

Let's face emotions!

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SUMMARY

With the rapid rise of service-based economies, emotional labor has been critically involved in individuals' work-life. For example, in the current Covid-19 pandemic, you might have noticed that a welcoming smile is an integral part of cashiers, baristas, or waiters' work. Although their smiles are not visible under their face masks, they regulate their emotions to express positivity towards their customers.

In the past 20 years, research on emotional labor has grown and predominantly investigated two main emotional labor strategies: surface acting (modifying only external expressions) and deep acting (modifying inner feelings). Theoretical models have been developed to describe the relationships between these strategies and employees' well-being and performance. Cross-sectional and daily diary studies have examined the underlying proxies that explain these relationships.

Yet, despite this progress, three key questions remained unexamined. 1) Why does research on the consequences of deep acting produce inconsistent findings? Is it due to ignoring its multidimensional nature? 2) How do different deep acting strategies causally relate to emotional labor outcomes? 3) What are other emotional labor strategies besides deep and surface acting?

Chapter 1 elaborates on these three questions, and how the present thesis addresses them.

Chapter 2 presents an up-to-date view of the emotional labor literature by synthesizing what is presently known in the literature and how the field can be further advanced. In this review, we particularly focus on two traditional strategies (surface acting and deep acting). Several recommendations from this review have been obtained: the need to examine a) the multidimensional nature of deep acting, b) the causal effect of specific deep acting strategies on well-being and performance indicators, c) a comprehensive taxonomy of emotional labor strategies.

Chapter 3 provides a finer-grained investigation of deep acting. We argued that considering deep acting as a uniform strategy overlooks fundamental differences among deep acting strategies (perspective-taking, positive reappraisal, and attentional deployment), which complicates understanding the consequences of deep acting. We predicted that three specific deep acting strategies are differently associated with proximal emotional labor outcomes (resource depletion, self-authenticity, and rewarding interactions with customers). Using a daily diary study, we supported our prediction. More specifically, compared to the two other strategies, perspective-taking seemed to be a particularly adaptive way of deep acting. It was positively associated with rewarding interactions at both within-person and between-person levels. In contrast, positive reappraisal was negatively related to rewarding interactions with customers at the between-person level (albeit marginally significant). Positive reappraisal was also energy depleting for employees. They felt more depleted when they used positive reappraisal than they typically do so on a particular day. Similarly, attentional deployment appeared to be less adaptive than perspective-taking for employees' well-being. It was linked to more resource depletion at the within-person level (albeit marginally significant). Furthermore, employees who frequently used attentional deployment reported lower self-authenticity at the between-person level.

Building on Chapter 3, **in Chapter 4**, we examine the potential causal impacts of the three deep acting strategies on resource depletion, negative affect, positive emotions, self-authenticity, perceived authenticity, and service performance. We experimentally manipulated these three strategies in a travel agency simulation. However, our manipulation failed to lead to the expected differences in the engagement of emotion regulation. In particular, participants predominantly engaged in perspective-taking regardless of the experimental condition they were assigned to. Nevertheless, this chapter offers important theoretical and methodological insights. Theoretically, the correlational findings confirmed that perspective-

taking, positive reappraisal, and attentional deployment are different strategies. We found that perspective-taking and positive reappraisal were related to higher positive affect and self-authenticity, while they were related to lower resource depletion. In contrast, attentional deployment was linked to less positive affect (albeit marginally significant). Methodologically, this experiment informs us that manipulating emotion regulation in the context of emotional labor may require a more sophisticated design. For example, participants may need more intense training on emotion regulation to improve their expertise in the use of emotion regulation.

Chapter 5 argues that the current emotional labor literature is constrained to two broad emotional labor strategies. Using a bottom-up approach, we interviewed employees to collect a comprehensive list of emotional labor strategies. As expected, we found evidence for a wide range of emotional labor strategies beyond what is theoretically suggested. More specifically, we observed six novel strategy categories: cognitive interpersonal (changing the way the customer evaluates the situation), affective interpersonal (changing the customer's emotions), solution-oriented (solving the customer's problem), waiting (passively waiting for the situation to be over), avoidance (staying away from the situation) and deviance in good faith (deviating from display rules to protect one's self-esteem).

Finally, **Chapter 6** discusses how these findings can advance the current theoretical, methodological, and practical understanding of emotional labor. It also acknowledges the possible limitations of the empirical studies reported in this dissertation and provides future research questions.