CHAPTER 9

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE EFFECTS OF EMOTIONAL LABOR STRATEGIES ON CUSTOMER OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research reported in this article was to develop a conceptual model that links emotional labor strategies performed by service employees to a number of relevant antecedents as well as to a variety of customer outcomes. We link emotional labor directly to the customer domain by examining how customers experience and react to emotional displays of service employees. Thus, we expand current emotional labor research which has predominantly focused on employee and organizational outcomes but has offered limited theoretical guidance as to how customers may be directly affected by emotional labor in the service delivery process. Specific research propositions are developed that offer insight into the antecedents and potential impact of emotional labor strategies on customer behavior. Managerial and research implications as well as avenues for future research are discussed from the perspective of emotional labor theory.

INTRODUCTION

Service management and marketing researchers have become increasingly interested in the role of emotions in service encounters (Lemmink & Mattson, 2002; Liljander & Strandvik, 1997; Mattila & Enz, 2002). To develop and successfully maintain relationships with customers, service employees are expected to display certain emotions (e.g., cheerfulness) and suppress others (e.g., anger) as part of their job requirements. Although such "emotional labor" (Hochschild, 1983) has been demonstrated to exert a major influence on key employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002), the effects that emotional labor has on customers have only been sparingly addressed by organizational scholars. This is surprising, given that the interaction between a customer and a service provider is not only essential in the determination of customer evaluations, but often is the service itself in the eye of the customer (Bowen, 1990; Bowen, Schneider, & Kim, 2000). Thus, there is reason to believe that employees' emotion regulation in service interactions does not only affect their own well-being but also affects customer outcomes that are critical for relationship marketing success, such as customer satisfaction and retention. However, to date there has been a lack of conceptual as well as empirical research into the emotional labor–customer outcome link.

In addressing this research gap, the aim of our research is to develop a theoretical model of the antecedents of two different emotional labor strategies as well as their effects on customer outcomes in order to provide service firms with knowledge on how to achieve desirable customer outcomes through emotional labor management. The article is structured as follows: first, we review the existing literature on emotional labor strategies and their effects on employees and customers. Then, by applying a two-dimensional conceptualization of emotional labor encompassing surface acting and deep acting, we develop a theoretical model of emotional labor and its consequences and antecedents, and offer specific research propositions for future research. Specifically, we examine how the two emotional labor strategies affect customer perceptions of employees' customer orientation, customer satisfaction, social relational benefits, trust, and customer retention.

In addition, our research focuses on determinants of employees' choice of emotional labor strategy. Based on a number of organizational theories discussed below, we propose a set of individual-, dyadic-, and organizational-level antecedents on service employees' propensity to engage in either surface acting or deep acting. Finally, theoretical as well as practical

implications of our conceptual model are discussed from the perspective of emotional labor theories.

Importance of Emotional Labor Strategies in Service Delivery

Recent service management research has increasingly focused on the role of emotions in service deliveries, particularly the role of emotional labor performed by service employees. Emotional labor refers to the "effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions" (Morris & Feldman, 1996, p. 987). In her seminal work on service workers such as flight attendants and bill collectors, Hochschild (1979, 1983) concluded that while employees' physical, mental, and semi-motor tasks are often well documented, measured, and rewarded by organizations, emotional labor often is an unacknowledged component of their work. While the service management and marketing literatures have focused on delivering superior service quality and on the importance of courteous frontline employees delivering "service with a smile," doing so requires employees to consistently display emotions not genuinely felt by them. However, until recently, little attention has been paid to the effects such behavior may elicit. Hochschild (1983) argues that when interacting with customers under the guidance of organizational rules and regulations, managing one's emotions is not simply a private act done in a social context. Rather, emotional display is sold as labor and dictated by the organization through training, policies, and supervision.

Thus, although emotional reactions to one's organizational environment are an integral part of nearly every employee's job, emotional labor is a distinct concept in that it focuses on emotions as a requirement of the job. Organizations usually have certain explicit or implicit "display rules" (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987), that is, norms and standards of behavior which indicate which emotions are appropriate and should be publicly expressed and which emotions should be suppressed. Early emotional labor research has primarily focused on identifying various types of emotion management strategies. Although a number of strategies have been discussed (see, e.g., Hochschild, 1983; Zapf, 2002), research has primarily focused on surface acting and deep acting as commonly adopted approaches of service employees to manage their emotions. In surface acting, employees only try to change their outward appearance without genuinely altering how they actually feel (i.e., faking). Thus, employees express feigned emotions when surface acting. In deep acting, on the other hand, employees express the

desired emotion and attempt to summon those emotions. Thus, when deep acting, employees express true emotions.

Research on emotional labor has predominantly focused on the effects of emotional labor on employee well-being. Specifically, Hochschild (1983) highlighted a number of negative consequences of emotional labor, primarily psychological ill health such as stress and job burnout. Links have been shown to exist between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002), job dissatisfaction (Grandey, 2003; Morris & Feldman, 1997), and lack of organizational identity (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000). However, empirical findings are contradictory to some extent. Wharton (1993, 1996), for example, found that the more service employees engaged in emotional labor as part of their work, the more satisfied they were. Grandey (2003) suggests that such contradictions can be explained by differentiating between acting strategies. That is, whereas surface acting has a number of negative effects on employees, deep acting may in fact be beneficial to their psychological well-being.

Emotional Labor as a Regulatory Process

In our proposed theoretical model, we conceptualize and measure emotional labor as a regulatory process. This is consistent with recent emotional labor research (e.g., Grandey, 2003) and is a significant improvement on early work in this area where emotional labor was believed to be unidimensional in terms of frequency and consequently was measured at the job level (e.g., Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 1993, 1996). As such, survey respondents were often classified as performing high or low emotional labor based on their reported job classification. Although Morris and Feldman (1996, 1997) pointed out the limitation of this approach and proposed a model that included three dimensions of emotional labor (frequency of interaction, duration of interaction, and emotional dissonance), their model was similarly criticized for lack of content validity (Kruml & Geddes, 2000; Mann, 1999). Only recently has emotional labor been conceptualized and measured as a regulatory process involving different types of acting strategies (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Grandey, 2003; Kruml & Geddes, 2000). By assessing and contrasting the effects of different types of emotion management, our study will explore the relative, comparative effects of each strategy.

Building on the identification of different alternative emotional labor strategies, our aim is to understand the consequences of alternative emotional labor strategies for customer outcomes as well as the antecedents of employees' engaging in these strategies. The great majority of empirical emotional

labor research so far has exclusively focused on employee consequences (Grandey, 2003; Morris & Feldman, 1997; Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000; Wharton, 1993). To our knowledge, our model is the first attempt to systematically map the differential effects of emotional labor strategies on customers.

In addition, our aim is to examine several individual-, dyadic-, and organizational-level determinants of emotional labor strategies. Although some previous research has examined several emotional labor antecedents, most of this work has focused on task characteristics specific to the display rules of the organization (e.g., Morris & Feldman, 1996; Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000). By focusing on employee satisfaction as well as factors specific to the service delivery context, we hope to provide a better understanding of these relationships. Such an understanding will provide tools for service managers that enable them to systematically impact their employees' choice of acting strategies.

Customer-Related Outcomes of Emotional Labor

In contrast to the work on positive and negative effects of emotional labor on employee well-being, the effects of emotional labor on customers have remained largely unexplored. This is surprising, given that the effective management of service employees' emotions is an essential task for service marketers and emotional display of employees is likely to influence clients' emotions, behaviors, and attitudes, thereby influencing their buying decisions and perceptions of service quality. In fact, Bitner (1990) suggests that displayed emotions of both customers and employees are an integral part of the service delivery itself.

Existing empirical studies that address the effects of emotional labor on customers are rare (Grandey, 2003; Pugh, 2001; Mattila & Enz, 2002; Tsai, 2001; Tsai & Huang, 2002). All studies on the relationship between emotional labor and customer outcomes do not directly examine the differential effects of various emotional labor strategies. Specifically, the study by Grandey (2003) is the only one addressing the interface of emotional labor and customer outcomes directly, modeling the concept of affective delivery as an outcome of emotional labor and finding support for this impact. However, in her study, affective delivery, defined as the extent to which service delivery is perceived as friendly and warm by customers, was assessed not by customers, but by coworkers of the employee. The studies by Pugh (2001), Mattila and Enz (2002), Tsai (2001), and Tsai and Huang (2002), on the other hand, did not directly focus on emotional labor strategies, but examined the relationship between employee displayed emotions and customer emotions. Although

customer assessments were gathered in all four studies from customers, employee emotions were assessed by independent observers who unobtrusively observed service employees. Obviously, such study design primarily focuses on outwardly displayed emotions but leaves unexplored underlying emotion management processes at the heart of Hochschild's (1983) definition of emotional labor. In other words, a distinction between surface acting and deep acting was not possible in these studies due to the nature of the data collection of employee emotions. In sum, a major contribution of our research is to develop a theoretical model that sheds light on a topic that has received little empirical attention to date, namely the link between employees' emotional labor strategies and resulting customer outcomes.

Antecedents of Employees' Emotional Labor Strategies

Similarly to research on customer outcomes, antecedents of employees' choice of emotional labor strategies have also received limited empirical attention, as the majority of prior research has focused on the consequences but not the determinants of employee emotional labor. Many of the existing studies tend to focus on firm and job characteristics as predictors of emotional labor, such as organizational display rules, supervision, training, and attentiveness as predictors of employees' emotional labor (e.g., Grandey, 2003; Kruml & Geddes, 2000; Morris & Feldman, 1997). In addition, some researchers have investigated dyad characteristics of employee–customer links during service interactions as factors influencing emotional labor, for example, type of service relationship (Grayson, 1998), power of role receiver (Morris & Feldman, 1997), and rapport (Bailey, Gremler, & McCollough, 2001). Recently, some of the focus has shifted to individual-level antecedents of service employees, such as affective, behavioral, and dispositional characteristics, including job satisfaction (Grandey, 2003), personality (Glomb & Tews, 2004), and cognitions (Bailey et al., 2001). The purpose of the proposed theoretical model is to expand this research stream. This will be achieved by examining additional individual-, dyadic-, and organizational-level determinants of emotional labor deemed to be important predictors of employees' choice of emotional labor strategies based on a number of organizational theories.

THEORETICAL MODEL

To understand the consequences of different emotional labor strategies on customer outcomes and to examine determinants of the two emotional labor

strategies, we suggest the theoretical model illustrated in Fig. 1. Basically, we draw on the distinction of surface acting and deep acting as emotional labor strategies (Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983; Totterdell & Holman, 2003). We then argue that the two strategies will have a differential impact on several customer outcome variables, which have been shown to be crucial for a service firm's economic success. Moreover, we also presume that a set of individual-, dyadic-, and firm-level factors exists that determine and influence the choice of the two emotional labor strategies. The proposed relationships of the model are discussed below.

It should be added that our model is based on the assumption that the interaction with a service employee bears the potential to be perceived as beneficial by the customer in that the service offered is interactive and individualized (e.g., hair dressers, medical services, therapists). Although some of the propositions provided might also be applicable to other kinds of services (i.e., less interactive and more standardized), we focus on individual and interactive services when discussing the consequences and antecedents of emotional labor.

Emotional Labor Strategies

With regard to emotion regulation strategies, different strategies have been suggested in the literature that can be applied by service employees to cope with organizational display rules. As discussed earlier, the most prominent distinction of acting strategies was introduced by Hochschild (1983) who distinguishes between surface acting and deep acting. This distinction has been adopted by several other researchers (e.g., Grandey, 2003; Grayson, 1998; Kruml & Geddes, 2000), although some of these authors use slightly different terminology for their constructs. As discussed, in *surface acting*, an employee tries to change only his or her outward appearance and behavior when exhibiting required emotions. For example, when dealing with an angry and annoying customer, an employee may simply put on a smile and pretend to be friendly without changing his or her inner feelings of annoyance with the customer. In *deep acting*, on the other hand, individuals express the required emotions but do so by attempting to summon these emotions within themselves. For example, Hochschild (1983) reports of flight attendants who are trained to deal with angry and annoying passengers by thinking of them as frightened first-time fliers, therefore, changing their inner feelings from annoyance to pity and empathy. Thus, surface acting can be conceptualized as a response-focused regulation strategy, whereas deep acting is an antecedent-focused regulation (Totterdell & Holman, 2003).
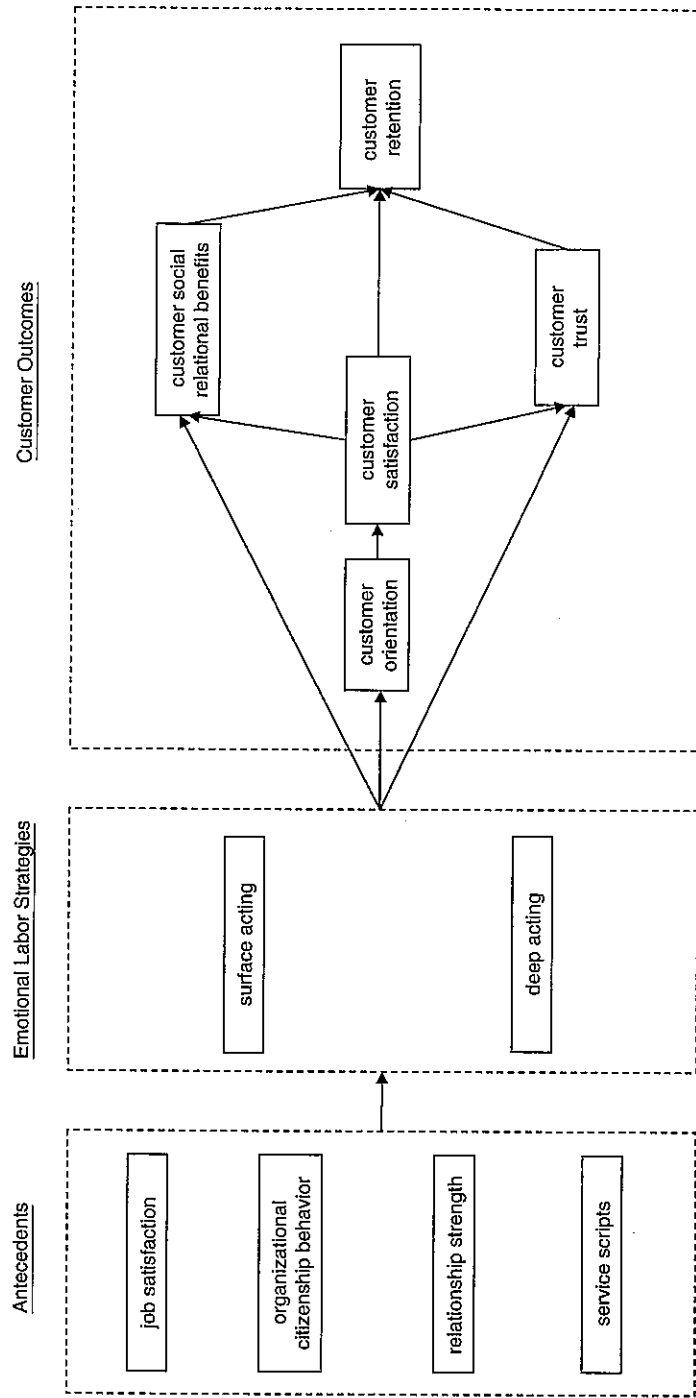
Fig. 1. Theoretical Model of Consequences and Antecedents of Emotional Labor Strategies.

Customer Outcomes of Emotional Labor

Drawing on services management research and emotional labor theory, we suggest that employees' emotional labor strategies influence customer perceptions of employees' customer orientation, customer satisfaction, customer trust in the service provider, the level of social benefits received from the relationship as well as the level of customer retention.

Emotional Labor Strategies and Customer Orientation of Employees and Customer Satisfaction

Customer orientation of the service employee is conceptualized as an employee's efforts to fulfill customer needs, combining elements such as the employee level of pampering the customer, reading customers' needs, and delivering the required service to customers (e.g., Donavan, Brown, & Mowen, 2004; Hennig-Thurau, 2004). In service industries where employees take a pivotal role for service creation and delivery, a high level of employee customer orientation usually implies that customers feel satisfied with the service provided, with satisfaction constituting a customer's cognitive–emotive appraisal of the service provision (Oliver, 1997). Indeed, research on service quality and satisfaction has confirmed that employees' customer orientation is a major determinant of customers' satisfaction with a service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

Because the way that employees regulate and display emotions influences customer perceptions of the service delivery process, we expect that employees' emotional labor strategies impact the level of customer orientation of service employees as perceived by customers and consequently also customers' satisfaction with the service. Specifically, when an employee engages in surface acting, customers may question his or her motivation to provide a maximum level of service, as employees' superficiality signals to customers that employees might act according to prescribed job requirements and without a real concern for the customer's greater needs. Thus, surface acting is expected to have a negative impact on customer orientation and customer satisfaction. In contrast, when employees engage in deep acting, this behavior signals motivation and customer commitment to customers and will have a positive effect on both customer orientation and satisfaction. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 1. Surface acting (deep acting) by service employees has a negative (positive) impact on customers' assessment of service employees' customer orientation and their satisfaction with the service.

Emotional Labor Strategies and Customer Trust

Customer trust is conceptualized as customers' expectations about a firm's future behavior and their subsequent willingness to rely on the exchange partner (e.g., Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). Trust is generally conceptualized as a multidimensional construct, including the dimensions of competence (or credibility) and benevolence (or integrity) (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002).

Surface acting by employees conflicts with customer expectations of honest behavior and may be interpreted by customers as "cheating" (Grandey, 2003). Therefore, surface acting is not compatible with the benevolence dimension of trust and can consequently be expected to have a negative impact on customer trust. Deep acting, on the other hand, requires emotional investments from the employee which will be interpreted by the customer as signal that the employee is interested in a long-term relationship and does not intend to engage in opportunistic behavior, i.e., supporting the development of benevolence trust on the side of the customer. This leads us to the following proposition:

Proposition 2. Surface acting (deep acting) by service employees has a negative (positive) impact on customers' trust in the service firm.

Emotional Labor Strategies and Customer Social Relational Benefits

Customers have been shown to maintain relationships with service providers because of the social benefits associated with such relationships (e.g., Goodwin & Gremler, 1996; Gwinner, Gremler, & Bitner, 1998). Social relational benefits refer to non-functional advantages of a relationship that customers receive, such as the development of rapport, acquaintances, and "commercial friendships" with service employees (e.g., Gremler & Gwinner, 2000; Price & Arnould, 1999). We argue that the extent to which customers experience social relational benefits depends on the emotional labor strategy of the service employee.

Specifically, as social relationships require exchange partners to signal true interest in the other person, the expression of superficial and unauthentic emotions related to surface acting will have a counterproductive effect on social benefits. Moreover, surface acting stresses the emotional distance between employees and customers as employees apply standardized behavior and feigned friendliness instead of treating customers as individuals. In contrast, as deep acting involves a higher level of employee empathy and interest in the customer's well-being, it is likely to be a more appropriate and effective behavior when it comes to social relationships among employees and customers. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 3. Surface acting (deep acting) by service employees has a negative (positive) impact on customer social relational benefits.

Emotional Labor Strategies and Customer Retention

Customer retention is usually considered the key outcome variable of the relationship marketing concept (Rust & Zahorik, 1993), i.e., a company's coordinated efforts to build and maintain lasting relationships with profitable individual customers. Although we do not presume emotional labor to directly impact retention, there are reasons to believe that emotional labor handling strategies affect customer retention through the other outcome variables considered in our model. By drawing on the literature on customer orientation of service employees (e.g., Parasuraman et al., 1988) and relationship quality (e.g., Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997), we propose the following interrelationships among the outcome constructs of our conceptual model:

Proposition 4. Customer orientation of service employees has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.

Proposition 5. Customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer social relational benefits.

Proposition 6. Customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer trust.

Proposition 7. Customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer retention.

Proposition 8. Customer social relational benefits have a positive impact on customer retention.

Proposition 9. Customer trust has a positive impact on customer retention.

Antecedents of Emotional Labor-Handling Strategies

Apart from customer-related outcomes of specific emotional labor strategies, our theoretical model also focuses on a set of predictors of employees' likelihood to engage in either surface acting or deep acting. Specifically, in our proposed model we focus on three kinds of potential antecedents of emotional labor regulation strategies, namely (a) individual-level factors, (b) dyadic factors of the service interaction, and (c) organizational factors. Although a number of antecedents can be expected to exist in each category, we focus on those variables from each category expected to have the strongest impact on employees' choice of emotional labor regulation strategies based on theoretical considerations and previous research findings.

Employee Job Satisfaction and Emotional Labor Strategy
Job satisfaction refers to the positive/negative attitude people have about their jobs (e.g., Churchill, Ford, & Walker, 1974). Findings on the impact of job satisfaction on emotional labor have been somewhat ambiguous, with some authors having found a negative relationship (e.g., Morris & Feldman, 1997) while others reported a positive relationship instead (e.g., Wharton, 1993).

These contradictory results may be due to the fact that job satisfaction has differential effects on emotional labor strategies (Grandey, 2003; Morris & Feldman, 1996). That is, employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs may have to engage in more surface acting in order to bring their displayed emotions in line with organizational display rules, but have difficulties to engage in deep acting because of the emotional investments required by that strategy. Consequently, we expect that the lower the employees' job satisfaction, the more they will engage in surface acting because it requires them to spend less effort than deep acting. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 10. Employees job satisfaction will have a positive impact on deep acting, but a negative impact on surface acting.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Acting Strategy Choice
Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is defined as behavior of individual employees that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that, in the aggregate, promotes the effective functioning of the organization (Organ, 1988, 1990). Within the context of emotional labor, OCB has only recently received attention from researchers. Bailey et al. (2001) were the first to incorporate OCB as a variable in their model of emotional value in service encounters. These authors suggest that displaying emotions in itself may be considered as a form of OCB. Similarly, a relationship between OCB and emotional labor strategies was suggested by Totterdell and Holman (2003).

These studies suggest that employees may regard certain types of emotional labor as voluntary citizenship behavior that goes beyond organizational expectations. Building on this argument, we expect that employees with high levels of OCB will be more likely to engage in deep acting given the higher emotional effort required to deliver this emotional labor strategy. In contrast, when employees' level of OCB is low, they are more likely to prefer to engage in surface acting due to the smaller emotional efforts associated with this strategy type. Thus, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 11. OCB will have a positive impact on deep acting, but a negative impact on surface acting.

Relationship Strength and Emotional Labor Strategy

Another potential antecedent of an employee's emotional labor strategy choice is the strength of the relationship, the employee maintains with an individual customer. In our research, we draw on a conceptualization of service relationships suggested by Gutek and colleagues (Gutek, Bhappu, Liao-Troth, & Cherry, 1999; Gutek, Groth, & Cherry, 2002) who distinguish between interactions of two people who have a shared history of interactions and expect to interact with each other again in the future (i.e., "service relationships") and interactions of people who do not know each other and do not expect to see each other again in the future (i.e., "service encounters"). This distinction can be transformed into a continuum of relationship strength, with long-term, intensive relationships defining a high relationship strength and one-time encounters with unknown customers defining low strength.

When an employee encounters a customer for the first time, he or she is likely to have difficulties in judging the appropriateness of emotional investments and therefore may be more likely to stay away from deep acting behavior, preferring surface acting instead. Surface acting is particularly likely to be applied when employees get the impression that a first-time customer will not use the service offered again in the future, e.g., because the customer is a tourist (i.e., low relationship strength). In contrast, in high relationship strength dyads, emotional investments will be considered more appropriate by the employee, based on the long-term perspective of his or her relationship with the customer. Therefore, employees will tend to apply deep acting when the strength of a relationship is high. We propose the following proposition:

> **Proposition 12.** Relationship strength will have a positive impact on deep acting, but a negative impact on surface acting.

Service Scripts and Acting Strategy Choice

Service employees' performance is never context free, but influenced by norms and requirements of the service organization. A major organizational variable that can be expected to influence employees' choice of emotional labor strategies is the level of service scripts provided by the firm. Service scripts include formal descriptions of the way employees are expected to behave during interactions with customers (Smith & Houston, 1983). They are intended to increase the quality of service delivered through standardizing employee behavior and thereby reducing the level of service heterogeneity. Although service scripts can be found across many different types of services, empirical research on service scripts has been sparse.[1]

The extent to which service employees' behavior is regulated by service scripts is likely to impact employees' choice of emotional labor strategies. Specifically, the more service scripts restrict employee behavior, the more employees will engage in surface acting behavior because employees are prevented by rigid scripts from behaving in a natural, spontaneous way, which is part of a deep acting strategy. When service scripts are less rigid, leaving the employee sufficient space to adapt his or her behavior according to a customer's interests and needs, the employee is more likely to engage in deep acting behavior. Therefore, we offer our final antecedent-related proposition:

Proposition 13. The restrictiveness of service scripts has a negative impact on deep acting, but a positive impact on surface acting.

DISCUSSION

In this article, we developed a theoretical model that links two emotional labor acting strategies, surface acting and deep acting, to a variety of customer outcomes as well as to a number of individual-, dyadic-, and organizational-level antecedents. Given that most emotional labor research to date has focused on employee outcomes (e.g., well-being, job burnout, etc.), our research contributes to the emotions literature by drawing conceptual links between employees' propensity to engage in emotional labor and customers' attitudes and behavioral reactions to such display of emotional labor.

In short, this research focuses on the question of how the customer experience during service encounters can be managed by employing emotional labor strategies of service employees. Among service management and marketing research scholars, the interest in emotional labor is likely to surge. This research contributes to a more sophisticated understanding of the antecedents and outcomes of emotional labor and builds on previous work, which has focused on either emotional labor strategies or its consequences on employee well-being. Our conceptual model and the propositions derived from it support the notion that emotional labor is a relevant phenomenon, yet somewhat overlooked in the services literature, and has an impact on important customer outcomes such as satisfaction, trust, and loyalty behavior.

Theoretical Implications and Directions for Future Research

Our primary theoretical contribution lies in developing a model of emotional labor outcomes and antecedents. It is hoped that our proposed model

will trigger some related future research. Naturally, a fruitful avenue would be an empirical test of our conceptual model. Although we focused on a number of variables deemed to be the most theoretically relevant outcomes and antecedents of emotional labor, there are other potentially important variables not included in our study. Future research may benefit from identifying additional customer attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors in regards to emotional labor that influence their service experience and ultimately affect their customer satisfaction and likelihood to remain loyal with the organization.

Our study also has implications for future research in terms of examining emotional labor strategies in a cross-cultural context. Anecdotal evidence suggests that norms and expectations regarding emotional display vary greatly among different cultures and countries among employees as well as customers. However, to our knowledge, no empirical research has examined the cross-cultural dimensions and implications of emotional labor. The advent of global markets and the fact that organizations operate across national boundaries require companies to become familiar with relevant services-related concepts (such as emotional labor) across different cultures. Thus, the relationships discussed in this article can be expected to be influenced by cultural variables. To understand the effects of culture on emotional labor, it would be especially important to examine communication patterns (verbal as well as non-verbal) as a component of culture, which is essential to any customer–employee interaction. A wealth of research has shown that cultures differ with regard to their communication styles and with regard to the importance they attach to verbally expressed messages (e.g., Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Guirdham, 1999; Hall, 1976). Future research may compare data collected from different cultures to explore whether emotional labor strategies and their antecedents and consequences are culture sensitive, i.e., differ across various countries and cultures.

Managerial Implications

It is hoped that by specifying the phenomenon of emotional labor, appropriate steps can be identified and taken by managers to improve service delivery. Our research advances managers' understanding of the customer experience of service delivery by showing how to strengthen customers' relationships with the service organization through increased satisfaction and retention based on a better understanding of customer perceptions of emotional display strategies of service employees. The knowledge generated by this research is not limited to service firms, but will also be of use to

consumer goods companies that offer consumers interaction opportunities to increase the effectiveness of their customer-contact management.

Moving from the general to the specific, one practical implication of this research relates to employee training. Our conceptual model offers managers, implications as to how training programs need to be designed to target customers' emotional needs and improve employee performance. Our theoretical model suggests that there are benefits associated with training service employees in different emotional labor strategies as well as with a better understanding of the effects that emotional components of service delivery have on customers. For example, by applying the customer equity concept (Blattberg, Getz, & Thomas, 2001), employees could be taught that deep acting should be used when dealing with loyal and frequent customers, while surface acting is more appropriate for less frequent customers. We hope that by contributing to a better understanding of the characteristics and consequences of emotional labor among managers, organizations will be able to more effectively manage emotional demands of their employees and, consequently, create a better service experience for their customers.

NOTES

1. As a matter of fact, the authors are not aware of a single study that has empirically investigated service scripts.

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