# A predictive study of emotional labor and turnover

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**Summary**      The current study examined how the emotional labor strategies of deep acting and surface acting directly influence emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions, and indirectly impact actual turnover among a sample of bank tellers. Turnover data were collected from organizational records 6 months after participants responded to a survey that measured emotional labor strategies, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intentions. Results showed that turnover intentions mediated the relationship between deep acting and actual turnover. Additionally, surface acting had indirect effects on turnover through emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions. Copyright © 2009 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Introduction

Emotional labor, the regulation of feelings and expressions at work (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983), is a critical aspect of many jobs that require employees to interact with customers, coworkers, and the public. Service organizations specify emotional display requirements and employees must actively regulate both their emotions and emotional displays to meet these requirements. Since Hochschild's (1983) seminal work on the management of human feelings in the workplace, many researchers have elaborated on this view and provided empirical evidence that emotional labor is a central part of everyday work life for many employees (e.g., Bolton, 2005; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). With the expansion of the service economy and increased competition among service providers (Korczynski, 2002), managing emotions in the workplace will continue to increase in importance (MacDonald & Sirianni, 1996; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Pugliesi, 1999).

   Hochschild's (1983) dramaturgical approach to emotional labor states that emotional labor consists of the effortful use of *surface acting* and *deep acting* to conform to display expectations (Grandey, 2000). Surface acting involves suppressing one's felt emotions and faking the desired emotional display. Consequently, surface acting is considered to be ''acting in bad faith'' because it entails

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modifying emotional displays without changing internal feelings (Grandey, 2003; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). On the other hand, deep acting involves actually changing one's feelings in order to elicit the appropriate emotional display. Accordingly, deep acting is considered to be "acting in good faith" because it involves trying to change internal emotional states to match organizational expectations (Grandey, 2003; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987).

Researchers have empirically shown that the distinction between surface and deep acting may help explain how emotional labor can result in both positive and negative outcomes. Specifically, surface acting is generally related to negative outcomes, such as personal inauthenticity, lower ratings of affective delivery, depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, dissatisfaction, and burnout because of its focus on only changing displays rather than changing feelings (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Gosserand, 2003; Grandey, 2003; Grandey, Fisk, & Steiner, 2005; Grandey, Fisk, Matilla, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005; Totterdell & Holman, 2003). Conversely, deep acting, with its focus on changing felt emotions, is more likely to lead to positive outcomes, such as personal authenticity, personal accomplishment, lower likelihood of revealing negative emotions, and enhanced job satisfaction and performance (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Grandey, 2000; Grandey, 2003; Grandey, Fisk, Matilla, et al., 2005; Totterdell & Holman, 2003).

Several researchers have suggested that withdrawal behaviors may be an outcome of emotional labor (Abraham, 1999; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Côté & Morgan, 2002; Grandey, 2000; Rubin, Tardino, Daus, & Munz, 2005; Zerbe, 2000). For example, Grandey (2000) argued that emotion management increases physiological arousal, which may lead individuals to withdraw from their work and eventually quit. Previous research has demonstrated that emotional labor influences turnover intentions (e.g., Abraham, 1999; Wong & Law, 2002), but no empirical work has examined how emotional labor impacts actual turnover. Consistent with prior theory (e.g., Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002), we expected that surface and deep acting should have different relationships with turnover. Specifically, surface acting may contribute to increased turnover due to its effortful nature, creation of emotional dissonance, and associated emotional exhaustion, whereas deep acting may decrease turnover due to the authentic, positive emotions elicited by this strategy.

The purpose of this study is therefore to examine the relationships between deep acting, surface acting, turnover intentions, and actual turnover, as shown in Figure 1, in a predictive study. In the following sections, we first integrate emotional labor and turnover research and articulate the
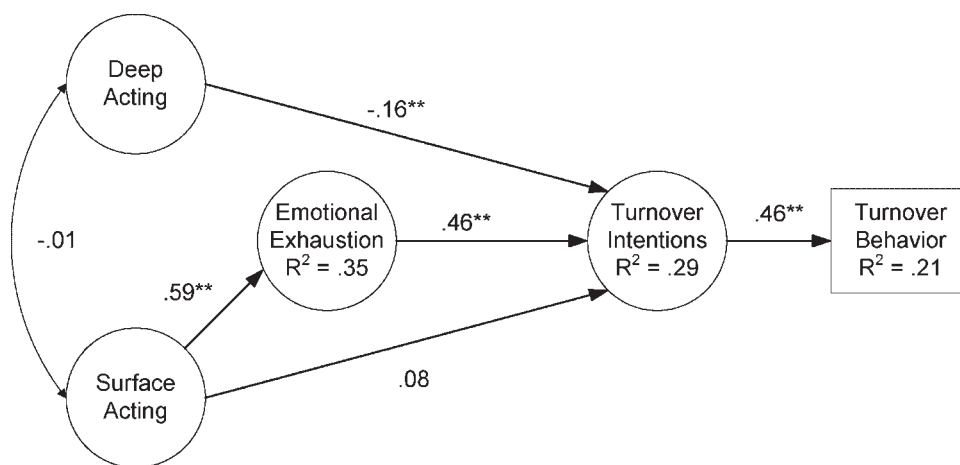


Figure 1. Test of hypothesized model. *Note*: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

theoretical links between constructs in these two domains. We then develop hypotheses linking the emotional labor strategies to turnover through turnover intentions and emotional exhaustion.

## Integrating emotional labor with turnover theory

Historically, most perspectives on turnover have placed turnover as the final outcome of a relatively slow, deliberate process wherein employees evaluate their jobs, develop negative perceptions, take steps to secure future employment, and then finally quit. For example, Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, and Meglino's (1979) conceptual model of employee turnover links job perceptions to a cognitive process of evaluating job satisfaction and the utility of the present and anticipated future job. This evaluation generates intentions to turnover, which then shape actual turnover. Hom and colleagues (Griffeth & Hom, 2001; Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Hom & Kinicki, 2001) modified and further refined Mobley et al.'s (1979) theory, showing similar support for longitudinal models in which attitudinal evaluations lead to withdrawal cognitions, a job search process, and ultimately turnover. It is noteworthy that these models also fit with research on attitudes, intentions, and behaviors that demonstrates that intentions are the most proximal predictor of behaviors (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992).

Consistent with this reasoning, we do not expect that emotional labor will directly influence turnover. Emotional labor is a relatively mundane experience that is common to many jobs (Glomb & Tews, 2004) and is unlikely to represent a ''shock'' that prompts immediate turnover decisions (Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996). Rather, we expect that job perceptions and turnover intentions will carry the influence of emotional labor to turnover, suggesting a less direct link. This sequential pattern of relationships, as shown in Figure 1, expands on past research by allowing us to test how turnover intentions and emotional exhaustion mediate the emotional labor–turnover relationships. Previous findings have only tied emotional labor to turnover intentions, which presents an important limitation because intentions are not necessarily strong predictors of actual behaviors (e.g., Madden et al., 1992). For example, Allen, Weeks, and Moffitt (2005) demonstrated that the relationship between turnover intentions and turnover was moderate and dependent on many moderator variables, such as self-monitoring and locus of control. Consequently, it is inappropriate to make generalizations about the effects of emotional labor on turnover based on findings concerning turnover intentions. The primary purpose of this study is to provide the first test of the potential indirect effects of emotional labor on actual turnover.

## Indirect effects of surface acting on turnover

As we previously described, surface acting is generally associated with more detrimental outcomes for individuals and organizations than is deep acting. Theoretical support for the link from surface acting to turnover intentions can be found in theory and research on emotional dissonance (Grandey, 2000). Emotional dissonance is an uncomfortable state that occurs when felt emotions are discrepant from emotional displays, which always occurs when people surface act. Research on emotional dissonance indicates that this experience is uncomfortable, and that employees are consequently motivated to remove themselves from situations in which emotional dissonance occurs. For example, Zerbe (2000) and Abraham (1999) demonstrated that emotional dissonance resulted in increased turnover intentions. Because emotional dissonance and surface acting are conceptually similar constructs (Grandey, 2003; Rubin et al., 2005; Zammuner & Galli, 2005), we expect that high surface acting will have a direct, positive effect on turnover intentions.

The second link in the chain, from turnover intentions to turnover, is well established in the literature (e.g., Allen & Griffeth, 2001; Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003). Many existing turnover models place

withdrawal cognitions and intentions as the immediate antecedents to turnover (e.g., Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Hom & Kinicki, 2001). However, despite existing research support for these two bivariate links, no existing research has tested the full indirect effect of surface acting on actual turnover via turnover intentions. We expect that the emotional dissonance associated with surface acting will prompt cognitions about turnover, and these turnover intentions will ultimately lead to turnover. Thus, we do not expect that surface acting will have a direct effect on turnover, but rather that this effect will be fully mediated by turnover intentions.

> *Hypothesis 1*: Turnover intentions fully mediate the relationship between surface acting and turnover, yielding a positive indirect effect from surface acting to turnover.

Figure 1 includes an additional mediated path that explains another means by which surface acting contributes to turnover intentions. We previously hypothesized that the emotional dissonance inherent in surface acting should contribute directly to turnover intentions. However, we also expect that the effort that goes into faking an emotional expression should result in high levels of emotional exhaustion that further contribute to turnover intentions. Emotional exhaustion is the central component of burnout that is characterized by depleted emotional resources and feeling exhausted due to one's work (Maslach & Jackson, 1986; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Research has consistently indicated that surface acting is an antecedent of emotional exhaustion (Bono & Vey, 2005; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Grandey, 2000; Grandey, 2003). For example, Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) found that surface acting was positively related to emotional exhaustion, suggesting that this effect occurred because surface acting results in inauthentic displays, yielding greater internal tension and physiological effort that manifests itself as feeling emotionally drained (Morris & Feldman, 1996; Morris & Feldman, 1997). Further, a variety of past studies have shown that emotional exhaustion is positively related to turnover intentions (e.g., Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003; Westman & Eden, 1997). For example, Lee and Ashforth's (1996) meta-analysis found a .44 correlation between these constructs.

Thus, prior work suggests that surface acting will have both a direct, positive effect on turnover intentions and an indirect, positive effect on turnover intentions through increased emotional exhaustion. We therefore expect that emotional exhaustion will partially mediate the relationship between surface acting and turnover intentions in our model.

> *Hypothesis 2*: Emotional exhaustion will partially mediate the relationship between surface acting and turnover intentions, yielding a positive indirect effect.

## Indirect effects of deep acting on turnover

Past research has shown that deep acting tends to yield a more positive set of outcomes than surface acting (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Grandey, 2000; Grandey, 2003; Grandey, Fisk, Matilla, et al., 2005; Totterdell & Holman, 2003). Consistent with this work, we expect that deep acting will be negatively associated with turnover intentions. Customer service positions, like bank telling, are categorized as *integrative occupations* (Wharton & Erickson, 1993), which have emotional display requirements to express positive emotions and hide negative emotions. Deep acting in this context involves trying to feel internally positive, which yields an authentic, positive emotional display. Thus, when employees engage in deep acting to conform to these display rules, it should result in more positive emotional experiences for the employee (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 2002).

Research outside of the domain of emotional labor has shown that positive affective experiences and job attitudes are associated with reduced turnover (Hom & Kinicki, 2001; Posthuma, Joplin, & Maertz, 2005; Spector & Jex, 1991; Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, & de Chermont, 2003). For example,

George and Jones (1996) found that positive moods were negatively related to turnover intentions, and satisfaction was shown to play an important part in many turnover models (e.g., Hom & Kinicki, 2001). Because deep acting in customer service contexts should yield positive emotions consistent with the desired positive emotional expressions, we expect that employees who engage in deep acting will experience more positive affect at work, and will therefore be less likely to form an intention to turnover. Given again that turnover intentions are related to turnover (Hom & Griffeth, 1991), we see evidence that the positive experiences associated with deep acting should yield an indirect, negative effect on turnover.

> *Hypothesis 3*: Turnover intentions mediate the relationship between deep acting and turnover, yielding a negative indirect effect from deep acting to turnover.

An examination of Figure 1 indicates that we have not hypothesized an indirect effect from deep acting to turnover intentions via emotional exhaustion as we did with surface acting. Several studies have found no link between deep acting and emotional exhaustion. For example, Grandey (2003) found that deep acting was unrelated to emotional exhaustion. She interpreted this lack of relationship by theorizing that, although deep acting requires effort, it also results in payoffs, such as low emotional dissonance and high positive reactions from customers. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) made a similar argument, and they too found no relationship between deep acting and emotional exhaustion. Thus, we hypothesize that deep acting will only shape turnover through turnover intentions because we do not expect that deep acting will relate to emotional exhaustion.

# Methods

## Sample

A total of 263 bank tellers from a regional banking organization in the Midwestern United States participated in this study. The average age of participants was 38 years old. Women made up 95 per cent of the sample. Approximately 92.7 per cent of the sample was Caucasian, 4.6 per cent were African American, and the remaining 2.8 per cent classified themselves as Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, or American Indian/Alaskan Native. Average job tenure was approximately 4 years.

Bank tellers are frontline service providers requiring high levels of control over their emotions. For example, tellers' work activities include communicating with supervisors and peers, establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships with customers, and performing for or working directly with the public, and they are often called upon to display warmth and confidence (Zerbe, 2000). In addition, the O\*NET (Anderson, Mumford, Borman, Jeanneret, & Fleishman, 1999) indicates that teller work styles require being sensitive to others' needs and feelings, being pleasant with others on the job, displaying a good-natured, cooperative attitude, and being personally connected with others on the job. These requirements suggest that bank tellers are an excellent sample for investigating emotional labor. Further, it is noteworthy that this bank emphasized good customer service and selling bank services when interacting with customers, which further enhanced the emotional labor demands of the sample.

## Procedure

One month before the start of data collection, all 998 tellers in the bank were sent a letter describing the purpose of the study and directions for accessing the online survey. During the data collection period, approximately 26 per cent of the tellers ($n = 259$) completed the online survey, which included

measures of surface and deep acting, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intentions. Although somewhat low, this response rate is comparable to past research using a similar methodology (Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004). Further, because our measures were embedded in a broad, non-threatening attitude survey and respondents were blind to our interest in emotional labor and turnover, we have little reason to believe that self-selection bias could distort our results.

Six months after the survey was delivered, the first author accessed objective organizational records to gather data on turnover. Organizational records indicated that the turnover rate for the sampled tellers within this 6-month span was 17 per cent.

## Measures

Unless otherwise noted, all variables were self-report and assessed with a five-point Likert-type response scale with anchors ranging from $1 =$ strongly disagree to $5 =$ strongly agree.

### Surface acting
Surface acting was measured with the seven items reported by Diefendorff, Croyle, and Gosserand (2005), which originated with Kruml and Geddes (2000), Brotheridge and Lee (2003), and Brotheridge and Lee (2002). The items assess the extent to which employees fake unfelt emotions and/or suppress felt emotions ($\alpha = .96$). Sample items include ''I put on an act in order to deal with customers in an appropriate way'' and ''I fake a good mood when interacting with customers.''

### Deep acting
Deep acting was measured with the four-item scale reported in Diefendorff et al. (2005). These items were adapted from Kruml and Geddes (2000), Brotheridge and Lee (2003), and Brotheridge and Lee (2002). The items measure the extent to which employees report they modify their felt emotions so that genuine displays follow ($\alpha = .89$). Sample items include ''I work at developing the feelings inside of me that I need to show to customers'' and ''I work hard to feel the emotions that I need to show to customers.''

### Emotional exhaustion
An adaptation of Wharton's (1993) six-item emotional exhaustion scale was used to assess employees' feeling of being ''used up'' at the end of the workday ($\alpha = .92$). Sample items include ''I feel emotionally drained from my work'' and ''I feel burned out from my work.''

### Turnover intentions
An adaptation of Hom, Griffeth, and Sellaro's (1984) three-item turnover intentions scale was used to measure employees' intention to leave the organization ($\alpha = .97$). A sample item is ''I intend to leave the organization in the next 12 months.'' The items in this scale referenced a 12-month timeframe because we intended to collect turnover data again one year after collecting our original self-report data. However, we were unable to collect this second round of turnover data due to changes in the bank's management.

### Turnover
Turnover was assessed using organizational records 6 months after the online study. Turnover was coded as a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not the participant was still employed by the organization.

# Results

## Tests of model fit

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations, correlations, and internal consistency reliabilities (on the diagonal) for the observed scale score variables. All correlations reported with turnover are point-biserial correlations as turnover is a dichotomous variable. As shown in Table 1, all of our scales exhibited acceptable levels of reliability.

We tested the structural model shown in Figure 1 using MPlus v. 4.21 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2007). However, a critical assumption of SEM, that all variables are continuous and normally distributed, was violated by our dichotomous turnover data. Research indicates that the maximum likelihood estimation procedure that is typically used with SEM produces relatively accurate parameter estimates under conditions of non-normality, but as non-normality increases, the $\chi^2$ statistic becomes inflated and the standard errors of the parameter estimates become more pronounced (Chou, Bentler, & Satorra, 1991; Finch, West, & MacKinnon, 1997; West, Finch, & Curran, 1995). Consequently, we followed the recommendations of Finney and DiStefano (2006) and adopted a weighted least squares estimator with a mean- and variance-adjusted $\chi^2$ (WLSMV). This procedure represents a good balance of correction for severe non-normality without requiring a larger sample size than we had available for our analyses.

One challenge to using WLSMV is that the interpretation of the $\chi^2$ statistics to evaluate model fit is difficult because the statistic is mean-adjusted and the degrees of freedom are estimated to approximate a $\chi^2$ distribution. As a result, a simple $\chi^2$-difference test to compare the measurement and structural models cannot be performed; the difference between any two mean-and-variance-adjusted $\chi^2$ statistics yields a value that is not distributed as $\chi^2$, and is therefore conceptually meaningless. To compensate for this problem, Muthén and Muthén (1998–2007, pp. 313–314) developed a procedure to perform $\chi^2$ difference testing with WLSMV estimation. This procedure estimates the less-restrictive measurement model, saves its derivatives, and then compares the fit of the more restrictive structural model to the derivatives. The resulting value is distributed as $\chi^2$ and is interpretable.

Given these caveats, the data fit both the measurement model ($\chi^2$ (27) = 66.33, $p < .01$; TLI = .94; RMSEA = .07; WRMR = .56) and the structural model ($\chi^2$ (18) = 42.55, $p < .01$; TLI = .94; RMSEA = .06; WRMR = .67) quite well. Based on the difference testing procedure outlined by Muthén and Muthén (1998–2007), we found that both models fit the data equally well ($\Delta\chi^2$ (3) = 6.69, $p = .08$), providing support for the more parsimonious structural model as expected. Results of the structural model with path coefficients and effect sizes are shown in Figure 1. Note that the path

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  Surface acting | .96 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.  Deep acting | .03 | .89 |  |  |  |  |
| 3.  Emotional exhaustion | .56* | −.08 | .92 |  |  |  |
| 4.  Turnover intentions | .36* | −.15* | .49* | .97 |  |  |
| 5.  Tenure | −.06 | .11 | −.10 | −.14* | — |  |
| 6.  Turnover | .10 | −.09 | .14* | .40* | −.21* | — |
| Mean | 2.44 | 3.56 | 2.65 | 2.10 | 4.16 | — |
| SD | .97 | 0.86 | .91 | 1.14 | 5.64 | — |

*Note*: *$p < .05$.

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coefficient between turnover intentions and turnover ($\beta = .46$, $p < .01$) is a probit regression coefficient because turnover is a dichotomous criterion.

### Tests of hypotheses

James, Mulaik, and Brett (2006) noted that tests of partial mediation are quite similar in both a regression and SEM framework. Accordingly, we tested Hypothesis 1, which predicted that turnover intentions would mediate the relationship between surface acting and turnover, using SEM. This hypothesis was not supported as surface acting did not have a significant influence on turnover intentions ($\beta = .06$, ns). Hypothesis 2 stated that emotional exhaustion would mediate the relationship between surface acting and turnover intentions. We found support for Hypothesis 2 with a significant indirect effect ($\alpha\beta = .24$, $p < .01$), indicating that the effort associated with surface acting contributes to exhaustion, which enhances turnover intentions.

Given support for Hypothesis 2, we examined the extended meditational chain from surface acting to emotional exhaustion, turnover intentions, and turnover as an exploratory analysis. Interestingly, we found support for this more complex chain of relationships by observing a significant indirect relationship between surface acting and turnover via exhaustion and intentions ($\alpha\beta\gamma = .11$, $p < .01$). Therefore, our results concerning surface acting indicate that its effects on turnover occur through both exhaustion and turnover intentions, consistent with turnover theory (e.g., Hom & Griffeth, 1991). Our results show that employees who surface act become emotionally exhausted, engage in cognition about withdrawing from the job, and then finally quit.

Hypothesis 3 stated that turnover intentions would mediate the effect of deep acting on turnover. We found support for this hypothesis. Consistent with our expectations, we found that deep acting was negatively related to turnover intentions, and had a significant indirect effect through turnover intentions on turnover ($\alpha\beta = -.07$, $p < .05$). These results suggest that employees who deep act are consequently less inclined to develop cognitions about turnover and to actually leave the organization.

# Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine whether emotional labor is indirectly related to actual turnover, and more specifically, whether surface and deep acting have different effects on turnover. Our results largely supported our hypotheses. We found that surface acting had an indirect, positive effect on turnover intentions (through emotional exhaustion), as well as an indirect effect on actual turnover (through emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions). We also found that deep acting had a negative, indirect effect on turnover through lowered turnover intentions. Thus, consistent with prior theory (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002) our results provide evidence that the emotional labor strategies adopted by employees have different effects on organizational turnover and operate through different mechanisms. These findings are meaningful because they demonstrate that the emotional labor process influences turnover decisions over time, a conclusion that past research has only inferred from cross-sectional findings concerning turnover intentions. Below, we discuss the implications of these findings for future research and practice.

## Implications for future research

Our results are supportive of past theoretical models that suggest that emotional labor strategies should have differential effects on actual withdrawal behaviors (e.g., Grandey, 2000). However, there are many additional directions for future research that could supplement and expand on our findings. For example, an important extension of the current study would be to examine how emotional labor influences voluntary and involuntary turnover (Shaw, Delery, Jenkins, & Gupta, 1998). In the present study, the nature of the organization's data prohibited the separation of voluntary and involuntary instances of turnover. Given that emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions may be more strongly related to voluntary turnover than involuntary turnover, we expect that even stronger relationships may be evident if turnover data could be categorized in this fashion.

Another useful complement to this study would be to replicate our findings with additional individual differences included in the model. For example, John and Gross (2007) noted that individual differences in stress coping styles are related to emotion regulation strategies. Given that the appraisal of stress is also related to turnover (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998), there is evidence that we could predict more of the variance in turnover and better understand why employees choose a particular emotional labor strategy if we included more individual differences in future tests of our hypotheses.

## Implications for practice

Our findings have important implications for practitioners. Research indicates that turnover costs can range from 93 to 200 per cent of a departing employee's annual salary (Griffeth & Hom, 2001) and that turnover rates are especially high in customer service industries (Korczynski, 2002). The results of this study show that service organizations can reduce personnel losses by discouraging surface acting and encouraging deep acting, which would in turn lower emotional exhaustion, turnover intentions, and actual turnover. We stress that tellers who engage in surface acting and become exhausted are not necessarily undesirable employees who are better off leaving. Rather, they may be good employees who are merely engaging in a self-defeating strategy aimed at appropriately controlling their emotional displays.

Consistent with this idea, our results also suggest that targeted emotional labor interventions may possibly reduce turnover by orienting employees to more promising means of controlling emotional displays. It is noteworthy that emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions conveyed the influence of surface acting on turnover. This finding implies that surface acting may gradually wear down employees, resulting in thoughts of quitting, and ultimately leaving the organization (Hom & Kinicki, 2001). This mode of turnover stands in sharp contrast to immediate turnover decisions without turnover cognitions, such as those proposed in some of the pathways of Lee et al.'s (1996) unfolding model. Organizations therefore may have time to react to the mounting consequences of surface acting and emotional exhaustion before employees choose to quit.

For example, Parkinson and Totterdell (Parkinson & Totterdell, 1999; Totterdell & Parkinson, 1999) have demonstrated that employees can be trained to use different emotion management strategies successfully on the job. Their studies have distinguished between two broad classes of strategies, namely *engagement* strategies that direct attention or effort towards current mood and challenges, such as reappraisal or social support; and *diversion* strategies that direct attention or effort away from the current situation, such as avoidance. They found that participants instructed to use engagement strategies reported more positive moods and a better ability to withstand emotional demands. Based on these findings, it seems likely that training employees to use specific emotional labor strategies (i.e., deep acting instead of surface acting) may have some promise.

*Limitations*

Although our findings have important implications for emotional labor research and organizational practice, there are several limitations to note. First, the sample did not possess much demographic variability. Specifically, the sample was 95 per cent female and 92.7 per cent Caucasian, which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other contexts. Additional research is needed to replicate these findings on a more diverse sample, including more men and ethnic minorities. This is particularly important given research indicating cross-cultural differences in emotional display management strategies (e.g., Matsumoto, Yoo, Hirayama, & Petrova, 2005). Moreover, our sample came from a single organization and occupation, suggesting that our findings should be replicated in other contexts. However, it is important to note that our sample of bank tellers is a highly appropriate one for studying emotional labor.

We also acknowledge several limitations in our data collection approach. The organizational survey used to collect most of our variables introduces the potential for common method variance to distort our findings (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Although we collected turnover data from a different, objective source 6 months later, future research should attempt to replicate our findings using data collected with a wider variety of methodologies. Lastly, as noted previously, we were unable to separate voluntary and involuntary turnover in this study. Additional research is needed to examine these outcomes separately.

*Conclusion*

The present study represents the first test of the relationship between emotional labor and actual turnover. Our results indicate that emotional labor is an antecedent of turnover, and that the specific strategy of emotional labor utilized by employees has implications for their turnover intentions. These findings have the potential to help organizations shape emotional labor experiences in ways that may reduce both employees' emotional exhaustion and their desire to leave the organization.

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