can be seen as cool. In a competitive context, being inexpressive made an athlete seem more dominant, which increased perceptions of coolness. This finding is consistent with prior research showing that things become cool by being autonomous, but additionally highlights how people can show that they are autonomous by being dominant as well as by being different or rebellious. Finally, the finding that being inexpressive can increase coolness in competitive contexts may help reconcile our results with the literature that argues that being inexpressive is cool. Interestingly, many researchers arguing that coolness comes from concealing emotion have studied behavior in highly competitive social environments, notably African Americans living either in slavery or inner cities characterized by gang violence and crime (Connor, 1995; Majors & Billson, 1992).

General Discussion

Is being emotionally inexpressive cool? Our studies demonstrate that the answer to this question is not

as simple as previously assumed. In noncompetitive contexts, being inexpressive tends to make a person seem cold rather than cool. For example, in studies 1a–1d, being inexpressive (vs. smiling) had a negative effect on the perceived warmth of advertising endorsers, which in turn made the endorsers seem less cool. These results are aligned with research suggesting that warmth is a primary driver of whether people are judged favorably or unfavorably (e.g., Fiske et al., 2007). Importantly, the negative effect of being inexpressive on perceptions of the endorsers' coolness had downstream consequences on attitudes toward the advertised brands, thus extending prior research which shows that meaning can transfer from people to associated brands (Batra & Homer, 2004; Campbell & Warren, 2012; Escalas & Bettman, 2003). The effect of being inexpressive on the perceived coolness of the endorser did not depend on whether the advertised brand was familiar or unknown or whether the endorser was black or white, male or female, or famous or unknown.

Study 2 found that the competitiveness of the social context moderates the effect of expression on perceptions of coolness. In contrast to the finding that being inexpressive (vs. smiling) reduces perceptions of coolness in noncompetitive contexts, being inexpressive in a competitive social interaction increased perceptions of coolness by making an athlete seem more dominant. This finding is aligned with research demonstrating that people focus more on an individual's dominance and less on their warmth in contexts that involve competition (Little & Roberts, 2012; Spisak et al., 2012). However, similar to the results found for advertising endorsers, when the athlete was engaged in a noncompetitive social interaction, meeting his fans, being inexpressive had a negative effect on coolness by making the athlete seem less warm.

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

There are a number of opportunities to extend research on how emotional expressions influence perceptions of coolness. Because we limited our investigation to the effect of smiling, which indicates happiness, one opportunity for future research is to investigate how the expression of other emotions influences perceptions of coolness. Different emotions signal different information about the person expressing—or not expressing—the emotion (Van Kleef, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2010). Consequently, different expressions should have different effects on impressions of warmth and dominance,

and thus perceptions of coolness. Expressing pride (e.g., by pushing your chest out and holding your head high) indicates success and high social status (Shariff & Tracy, 2009; Tracy & Matsumoto, 2008). Therefore, relative to smiling, expressing pride is less likely to increase warmth, but more likely to increase dominance (Kalođerinos et al., 2014; Shariff & Tracy, 2009). As a result, expressing pride is more likely to decrease perceived coolness in cooperative contexts but elevate it in competitive contexts.

It will also be important for research to examine the effects of expressing negative emotions on perceived coolness, especially because saying that a person “lost their cool” implies that the person expressed a negative emotion, such as anger or fear. Expressing anger (e.g., by clenching your teeth and furrowing your brow) typically makes people seem disagreeable and difficult to get along with (Van Doorn, Van Kleef, & Van der Pligt, 2015). Thus, compared to being inexpressive, expressing anger is likely to decrease perceptions of warmth, and consequently, perceptions of coolness, especially in cooperative contexts. Other negative emotional expressions, such as those associated with fear and sadness, will likely have different effects than the effect of expressing anger. Because fear and sadness communicate a need for assistance (Eisenberg, 2000; Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 2001), they are less likely to decrease warmth (Van Doorn et al., 2015), but more likely to decrease dominance. Thus, expressing fear (e.g., by shrieking) or sadness (e.g., by crying) is less likely to decrease perceptions of coolness in cooperative contexts, but more likely to decrease coolness in competitive contexts.

Another way to extend our research would be to move beyond static displays of emotion to examine more dynamic expressions. Although static displays of emotion are common in many forms of marketing communications, including print advertising and photos posted on social media, consumers often interact with service employees and other consumers in face-to-face settings, and the prevalence of posting videos showing dynamic displays of emotion on social media is increasing at a rapid rate (Cisco, 2017). Moreover, when compared to static displays of emotion, dynamic displays of emotion provide more information about the person expressing the emotion (Ambadar, Schooler, & Cohn, 2005). Therefore, an important endeavor for future research is to examine the effect of dynamic displays of emotion on perceptions of coolness.

A third way to extend our research would be to examine whether the effect of being inexpressive

depends on whether a person is intentionally concealing their emotions rather than simply not feeling emotional in response to some event. Just as intentionally diverging from a norm can result in more positive impressions than unknowingly doing something unusual (Bellezza et al., 2014), it is possible that people may seem more cool if they are seen as intentionally concealing their emotions as opposed to simply not feeling emotion.

Finally, future research could investigate how cultural differences influence the effects of emotional expression on perceived coolness. Cultures have different norms about when it is appropriate to express different types of emotions and also what these expressions signal (e.g., Matsumoto, Yoo, & Nakagawa, 2008; Uchida, Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009). Although researchers have taken important steps in documenting what people find cool in countries such as Australia (Gurrieri, 2009), Estonia (Keller & Kalmus, 2009), Korea (Sundar et al., 2014), and the UAE (Rahman, 2013), the literature does not provide a clear consensus about theoretical differences between cultures in terms of the factors, including emotional expression, that influence perceptions of coolness.

Revisiting What Makes Things Cool

Marketers and consumers want to know how to become cool. One common answer is that people become cool by being emotionally inexpressive. We show that this answer is overly simple and often misleading: being inexpressive is not generally cool, although it can indirectly influence perceptions of coolness through inferences of warmth and dominance. Our research thus provides additional evidence that perceptions of coolness depend on both general desirability (Dar-Nimrod et al., 2012; Sundar et al., 2014), which is closely related to warmth, and autonomy (Warren & Campbell, 2014), which is closely related to dominance. Moreover, our research extends previous research on coolness that has operationalized autonomy as norm divergence (Frank, 1997; Heath & Potter, 2004; Warren & Campbell, 2014) by demonstrating that dominance can similarly make a person seem cool. This finding may help explain why brands like Nike and Aston Martin are considered cool (see www.coolbrands.uk.com/results/). Although neither brand is especially rebellious or divergent, both project a dominant image.

Desirability (Dar-Nimrod et al., 2012; Sundar et al., 2014) and autonomy (Warren & Campbell, 2014), are important antecedents of perceived coolness, but these factors may not tell the entire story.

The literature suggests other potential antecedents of coolness, including hedonism (Pountain & Robins, 2000), narcissism (Nancarrow et al., 2002; Pountain & Robins, 2000), sexual permissiveness (Bird & Tapp, 2008), toughness (Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl, & Acker, 2006), and delayed adolescence (Danesi, 1994; O'Donnell & Wardlow, 2000). These potential antecedents are plausible but have yet to be tested.

Continuing to build a better understanding of how people and objects become cool is critical for consumer researchers. Coolness can transform unrecognizable products into market leaders, obscure artwork into best-selling masterpieces, impoverished neighborhoods into thriving metropolises, and insecure teens into confident prom kings (and queens). Coolness is elusive, subjective, and constantly changing, but there are traits and behaviors that reliably influence the extent to which people and objects seem cool or uncool (Dar-Nimrod et al., 2012; Warren & Campbell, 2014). Identifying these traits and behaviors will not only help firms increase their bottom-line, but can also help consumers feel better about themselves.

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Supporting Information

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Appendix S1. Methodological Detail.