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Emotion Regulation in the Workplace: A New Way to Conceptualize Emotional Labor

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The topic of emotions in the workplace is beginning to garner closer attention by researchers and theorists. The study of emotional labor addresses the stress of managing emotions when the work role demands that certain expressions be shown to customers. However, there has been no overarching framework to guide this work, and the previous studies have often disagreed on the definition and operationalization of emotional labor. The purposes of this article are as follows: to review and compare previous perspectives of emotional labor, to provide a definition of emotional labor that integrates these perspectives, to discuss emotion regulation as a guiding theory for understanding the mechanisms of emotional labor, and to present a model of emotional labor that includes individual differences (such as emotional intelligence) and organizational factors (such as supervisor support).

In the past, emotions were ignored in the study of organizational behavior (Arvey, Renz, & Watson, 1998; Putnam & Mumby, 1993). The workplace was viewed as a rational environment, where emotions would get in the way of sound judgment. Thus, emotions were not even considered as explanations for workplace phenomenon. This view is being dismantled as more researchers are finding how workplace emotions help to explain important individual and organizational outcomes (for a review, see Arvey et al., 1998). More specifically, researchers are beginning to explore how emotions are managed by employees to improve work outcomes. One example is an employee changing how she feels, or what feelings she shows, in order to interact with customers or clients in an effective way. The focus of the present article is on the management, or modification, of emotions as part of the work role. Managing emotions for a wage has been termed *emotional labor* (Hochschild, 1983).

Overview of Emotional Labor

Emotional labor may involve enhancing, faking, or suppressing emotions to modify the emotional expression. Generally, emotions are managed in response to the *display rules* for the organization or job (Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 1983). These rules regarding the expectations for emotional expression may be stated

explicitly in selection and training materials, or known by observation of coworkers. Many work roles have display rules regarding the emotions that employees should show the public (Best, Downey, & Jones, 1997; Hochschild, 1983). For example, those who work in customer service may encourage repeat business by showing smiles and good humor, whereas those who work as bill collectors or in law enforcement may find that an angry demeanor results in the best "customer" response (Hochschild, 1983; Sutton, 1991; VanMaanen & Kunda, 1989). For therapists or judges, a lack of emotional responding may be needed when listening to clients. In each case, the emotional expression (or suppression) results in more effective workplace interaction.

Although emotional labor may be helpful to the organizational bottom-line, there has been recent work suggesting that managing emotions for pay may be detrimental to the employee. Hochschild (1983) and others have proposed that emotional labor is stressful and may result in burnout. To date, however, the specific mechanisms in understanding the relation of emotional labor with stress outcomes have been unclear. In fact, the previous works have not even agreed on what is meant by emotional labor. In this article, I first review previous theoretical perspectives and then present a conceptualization of emotional labor that integrates these ideas. In the second section, I introduce emotion regulation as a guiding theory for understanding the mechanisms by which emotional labor may be stressful to individuals but still be useful to the organization. Finally, I specify antecedents and consequences of emotional labor, based on this theory, and present individual and situational

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variables that may have implications for the relationships and human resource processes.

Previous Perspectives on Emotional Labor

Three conceptualizations of emotional labor that have greatly influenced the field also demonstrate the confusing nature of the definition of emotional labor (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996). Each of these assume that emotions are being managed at work in order to meet the display rules stated by the organization and suggest either individual or organizational outcomes of emotional labor. These articles provide useful groundwork for future studies. However, they contain contradictions in terms of how to define and conceptualize emotional labor. Such contradictions create difficulties for future researchers, as discussed by Brotheridge and Lee (1998). These previous articles are discussed below in terms of their contributions to understanding organizationally mandated emotion management, and their limitations.

Hochschild's (1983) Perspective

One of the earliest works to bring this facet of organizational life to the public's attention was the book *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Feeling*, by sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild. Hochschild (1983) coined the term *emotional labor* to refer to "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (p. 7). Hochschild's work stemmed from the dramaturgical perspective of customer interactions, where the customer is the audience, the employee is the actor, and the work setting is the stage (Goffman, 1959; Grove & Fisk, 1989). In this perspective, the performance involves impression management of service employees where "actors may employ expressive devices" in order to achieve this goal (Grove & Fisk, 1989, p. 430). In other words, managing emotions is one way for employees to achieve organizational goals. If an employee were to express a depressed mood or anger toward a coworker or customer, that would ruin the performance. Hochschild's (1983) dramaturgical perspective offered two main ways for actors to manage emotions: through *surface acting*, where one regulates the emotional expressions, and through *deep acting*, where one consciously modifies feelings in order to express the desired emotion.

One of Hochschild's (1983) major tenets is that this management of emotions requires effort. Hoch-

schild's book raised public and academic consciousness that managing emotions in the work setting existed and may be detrimental to the employee. Not only are the processes of surface and deep acting effortful, but as Hochschild (1979) stated, "when deep gestures of exchange enter the market sector and are bought and sold as an aspect of labor power, feelings are commoditized" (p. 569). This commoditization, where the organization controls something as personal as emotions, is suggested to be unpleasant to the employee. Because of this unpleasantness and the effort it takes to maintain a smiling face while coping with difficult customers, emotional labor is proposed by Hochschild to relate to burnout and job stress.

Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993) Perspective

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) defined emotional labor as the act of displaying appropriate emotions, with the goal to engage in a form of impression management for the organization (Gardner & Martinko, 1988). In comparison with Hochschild's (1983) perspective, Ashforth and Humphrey were more concerned with emotional labor as an observable behavior than as a management of feelings. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) downplayed the importance of the internal management of emotions through surface and deep acting and suggested instead a broader array of factors that affect the emotional expression of employees. In addition, they argued that emotional labor does not necessarily require conscious effort. In fact, they suggested that surface and deep acting may become routine and effortless for the employee, rather than sources of stress.

In terms of outcomes, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) focused mainly on the relationship between these observable expressions and task effectiveness or performance. They proposed that emotional labor should be positively related to task effectiveness, *provided that the customer perceives the expression as sincere*. Ashforth and Humphrey agreed with Hochschild that if employees are not showing genuine expressions, emotional labor may be dysfunctional to employees by creating a need to dissociate from self (particularly if deep acting). However, they do not provide a way of understanding how this may happen within the individual.

Thus, there are two main differences between this perspective and Hochschild's. The definition of emotional labor suggested here focuses on observable behaviors, not feelings, including emotional displays that are effortless or genuine. And second, they focus on the impact of emotional labor on task effectiveness, rather than on the individual's health or stress.

Morris and Feldman's (1996) Perspective

Morris and Feldman (1996) defined emotional labor as "the effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions" (p. 987). This definition comes from an interactionist approach, where emotions are expressed in, and partially determined by, the social environment. This perspective is similar to those of Hochschild (1983) and Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) in that it acknowledges that emotions can be modified and controlled by an individual, and the broader social setting determines when that happens. These authors proposed that emotional labor consists of four dimensions: (a) frequency of interactions, (b) attentiveness (intensity of emotions, duration of interaction), (c) variety of emotions required, and (d) emotional dissonance. Emotional dissonance was discussed by Hochschild (1983) as a state wherein the emotions expressed are discrepant from the emotions felt. Surface and deep acting, focused on by Hochschild (1983) and discussed by Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), are discussed as a minor facet within the dimension of attentiveness. Job dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion are proposed as outcomes of the dimension of dissonance, although again, the mechanisms by which these outcomes would occur are vague.

This definition of emotional labor includes the organizational expectations for employees in their interactions with customers (how long, how intense, how often), as well as the internal state of tension that occurs when a person must display emotions that are discrepant from his or her true feelings (emotional dissonance). The problem with this conceptualization is that a good case is not made for how frequency, duration, and variety *define* emotional labor. The explanation provided by Morris and Feldman (1997) for the dimensions as components of emotional labor is circular: "Emotional labor can best be described in terms of frequency of emotional labor" (p. 257). Other researchers (Kruml & Geddes, 1998; Zerbe, 1998) have used the dimension of dissonance as a defining dimension of emotional labor, but this definition has some difficulties as well. One, it is a state of being, rather than an effortful process, which does not fit the authors' definition of emotional labor. Two, experiencing dissonance does not comprehensively cover all the ways one may manage emotions at work. In short, I suggest that the four proposed dimensions do not completely define the emotion management process of the employee.

Emotional Labor as Managing Expressions and Feelings: Surface and Deep Acting

Thus, emotional labor has been defined as the characteristics of the job (as defined by Morris and Feldman, 1997) and the observable expressions of employees (as defined by Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). However, isn't it conceivable that the former contributes to the situation that invokes emotional labor, and the latter is the proximal goal of emotional labor? The more distal goal is to gain loyal customers for the organization (the focus of Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). Other ancillary outcomes may include negative attitudes and poor health for the employee (the focus of Hochschild, 1983, and Morris and Feldman, 1997). In order to understand all of these components, an integrated definition and theoretical model are needed.

For the definition, one can look at the similarities across the three studies. Although these previous works stem from different perspectives, define emotional labor differently, and focus on different outcomes, they all have the same underlying theme: Individuals can regulate their emotional expressions at work. Emotional labor, then, is the process of regulating both feelings and expressions for the organizational goals. Specifically, each perspective discusses surface and deep acting as a way of managing emotions. The processes of surface acting (managing observable expressions) and deep acting (managing feelings) match the working definition of emotional labor as a process of emotional regulation, and they provide a useful way of operationalizing emotional labor.

Thinking of emotional labor as surface and deep acting is beneficial for several reasons. First, surface and deep acting are not inherently value laden. Although dissonance is a negative state of being, surface and deep acting are processes that may have positive or negative results. This allows researchers to explain negative outcomes such as individual stress and health problems, and positive results such as customer service. Second, conceptualizing surface and deep acting as emotional labor has utility. If there are differences in how these two processes of emotion management relate to the outcomes, suggestions can be made for organizational training and stress management programs. Finally, seeing emotional labor as surface and deep acting ties directly into an established theoretical model. Although models have been proposed, they do not clearly explain *why* managing emotions should relate to the proposed outcomes. I suggest that the concepts of surface and

deep acting map onto well-established emotion regulation theory. Hochschild (1983) discussed general emotion theory, but it is not explicitly applied to the relationships she proposed. A broad emotion theory can help organize and make predictions about these mechanisms of emotional labor. In the following section, I review the theory of emotion regulation as it applies to emotional labor.

Emotion Regulation Theory Applied to Emotional Labor

Strangely, perspectives on emotional labor have not specifically considered emotion theory since Hochschild. In the emotions literature, there is little agreement on what is meant by emotions (Arvey et al., 1998), but the term usually refers to physiological arousal and cognitive appraisal of the situation. By regulating the arousal and cognitions that define emotions, individuals can control their emotional expressions to fit the display rules of the situation (Goffman, 1959). Similarly, employees regulate their arousal and cognitions in order to display the appropriate emotions at work. Emotion regulation theory, defined as “the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions” (Gross, 1998b, p. 275), provides a very useful guiding framework for emotional labor. Not only that, but emotion regulation research has explicitly considered the role of physiological arousal much more closely than emotional labor theorists have in the past. Understanding the effect that prolonged arousal and suppression of this arousal have provides the literature with the mechanisms by which emotional labor may lead to burnout and stress.

General Model of Emotion Regulation

Recent works by Gross (1998a, 1998b) propose a process model of emotion regulation that may be specifically useful for the emotional labor topic. In this input–output model, individuals receive stimulation from the situation and respond with emotions. The situation acts as a cue to the individual, and the individual’s emotional response tendency (physiological, behavioral, cognitive) provides information to that individual and the others in the social environment (Freud, 1936/1961; Frijda, 1986).

Gross’s (1998b) model proposes that emotion regulation can occur at two points in this process. At the first point, called antecedent-focused, an individual can regulate the precursors of emotion such as

the situation or the appraisal. At the second point, response-focused, the individual modifies the physiological or observable signs of emotions. These two processes of emotion regulation correspond to the emotional labor concept of deep acting and surface acting. Application of general emotion theory to emotional labor can help explicate these processes of emotion management and form predictions about consequences as well. According to both emotional labor theorists and emotion researchers, the management of emotions through acting may have detrimental outcomes for individuals. In the next two sections, I discuss the two methods of emotion regulation, antecedent-focused and response-focused, and how they apply to the concepts of deep acting and surface acting. In the following section, I propose general predictions for these processes based on emotion regulation theory and previous research.

Antecedent-Focused Emotion Regulation

According to emotion regulation theory proposed by Gross (1998a, 1998b) the individual can regulate emotions at two points. At the first intervening point, an individual can engage in antecedent-focused emotion regulation, where the individual modifies the situation or the perception of the situation in order to adjust emotions. Gross (1998b) stated that different types of antecedent-focused emotion regulation are situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, and cognitive change. The first two types involve adjustments in the emotion-inducing situation. As interactionist theory discusses, people often choose the situations in which they act, including the situations that may create emotions (Buss, 1987). Employees may choose their jobs, but for service employees there may be little opportunity for situation selection beyond that as a method to regulate emotions. To enact situation modification, an employee may choose to leave the work floor if a certain customer approaches (Bailey, 1996), but this lack of availability is not quality customer service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) and may result in consequences for the individual. With the lack of options to choose or modify the situation, emotion regulation may take the form of the employee leaving the organization. In short, service employees may not have the breadth of situation modification that is available outside of a work role.

However, more relevant for this article are the other two techniques of antecedent-focused emotion regulation. In these, employees can modify how they perceive the situation in order to adjust their emotional response to the situation. With attentional

deployment and cognitive change, the regulation involves the employee managing emotions by changing the attentional focus and appraisal of the situation.

Attentional deployment. Attentional deployment is done by thinking about events that call up the emotions that one needs in that situation, known as “method acting” in theatre (Gross, 1998b, p. 284; Stanislavsky, 1965). The concept of deep acting, in its original form by Hochschild (1983), is very similar to attentional deployment. An example of this form of emotion management is an aspiring opera singer I knew whistling arias while serving customers in a coffeehouse. Doing something she loved helped her to focus on feeling good and to express positive emotions at work. One employee in a pilot study by the author wrote an example of attentional deployment: “Sometimes . . . I have to change my mood and boost my energy to teach. . . . I have to focus on being positive and maintaining that” (Grandey, 1998).

Cognitive change. The other antecedent-focused method is cognitive change, where one perceives the situation so that the emotional impact is lessened (Lazarus, 1991). For example, Hochschild (1983) described flight attendants who were trained to cognitively reappraise passengers as children so that they would not become angry with passengers’ potentially infantile behaviors. Reappraising work events as challenging, rather than stressful, can also help buffer against stress reactions (Folkman & Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus, 1991). This type of emotion regulation is also “deep,” in that the internal processes (thoughts and feelings) are modified with the goal to make the expression more genuine. The difference is that attentional deployment focuses upon changing the focus of personal thoughts, and cognitive change focuses on changing appraisals of the external situation.

Response-Focused Emotion Regulation

At the second intervention point, according to the process model by Gross (1998b), an individual could engage in response-focused emotion regulation, or *response modulation*. In this process, the person has a tendency toward an emotional response, but manipulates how he or she shows that emotional response by “directly influencing physiological, experiential, or behavioral responding” (Gross, 1998b, p. 285). Rather than adjusting the situation or the perception of the situation, the individual manipulates the emotional expression of his or her reaction to the situation. This could be done with exercise or drugs that induce the appropriate state (which helps explain

why organizations may want to provide free coffee to their front-line employees). An individual may also adjust the intensity of the displayed emotion, or fake the expression entirely.

Response-focused emotion regulation corresponds with the process of surface acting. An employee may paste a smile on her face though she is feeling “blah” (adjusting intensity) or may put on an empathic “mask” in order to remain polite toward the customer who is annoying (fake the display). In a pilot study by the author, employees wrote about such experiences in their jobs: “I had to be very accepting and empathetic to a client who I did not at all like” and “I was worried about a personal matter, but had to be polite to other workers” (Grandey, 1998). Response-focused processes have also been found in descriptive studies of service workers (Hochschild, 1983; VanMaanen & Kunda, 1989). In this emotion management technique, employees work to display more emotion than they feel, or to suppress true feelings and show acceptable expression. This emotional regulation technique is concerned with modifying expression, not the internal feelings, as in deep acting.

Mechanisms of Emotion Regulation

According to emotion regulation theory, individuals may regulate their emotions at several points in the emotion process. If we apply this to the work setting, we can think of the process generally in the following way. The job environment or a particular work event may induce an emotion response in the employee (e.g., anger, sadness, anxiety), and behaviors may follow that would be inappropriate for the encounter (e.g., verbal attack, crying, complaining). Because the display rules state that such reactions are not appropriate, emotional labor regulates his or her response. This regulation involves modifying feelings by “thinking good thoughts” or reappraising the event (deep acting), or modifying expression by faking or enhancing facial and bodily signs of emotion (surface acting).

But how does regulating emotions result in burnout, job dissatisfaction, or “emotional estrangement,” as proposed by Hochschild (1983) and others? To answer this question regarding the mechanism of emotional labor, one must go to general theories of emotion and stress (see Lazarus, 1999). The experience of both emotions and stress are known to be accompanied by a physiological state of arousal involving the endocrine system (release of hormones) and the autonomic nervous system (increased heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, skin conductance). While in this arousal state, the body is converting its

resources to energy to respond to the current crisis. This means that energy is not available for other tasks, such as the immune system. For the past 30 years or so, psychologists have found that emotions and the management of emotions are associated with health problems such as cancer and heart disease (Gross, 1989, 1998a; Pennebaker, 1990; Steptoe, 1993).

Generally, individuals experience a physiological state of arousal or emotion (anger or fear), and they then have an emotional tendency (attack or flee). This corresponds with Frijda's (1986) idea of "action readiness," and Freud's (1936/1961) idea that emotions provide cues about the environment. The arousal state from emotions informs them and gets them in a bodily state to respond to the situation. But in today's society, people learn to regulate that emotional tendency, so that their emotional reactions to other people don't result in "fight or flight" (Cannon, 1932). So, these "action tendencies" to respond to emotion-producing stimuli are overridden by coping or regulatory processes so that people do not act inappropriately in social settings (Lazarus, 1991).

In order to show the appropriate emotion for a situation, sometimes individuals must inhibit or suppress feelings. Research on deception has found that people are able to inhibit expressions with only slight observable signs of the deception taking place (Ekman & Friesen, 1975). However, this regulation for the social interaction may tax the system. Inhibiting feelings and emotional expression lowers behavioral activity, but has actually been found to increase autonomic nervous system activity (Gross, 1998a; Pennebaker, 1985). Thus, "it is reasonable to predict that long-term inhibition would be associated with overall heightened physiological activity" (Pennebaker, 1985, p. 85). This physiological activity, or "bottling up" of emotions, taxes the body over time by overworking the cardiovascular and nervous systems and weakening the immune system. As evidence of this process, research has linked the inhibition of emotions to a variety of physical illness, including higher blood pressure and cancer (Blackburn, 1965; Gross, 1989; King & Emmons, 1990; Smith, 1992). In fact, inability to express negative emotion is one of the strongest predictors of cancer (Cox & McCay, 1982; Derogatis, Abelloff, & Melisaratos, 1979).

General Predictions for Surface and Deep Acting Based on Emotion Regulation Theory

The emotion research is valuable to the study of emotional labor in that it supports two main assumptions: Individuals can and do regulate their

emotions for social situations, but regulation of emotions may be stressful to their health. Emotional labor, or regulating emotions for the work role, may be successful in the impression management sense, but may be detrimental to the employee's health. Specific studies from this paradigm are instructive in how deep acting and surface acting, two proposed processes of emotional labor, would relate to organizational and individual outcomes.

Deep Acting

Engaging in deep acting through reappraisal or self-talk has been called a "good faith" type of emotional labor because it shows the employee has goodwill toward the organization (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). However, the effect of this regulatory process on the individual is uncertain. The emotion regulation work in one lab study suggested that encouraging participants to interpret verbal harassment in a more detached, nonthreatening way decreased physiological arousal to that stimulus (Stemmler, 1997). This "cognitive change" modified participants' actual emotional arousal state in response to this negative situation. But emotion is a complex construct. Gross (1998a) found mixed support for the effect of deep acting on arousal in another study. Using self-reports of emotion, multiple physiological measures such as finger temperature and heart rate, and rater's observations of emotion expressions, he measured the responses of participants to a video designed to elicit disgust. Individuals who were told to engage in reappraisal reported lower levels of self-reported emotion and lower observable signs of emotions than those who were not told to reappraise the situation. These two taken together would suggest an actual change in feelings had occurred, or that deep acting was successful. Interestingly, however, the reappraisal group did *not* have lower physiological signs of emotion than the other group. Although deep acting in this form may regulate observable signs of emotions and even the individual's perception of his or her own emotions, it is unclear whether deep acting actually lowers the physiological arousal.

Surface Acting

Surface acting, or antecedent-focused emotion regulation, may be desirable to organizations so that customers or clients always see the expressions that are mandated, even when the employee may feel differently. However, Hochschild (1983) suggested that this job demand results in stressful experiences

for the employee. This may be because individuals generally do not like to feel “fake,” or in the long-term, because suppressing true emotions and expressing false emotions requires effort that results in stress outcomes. For example, in two recent studies participants were asked to suppress the emotional expression of either sadness or disgust (Gross, 1998a; Gross & Levenson, 1997). The suppression condition resulted in decreased *observable* signs of emotion, such that ratings of participants’ facial and bodily responses to emotion-inducing stimuli were lower than a nonsuppression condition. In other words, people are capable of suppressing their emotions so that others cannot see how they truly feel. However, the levels of the self-reported experience of emotion in these two studies, and the physiological signs of emotional activation, did not decrease. Thus, the participants were aware that they were “faking,” and they still had a state of emotional arousal. According to recent emotion theory and recent emotion regulation lab studies, both surface and deep acting techniques may result in the required emotional expression, but the physiological emotional response may still be active. Such studies may help explain how emotional labor can relate functionally to performance measures but can be dysfunctional for the individual’s health and stress.

A Caveat

It is recognized that these studies differ in several ways from the situations faced by employees in most

organizations. The emotion regulation studies do not address situations in which the individual suppresses one emotion and simultaneously expresses a different emotion (i.e., a customer service employee may need to inhibit anger and smile at a difficult customer). Likewise, studies are not testing the impact of enhancing or enlarging felt emotions in order to meet the display rules of the job. Finally, the fact that employees are paid for their emotion regulation may affect individuals differently than when the regulation is for a lab study or the sake of social norms. These situations still need to be studied in lab and field settings.

A Model of Emotional Labor

The process of reorganizing and integrating the previous models of emotional labor around the working definition and utilizing the general emotion regulation theory provides a conceptual model of emotional labor (see Figure 1). Antecedents of emotion regulation are the situational variables, as stated by Gross (1998b). In the context of emotional labor, the situational variables include the employee’s interaction with customers. Drawing on previous emotional labor studies, the variables describing the nature of customer contact and the organization’s emotion display rules should contribute to the emotional labor process (Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996). The emotion regulation literature, integrated with the emotional labor theories, supports

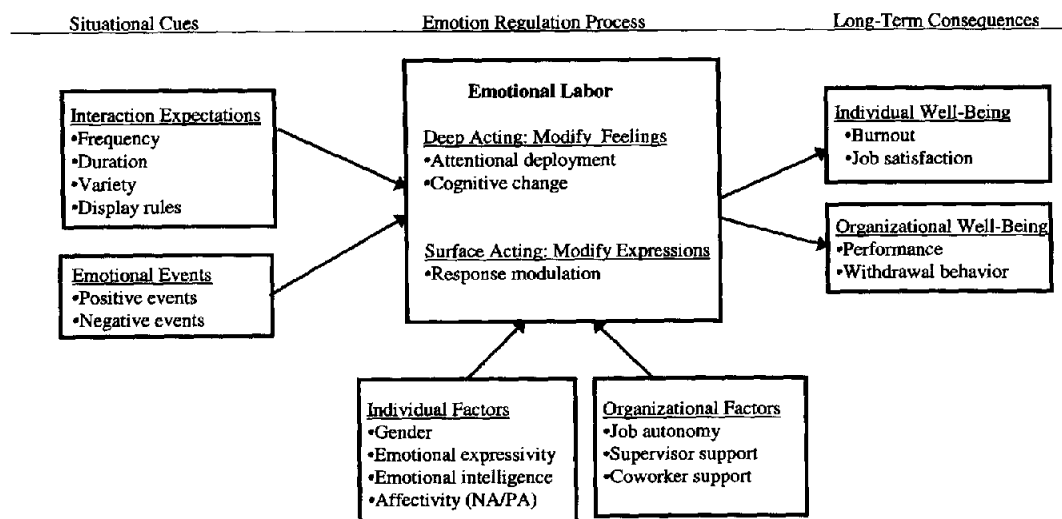


Figure 1. The proposed conceptual framework of emotion regulation performed in the work setting. NA = negative affect; PA = positive affect.

the existence of several means of performing emotion management in work settings. Two such methods, called deep acting and surface acting in the emotion labor literature, can be understood more broadly as ways of regulating feelings or manipulating expression. Based on the emotion regulation lab studies and emotional labor field studies, the effortful processes of surface acting and deep acting may be related to employee stress and health as well as organizational well-being. See Figure 1 for the proposed model. The next sections propose more specifically the previous research on and propositions regarding the antecedents and consequences of emotional labor.

Situational Antecedents of Emotional Labor

As seen in the emotion regulation literature, the situation acts as a cue from which emotions may result. In the customer service setting, the salient situation is the interaction with customers and the expectations of the organization. This can be measured as both chronic expectations of the employee's interactions with customers and acute events that create an emotional response. Both the chronic and the acute situational factors may impact the emotion regulation needed.

Customer Interaction Expectations

As Hochschild (1983) stated, certain job characteristics may demand higher levels of emotional labor from employees. One characteristic is the nature of interaction with customers, in particular, the frequency of face or voice contact. To this, Morris and Feldman (1996) added the characteristics of the duration of interactions and variety of emotional expression. Hochschild's other proposed characteristics of emotional labor jobs are that the organization expects and controls the emotional expression of the employee. This characteristic can be seen in perceptions of display rules—how much the employees perceive that certain emotional expressions are part of the job. These work role characteristics can be thought of as ongoing situations to which employees respond with emotion regulation.

Different work roles hold different expectations for the employee when interacting with customers. Job roles may differ in the *frequency* that employees are expected to interact with customers. A receptionist at a small legal firm may welcome customers once an hour, but a cashier at a grocery store may meet 10 customers an hour. Another difference in interactions is the *duration* demand placed on employees. A

salesclerk in a clothing store may work with a customer for hours, whereas a convenience store clerk may only interact with each customer for 5 minutes. The work role demands of frequency and duration are situational factors that may increase the likelihood that an employee must fake expressions or modify feelings. Thus, such factors are proposed as antecedents of emotional labor. The relationships found between customer interaction expectations and emotional labor have provided mixed support. Nonsignificant correlations were found for frequency of interaction and duration with dissonance (Morris & Feldman, 1997), and between frequency of interactions and surface or deep acting (Grandey, 1999). In another study, frequency had significant positive relationships with surface acting and deep acting (Brotheridge & Lee, 1998), although duration was not related to surface or deep acting.

A few researchers have explored the different emotional displays required by jobs. Three types of emotional work requirements have been proposed and tested: integrative, differentiating, and masking (Jones & Best, 1995; Wharton & Erickson, 1993). Front-line service employees are generally expected to express integrative emotions such as happiness and sympathy. Other job types, such as bill collectors or bouncers, are expected to portray differentiating emotions such as fear or anger (Hochschild, 1979; Sutton, 1991). The third type is descriptive of jobs in which controlling emotions are required, such as therapists or judges. In this article, I focus on those in the first group, who are expected to express integrative emotions and suppress differentiating emotions.

Those expectations are controlled by the display rules of the organization, which may be informal norms or formal processes (Hochschild, 1983). As stated earlier, training and performance appraisal materials may directly request emotional labor. If employees report that certain emotions are expected by the organization, then that individual may engage in more emotional labor to meet the expectations. With samples of part- and full-time student workers, Brotheridge and Lee (1998) found significant correlations for the perception of emotion display rules with surface acting and deep acting. Others have found a relationship between display rules and emotional effort (Kruml & Geddes, 1998) and display rules and deep acting (Grandey, 1999). Thus, it can be proposed that perceiving that the organization expects certain emotion displays will lead to more management of emotion by employees.

Emotional Events

Although the work setting may create a chronic need to regulate emotions, the acute events at work have an immediate impact on an employee's emotions. As suggested by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), emotional events at work may help explain employee attitudes and behavior. An emotional event may lead to more emotional regulation when that event results in emotions that are discrepant from the organizational display rules. The event is appraised for its positive or negative influence on the person's well-being. In particular, if the event interferes with the employees' goals, one of which is to express and induce positive emotions, the event will be appraised negatively (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). In other words, the event may be seen as stressful. Such events may involve a customer angrily blaming the employee for a product malfunction, or learning that a family member has become sick. In such cases, the employee experiences an event that requires emotion regulation to maintain the appropriate appearance at work. On the other hand, if the event creates a positive emotion (such a hearing about a raise or getting accepted to graduate school), then that may help meet display rules. In this case, less emotion regulation would be necessary.

Bailey (1996) obtained descriptions from employees about how they coped with "difficult" customers, a general type of work event. Twenty-two out of 49 respondents described an interaction with customers where the customer was too demanding or angry about an organizational factor. Their responses supported the idea that such interactions may increase emotion regulation at work. Responses to difficult customers included leaving the work floor (situation modification), thinking of something funny (attention deployment), realizing some people are never happy no matter what (cognitive change), and trying to stay calm, taking deep breaths (response modulation). These qualitative findings are supportive of how work events may create more emotional labor, and how antecedent-focused or response-focused tactics may be used by employees to regulate emotions for organizational goals.

Higher frequency of negative events may lead to more emotion regulation, and thus more stress. Across the 49 employees with different types of jobs, employees on average reported that they dealt with "difficult" customers once or twice a day (Bailey, 1996). This suggests that one type of emotional event may happen fairly often. Other emotion events may occur at work as well, such as the equipment not

working or a personal issue arising. The source of the affective events may be the customer, coworkers, supervisor, or personal situations. Affective events that interfere with emotion display rules may be a very salient part of work life and should be considered in emotional labor studies. Provided that the events induce emotions that are discrepant from display rules, more events should result in more effort to regulate emotions, and so should have a cumulative effect on stress and well-being. The source of event may also impact how much regulation is performed. Display rules may be more explicit for interactions with customers, rather than employees. Thus, when the source of the event is a coworker, less emotion regulation may be needed.

This proposition may be explored via diary studies in which employees describe events and how they responded to them in the immediate context, and then relate those events to overall emotional labor and stress. Observational studies and lab studies may also help explore this idea of emotional events impacting emotional labor. Understanding the types of events and how frequently they occur may help organizations to adjust their work processes or to design better training for dealing with such situations.

Stress and Well-Being as Outcomes of Emotional Labor

The preceding section proposed that the organizational expectations act as a situational cue for employees. The organization's demand for certain emotional expressions should result in more emotion regulation by the employee, or emotional labor. As discussed earlier, these methods of emotional labor, surface and deep acting, require a level of effort by the individual. The amount of emotional labor should relate to stress due to the physiological demands of emotion regulation (Gross, 1998a, 1998b; Lazarus, 1991). However, surface and deep acting should affect customer service performance, because they are ways of regulating emotions in order to interact with customers with positive expressions. There are other organizational outcomes, though, that may be detrimentally affected by this labor. The following sections review the theoretical and empirical support for relationships between emotional labor and various well-being outcomes.

Burnout

Burnout is a stress outcome typically found in employees in the helping industries. Burnout occurs

when an employee becomes overly emotionally involved in interactions with customers and has little way to replenish those emotional resources being spent (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986). The signs of burnout are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Maslach, 1982). When a situation induces repeated emotional responses that the employee must regulate, the employee may experience emotional exhaustion, or energy depletion and fatigue. To cope with this feeling, employees may detach from the customers by objectifying or depersonalizing them. This may lead to feeling negatively about themselves and their work, to the point where they experience a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Other researchers have associated burnout with important organizational outcomes like performance and turnover (Singh, Goolsby, & Rhoads, 1994; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). If emotional labor is related to burnout, it also may contribute to a host of other organizational outcomes.

The research supports the prediction that emotional labor will relate to burnout. Gross and Levenson (1997) discussed the physiological effort demanded to inhibit emotions from being expressed in a lab study. Several studies have assessed the relationship of emotional labor with emotional exhaustion in employees. Emotional dissonance has been related to emotional exhaustion (Abraham, 1998; Morris & Feldman, 1997). Surface acting was related to emotional exhaustion in another study, beyond deep acting and dissonance (Brotheridge & Lee, 1998). Thus, there is support for the relationship of emotional exhaustion to managing emotions at work. There seemed to be less empirical support for emotional labor's relationship to the other burnout dimensions. It is expected that emotional labor will have a similarly detrimental relationship with depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The more employees need to effortfully express and suppress emotional responses at work, the more they may choose to depersonalize customers. This may be a way of distancing themselves from the stress of the emotional expenditure; if they are detached when interacting with customers, their potentially emotion-producing reactions will matter less (Hochschild, 1983). One study of police officers found that when officers are expected to suppress their reactions to tragic events, this suppression may result in less empathy and connection with citizens (Pogrebin & Poole, 1995). If an employee feels that meeting emotion demands at work requires a lot of effort and

feels detached from customers, then that employee may also feel a lowered sense of personal accomplishment.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a measure of the employee's evaluation of the job and has often been used as a proxy for employee well-being at work. Some researchers propose that being required to be friendly to customers may make a monotonous job more fun, or may allow self-expression that is enjoyable to employees (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Tolich, 1993). Others have suggested that emotional labor stifles personal expression and as such is unpleasant (Hochschild, 1983; VanMaanen & Kunda, 1989). The empirical research on the relationship between managing emotions at work and job satisfaction has been contradictory. This contradiction may be due to the use of different definitions of emotional labor. Expressions of emotions may be positively related to job satisfaction, as suggested by the facial feedback hypothesis (Adelmann & Zajonc, 1989), but the regulation to *achieve* that expression may be negatively related to satisfaction.

The available data support this difference, although not with surface acting directly. Two studies supported that the experience of emotional dissonance (which is conceptually similar to surface acting) was negatively related to job satisfaction (Abraham, 1998; Morris & Feldman, 1997). Rutter and Fielding (1988) reported that suppressing true emotions (surface acting) was a source of stress for prison officers, and that such suppression related to lowered job satisfaction. Adelmann (1995) reported that the table servers who expressed real smiles at work, and didn't feel "false," had more job satisfaction than those who reported faking emotions. There seems to be less empirical support for the relationship of deep acting with job satisfaction. Based on Hochschild's (1983) work, there should be a negative relationship. Her argument was that working to manage something as personal as emotions for organizational purposes would be inherently unsatisfying. In general, those who report high levels of emotion regulation with customers may be less satisfied with their jobs.

Work Behaviors as Outcomes of Emotional Labor

Customer Service Performance

In the service industry, managing emotions (showing happiness and empathy, not fear or anger) is an

important facet of maintaining loyal customers and repeat business (Albrecht & Zemke, 1985; Hochschild, 1983; Schneider & Bowen, 1985). Because emotion regulation may be performed in different ways, it is possible that some methods are more effective than others and may thus impact performance on the job. As a means of presenting a positive image of the organization and inducing the appropriate feelings in customers, managing emotions may result in good customer service performance (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Emotional expression such as smiles and friendly comments can lead to good work performance as measured by tips for table servers (Adelmann, 1995; Tidd & Lockhard, 1978). Pugh (1998) found a positive relationship between emotional displays of bank tellers and customer satisfaction. These studies suggest that positive emotional expressions will result in higher customer service performance.

However, the personal effort of producing those expressions may tell a different story. Emotion regulation researchers find that emotion suppression and exaggeration may impair cognitive performance (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998; Richards & Gross, 1999). Little is known about how an employees' method of regulating emotions is related to customer service performance. Several authors have mentioned the importance of emotional displays being seen as "genuine" in service settings (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). Emotional expressions that are perceived as insincere may negatively impact customer service (Grove & Fisk, 1989; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). Emotion research has found that when people "fake" emotions, or are surface acting, there seems to be "leakage" so that observers can detect the deception (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). This suggests that surface acting should be negatively related to service performance. However, deep acting, or antecedent-focused emotion regulation, convinces employees that they really feel the way they are trying to express (Gross, 1998a). Although this process is still effortful, it may lead to an expression that is perceived as more genuine than when an employee surface acts. Thus, deep acting may be positively related to customer service.

Withdrawal Behaviors

Emotion regulation results in physiological arousal that, over the long run, may affect withdrawal behaviors such as leaving the work floor, absenteeism, and turnover. These are outcomes that are of particular concern to customer service jobs, and thus

it is vital to understand the impact of emotional labor. In customer service jobs, it is essential that employees be available to customers (Parasuraman et al., 1985). If employees leave the work floor to cope with their emotions, this may diminish the impression the customer has of the organization. Leaving the work floor or talking to coworkers were stated ways of coping with difficult customers for 36 out of 49 respondents in a variety of jobs (Bailey, 1996).

In the long run, employees may also decide to leave the organization. Emotional labor levels may predict those who desire to leave the organization. Those who need to engage in high levels of surface acting may be more inclined to desire a different job. In fact, the need to regulate emotions regularly at work may act as a signal to the employee that this environment is not a good match for the individual (Edwards, 1991; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). The employee may engage in the antecedent-focused emotion regulation technique of situation selection (Gross, 1998b) and select a different organizational setting for employment. On the basis of the burnout literature, it is likely that working in jobs that demand high levels of emotional regulation may result in withdrawal behaviors (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Maslach & Pines, 1977; Singh et al., 1994).

Personal and Organizational Factors Affecting Emotional Labor

In this article, I have proposed a linear process between organizational antecedents, emotional labor, and the well-being of the employee and the organization. Looking at previous emotion research, it is clear that this is a simplified process. As suggested by Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), there are many other variables that may impact customer service besides the employee's emotional labor process. The emotion regulation works have suggested some factors but not specifically work-oriented variables. For comprehensive understanding of emotional labor, individual differences and organizational factors should be taken into account in future research.

Personal Characteristics Related to Emotional Labor

There are many individual differences that may be related to emotional labor. Emotional labor researchers need to integrate the personality variables into the emotional labor framework, in order to understand the concept of emotional labor more clearly. Are

certain types of people better at regulating their emotions? Are other types of people better at handling difficult situations without becoming stressed? Is emotional laboring through surface and deep acting a trainable process? A few related concepts are briefly mentioned in order to suggest directions for future research.

Gender. Gender differences are often a topic of interest, and the area of emotional labor is no exception. Hochschild (1983) pointed out that the majority of service jobs are performed by women, and as such gender becomes an issue for emotional labor. Wharton and Erickson (1993) also discussed how women are more likely to manage emotions at work as well as at home. If women engage in more emotion management situations, perhaps they are better at managing emotions (so performance would be better), but they would be engaging in more suppression of true feelings (so stress would be higher). Krumboltz and Geddes (1998) found a relationship between gender and emotional dissonance, in that women were more likely to report feeling differently than they expressed. It is unclear if this means that men are showing emotions that are inappropriate for the job or simply not feeling discrepant emotions. In line with the first point, one study suggested that men and women have different motives for regulating emotions, in that women are more concerned with getting along, whereas men are more motivated to stay in control and express powerful emotions such as anger or pride (Timmers, Fischer, & Manstead, 1998). However, in the customer service setting, this motive may not work in men's favor. It is possible that in service settings, men may need more training to manage emotions when dealing with customers.

Emotional expressivity. Beyond demographic variables, there are a wide variety of related "emotion" variables that have been explored in clinical, developmental, or organizational research. Emotional expressivity as a personality characteristic has been receiving attention lately as a predictor of health and job performance (Arvey et al., 1998; King & Emmons, 1990; Kring, Smith, & Neale, 1994). Recently, scales of emotional expressivity have been tested by Gross and John (1998) and Steel, Arvey, and Kyllonen (1999). These scales, such as Positive Expressivity, Impulse Intensity, and Masking, seem very related to the ideas of surface acting and deep acting presented earlier. It is possible that persons high in positive expressivity, for example, would be skilled at meeting organizational display rules. Thus, such an individual should report lower levels of

emotional labor and perform better in service jobs. Expressivity is also related to gender, with women reporting higher levels of emotional expressivity (King & Emmons, 1990; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989).

Emotional intelligence. Another related concept that has been receiving a lot of attention recently is emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1995). Emotional intelligence is referred to as the ability to recognize and use emotional information in social interactions. Effective affect regulation is one of the signs of strong emotional intelligence (Salovey, Hsee, & Mayer, 1993). Those with high emotional intelligence are skilled at handling social encounters, and in fact may make other people feel good about themselves as well (Goleman, 1995). This is a desired characteristic in service encounters. The Trait Meta-Mood Scale (Salovey et al., 1995) was designed to consider the amount of attention that people pay to their emotions and the modification of emotions. Unfortunately, the measurement of this construct has had difficulty. In particular, one study found that this factor of emotional intelligence was extremely unreliable (Davies, Stankov, & Roberts, 1998). New modifications of this scale are beginning to emerge (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, in press) and should be used in any future studies that test how emotional labor and emotional intelligence can inform each other.

Self-monitoring. Self-monitoring refers to the extent that people monitor their self-presentations and control their expressive behavior (Snyder, 1974). High self-monitors are more aware of the emotional cues of others and are more willing and able to change their own emotional expression to fit the situation than low self-monitors. Low self-monitors tend to remain "true" to their internal feelings. Self-monitoring makes theoretical sense as an influential characteristic on emotional labor. In jobs where emotional labor is required, low self-monitors should have a more difficult time following display rules. If they want to keep their jobs, they need to adhere to emotional display rules, but they may be less at ease suppressing their true feelings than a high self-monitor. Thus, low self-monitors may report higher levels of emotional labor and higher levels of stress in customer service jobs. Studies have suggested that high self-monitors would be less reactive to dissonance (Abraham, 1998) and better at customer service jobs (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1982; Friedman & Miller-Herringer, 1991). Wharton (1993) found that high self-monitors in emotional labor jobs, as defined by Hochschild's (1983) taxonomy, were less likely to report burnout than low self-monitors. Research needs to explore

how self-monitoring relates to methods of emotion regulation at work.

Affectivity. Positive affectivity is related to enthusiasm and optimism, whereas negative affectivity is related to pessimism and aversive mood states. As stated by [Weiss and Cropanzano \(1996\)](#), affective traits act as predispositions toward more or less intense emotional responses. Thus, someone high in negative affectivity (NA) may respond more strongly to negative events if they occur. This means a high NA person exerts more emotional labor to maintain the emotional display in the face of a difficult encounter. Affectivity has been proposed in theoretical models as a predictor of emotional labor. [Morris and Feldman \(1996\)](#) suggested that positive and negative affectivity would relate to emotional labor. In particular, these researchers hypothesized that when the emotion work requirements (express positive or negative emotions) conflicted with affectivity (positive or negative affect), dissonance would occur. Some have found that positive affectivity is generally effective in the workplace ([Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994](#)), but this research does not consider emotional labor explicitly. Research is needed to test these propositions and to see if high NA persons can learn to regulate their emotions in effective ways.

Organizational Factors

As suggested by [Ashforth and Humphrey \(1993\)](#) and [Morris and Feldman \(1996\)](#), and supported by the emotion regulation literature, the environment is a very important factor in understanding emotion management. It is very possible that the situation in which employees work may affect the level and type of emotional labor in which they engage.

Autonomy. Feeling a lack of control over events has been identified as a source of life stress ([Rodin, 1986](#)) as well as job stress. [Hochschild \(1983\)](#) discussed the unpleasantness of having the organization control one's personal feeling state. A few studies have tested the idea that job autonomy minimizes the stress of the emotion regulation process. [Wharton \(1993\)](#) found that those who reported high autonomy had lower emotional exhaustion in both high and low emotional labor-typed jobs. [Morris and Feldman \(1996\)](#) reported that job autonomy was negatively related to emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion and positively related to job satisfaction. A recent court case with a major grocery store chain involves emotional autonomy in particular: Customer service employees are suing the company because they must smile at customers even though that has led to sexual harassment by customers. Organizations

who take away emotional autonomy may find negative outcomes emerge.

Supervisor and coworker support. The emotion regulation theory proposed by [Gross \(1998b\)](#) discussed the environment as a cue to the emotional response that follows. Support from coworkers and supervisors should create a positive working environment ([Schneider & Bowen, 1985](#)). An employee's perception that he or she works in a supportive climate has been found to relate to job satisfaction, lowered stress, and turnover intentions, and even higher team performance ([Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997](#); [Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997](#); [Howes, Cropanzano, Grandey, & Mohler, 1999](#)). In customer service settings, where positive expressions are expected, feeling positive about the social environment may mean that less emotional labor is necessary. One may genuinely feel the emotions that are expected in a service environment if the interpersonal relationships are positive and supportive. Indirectly, support may help employees cope with the stress of service jobs. [Bailey \(1996\)](#) suggested that talking to other people was a method of coping with difficult customers. The stress literature shows fairly clearly that disclosure of emotional events helps individuals cope with stress and buffer against health risks ([Carver, Schein, & Weintraub, 1993](#); [Pennebaker, 1990](#)). Social support in service settings seems to help protect individuals from stress ([Goolsby, 1992](#); [Pines & Aronson, 1988](#)). Only one known study has tested support as a moderator of emotional labor and outcomes. [Abraham \(1998\)](#) found that social support interacted with emotional dissonance to buffer against job dissatisfaction.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Emotions have been a difficult topic of study for decades: Even the definition and operationalization of "emotion" remains murky. The much newer field of emotional labor can miss some of these growing pains if researchers learn from these more established emotion theories, as this article has attempted to show. In general, several propositions could be made based on the emotion regulation theory and the previous emotional labor research. One, situational settings contribute to the emotional labor engaged in by the employees. Those who interact with customers or clients for extended periods and who experience emotional events in those situations are more likely to emotionally regulate. Two, emotional labor may result in good organizational performance, but may have consequences for the employees' health. Specifi-

cally, deep acting should be more positively related to service performance than surface acting, but both should be related to burnout, withdrawal, and negative work attitudes. Finally, personal and organizational characteristics may act as main effects on the level of emotional labor performed; for example, women or those who are emotionally expressive may be more likely to engage in emotional labor. These organizational and personal characteristics may also act as moderators by affecting relationships with the consequences of emotional labor. For example, those who perceive high levels of supervisor support may report high levels of emotional labor but not burnout because support acts as a buffer against the stressors.

As can be seen, there are many unknowns, and both lab and field research are needed to test the relationships outlined in Figure 1. For example, diary studies of emotional events would illustrate the type of events employees respond to at work, as well as act as a coping technique suggested by the emotion regulation researchers (i.e., Pennebaker, 1985, 1990). Lab studies, not typically done by organizational researchers, could examine the impact of surface and deep acting processes on customers. Both of these types of studies would have implications for workplace training for employees. Field studies, typically not used by the emotion regulation researchers, could include pen-and-paper studies of personality characteristics and emotion regulation techniques to inform selection decisions. Those personality types who are more likely to reappraise situations and change feeling states may be better suited for certain jobs than those who prefer to inhibit their feelings. Finally, research that assesses the relationship of surface and deep acting to each other and the environment is needed. Perhaps surface acting is a reaction to an event, and deep acting occurs more constantly throughout the day. The emotion regulation theory proposed by Gross (1998b) seems to suggest that deep acting would occur first, and then surface acting if that was not successful. These are empirical questions, answerable by longitudinal field or lab studies and qualitative studies. All of the preceding research would not only inform the understanding of emotions at work, but also contribute to the broader field of emotion regulation.

This is an exciting time for researchers of workplace emotion, with many questions still to be answered. The study of emotional labor continues to expand in accord with the recognition that not only do emotions exist in the workplace, but they greatly impact the workplace and the employees. Emotion

regulation may be an important factor in explaining many aspects of employee and organizational life.

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