

Emotion at Work: To What Extent are We Expressing, Suppressing, or Faking It?

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Emotions and emotion management are a prominent feature of organizational life and the concept of emotional labour was coined to describe the effort required to fake or suppress an emotional display because of the demands of the work role. Although much qualitative work has been conducted to investigate emotional labour, no attempts have been made to measure the degree to which this emotion work occurs. This omission is partly due to the difficulties in defining the construct and dimensions of emotional labour and this article discusses previous attempts at definition and reconceptualizes the concept in order to allow the development of a measurement tool. The process of development and testing of the tool within 12 UK companies is the focus of the remainder of the article and leads directly to the first quantitative answer to the question, to what extent *are* we expressing, suppressing, and faking emotion at work? Results suggest that emotional labour is performed in almost two-thirds of workplace communications, both at and away from the frontline. Implications for practitioners and researchers are outlined.

INTRODUCTION

A key component of work performed by many workers has been the presentation of emotions that are specified and desired by their organizations

—Morris & Feldman, 1996, p. 987

Emotions and emotion management are a prominent feature of organizational life as the above quote goes some way to illustrate. In recent years, the concept of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) has been presented as a means of describing the management of feeling to create a publicly observable and desirable emotional display as part of the job role. Examples of emotional labourers abound. Consider the cocktail waitress who must continually appear “exuberant

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and friendly”, even to abusive customer, if tips are to be forthcoming (Spradley & Mann, 1975), or the doctor who must suppress her feelings in front of patients, only to “cry or weep when patients left her surgery”, (Jones, 1996, p. 7). Consider also the shopfloor charged with enforcing work rules he personally thinks “inane” (Dunkerley, 1975), or the police officer who is required to be “calm and dispassionate in the face of human misery” (Martin, 1980), or even the worker who told Hochschild (1983, p. 118) that “even when people are paid to be nice, it's hard for them to be nice at all times”. In each of these settings, managing one's emotions is crucial to successful role performance.

Qualitative research has provided a range of evidence to suggest that emotional labour is performed in a wide variety of work roles including flight attendants (Hochschild, 1983), supermarket cashiers (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989, 1990; Tolich, 1993), debt collectors (Sutton, 1991), nurses (James, 1989) and police detectives (Stenross & Kleinman, 1989). Few quantitative empirical studies aimed at measuring the extent to which emotional labour is performed, however, have been attempted and this may be due, not only to the relative newness of the field, but also to confusion and problems in defining the construct and components of the concept of emotional labour.

Emotional labour: The construct

Emotional labour is defined variously as “the work role requirements concerning the display of appropriate emotions to create an impression as desired by an employer” (Bailey, 1996, p. 2) and “the effort, planning and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transaction” (Morris & Feldman, 1996, p. 987). The emphasis thus ranges from the internal effort on the one hand, to the external behavioural display on the other. But, which part is “emotional labour”? Is it the *effort* required to display emotions not genuinely felt or to hide emotions that are felt, or is it the external expectations resulting in the actual faked *display* itself? This distinction is crucial if emotional labour is to be measured in an empirical way.

Two previous published attempts to operationalize emotional labour illustrate this distinction. The first was by Hochschild (1983) who, despite defining emotional labour in terms of the internal state (and, indeed, suggesting that this internal labour may relate to negative outcomes in terms of stress and burnout), attempted to measure it in terms of external characteristics of the job (degree of interpersonal contact, external expectations on employees concerning emotional display, and external control exerted by the employer on emotional states). Thirteen years later, Morris and Feldman (1996) integrated this apparent contradiction into a model of emotional labour that included both an internal component (the conflict experienced because of the discrepancy between genuine and expected emotion) and an external component (the demands made on employees in terms of expectations or intensity of display).

Emotional labour: Its components

Initially, emotional labour was thought to be a unidimensional construct in terms of frequency of contact with customers (the emphasis has always been on the customer–organizational interface rather than away from it). Although this was Hochschild's earlier (1979) approach, this has still been maintained in more recent years; for instance James (1993, p. 96) describes emotional labour as “an integral ... part of employment that involves contact with people”. Brotheridge (1998) points out that it may be this unidimensional conceptualization that has concealed hypothesized relationships between emotional labour and negative consequences such as stress, since several empirical studies using this conceptualization have failed to find such a link. Morris and Feldman (1996) argue that frequency of emotional display is only one of four dimensions of emotional labour; the others are attentiveness to display rules (including intensity and duration of emotional display), variety of emotions expressed, and emotional dissonance (akin to cognitive dissonance, this is the psychological strain experience when there is a discrepancy between emotions felt and those expressed). The first three components relate to states external of the labourer, whereas the fourth dimension, emotional dissonance, relates to the internal state or conflict.

Each of the four dimensions was individually hypothesized to increase the mental effort involved in the transaction. The implication in this was that each on its own was necessary and sufficient to produce “emotional labour” and thus, any attempt to measure the construct would need to: (1) quantify the degree to which respondents attended to *display rules* (defined by Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989, p. 8, as “behavioral expectations about which emotions ought to be expressed and which ought to be hidden”), (2) measure the degree to which discrepancy was experienced between felt and expressed emotion, (3) quantify the range of emotions expressed, as well as (4) the frequency, duration, intensity of emotional display. According to Morris and Feldman's model, the more dimensions experienced, the more emotional labour is being performed. However, confusion lies in the fact that they acknowledge that each dimension on its own may be not be a sufficient indicator of emotional labour yet nor are all dimensions necessary indicators. That is, no one dimension alone fully encapsulates emotional labour yet neither are all four necessary. For example, they admit that conceptualization of emotional labour only in terms of frequency of appropriate emotional display is not enough because it does not capture any internal elements such as planning or control. Similarly, emotional labour could exist without the variety of emotional display dimension since some occupations may restrict the range of emotions that is permitted to be expressed, thus restricting this particular dimension as an indicator of emotional labour.

This difficulty in deciding what exactly does contribute to the construct of emotional labour makes measurement issues especially problematic. If we are

not entirely sure what emotional labour is, how can it be measured? In the light of these difficulties, it is worth addressing a more basic question concerning the issue of whether there is any real value to be gained from developing a measure of emotional labour at all.

Why measure emotional labour?

Emotional labour performance is thought to be associated with a range of consequences, some of which are potentially functional and others dysfunctional for the organization and the individual.

Selling more products, dealing with customer complaints adequately (and thus ensuring repeated business or “*encore*” gains), ensuring the smooth-running of communicative interactions—even obtaining confessions from criminals (Arther & Caputo, 1959) are all positive outcomes thought to be associated with the performance of emotional work. As Hochschild (1983, p. 9) said, “Emotional labour is potentially good. No customer wants to deal with a surly waitress, a crabby bank clerk or a flight attendant who avoids eye contact.” From the organization's perspective, theories of human memory and learning may explain why organizations whose employees display pleasant emotions (that appear genuine) may promote organizational goals. The emotional front that clients or customers associate with a particular organization may influence the decision to use the services offered by that company. Evidence from laboratory studies indicates that positive feelings about an event make it more accessible to memory and more likely to come to mind (e.g. Isen & Shalke, 1982). Research by Westbrook (1980) suggests that these findings may be generalized to organizational settings; Westbrook reported that customers who have felt good about a particular product (that is, their mood was better, they were optimistic, and they expressed general life satisfaction) were more likely to remember the store the next time they consider where to shop. This could even mark the start of an operant conditioning cycle (Skinner, 1953) whereby the emotions displayed are the reinforcers and patronizing that organization is the reinforced behaviour. A similar cycle may operate when debtors want to avoid the negative emotions displayed by debt collectors; the unpleasant emotional behaviour of the role occupants may act as negative reinforcement. Target persons display negatively reinforced behaviours (i.e. they pay their debts) in order to avoid the role occupants' unpleasant behaviour.

On the other hand, emotional labour is a “double-edged sword” (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993, p. 96) which is thought to have negative outcomes for the labourer. Wharton (1993, p. 209) puts it succinctly when she suggests that “this job demand, unique to occupations involving emotional labor, can be viewed as one source of job-related stress”. Parkinson (1991, p. 430) points out that “keeping the customer happy does not necessarily imply that the employee herself is happy”. It is argued (e.g. Hochschild, 1983) that portraying emotions

that are not felt creates the strain mentioned earlier of *emotive dissonance*. This state drives the individual to reduce the tension by achieving consonance by attempting to change one of the cognitions so that they are no longer inconsistent. Frequently or constantly maintaining a difference between feeling and feigning leads to strain. Although emotive dissonance, like cognitive dissonance, is an unstable state, reducing the dissonance is problematic. Emotional labourers can reduce the strain by either changing what they *feel* or by changing what they *feign*. As Van Maanen and Kunda (1989, p. 92) point out “if the feeling gives way and comes into line with the display, authenticity ... may suffer, for the employee's sense of self begins to move to the rhythms of corporate ups and downs”). It is as if “one's feelings have been given over to a third party to manage” (Newton, 1995, p. 130). If on the other hand, display gives way, “inappropriate passions may be released that may cost the wayward worker a job” (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989, p. 92).

Other negative consequences associated with emotional labour, which have been reported, include general dissatisfaction, estrangement between self and true feelings (Hochschild, 1983), feeling robotic and unempathetic (Albrecht & Zemke, 1985), role overload (Wharton & Erickson, 1993), lack of work identity (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989), lack of openness with co-workers, (Kahn, 1990), and “burnout”. Burnout, a unique type of stress reaction, is most commonly conceptualized as a tripartite stress syndrome (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) and is associated with jobs that “emphasize contact with people” (Maslach, 1983, p. 32). As Maslach and Jackson (1981, p. 99) put it, “burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people-work’”. Burnout is itself related to serious negative consequences such as deterioration in the quality of service, job turnover, absenteeism, and low morale (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Furthermore, burnout seems to be correlated with various self-report indices of personal distress, including physical exhaustion, insomnia, increased use of alcohol and drugs, and marital and family problems (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Research has identified a number of other potential negative consequences on health that chronic emotional labour requirements can have. As early as 1959, the ability to “self-disclose” (Jourard, 1959) has been linked to a “healthy personality”, and Jourard (1959, p. 5) even describes neurotic and psychotic symptoms as “subconsciousness interposed between the patient's real self and the gaze of the onlooker”. From Freud (e.g. 1960) to the present (e.g. Fridlund, Newsome, & Gibson, 1984; Pelletier, 1985), “bottled up emotions” have been blamed for symptomology, both psychological and physical. For instance, people who continually inhibit their emotions have been found to be more prone to disease than those who are emotionally expressive (Alexander, 1939; Beutler, Engle, Oro-Beutler, Daldrup, & Meredith, 1986; Freud, 1960; Pelletier, 1985; Udelman & Udelman, 1981). In recent years, there have been empirical reports too of an association between the inhibition of anger and hostility and essential

hypertension and coronary heart disease (e.g. Appel, Holroyd, & Gorkin, 1983; Friedman & Booth-Kewley, 1987; Friedman, Hall, & Harris, 1985; Gentry, 1985; Goldstein, Edelberg, Meier, & Davis, 1988).

Despite the evidence described previously concerning the potential pernicious consequences of emotional labour performance as well as its possible benefits, no study to date has yet attempted to measure the amount or degree to which emotional labour occurs in organizational life. The best guess up to now as to how much emotional labour is performed may come from Hochschild (1983) who estimated that “roughly one-third of American Workers today have jobs that subject them to substantial demands for emotional labor” (p. 11). A more accurate means of measuring emotional labour would offer a number of benefits:

(1) A measure of emotional labour would enable direct exploration of relationships of emotional labour performance with other variables such as stress, burnout, absenteeism, performance, etc. Such a measure has been called for by previous researchers such as Wharton (1993) who maintained that “researchers should devote more attention to the measurement of emotional labour” (p. 228), whereas Morris and Feldman in their 1996 review of emotional labour, state that “researchers should focus on developing and validating measures of the ... components of emotional labour” (p. 1003).

(2) Researchers and practitioners would then be able to use the measure in order to ascertain or levels of any associated costs or benefits of emotional labour performance within organizations.

(3) It would allow emotional labour in different professions, different types of communication, different industries, and different media to be compared. This would contribute to increased awareness of this possible source of stress and contribute to best practice or bench-marking.

(4) If measured emotional labour was found to be related to particular consequences such as burnout, the scale would enable individuals to monitor their own emotional labour levels throughout a working day, helping them to identify and reduce a possible source of work stress.

(5) Similarly, if measured emotional labour is shown to be related to various consequences, there may be implications for controlling emotional labour performance in order to maximize or minimize those consequences. Intervention strategies that may be introduced to reduce (or otherwise) emotional labour performance can be evaluated.

Notwithstanding the difficulties with knowing exactly what constitutes emotional labour, as discussed earlier, there are a number of possible ways in which emotional labour could be measured, including assessing how much emotional labour is required by a particular job, how much emotional labour a person generally engages in their job, or how much emotional labour a person engages in within a particular work situation. Hochschild's early attempts (1983) at assessing emotional labour were based on assessing emotional labour

requirements of particular job types. However, it was felt that this approach may miss out on some of the variability within supposedly non-emotional labour jobs. In addition, the best way to decide if a job is high or low emotional labour must surely be to measure the extent to which emotional labour occurs during a typical day or week within that job. For this reason, it was decided to concentrate on developing a measure that would allow emotional labour to be measured within particular one-to-one interactions, with the aim being that any one individual could monitor their own emotional labour within their job role. In addition, this would allow a picture to be developed of the emotional labour performance typical of various professions or companies.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEASURE

A reconceptualization of emotional labour

The first step to developing the measure involved a new conceptualization of emotional labour in order that the appropriate aspects or dimensions could be measured. Before discussing this process, it is worth briefly outlining what is understood by the term “emotion” itself. This is no simple feat either, since the question of what an emotion is remains “hotly contested” (Morris & Feldman, 1996, p. 987). As one source put it, “despite the importance of emotion in everyday life, the question of ‘what are emotions’ is extremely hard to answer” (Thompson, 1988, p. 3). However, most theorists agree that an emotion consists of cognitive process, an experiential feeling, physiological change and a behavioural aspect. Goleman (1996, p. 289) sums it up by saying that an emotion refers to “a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, physiological and biological states and a range of propensities to act”.

Because this study was undertaken prior to the publication of Morris and Feldman's influential paper, the four-dimensional approach they suggest was not used as a basis for the development of the current scale. However, implicit in the current conceptualization of emotional labour was an awareness of both the internal state of the labourer and the situation external to the labourer, in accordance with Morris and Feldman's approach. Emotional labour is thus defined here as:

the state that exists when there is a discrepancy between the emotional demeanour that an individual displays because it is considered appropriate, and the emotions that are genuinely felt but that would be inappropriate to display.

This definition encompasses a number of elements:

- There must be internal emotional dissonance for emotional labour to exist.
- It is not enough just to feel dissonant; this must be accompanied by a behavioural emotional display.

- “Appropriate” displays may be so because of either explicit or subtle display rules, or simply because of some informal protocol or internal expectation of the labourer. That is, if the labourer particular display to be appropriate, that is enough, even if there is no external display rule enforced or suggested.

This definition thus encompass both internal and external states, but makes no mention of perceived effort. It is conceptualized that the emotional labour *is* the effort or labour and that the labourer does not need to actually perceive of their emotional control in terms of effort. The definition also allows faking of emotional display or suppression of felt emotion to each on their own be sources of emotional labour, whilst acknowledging that both need not exist together for emotional labour to occur.

Dimensions on which measure is based

As mentioned, this study was undertaken prior to Morris and Feldman putting forward their four dimensions of emotional labour. However, based on the previous conceptualization of emotional labour, the following dimensions were suggested:

1. Expectations or rules about emotional display
2. Emotional suppression
3. Emotional faking.

Dimension 1 is the external component of emotional labour, whereas 2 and 3 are the internal. The last two dimensions incorporate the conflict idea, since emotions can only be suppressed or faked because of a discrepancy between expected and felt emotion.

It was decided to use a self-report questionnaire approach to devising a measure of emotional labour. According to Wallbott and Scherer (1989, cited in Morris & Feldman, 1996, p. 1004), the use of a questionnaire to collect information about emotional experience and expression can “offer a number of advantages” including access to more emotional experiences over a longer period of time. In addition, a questionnaire they say, may be “the only way to get subjects to reveal especially sensitive information such as emotional dissonance” (ibid, p. 1004).

Once the dimensions were identified, the next step was to define issues within each dimension that would be worthy of exploration and that might be expected to contribute to emotional labour performance. This was carried out by conducting 10 unstructured interviews with subjects who agreed with the statement that they “have to hide or fake emotions a lot at work”. During the interviews, the respondents were asked to describe situations when they might fake or hide emotion, how they felt, and why they felt the need to hide or fake. This led to the

identification of several issues such as the distinction between hiding negative or positive emotion, or the general feeling of not being “themselves” during emotion management. These issues led directly to the creation of questions. The questions were created in the form of Likert scales whereby there was a stem statement followed by a scale of 1–8 with an “anchor” of “strongly agree” at one end and “do not agree at all” at the other (thus, scores of 1–7 indicated some agreement with the stem statement, with scores of 1–4 indicating high agreement).

Seventeen questions (that survived the piloting procedures—see later) were created in total, with six contributing to the expectations/rules dimension of emotional labour, six to the suppression dimension, and five to the faking dimension. An example of two items are shown in Table 1 and the 17 item names and descriptions are shown in Table 2.

In addition to the 17 items making up the Emotional Labour Inventory, a question was also included concerning the expression of emotion *per se*. Within the conceptualization of emotional labour being used for this study, emotional expression on its own was not considered to be indicative of emotional labour. However, knowing the extent and variety of emotions expressed would add value in terms of being able to distinguish between how much of expressed emotion was genuine and what kind of emotions were expressed at all. Thus, a question asking whether emotion was expressed was followed by a list of possible emotions. The starting point for generating this list was an examination of the literature on self-report of emotion (e.g. Plutchik, 1994). One of the earliest adjective checklists was developed by Gough (1960) and this consisted of 300 words including such terms as affectionate, charming absent-minded, prudish, sexy, slow, weak, quiet, relaxed, and gloomy. Later authors included words such as droopy, tired, sleepy, and aroused (Russell, 1989). The problem with some of these words was that people did not always agree on which were emotion words and which were not. In addition, it was important that the final list should be as concise as possible (to aid speedy completion of the survey) and should include only those words thought to be relevant to the work environment. A short list of approximately 30 words was shown to experts and these experts deleted or added to the list as they thought appropriate. The final list contained 16 words (listed later) and these were the result of changes following the pilot studies (see later). It is acknowledged that the means for generating this list were not perfect but that a more precise attempt would have taken a prohibitively long time (the author is aware of a colleague in the US whose entire doctoral work is concerned with generation of such a list of work-related emotions). The emotions in the final version were:

enthusiasm	boredom	sympathy	admiration
interest	anger	shame	intimidation
dismay	sadness	happiness	disappointment
hurt	anxiety	pride	embarrassment

TABLE 1
Examples of items from the Emotional Labour Inventory

1. At some point during the communication, I felt that I intentionally conveyed (or attempted to convey) a positive emotion or feeling that I did not really feel but that was appropriate at the time (for example, I pretended to be happy, excited, etc.).

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Disagree

2. At some point I felt stressed or found it a strain because I could not show my true feelings.

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Disagree

TABLE 2
Factor loadings for items loading highly on the three factors

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
HIDENEG—hiding negative feeling	0.84	0.08	0.12
STRAIN—strain not being able to show feelings	0.82	0.07	0.19
HIDE—hiding feelings	0.80	0.04	0.12
FAKE—faking feelings	0.74	0.27	0.13
STRAIN—strain maintaining role	0.72	0.07	0.25
FAKEPOS—faking positive feeling	0.59	0.32	0.23
ACTDIF—acting differently than at home	0.55	0.35	0.02
BEFNEG—hiding prior negative feeling	0.52	0.12	0.35
EXPECTED—laughing/frowning because expected	0.48	0.24	0.35
ACTING—acting a role	0.06	0.83	0.06
ROLE—other person expected my role	0.01	0.82	0.08
EXPFACE—put on an expected “face”	0.32	0.60	0.04
RULES—rules/protocol about communication	0.35	0.49	0.03
BEFPOS—hiding prior positive feeling	0.03	0.08	0.77
HIDEPOS—hiding positive feeling	0.19	0.03	0.73
FAKNEG—faking negative feeling	0.24	0.01	0.66
PSYCH—psyched myself up to feel emotion	0.39	0.16	0.43

The same list was used to answer the question: If emotions are suppressed (asked as part of the Emotional Labour Inventory), *what* emotions are suppressed?

The Emotional Labour Inventory (ELI) went through a total of four piloting procedures in which 40 subjects were asked to complete one up to a total of five times (one after each of five communications at work—see Procedure). The results of the pilots, which resulted in several adaptations, are presented elsewhere (Mann & Jones, 1997). Some of the changes made following the pilots were with regards to wording or design. For example, early versions of the scale

utilized a 5-point scale but the results suggested that this was not sensitive enough and that the middle point was used too easily as a convenient “don't know” or “don't care” response. Similarly, the list of emotions that respondents could indicate they had expressed or suppressed underwent some amendments; five emotions were deleted which, in 47 sets of data provided by the early pilots, had not been ticked at all. These were excitement, delight, disgust, envy, and guilt. All the others had received at least one tick. It was felt that, although this was based on only 12 people, 47 interactions were involved and their not being displayed or hidden in any, warranted their exclusion in the interest of keeping the questionnaire as short as possible. One emotion was added to the list, however—boredom. This emotion was mentioned spontaneously by two respondents and it was felt that this could well be an emotion other subjects may attempt to suppress in workplace communications. Indeed, according to Fisher (1993, p. 395) “nearly everyone experiences episodes of boredom at work from time to time”, whilst Briner (1995, p. 4) argues that boredom is “presumably widely experienced at work”.

As well as an individual mean score for each of the 17 items for each respondent, an overall emotional labour score was obtained from each ELI as being between 41 and 136 (where 41 represents very high emotional labour and 136 very low). This range was obtained on the basis that there were 17 items and thus the lowest possible score (indicating the highest possible emotional labour) would be 17. However, three sets of the items were mutually exclusive, that is, it was impossible or unlikely that respondents would score highly on both items in the set. Thus, the lowest possible score was raised to 41.

Of course, it is acknowledged that emotional labour performance is likely to depend on many aspects, some of which were identified by Morris and Feldman (1993); for instance, how many people are involved in the encounter, the medium used, the duration of the encounter, etc. For these reasons, a number of other measures were taken in order to assess the influence of such factors on emotional labour performance:

- (1) Number of people involved in the encounter: This was controlled by asking respondents to only complete ELIs when there was just one other person involved.
- (2) Medium used: Respondents were asked to indicate whether the communication took place via the phone or face to face.
- (3) Demographics: Age and gender details were also requested.
- (4) Organizational level: Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were at junior, middle, or senior levels of management.
- (5) Purpose of communication: Respondents were provided a list of six possible purposes ranging from “providing information” to “dealing with complaints”.

- (6) Who the communication was with: In terms of the other person being a customer/client, colleague/peer, boss, or subordinate.

One factor that was not measured was duration of encounter. This was a point made by Morris and Feldman but, as mentioned previously, this current study was conducted prior to publication of this paper and this omission is acknowledged as a possible limitation of the study.

TESTING THE SCALE IN ORGANIZATIONS

Procedure

Subjects were approached in small groups. The author explained that she was conducting some research into corporate communications and that they were being asked to cooperate by completing an ELI after each of the *next* five (or up to five) work-based communications that they had. It was stressed that they should not select the communications on any other basis but on their being the next five to occur. This is in order that the communications being monitored were not chosen for being those that involved high amounts of emotional labour; rather, it was intended that a “snapshot” of the next five workplace communications be used at the basis of the study. On the same form as the ELI were a few questions pertaining to the communication such as what the intended purpose of it had been, whether they expressed any emotion, and whether the respondent perceived the outcome to be “successful”. They were also asked to complete a second short questionnaire which asked for demographic details such as age, gender, and managerial status, and responses to a short stress and a short work-role scale (see Validity). Each of these two scales (shown in the Appendix) were devised specifically for this piece of research and were created using similar techniques and piloting procedures as the main ELI. Each potential subject was shown a pack consisting of a folder and six questionnaires inside (five ELIs and one general questionnaire asking for demographic details, the work-role scale, and the stress scale). Full instructions inside the pack were read out to the subject (to ensure consistency of instructions).

Subjects agreeing to take part were given an identification number which the author kept note of with their name. This ensured confidentiality whilst allowing the author the means of ensuring all questionnaires were returned. Subjects either mailed the completed forms back or they were collated by someone within the organization (who ensured issues of confidentiality were adhered to).

Subjects

The ELI was tested amongst a total of 137 office-based employees from 12 UK companies; 65% were male and 35% female. The companies selected were mainly banking or telecommunications, although one was a television broad-

casting company and another was a manufacturing company. Response rates for individual companies varied from 22% to 61%, with the overall response rate being 45%. It is not known exactly why some companies yielded a higher response rate than others; attempts to increase response rate such as providing a small gift to respondents, follow-up information and feedback, and chasing up late respondents were exactly the same for each company. However, some managers appeared to be more keen on their staff cooperating than others and these people made more explicit their expectation that they should help and this obviously may have had some impact on response rates.

Of the subjects, 4% classed themselves as senior management, 13% as middle management, and 19% junior. The remaining 64% did not place themselves in any of these organizational levels.

The respondents monitored a total of 553 communications between them and approximately equal numbers of ELIs were completed by the 18–30, 31–40, and 41–50 age groups (163, 169, and 168 respectively), with somewhat less in the 51–60 age group (51). 30% of the communications monitored by the subjects were with customers; the rest were with colleagues at work.

Reliability of scale

Principal Components Analysis was performed on the 17 items and this extracted three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. These accounted for 52% of the variance. A large part of that variance (36%) was accounted for in the first factor with only 10.6% from the second and 8% from the third.

In this exploratory phase, the next issue was whether the factors produced meaningful subscales that were reliable. An orthogonal varimax rotation was used on the principal components extracted. Nine variables loaded highly on the first factor, four on the second, and four on the third. No item loaded highly on more than one factor, indicating good “factor purity” (Kline, 1994, p. 108). These items, together with their factor loadings, and those for the rest of the items, are shown in Table 2.

Alpha reliability coefficients were then computed for each of the three subscales. Factor 1 had high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.89$) and Factors 2 and 3 had good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.71$ and 0.64). The results thus suggest that there is one main factor accounting for nine of the test items with two secondary factors accounting for the remaining eight items.

All the scores on the 17 items making up the ELI across all 553 communications monitored were subject to an internal reliability test using Cronbach's alpha. The alpha coefficient was 0.88, suggesting high internal consistency (well above Nunnally's 1988 recommended minimum level of 0.7).

Item-whole correlations (minus the item) were then performed in order to ascertain the relationship of each item within the ELI to the overall emotional

labour score. Items whose scores correlate well with the overall emotional labour score are more reliable than those that correlate poorly. The correlations are all significant. No item was below the recommended 0.25 limit at which researchers feel indicates “little or no relationship” (Fink, 1995, p. 36).

Validity of scale

One type of validating evidence comes from the measure of “role-play” from the general questionnaire since it was expected that roleplay and emotional labour would correlate (see Discussion for more on this). The four items making up the role-play scale (see Appendix) were combined to give an overall total score for role-play as being between 4 (high role-play) and 20 (low). The mean across all the subjects for the overall “roleplay” score was 9.2 (median = 9) and the standard deviation 2.3. The overall role-play score within each communication was correlated with the overall emotional labour score for each communication. Over all the communications, role-play correlated significantly with emotional labour such that the more role-play involved in a respondent's job, the more emotional labour likely to be experienced, Pearson's $r = 0.28$, $P < .005$. Because the internal reliability of the role-play scale was low, correlations were calculated for each of the four items with emotional labour too and all four correlated significantly with emotional labour scores, Q1, $r = 0.19$, Q2, $r = 0.21$, Q3, $r = 0.17$, and Q4, $r = 0.16$.

A second possible measure of the convergent validity of the ELI scale is from the general stress measure taken within the general questionnaire (see Discussion for more on this). Overall emotional labour scores were correlated with overall stress scores and a significant relationship was found such that the more emotional labour reported, the higher the stress level of the respondent was also recorded, $r = 0.35$, $P < .005$.

MAIN FINDINGS

Some of the main findings relating to measured emotional labour, emotions displayed, faked and suppressed, and display rules, are outlined in this section.

Emotional labour

At least moderate levels of emotional labour were recorded in almost two-thirds of communications, whilst high emotional labour was recorded in approximately a third of all communications monitored. This is shown in Table 3, which shows the distribution of emotional labour score categorized in terms of standard deviations.

There was no statistical significant difference between the mean of overall emotional labour scores recorded for frontline as oppose to non-frontline communications, although more “very low” emotional labour was recorded for non-frontline (22%) than frontline (14%).

TABLE 3

Distribution of emotional labour scores according to standard deviation categories

<i>Label</i>	<i>Score Range</i>	<i>All Communications Falling in Range</i>	<i>Frontline Communications</i>	<i>Non-frontline Communications</i>
Very low	119–136 (more than 1 SD* above mean*)	19%	14%	22%
Low	109–118 (1 SD above mean)	17%	19%	16%
Moderate	87–108 (within ½ SD of mean)	30%	35%	28%
High	86–76 (1 SD below mean)	14%	13%	15%
Very high	75–41 (less than 1 SD below mean)	20%	19%	19%
Mean		97	96	98
SD		22.4	21	23

*For all categorization purposes, SD and Mean for “all communications” is used.

There was no statistically significant effect of gender on recorded emotional labour score. Communications involving complaints attracted the highest recorded levels of emotional labour than any other type of communication.

The more emotional labour reported in a communication, the less successful that communication is perceived to be by the respondent, $r = -0.2$, $P < .005$. Similarly, stress as measured by the short stress scale (in the general questionnaire) correlated significantly with emotional labour such that the more stress the individual reported, the more emotional labour they experienced, $r = 0.35$, $P < .005$.

There was a statistically significant effect of the managerial level of respondent on emotional labour score such that communications monitored by senior management (mean 113) were reported as showing significantly less emotional labour than those monitored by middle (mean 99) or junior (mean 102) management, $F = 4.4$, $P < .05$.

Emotional display

Emotional expression was recorded (scores of 1–7 on this item) in 92% of all communications monitored and a high degree (scores of 1–4) of emotional expression was recorded in 67% of communications. There was no statistical significant difference in scores in degree of emotional expression between frontline and non-frontline communications.

The most commonly expressed emotions were interest, expressed in 47% of all communications, and enthusiasm, expressed in 33% of communications. In 58% of communications, respondents indicated “feeling fake” (scores of 1–7 on FAKE). Of those communications in which emotion was strongly expressed

(67% of all communications), 41% of the expressed positive emotions such as interest and enthusiasm were likely to have been faked (scores of 1–4 on FAKEPOS).

Emotional suppression

In 60% of communications respondents indicated that they did, to some extent, hide emotion (scores of 1–7 on the variable HIDE). In just over a quarter of all communications respondents scored 1–4 on this variable, indicating high degree of emotional suppression. There was no statistical difference between emotional suppression scores for frontline as opposed to non-frontline communications.

The most frequently suppressed emotion was anger, suppressed in 10% of all communications.

Emotional display rules

In 53% of the communications, respondents indicated that they had laughed or frowned because they were expected to, rather than because they genuinely felt like doing so (scores of 1–7 on the item EXPECTED). Respondents scored 1–4 on this variable in 24% of all communications. There were no significant frontline–non-frontline differences. There was a significant correlation between scores on this variable and overall emotional labour score such that the more subjects reported laughing or frowning because it was expected, the more emotional labour reported.

In 86% of all communications, respondents reported that there were rules governing how they spoke (scores of 1–7 on RULES) and in 70% of communications scores of 1–4 were given on this item.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

This article has presented one of the first attempts to measure the degree to which we express, suppress, and fake emotion during workplace communications, both at and away from the frontline. The value in this for researchers is in the further development of the tool (the ELI) that can be built on the framework presented in the current study and the uses that the tool can eventually be put to (see earlier section). For practitioners, the data provides some of the first evidence to support interventions into emotion work, display rules, and emotional expression in the workplace.

One of the main concerns when developing a new measure such as the ELI is whether the items within it are internally consistent and each contribute to the overall construct. The ELI has been shown to have high internal consistency demonstrated by the high Cronbach's alpha and all the items correlate significantly with the overall emotional labour score. This suggests that they do indeed

measure one construct, assumed to be “emotional labour”, and that all the items are contributing to this construct.

Validity of the tool is much more difficult to determine during these early stages of development. Attempts were made to investigate the correlations of overall scores on the ELI with other measures thought to contribute or relate to the construct emotional labour. Two such measures were selected as being stress and degree of role-play. However, problems arose in exactly how to ensure convergent validity with these measures, given the fact that the study did not employ a longitudinal design. That is, the ELI in this first instance was used to obtain a “snapshot” of emotional labour performance, emotional expression suppression, and faking, in a very short time period (such as a morning or afternoon). Attempts to correlate emotional labour scores in one afternoon with a general established stress measure would not have been appropriate and thus could not be justified. For this reason, it was decided to devise a very simple, short measure of the physical symptoms of stress that could be used to give some indication of any relationships. That a correlation was found in the expected way (since previous researchers, as discussed earlier, believe emotional labour to be a source of stress), suggests that emotional labour might be stressful, but certainly does not prove it. Indeed, it could be that it is the stress that is leading to emotional labour rather than the other way round. It could be that individuals who are stressed may have to work harder at managing their stress-related emotions and thus score higher on the emotional labour scale. Clearly, further, perhaps longitudinal, research is needed to validate the ELI with stress measures. Alternatively, the ELI could be used in conjunction with physical measures of stress such as blood pressure or galvanic skin response in order to establish any direct correlations of measured emotional labour with stress.

The other attempt at validating the ELI came from the role-play scale. It was expected that taking on work roles would contribute to emotional labour; that is, those people who report that they are more likely to take on roles at work that are different to those outside work, are more likely to experience emotional labour at work. This relationship was found and does contribute to the validity of the ELI.

The ELI produced a number of findings, including the first attempt at quantification of emotional labour at work. The finding that emotional labour might exist in at least two-thirds of communications, with high levels of emotional labour in about a third of communications, should bring both cheer and concern to organizational practitioners. On the one hand, if employees are performing so much emotional labour, then the positive outcomes discussed earlier are likely to result too. If employees are obeying display rules, managers can be reassured that benefits such as customer loyalty, corporate image, smoother relationships, etc. will accrue.

On the other hand, the results suggest that the potential negative consequences discussed earlier that may be associated with emotional labour could

be a bigger problem than has been previously thought. If emotional labour performance is associated with stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and poorer performance (and future research using the ELI should be able to measure these links more clearly), then these risks would seem to be severe. Of course, the current study takes no account of individual coping mechanisms or personality characteristics that might moderate the relationship of emotional labour with stress—again, this would be a crucial area for future research. These limitations notwithstanding, the findings do suggest that organizational practitioners ought to be considering the effects of emotional labour performance in their companies very carefully and attempting to implement strategies to reduce any potential negative consequences. This would appear to be especially so in complaints or customer service departments where emotional labour was found to be the highest. However, the findings also suggest that consideration of emotional labour should be given to non-frontline employees as well as frontline, since similar degrees of emotional labour were recorded for both groups. This is a fairly new departure from the traditionally held view that emotional labour is more of a frontline phenomenon. Certainly, most of the previous research in the field of emotional labour has been concerned with employees working at the organization–customer interface such as flight attendants (Hochschild, 1983), police officers (Stenross & Kleinman, 1989), medical students (Smith & Kleinman, 1989), debt collectors (Hochschild, 1983; Sutton, 1991), hair stylists (Parkinson, 1991), waiting staff (Spradley & Mann, 1975; Tidd & Lockard, 1978), supermarket clerks (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989; Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988; Tolich, 1993), and theme park employees (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). The findings of this current study, in line with recent comments from some modern researchers (such as Briner, 1995), suggest that this unbalance needs to be redressed.

The finding that perceived success of communication is negatively associated with emotional labour should also be of great concern to practitioners, as this suggests a direct performance-related downside of emotional labour performance in addition to the possible health consequences (although, arguably, health consequences result in lowered performance anyway, through absenteeism and turnover). Why should the outcome of conversations that involve high emotional labour be rated less successful as those that involve low emotional labour? One explanation could lie in the fact that it is *perceived* success that was measured, rather than any objective estimate of success. *Perceived* success may or may not be related to actual success. So, the real question should be, why should performance of emotional labour effect perceived success? It could be that when performing emotional labour, the individual feels fake, false, or phony, a feeling that may be evaluated in a negative light. There may be the perception that it is “bad” to fake or hide emotions since the person is not being genuine. It could be this feeling that is reflected in the success rating they give—that is, they may feel that a successful communication should not involve “acting”.

Clearly this is another area that warrants further research, particularly in terms of investigating relationships of emotional labour performance with more objective measures of communicative success. It would also be useful to use the ELI to examine relationships of emotional expression, faking, and suppression with other performance-related variables such as quality or absenteeism.

The organizational level of the respondent (senior, middle, or junior) had a significant effect on reported emotional labour, such that those communications monitored by senior management were reported as showing less emotional labour than those monitored by middle or junior management. This makes logical sense, since we would expect that people higher in the organization can afford to be more honest with their emotional displays as they are less afraid of the consequences from their superiors of disobeying display rules (if, indeed, display rules are as prevalent higher up the hierarchy). This is reflected in Van Maanen and Kunda's (1989, p. 55) observation that "only the dominant and the dormant have relative freedom from emotional constraints in organizational life".

That emotional expression was found to be so prevalent amongst respondents of this study (up to 92% of conversation involved emotions being expressed) should be the final nail in the coffin for protagonists of the rationality vs. emotion school, who believe that emotion has no role to play in the rational enterprise of work. Clearly, emotion has an almost invariable presence in the workplace, as this study demonstrates that few conversations at work do not involve emotion. Interest is expressed in almost half the communications monitored and enthusiasm in a third, although at least 40% of this is likely to be faked. Thus, faking of emotion is also a prominent feature of organizational life, with well over a third of emotions such as interest and enthusiasm being faked.

Should this finding be a source of concern or celebration for practitioners? On the one hand, it might be disconcerting to know that the next time one's colleague appears interested in a new project, there is at least a one in three chance they are faking it. On the other hand, the faking of emotion does much to "lubricate the creaking mechanisms of social intercourse" (Guthrie, 1971, p. 7, cited in Snyder, 1986, p. 6), and the world would undoubtedly be a less pleasant place if we stopped faking it. Certainly at the customer-organization interface, faking emotion is, or should be, an important part of the service offering for employees who are required to appear cheerful, interested, friendly at all times. The only real concern is in its contribution to emotional labour and the potential negative consequences that this could bring.

Emotional labour is comprised of both faking and suppressing of emotion and this study suggests that we hide emotions as much as we fake them. Emotions are likely to be faked in approximately 20% of all communications and are reported as being strongly suppressed in about a quarter of communications. The most frequently suppressed emotion is anger, and this should be of grave concern, given the previously reported findings of associations between anger suppression and illnesses such as coronary heart disease.

The findings concerning display rules provide some of the first employee-centred evidence about the existence and extent of display rules in organizations. In the large majority of communications monitored, respondents felt that they were rules governing how they spoke, and it is presumably these rules that resulted in them laughing or frowning (physical displays of emotion) because they were expected to rather than because they genuinely wanted to.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although the Emotional Labour Inventory is still in its early stages of development, it has been able to quantify for the first time, the degree to which we express, hide, and fake emotions at work. That this emotion management is relevant to work life has been discussed in the earlier sections of this article, as have the potential negative and positive outcomes associated with this emotion work, or emotional labour. This study shows that emotional labour is indeed a prominent feature of organizational life, both at and away from the frontline, and this suggests that further work from researchers and greater investment by organizational practitioners in this area is now warranted.

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APPENDIX

Role-play scale

Respondents were asked to indicate how much they agree (on a scale of 1–5) with each of the following statements (scores of 1 indicate high agreement, 5 low agreement):

<i>Item</i>	<i>Scale</i>				
Q1. When I interact with people at work I act differently than when I interact with my family or friends.	1	2	3	4	5
Q2. I take on a “work role” that is different from roles I have outside work.	1	2	3	4	5
Q3. I have more than one “work role” depending on who I am with or on which aspect of my job I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5
Q4. Mine is the sort of job where if I am feeling depressed or worried about a personal or family problem, I have to put on a “brave face” and hide my feelings from the people I work with.	1	2	3	4	5

Stress scale

Respondents were asked over the last three months, how much the following statements applied to them on a scale of 1–5 (scores of 1 = high application, 5 = low):

<i>Item</i>	<i>Scale</i>				
Q1. I find it difficult to get to and/or stay asleep	1	2	3	4	5
Q2. I frequently get headaches.	1	2	3	4	5
Q3. I frequently get stomach aches, indigestion, or heartburn.	1	2	3	4	5
Q4. I feel tired or exhausted.	1	2	3	4	5
Q5. My appetite has changed.	1	2	3	4	5
Q6. I often feel dizzy.	1	2	3	4	5

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