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Emotion Work in the Hellenic Frontline Services Environment:

How it Relates to Emotional Exhaustion and Work Attitudes

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## Emotion Work in the Hellenic Frontline Services Environment:

## How it Relates to Emotional Exhaustion and Work Attitudes

## Abstract

The relationship of emotion work with emotional exhaustion and a variety of attitudes towards the job and the organization was investigated in a sample of Hellenes (Greek) employees in the banking industry who were performing frontline service jobs. Emotion work was conceptualized and operationalized in terms of five dimensions: surface acting, deep acting, frequency of emotional display, intensity of displayed emotion, and variety of displayed emotions. The results suggested a weak mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between emotion work and work attitudes. The results also revealed the presence of a substantial number of interaction effects in the relationship of emotion work with emotional exhaustion and work attitudes. In particular, emotion work was related to emotional exhaustion solely by means of interactions, and the largest part of the relationship of emotion work with work attitudes was also due to interaction effects. In the cases that main effects were present these were mainly caused by an allegedly secondary dimension of emotion work, the variety of displayed emotions, and not by any of the primary dimensions. The national cultural characteristics provided an account for the identified relationship pattern between emotion work, emotional exhaustion and work attitudes. In general, the study revealed the importance of the interactions between the dimensions of emotion work, and was also suggestive of the role of the national cultural context in the way emotion work is associated with outcomes that are of interest to employees and organizations.

**Keywords:** Emotional labour; interaction; emotional exhaustion; national culture; work attitudes; Greece.

Emotion Work in the Hellenic Frontline Services Environment:

### How it Relates to Emotional Exhaustion and Work Attitudes

Modern economies have been moving away from the production of manufacturing products and tend to rely heavily on the provision of services for income generation (e.g., The Economist, 2006; OECD, 2003). However, provision of service products normally requires direct (i.e., face-to-face or voice-to-voice) interaction with customers to a much greater degree than the manufacturing of goods does. In the provision of service the quality of interaction with the customer, and the satisfaction the customer derives from this interaction, is part of the supplied product. Therefore, the emotions displayed by service providers when they interact with customers are a critical factor for the quality of service offered. For this reason, the display and management of appropriate emotions comprises a substantial part of the large number of service industry jobs that require direct interaction with clients. Indeed, Tschan, Rochat and Zapf (2005) conducted research with individuals who were performing predominantly service jobs and they found that the vast majority (i.e., nine out of ten) of their work-related interactions involved the display of prescribed emotions.

The management of displayed emotions according to the requirements of the job is referred to as emotion work (or “emotional labour”, Hochschild, 1983<sup>1</sup>). More specifically, emotion work signifies the regulation of a job incumbent’s emotional display so the conveyed emotions are in line with those expected by customers and by the organization for meeting set service quality demands (e.g., Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987; and also see Sutton, 1991). For example, a bill collector should convey urgency, an amusement park employee must express friendliness and joy, a flight attendant must display politeness, friendliness and confidence, and a bank teller should behave politely and display knowledge and confidence. These emotions should be expressed with consistency over time and across situations and clients, and independently

of the job incumbent's actually felt emotions, mood or attitudes towards particular customers<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, emotion work often necessitates the disguise or modification of the job holder's actual emotions in order to display the emotions required by one's job role (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1983). The process of disguising one's actual feelings, which results in dissonance between true and displayed emotion (Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996; and see Tschan et al., 2005), is referred to as "surface acting"; while the process of modifying one's felt emotions in a way that actual and displayed emotions are in consonance with each other and with the expected emotion is referred to as "deep acting" (Hochschild, 1983).

The literature stresses the difference between surface and deep acting. Surface acting involves the suppression of felt emotions combined with the adoption of an emotional mask; which is a process that imposes substantial strain, and is potentially psychologically and physically draining. On the other hand, although deep acting also requires effort from the part of the individual it normally results in greater alignment between actual and displayed emotions; hence, in a reduction in the respective dissonance. These differences between deep and surface acting are critical as regards the ways in which they relate, or they are expected to relate, to outcomes of emotion work (e.g., Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987; Zapf, 2002).

Additional dimensions of emotion work have been identified. These dimensions pertain to characteristics and demands of emotion work that are not encompassed by the disguise or modification of one's actual feelings, and include the frequency of emotional display, the intensity of displayed emotion, and the variety of displayed emotions (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Morris & Feldman, 1996). Surface and deep acting have been considered as primary dimensions of emotion work, whilst frequency, intensity and variety

have been considered as secondary dimensions, described as “emotion-related role requirements” (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003, p. 366). Indeed, the identification of frequency, intensity and variety as dimensions of emotion work has been inconsistent and more recent than the identification of surface and deep acting (see, for example, Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983; but also see Morris & Feldman, 1996). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that these three secondary dimensions bear weaker and less consistent relationships with correlates and outcomes of emotion work.

#### Emotion work and emotional exhaustion: Main effects

It has been legitimately suggested that engagement in emotion work negatively impacts experiences of well-being (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Hochschild, 1983). However, although emotion work is a highly contemporary issue, it is still a relatively new construct. Hence, empirical work on its correlates is still limited. Nevertheless, such work is available.

The index of well-being that has attracted most attention in emotion work research is emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion signifies the experience of being strained and depleted of one’s emotional, primarily, and physical, secondarily, resources (e.g., Maslach, 1982; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). It is the most prominent facet of job burnout, the psychological syndrome that is connected with chronic exposure to stressful interpersonal encounters in the context of work (e.g., Maslach et al., 2001; Shirom, 1989). The limited empirical research on emotion work has focused mostly on the relationship of emotional exhaustion with the primary dimensions of emotion work, surface and deep acting. This research is supportive of the conceptual distinction between surface and deep acting, and in line with the argument that surface acting is detrimental to employees’ well-being (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Hochschild, 1983). Indeed, the available empirical reports indicate a positive relationship between the degree to which employees engage in

surface acting and their levels of emotional exhaustion (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Grandey, 2003; Totterdell & Holman, 2003). On the other hand, that same research has failed to identify a relationship between deep acting and emotional exhaustion. Such a relationship has not been particularly expected in the respective literature because, as noted, despite requiring effort too, deep acting leads to internalization of one's job role and, hence, reduces dissonance between felt and displayed emotions (e.g., Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002, p. 22; Grandey 2003, p. 89; and see Brotheridge & Lee, 2003, p. 372; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne & Ilardi, 1997; Totterdell & Holman, 2003).

Therefore, it is reasonable to expect a relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion, but not between deep acting and emotional exhaustion.

Hypothesis 1. Surface acting will be positively related to emotional exhaustion.

Due to their recent identification, empirical research with the secondary dimensions of emotion work is extremely limited. In the only systematic investigation that involved these dimensions, Brotheridge and her associates (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003) found no relationship between them and emotional exhaustion<sup>3</sup>. However, considering the scarcity of empirical work additional research is needed. Hence, one of the aims of the present study was to contribute with additional empirical evidence on the relationship between the secondary dimensions of emotion work and emotional exhaustion. Taking into account the extant limited empirical research, which reports absence of relationships, no hypotheses were posed. However, the identification of relationships could not be ruled out, considering that theoretical work has expressed expectations for associations between these secondary dimensions of emotion work and emotional exhaustion (Morris & Feldman, 1996).

Emotion work and emotional exhaustion: Interaction effects

As seen above, only one dimension of emotion work has been found, and is hypothesized herein, to relate to emotional exhaustion. However, the empirical, but also the conceptual, literature has concentrated solely on the main effects of the components of emotion work and has neglected their interactions. This is an area that needs to be explored.

Indeed, interaction effects between the primary and the secondary dimensions of emotion work are a reasonable possibility. For example, surface acting may contribute more strongly to emotional exhaustion if one's job role additionally requires the very frequent display of prescribed emotions, or the display of high intensity in the expressed emotions, or the display of a large number of different emotions; because this means that emotional dissonance will be experienced more frequently, more intensely, and the employee will need to switch from the display of one emotion to the display of another emotion in a greater number of occasions, respectively. As another illustration, deep acting may become emotionally taxing if the individual also tries to experience intensely the emotions she/he tries to internalize, or if a large variety of emotions need to be internalized; because this will require the deployment of psychological resources in greater degree and in a multitude of occasions, respectively. Therefore, the interactions of surface and deep acting with the three secondary dimensions of emotion work should be tested for their relationship with emotional exhaustion. No such testing has taken place, as yet.

Hypothesis 2. The interactions of surface acting with the frequency (H2a), intensity (H2b) and variety (H2c) of emotional display will be positively related to emotional exhaustion.

Because no main effect has been hypothesized for deep acting the investigation of the relationships of its interactions with the secondary dimensions of emotion work was posed as research question.



Research question 1. To investigate whether the interactions of deep acting with the frequency, intensity and variety of emotional display are related to emotional exhaustion. If relationships are identified these will be expected to be in the positive direction.

However, apart from their interactions with surface and deep acting, the frequency, intensity and variety of emotional display may also interact with each other in their relationships with emotional exhaustion. For example, a service job role that requires the intense display of a large variety of emotions may be especially emotionally taxing on individuals who perform it; or a job role that demands the frequent display of a large variety of different emotions may also be particularly taxing on individuals' emotional resources. These are reasonable possibilities that also need to be investigated; as they have not been empirically, or even theoretically, considered as yet.

Research question 2. To investigate the relationship of the interactions between frequency, intensity and variety of emotional display with emotional exhaustion. If relationships are identified these will be expected to be in the positive direction.

### Emotion Work and Work Attitudes

The relationship between emotion work and work attitudes has not been empirically investigated, as yet; though such a relationship has been speculated (Grandey, 2000; Morris & Feldman, 1996).

Emotional exhaustion has been conclusively found to relate to a variety of attitudes towards the job and the organization, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions (e.g., meta-analysis by Lee & Ashforth, 1996); and is arguably a causal antecedent of these attitudes (see Cropanzano, Rupp & Byrne, 2003). This well researched issue was not of consideration in the present work.

We saw in detail above that emotional exhaustion has been theoretically considered as an outcome of emotion work, and we reviewed the limited empirical evidence that

generally concurs with this view. Logically, therefore, emotion work should relate to work attitudes. There are two reasons to expect such a relationship:

First, as just seen, work attitudes have been identified as an outcome of emotional exhaustion, which, in turn, has been treated as an outcome of emotion work. Therefore, emotion work should be indirectly related to work attitudes via its relationship with emotional exhaustion. In other terms, emotional exhaustion should mediate the relationship between emotion work and attitudes towards the job and the organization.

Second, emotion work should be expected to bear a relationship with work attitudes independent of its relationship with emotional exhaustion. For example, performance of a job that requires the consistent display of certain emotions at the expense of actually felt emotions should have a negative impact on the job incumbent's job satisfaction.

Furthermore, imposition of strict emotional display rules on one's job may also reflect on the attitudes of the job incumbent towards the organization, negatively influencing one's commitment towards it and one's intentions to stay with it. This means that apart from the indirect relationship, via emotional exhaustion, there should also be a direct relationship between emotion work and attitudes towards the job and the organization. Therefore, the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between emotion work and work attitudes should be only partial. Hence, the following hypothesis was posed:

Hypothesis 3. Emotional exhaustion will partially mediate the relationship between emotion work and work attitudes. More specifically, emotional exhaustion will partially mediate the relationship of emotion work with job satisfaction (H3a), organizational commitment (H3b) and turnover intentions (H3c).

Considering the above reasoned expectation on the relationship of emotion work with work attitudes, and in direct analogy with the hypotheses and research questions on the relationship of emotion work with emotional exhaustion developed earlier (i.e.,

Hypotheses 1 and 2, and research questions 1 and 2), the following hypotheses and research questions were also posed:

Hypothesis 4. Surface acting will be negatively related to job satisfaction (H4a) and organizational commitment (H4b), and positively related to turnover intentions (H4c).

Hypothesis 5. The interactions of surface acting with the frequency (H5a), intensity (H5b) and variety (H5c) of emotional display will be negatively related to job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 6. The interactions of surface acting with the frequency (H6a), intensity (H6b) and variety (H6c) of emotional display will be negatively related to organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 7. The interactions of surface acting with the frequency (H7a), intensity (H7b) and variety (H7c) of emotional display will be positively related to turnover intentions.

Research question 3. To investigate whether the interactions of deep acting with the frequency, intensity and variety of emotional display are related to job satisfaction. If relationships are identified these will be expected to be in the negative direction.

Research question 4. To investigate whether the interactions of deep acting with the frequency, intensity and variety of emotional display are related to organizational commitment. If relationships are identified these will be expected to be in the negative direction.

Research question 5. To investigate whether the interactions of deep acting with the frequency, intensity and variety of emotional display are related to turnover intentions. If relationships are identified these will be expected to be in the positive direction.

Research question 6. To investigate the relationship of the interactions between frequency, intensity and variety of emotional display with job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions. The general expectation is that these interactions will

bear a negative relationship with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and a positive relationship with turnover intentions.

### The National Cultural Setting

The present work was set to test a number of mostly untested yet hypotheses and research questions regarding the relationship of emotion work with emotional exhaustion and work attitudes. However, it is considered that an equally important contribution will be to conduct this testing in a national cultural context that is different from the one that the theoretical work on emotion work has taken into consideration, and in which the limited empirical research has been conducted to date.

Emotion work, and its outcomes, has been conceptualized mainly with respect to the Anglo-Saxon, and especially the North American, cultural environment (i.e., Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1990). And empirical research on correlates of emotion work has been conducted predominantly in that cultural environment (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Grandey, 2003; Totterdell & Holman, 2003). In addition, the Anglo-Saxon countries are amongst the most economically developed in the world (e.g., *The Economist*, 2005; United Nations, 2005a), and amongst the countries that utilize the most sophisticated customer service techniques globally (see, for example, Tellis, Stremersch, & Yin, 2003; Malhotra, Agarwal & Peterson, 1996). There has been some recent confirmatory empirical work outside the Anglo-Saxon cultural cluster (Tschan et al., 2005), whose focus, however, bore limited relevance to the focus of the present study. Even that work, however, was conducted in Switzerland, also one of the most economically advanced countries in the world, and also a country with a very strong orientation and tradition in customer service (e.g., United Nations, 2005a).

Therefore, it is important to conduct research in national cultural contexts that are different from the Anglo-Saxon one, and belong to countries that are not yet in the league of the most advanced in terms of economic development or in terms of customer service.

#### The Hellenic service sector as context

Hellas (also known as Greece) fulfils the above conditions. As it will be illustrated in detail below, in terms of national culture Hellas is substantially different from the Anglo-Saxon countries, but also different from the Northern European countries (e.g., Ronen & Shenkar, 1985; Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars, 1993); where, as seen, the confirmatory empirical research on emotion work has been conducted so far. In addition, Hellas has other distinct characteristics that render the Hellenic (Greek) environment a very appropriate context for research on correlates and outcomes of emotion work. Indeed, authors (see Rafaeli & Sutton, 1990) have stressed the importance of taking into account societal emotion display rules as well as the state of development in customer service of the particular country as a means of enhancing our understanding on emotion work.

#### The Hellenic cultural context

It appears that two of the cultural dimensions identified by Trompenaars bear particular relevance to the present work. These dimensions are the Specific – Diffuse and the Affective – Neutral (Trompenaars, 1993). Trompenaars' cultural model was deemed more appropriate as a framework for studying emotion work than the other two dominant cultural models, namely Hofstede's and Schwartz's, because Trompenaars' cultural dimensions focus on how people behave towards each other whilst Hofstede's and Schwartz's dimensions revolve around values (e.g., Gatley, Lessem & Altman, 1996; Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Schwartz, 1994; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987; Trompenaars, 1993). Emotion work refers to behaviours towards others and the extent to which these behaviours are discrepant from felt emotions; hence, Trompenaars' dimensions must offer greater

assistance in explaining cultural differences in the way emotion work relates to outcomes that are of interest to individuals and organizations.

Hellas, along with other Southern European countries, is positioned towards the Diffuse end of the Specific-Diffuse cultural dimension (see Trompenaars, 1993, p. 88). In contrast, North American countries, the United Kingdom and Northern European countries, where confirmatory empirical work on emotion work has been exclusively conducted so far, are positioned towards the Specific end of the dimension. In Specific societies a clear distinction exists between personal and professional life, and people are expected to adopt particular roles in their professional lives. For example, in Specific cultures individuals who work as frontline service workers are expected, and it is highly acceptable and endorsable, to “wear” an emotional mask at work. However, it is also expected and endorsed to act in completely different, and more genuine, ways in their personal lives. On the other hand, the distinction between professional and personal life is very loose in cultures that are positioned towards the Diffuse end of the dimension. Such cultures endorse the adoption of similar patterns of behaviour at work and in private life. Therefore, it can be logically assumed that frontline service employees in societies with Diffuse cultures, like Hellas, are less likely to adhere to emotional display rules.

Regarding the Affective – Neutral dimension, Hellas, like other Southern European countries, is positioned towards the Affective end of the continuum (Trompenaars, 1993). In cultures that are positioned towards the Neutral end of the continuum the overt expression of felt emotions is not endorsed and individuals are expected to control and subdue their feelings. In contrast, the overt expression of emotions is endorsed in cultures that are positioned towards the Affective end of the continuum. Individuals in such societies try to find immediate outlets for their emotions. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that in Affective cultures, like the Hellenic, individuals who occupy frontline service posts

will be inclined to display their actually felt emotions and thoughts when interacting with customers rather than those emotions that are prescribed by their work roles.

Considering, therefore, the Diffuse and Affective nature of the Hellenic culture it would be expected that individuals who occupy frontline service positions in Hellas do not perceive the same pressure and do not expend the same amount of effort to engage in emotion work as their counterparts in Specific and Neutral societies. This implies that the consequences of emotion work in Hellas, and in other countries with similar cultural characteristics, may not be the same as those assumed and found in the extant literature. This renders an empirical investigation on correlates of emotion work in the Hellenic frontline services environment important and necessary; as it can provide valuable insights.

As mentioned earlier, specific cultural knowledge, when available, should also be utilized in combination with established models of national culture; because, however informative and valid, models of national culture do not contain all necessary information for the understanding and prediction of cultural differences in work behaviour (Hofstede, 1993; 2001; Smith et al., 2002). Indeed, cultural features that are specific to Hellas further corroborate the above speculations that were based on the Specific and Affective nature of the Hellenic culture.

A particular cultural characteristic of Hellas that is pertinent to our discussion is that forthrightness is highly valued in the Hellenic society. Having the moral strength or “valour” to express one’s opinion and one’s feelings regardless of the circumstances, and even at one’s detriment, is seen as virtue by Hellenes. To the contrary, disguising one’s emotions, and especially displaying positive emotions or behaviour (e.g., politeness or friendliness) when negative emotions towards the other party are actually present, is scorned. This is seen as “double-faced” tactic, especially when the individual engages in it for personal gain, including “winning” a customer by creating a positive impression of oneself. In the Hellenic society individuals are expected to “show what they are” rather

than to display a distorted, however positive, image of themselves. This implies that Hellenes who engage in frontline service work may be culturally motivated to display their actual emotions when they interact with customers instead of those emotions that are prescribed by their job roles.

Finally, another cultural feature of Hellas that is particularly relevant to our case is that Hellenes have the tendency to react negatively to and to distrust authority (Triandis, Vassiliou & Nassiakou, 1968; and see also Kakava, 2002). This suggests that Hellenes frontline service employees are more likely to consciously disregard directives from their employer about emotional display rules in interaction with customers.

#### The Hellenic services context

However, apart from its cultural characteristics, there is another reason that Hellas offers a very appropriate context for the study of emotion work. Hellas is at a different stage of economic development from the countries in which confirmatory empirical research on emotion work has been conducted so far. Although it has consistently achieved growth rates above the European Union average for the last ten years (e.g., European Commission, 2006; United Nations, 2005a), and is included in the cluster of developed countries in terms of its performance in the Human Development Index (United Nations, 2005b), Hellas still lags behind major world economies, including those of the Anglo-Saxon and Northern European countries, in terms of economic wealth (e.g., see The Economist, 2005; United Nations, 2005c).

In addition, and most important for our case, customer service orientation in Hellas is apparently substantially different from the countries in which the bulk of conceptual and confirmatory empirical work on emotion work has taken place. The management techniques utilized in Hellas are generally less cutting-edge than the management techniques utilized in more economically advanced countries (the most comprehensive study on Hellenic management and business techniques has been conducted by Bourantas



& Papadakis, 1997; but see also Eleftheriou & Robertson, 1999), and the idea of customer service in Hellas is different from that in more advanced service oriented economies. In particular, the general attitude among Hellenes service providers is still predominantly geared towards the provision of the product (e.g., material good, financial product, etc.) with less attention paid at the service, in terms of behaviour towards the customer, that accompanies that product. As an illustration, a typical frontline bank employee in Hellas would normally perform a required financial transaction with a customer having low concern regarding whether the customer is satisfied with aspects such as his/her friendliness and politeness, or even conscientiousness and competence. In this respect, adherence to emotional display rules is not always seen by frontline workers in the Hellenic service industry as part of their work role.

Therefore, the service industry in Hellas provides a highly appropriate setting for the conduction of confirmatory empirical research on emotion work. It is of importance to investigate whether and the way in which emotion work relates to important outcomes for employees and organizations, such as emotional exhaustion and work attitudes. Considering the information presented above, it is wise to adopt some conservatism regarding our expectations on the identification of relationships. If frontline service workers in Hellas do not feel obliged to and are not culturally expected to adhere to emotional display rules in their interactions with customers it is likely that engagement in emotion work does not have as serious consequences.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Participants were 110 (69 women and 41 men) native Hellenes (Greeks) who were employed on a full-time basis in the Hellenic (Greek) banking sector. All participants were performing frontline service jobs (cashiers and enquiries personnel). Frontline service jobs in the banking industry have been identified as involving emotion work (Hochschild, 1983,

p. 239; Zapf, 2002); hence, individuals performing such jobs provided an appropriate sample for the investigation.

Data were collected by handing questionnaires personally to all frontline employees in four randomly chosen branches of four different banks in the Athens metropolitan area of Hellas. The directors of these branches had granted permission and supported the study. Completed questionnaires were collected within three days after having been handed.

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. Mean age and tenure were 36.78 ( $SD = 8.07$ ) and 13.6 ( $SD = 9.28$ ) years, respectively; and mean tenure in a frontline service job was 10.89 ( $SD = 8.06$ ) years. Of the participants, 59 were single and 51 were married, and more than half (61 or 55.5%) held undergraduate or postgraduate degrees.

### Measures

Emotion work. This was measured with the scale developed by Brotheridge and Lee (2003). It consists of 14 items and respondents are asked to imagine themselves on an “average day at work” and indicate the frequency (1: never, 2: rarely, 3: sometimes, 4: often, 5: always) with which they engage in a number of actions pertinent to emotion work. The scale contains items that tap the five dimensions of emotion work, namely surface acting (three items, e.g., “on the average day at work, how frequently do you pretend to have emotions you do not really have?”), deep acting (three items, e.g., “on the average day at work, how frequently do you try to make an effort to actually feel the emotions that you need to display to others?”), frequency (three items, e.g., “on the average day at work, how frequently do you display specific emotions required by your job?”), intensity (two items, e.g., “on the average day at work, how frequently do you express intense emotions?”), and variety (three items, e.g., “on the average day at work, how frequently do you express many different emotions?”). Cronbach alphas were .61, .62, .80, .70 and .70 for surface acting, deep acting, frequency, intensity and variety, respectively. The coefficients for surface and deep acting were lower than those reported by Brotheridge and

Lee (2003) in their validation studies, but they were still within acceptable limits (DeVellis, 1991).

Emotional exhaustion. This was measured with the emotional exhaustion scale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) that consists of nine items (e.g., “I feel emotionally drained from my work”) and utilizes a 5-point intensity response format (1: very little, 5: very much). Cronbach  $\alpha$  for the present sample was .84.

Job satisfaction. This was measured with five items in a five-point response format (1: strongly agree, 5: strong disagree). Three items were from Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) scale (e.g., “generally speaking I am very satisfied with this job”) and two items were from Gattiker and Larwood’s (1986) scale (e.g., “I am in a position to do mostly work that I really like”). A principal components analysis using the eigenvalues-greater-than-one criterion yielded a single factor with loadings range .58 to .83 and median loading .71; indicating that the scale measured a unitary construct. Cronbach  $\alpha$  was .73.

Organizational commitment. This was measured with Allen and Meyer’s (1990) affective organizational commitment scale. Affective or attitudinal organizational commitment reflects the extent to which the employee identifies with, feels attached to and is involved in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1984; Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979; Riketta, 2002); and is shaped by the experiences of individuals within their employing organization (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002). Hence, affective organizational commitment resembles the notion of commitment on which the hypotheses and research questions of the present work were built. The scale contains eight items that are either positively (e.g., “I really feel as if this organization’s problems are my own”) or negatively stated (e.g., “I do not feel ‘emotionally attached’ to this organization”) in a 5-point response format (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree). Negatively stated items were reversed in the scoring process. Cronbach  $\alpha$  for the present sample was .74.

Turnover intentions. This was measured with two items (“how often do you think of leaving your present job?” and “how likely is it that you will look for a new job within the next year?”) to which participants responded using a 5-point response format (1: rarely or never, 2: occasionally, 3: sometimes, 4: fairly often, 5: very often). Cronbach  $\alpha$  was .78.

Controls. Information on a number of personal and work-related demographic variables, which could confound the relationships under investigation (e.g., Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Morris & Feldman, 1996), was collected with single items. These variables included respondents’ age, gender (coded 1: male, 2: female), educational attainment (coded 1: gymnasium, to 6: postgraduate degree<sup>4</sup>), marital status (coded 1: single, 2: married), tenure with the organization, and tenure in a frontline service job.

In order to ensure semantic equivalence between the original, English, version and the Hellenic version of the scales the translation/back-translation technique (see Behling & Law, 2000) was employed. The procedure consisted of three steps: In the first step, the full questionnaire was translated to the Hellenic language by an individual who was fluent in both languages; in the second step, the translated questionnaire was translated back to English by another bilingual individual; and in the third step, the two English language versions of the scales were compared. No major semantic differences were detected and some minor differences were resolved by changing the wording in the Hellenic version of the questionnaire. A pilot of the final questionnaire to a limited number of frontline service bank employees suggested that the scales were perfectly intelligible to our target population.

## Results

Descriptive statistics and Person correlation coefficients are presented in Table 1.

The main data-analytic technique was hierarchical regression. One-tailed significance testing was employed, because specific expectations regarding the direction of relationships had been posed. A series of one-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs)

indicated no significant differences between participants from the four banks in any of the variables that were utilized as criteria in the regressions, namely emotional exhaustion,  $F(3, 106) = .74$ , ns; job satisfaction,  $F(3, 106) = 1.65$ , ns; organizational commitment,  $F(3, 106) = 1$ , ns; and turnover intentions,  $F(3, 106) = .42$ , ns. For this reason, bank of employment was not utilized as control in the analysis.

### Predicting Emotional Exhaustion

Hypotheses 1 and 2, and research questions 1 and 2 were tested with a hierarchical regression that utilized emotional exhaustion as criterion. Control variables were forcibly entered in the first step. To preserve power, considering the large number of interaction effects, only those potential controls that demonstrated a significant relationship with emotional exhaustion were entered into the regression equation. The inter-correlations indicated that age ( $r = .17$ ,  $p < .10$ ) was marginally related to emotional exhaustion. Gender,  $t(108) = -1.92$ ,  $p < .10$ , was also marginally related to emotional exhaustion, with women participants ( $M = 2.92$ ,  $SD = .77$ ) reporting higher emotional exhaustion than male participants ( $M = 2.63$ ,  $SD = .73$ ). Therefore, only age and gender were entered into the regression equation as controls.

The five variables that represented the dimensions of emotion work, namely surface acting, deep acting, frequency of emotional display, intensity and variety of displayed emotions, were entered in the second step. Standard scores were utilized because interaction effects were also investigated (see Dunlap & Kemery, 1987). The three interaction effects of surface acting with the frequency, intensity and variety of emotional display were entered in the third step, as they strictly pertained to the testing of Hypothesis 2. The fourth, and final, step included the block that contained the seven remaining interaction effects, which pertained to the investigation of research questions 1 and 2. Interaction effects were operationalized as cross-products of standard scores on the respective variables, e.g., Surface acting x Frequency of emotional display, etc. (Dunlap &

Kemery, 1987). This transformation increases the accuracy of the estimation of the coefficients of the interaction terms without affecting the estimates of the main effects. The stepwise method for variable inclusion into the regression equation was employed for the second, the third and the fourth block. The stepwise technique selects and retains into the final regression equation only those predictor variables that make a significant contribution to the total regression model (e.g., Draper & Smith, 1981); hence, it improves parsimony (Sokal & Rohlf, 1981). As noted, this was especially important in the present study due to the large number of interaction terms. The analytic strategy ensured that in all analyses the ratio of cases to variables was substantially above the recommended minimum limit (e.g., see Berry & Feldman, 1985).

The final regression model is presented in Table 2. Neither scores on surface acting (Hypothesis 1) nor scores on any of the other dimensions of emotion work survived the stepwise procedure. Hence, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. The interaction of Surface acting x Frequency of emotional display made a significant contribution to the total amount of variance accounted for ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $t = 1.8$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but none of the other interactions of surface acting survived the stepwise procedure. Therefore, Hypothesis 2a was supported, whilst hypotheses 2b and 2c were not supported. The interaction of Deep acting x Intensity of displayed emotion made another significant addition to the total amount of variance accounted for in scores on emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $t = 1.92$ ,  $p < .05$ ); hence, the investigation of research question 1 yielded a significant relationship. The combined contribution of the emotion work terms to the total amount of variance accounted for was significant,  $F(2, 105) = 3.29$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{adj} = .038$ . As none of the interaction terms between the three secondary dimensions of emotion work survived the stepwise procedure, the investigation of research question 2 yielded no significant relationships.

### Predicting Work Attitudes

Hypotheses 4 through 7 and research questions 3 to 6 were tested with three hierarchical regressions that followed the same procedure as the regression that tested hypotheses 1 and 2, and research questions 1 and 2. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions were criteria variables in these regressions. The first step in each regression included those controls that were significantly related to each criterion variable, respectively; and were forcibly entered into the regression equation. The three next steps were identical to those in the building of the regression that tested hypotheses and research questions 1 and 2.

#### Emotion work and job satisfaction

Hypotheses 4a and 5, research question 3, and the first part of research question 6 pertained to the relationship of emotion work with job satisfaction, which was employed as the criterion variable in the regression equation. No controls were utilized in the construction of the equation because none of the potential controls (see Table 1), including gender,  $t(108) = -1.23$ , ns, and marital status,  $t(108) = -.48$ , ns, were related to job satisfaction.

The regression model is presented in Table 3. Scores on surface acting did not survive the stepwise procedure, neither did scores on any of the other four dimensions of emotion work. Hence, no significant main effects were identified and Hypothesis 4a was not supported. The interaction of Surface acting x Intensity of displayed emotion ( $\beta = -.19$ ,  $t = -1.98$ ,  $p < .05$ ) made a significant contribution to the total amount of variance accounted for in scores on job satisfaction. The direction of the relationship was negative, hence, Hypothesis 5b was supported. The interaction of Intensity x Variety of displayed emotions also survived the stepwise procedure and further added to the total amount of variance accounted for ( $\beta = .16$ ,  $t = 1.75$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Therefore, the partial investigation of research

question 6 yielded a significant relationship. However, the direction of the relationship was positive, which was not in line with the expectation. Scrutiny of the interaction effect using Aiken and West's (1991) guidelines suggested that although job satisfaction was highest when both intensity and variety were lowest, as expected, job satisfaction was not lowest at the point that intensity and variety were highest, but in another condition (that of high intensity and low variety). Therefore, the expectation on the nature of the interaction effect was only partly supported in this case. The combined contribution of the emotion work terms to the total amount of variance accounted for in scores on job satisfaction was significant,  $F(2, 107) = 3.45, p < .05, \Delta R^2_{adj} = .043$ .

Hypothesis 3a, which postulated that emotional exhaustion would mediate the relationship of emotion work with job satisfaction, was tested with the procedure developed by Kenny and his associates (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Judd & Kenny, 1981). The procedure consists of three stages, each involving the construction of a regression model. In stage (i), the mediator (emotional exhaustion) is regressed on the predictor (emotion work, which was operationalized by means of its five dimensions and their interactions). To progress to the second stage the relationship must be significant. As seen earlier in the testing of hypotheses and research questions 1 and 2, two of the interaction terms of emotion work, Surface acting x Frequency and Deep acting x Intensity, made significant contributions to scores on emotional exhaustion,  $F(2, 105) = 3.29, p < .05, \Delta R^2_{adj} = .038$ . This justified progression to stage (ii) of the procedure that involves regression of the criterion (job satisfaction) on the predictor (emotion work). As seen above, emotion work made a significant contribution to scores on job satisfaction,  $F(2, 107) = 3.45, p < .05, \Delta R^2_{adj} = .043$ . This justified progress into stage (iii) of the procedure, which involves hierarchically regressing the criterion (job satisfaction) on both the mediator (emotional exhaustion) and the predictor (emotion work). Scores on emotional exhaustion made a



significant contribution to the amount of variance accounted for in scores on job satisfaction,  $\beta = -.53$ ,  $t = -6.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $F\Delta(1, 108) = 33.35$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{adj} = .229$ , and emotion work significantly added to that amount,  $F\Delta(3, 105) = 4.44$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{adj} = .067$ . To infer mediation the amount of variance in the criterion (job satisfaction) accounted for by the predictor (emotion work) in the third stage must be lower than in the second stage. However, in the present case the amount of variance in job satisfaction accounted for by emotion work increased in the third stage (i.e., from 4.3% to 6.7% of the total variance)<sup>5</sup>. This means that no mediation of emotional exhaustion in the relationship of emotion work with job satisfaction can be concluded. Therefore, Hypotheses 3a was not supported.

#### Emotion work and organizational commitment

Hypotheses 4b and 6, research question 4 and the second part of research question 6 pertained to the relationship of emotion work with organizational commitment, which was employed as the criterion variable in the regression equation. Tenure with the organization ( $r = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and tenure in a frontline service job ( $r = .34$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were significantly related to organizational commitment and were included in the block of controls. None of the other potential controls, including gender,  $t(108) = .90$ , ns, and marital status,  $t(108) = 1.3$ , ns, were related to organizational commitment.

The regression model is presented in Table 3. Surface acting did not survive the stepwise procedure to make a significant contribution to the total amount of variance accounted for in scores on organizational commitment over and above the contribution of the control block. Hence, Hypothesis 4b was not supported. However, scores on the variety of displayed emotions ( $\beta = -.26$ ,  $t = -3.09$ ,  $p < .01$ ) survived the stepwise procedure.

None of the interaction terms of surface acting with the secondary dimensions of emotion work was included in the regression equation; hence, Hypothesis 6 was not

supported. The interaction of Deep acting x Intensity of displayed emotion ( $\beta = -.16$ ,  $t = -1.88$ ,  $p < .05$ ) contributed significantly to the amount of total variance accounted for.

Therefore, the investigation of research question 4 yielded a significant relationship. The interaction of Intensity x Variety of displayed emotion ( $\beta = .40$ ,  $t = 4.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ) made a further significant addition to the total amount of variance accounted for. The positive direction of this interaction effect necessitated further scrutiny, as it was not in line with the expected direction. This revealed that organizational commitment was indeed highest when scores on intensity and variety were lowest, as expected. However, commitment was not lowest when intensity and variety were highest, but in another condition (that of low intensity and high variety). Therefore, the investigation of the second part of research question 6 yielded a significant relationship whose direction was only partly in line with expectations. The combined contribution of all three emotion work terms, main and interaction, was significant,  $F(3, 104) = 10.99$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{adj} = .197$ .

Hypothesis 3b, which postulated that emotional exhaustion would mediate the relationship of emotion work with organizational commitment, was tested along the lines in which Hypothesis 3a was tested. As found in the testing of hypothesis 3a, the condition imposed in stage (i), which is common to both hypotheses, was satisfied. Regarding stage (ii), as seen above, emotion work made a significant contribution to scores on organizational commitment,  $F(3, 104) = 10.99$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{adj} = .197$ . In stage (iii) organizational commitment (the criterion) was hierarchically regressed on emotional exhaustion (the mediator) and on emotion work (the predictor), with tenure and tenure in a frontline service job as controls. Emotional exhaustion made a significant contribution to the total amount of variance accounted for,  $F(1, 106) = 19.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{adj} = .134$ ; and emotion work further significantly added to this amount,  $F(3, 103) = 10.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{adj} = .160$ . The amount of variance in scores on organizational commitment accounted

for by emotion work in stage (iii) was 3.7% lower than in stage (ii), which exceeds the recommended 1% cut-off point (Melamed, 1996). Hence, emotional exhaustion mediates their relationship. As emotion work still accounted for a significant amount of variance in scores on organizational commitment in stage (iii), the mediation is partial. Therefore, Hypothesis 3b was fully supported.

#### Emotion work and turnover intentions

Hypotheses 4c and 7, research question 5 and the third part of research question 6 pertained to the relationship of emotion work with turnover intentions, which was employed as the criterion variable in the regression equation. Only tenure in a frontline service job was included in the control block, as it was significantly related to turnover intentions ( $r = -.19, p < .05$ ). None of the other potential control factors (see Table 1), including gender,  $t(108) = -.04, ns$ , and marital status,  $t(108) = -1.29, ns$ , were related to turnover intentions.

The regression model is presented in Table 3. Scores on surface acting survived the stepwise procedure and significantly added to the total amount of variance accounted for in scores on turnover intentions ( $\beta = .18, t = 2.01, p < .05$ ). Hence, Hypothesis 4c was supported. Variety of displayed emotions was also included in the regression equation ( $\beta = .23, t = 2.56, p < .05$ ).

The interaction term of Surface acting x Intensity of displayed emotion also survived the stepwise procedure ( $\beta = .22, t = 2.52, p < .01$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis H7b was supported. Finally, the interaction term of Surface acting x Deep acting further added significantly ( $\beta = -.30, t = -3.22, p < .01$ ) to the total amount of variance accounted for. The combined contribution of these two interaction terms was significant,  $F(2, 104) = 7.14, p < .01, \Delta R^2_{adj} = .096$ ; as was the total contribution of the four emotion work terms, main and interaction,  $F(4, 104) = 5.78, p < .001, \Delta R^2_{adj} = .146$ . As none of the interactions of

Deep acting with the secondary dimensions of emotion work nor any of the interactions between the secondary dimensions of emotion work survived the stepwise procedure, the investigation of research question 5 and of the third part of research question 6 did not yield significant relationships.

Finally, Hypothesis 3c, which postulated that emotional exhaustion would mediate the relationship of emotion work with turnover intentions, was tested along the lines in which Hypothesis 3a and 3b were tested. As already seen, the condition imposed in stage (i) of the procedure was fulfilled. As found above, emotion work accounted for a significant amount of variance in scores on turnover intentions,  $F(4, 104) = 5.78, p < .001, \Delta R^2_{adj} = .146$ ; which satisfied the condition imposed in stage (ii) of the procedure. Stage (iii) involved the hierarchical regression of turnover intentions (the criterion) on emotional exhaustion (the mediator) and on emotion work (the predictor), with tenure in a frontline service job as control. Emotional exhaustion contributed significantly to the amount of total variance accounted for,  $F(1, 107) = 17.17, p < .001, \Delta R^2_{adj} = .126$ ; and emotion work made a further significant addition to that amount,  $F(4, 103) = 5.21, p < .01, \Delta R^2_{adj} = .115$ . The contribution of scores on emotion work to scores on turnover intentions in stage (iii) was still significant; and the decrease in the amount of variance (i.e., 3.1%) in scores on turnover intentions accounted for by scores on emotion work in stage (iii) from stage (ii) was greater than the recommended cut-off point of 1%. Therefore, it was concluded that emotional exhaustion partially mediates the relationship between emotion work and turnover intentions, in full support of Hypothesis 3c.

### Discussion

The present work was set to investigate a number of mostly untested relationships of emotion work in a cultural context that was radically different from those in which research on emotion work had taken place to date. The findings contribute to our

understanding in three areas: First, the role and importance of interactions between the dimensions of emotion work; second, the nature of the relationship of emotion work with emotional exhaustion and work attitudes; and third, the role of national culture in the pattern of the relationship of emotion work with emotional exhaustion and work attitudes.

The study investigated an untested yet issue, which is the role of the interactions between the dimensions of emotion work. Earlier empirical research had focused exclusively on the main effects of the components of emotion work, and especially those of the primary components, surface and deep acting. The present work utilized five established dimensions of emotion work and looked at both their main and their interaction effects. In line with earlier reports, neither deep acting nor the three secondary dimensions of emotion work were related to emotional exhaustion. But, in contrast to the majority of earlier empirical studies, no relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion was identified either. This can be accounted for in terms of the cultural context, and it will be discussed later. However, importantly, the results revealed that interactions between the dimensions of emotion work were related to emotional exhaustion. In particular, the findings indicated that frequent engagement in surface acting, that is the regular disguise of felt emotions, was especially emotionally taxing. Similarly, engagement in deep acting of high intensity, that is expending effort to experience strongly the emotions one tries to internalize, was also found to be highly emotionally taxing. These findings are in line with the idea that partly triggered the present study: that it is in fact the combination of different emotion work pressures and requirements that impose the major psychological toll on emotion workers. To illustrate, although deep acting by itself may not be detrimental, the results suggest that it becomes detrimental when individuals have to experience intensively the emotions they try to internalize. The revelation of the contribution of the interactions is very important because it directs towards viewing the consequences of emotion work under

a different prism: that of the interplay between its components, instead of solely their main effects. As this was the first study to investigate the issue, further research is imperative.

The testing of the relationship of emotion work with work attitudes yielded results that were also largely in line with those on the relationship of emotion work with emotional exhaustion. Although main effects were observed in certain cases, interaction effects were more prevalent and they were present in the relationship of emotion work with all three work attitudes that were employed, namely job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions. The intensity of displayed emotion had a consistent role in the relationship of the two primary dimensions of emotion work, surface acting and deep acting, with work attitudes. In particular, the interactions of the intensity of displayed emotion with surface acting or deep acting were related to all three work attitudes in the expected direction: high intensity of displayed emotion combined with strong engagement in surface acting was associated with lower job satisfaction and stronger intentions to leave the organization; and high intensity of displayed emotion combined with strong deep acting was associated with lower organizational commitment. Considering these findings along with the findings on the relationship of emotion work with emotional exhaustion, it appears that the intensity of displayed emotion is a prominent secondary dimension of emotion work, as it emerged as a consistent moderator of the relationship of the two primary dimensions with both emotional exhaustion and work attitudes. This is in line with points made in the theoretical literature on the key role of the intensity of emotional display in the strain imposed by emotion work (Morris & Feldman, 1996).

Most of the identified interaction effects were in the expected directions. However, there were two cases of interaction effects whose directions were not fully in line with expectations. These were the interactions between the intensity and the variety of displayed emotions in their relationships with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment were highest when both intensity and variety

of displayed emotions were lowest, as expected; but, contrary to what was expected, the lowest levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment were not located at the points that both intensity and variety of displayed emotions were highest. These partly discrepant findings can be dismissed as isolated and random (e.g., see Howell, 1987). However, it is wiser to keep them in mind; as they signal the potential complexity of the interplay between the dimensions of emotion work, and further advocate the importance of additional work to shed light on the nature of this interplay.

Main effects, though not as numerous as the interaction effects, were also observed in the relationship of emotion work with work attitudes. In particular, the variety of displayed emotions, primarily, and surface acting, secondarily, bore relationships with organizational commitment and turnover intentions in the expected directions (i.e., negative and positive, respectively). It should be pointed that it was not surface acting, a primary dimension of emotion work, but the variety of displayed emotions, a secondary dimension, that was most consistently related with work attitudes. Taking into account the scarcity of empirical research with the secondary dimensions of emotion work, the present findings are supportive of the validity and substantive importance of these secondary components; and suggest that future research ought to utilize all identified dimensions of emotion work, primary and secondary.

The results also indicated a weak mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the relationship of emotion work with work attitudes. In other terms, the link between emotion work and participants' attitudes towards their jobs and the organization was mostly direct, and largely independent of the relationship of these attitudes with emotional exhaustion. The extent to which this finding can be generalized to other emotion work occupations and, especially, to different national cultural contexts, is an issue that must be addressed in future research. However, this relationship pattern can be explained in terms of the characteristics of the national cultural context in which the present study was conducted.

As seen, the Hellenic culture is Affective and Diffuse, with a strong orientation towards forthrightness and a tendency towards resistance to authority. Furthermore, as also seen, the attitude of many Hellenes towards service orientation is one of differentiation between the product offered and the emotional display that accompanies the delivery of that product. The above features of the Hellenic culture would suggest that frontline service workers in Hellas perceive low obligation and possess low motivation to display those emotions towards customers that are considered appropriate for their roles. Therefore, it would be less likely to mobilize psychological resources in order to engage in emotional display. This means that involvement in frontline service work should not be especially emotionally taxing for Hellenes employees; hence, not strongly linked with emotional exhaustion. In support of this explanation was the absence of main effect in the relationship of surface acting with emotional exhaustion, a relationship that has been reported in all studies conducted in Anglo-Saxon and Northern European countries.

On the other hand, however, these same cultural characteristics that prevent the development of emotional exhaustion in Hellenes frontline service employees can be responsible for the development of negative views towards their jobs and employing organization. Although they may not feel particular pressure to comply with emotion work requirements Hellenes frontline service workers should resent the fact that they perform a job that has emotional display rules and necessitates, at least sometimes, the violation of the culturally valued principles of forthrightness and genuine expression of felt emotions. This should naturally lead to the formation of negative attitudes towards their jobs; hence, to a decrease in job satisfaction and a heightened desire to quit the job. Furthermore, emotional display rules are designed, endorsed and imposed by the management of the organization who is a source of authority, which, as seen, is generally viewed with negativity by Hellenes. Therefore, Hellenes who engage in frontline service work should



be more likely to form unfavourable attitudes towards their employing organization and, hence, report lower commitment towards it as well as higher desire to leave.

The above culture-based accounts offer an apparently plausible explanation for the relationship pattern that was observed in the present study: the direct link of emotion work with work attitudes, with only weak mediation by emotional exhaustion. It appears that Hellenes who engage in frontline service work are likely to form negative attitudes towards their jobs and employing organization not because emotion work exhausts them, but mainly because frontline service work imposes display rules that are incompatible with deeply entrenched cultural values.

From a human resource management point of view the study suggests that in the Hellenic context, and by extrapolation in national cultural contexts that resemble it, emotion work is associated with undesirable phenomena for organizations. At this point, it is important to stress once more that the present study indicated that undesired outcomes of emotion work were only marginally related to emotional exhaustion; as emotional exhaustion weakly mediated the relationship of emotion work with work attitudes. Therefore, according to our findings, to limit the negative phenomena that are associated with emotion work organizations that operate in Hellas should not direct their policies towards emotional exhaustion; but either towards the nature of emotion work itself or directly towards the improvement of work attitudes. Although our knowledge on emotion work is still limited, potential human resource practices can include: the provision of information to frontline employees on the nature of emotion work; mentoring by senior colleagues or more experienced peers (e.g., Eby, 1997; King, Xia, Campbell-Quick & Sethi, 2005; van Emmerik, 2004); and the design of frontline service work in a way that reduces the demands on intensity, variety and frequency of emotional display (taking into account that our results suggest that these are the demands that are mostly related to negative outcomes rather than the sheer fact that employees are required to act in their

encounters with customers). Such specific-to-emotion-work human resource systems could be supplemented by practices that are traditionally utilized as means against negative work attitudes and voluntary turnover, for example, fairly designed and managed reward systems, and opportunities for development (e.g., Chen, Chang & Yeh, 2004).

### Limitations

The cross-sectional nature of the investigation does not allow strong assertions on causality regardless of the sophistication of data analytic techniques (e.g., Bozionelos, 2003). Furthermore, exclusive utilization of the self-report method invites the possibility of common method bias, which may be associated with inflation or deflation of the identified relationships (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). Although sound quantitative review work (Crampton & Wagner, 1994) demonstrated that the likelihood of obtaining biased coefficients due to self-reports is much lower than generally believed, precautions were still taken to reduce this possibility. These precautions included assuring participants on the anonymity of responses and stating in the instructions that there were no correct or incorrect answers (Podsakoff et al., 2003; and see Schmitt, 1994). Nevertheless, multi-source methodologies are encouraged, when feasible.

Internal consistency reliabilities for two of the dimensions of emotion work were only marginally acceptable. These low reliabilities cannot be easily attributed to sub-optimal translation of the scales because low internal consistencies were observed only with two of the five dimensions of emotion work. Furthermore, a drop in the value of alpha coefficients is not uncommon in measure transfer across linguistic and cultural groups (e.g., Helseth & Lund, 2005; Lee, Allen & Meyer, 2001). Nevertheless, these marginal internal consistencies should be kept in mind. As a more general note, it appears that additional work is needed towards the development and validation of emotion work measures. For example, along with individuals whose jobs involved emotion work, Brotheridge and Lee's validation samples also included full-time students and individuals who did not perform

jobs that involve emotion work (see Brotheridge & Lee, 2003, pp. 368-374). The present study utilized exclusively full-time employees whose jobs involved emotion work. This discrepancy in the nature of samples could be responsible for the differences in internal consistency reliabilities.

The relatively small sample size also needs to be mentioned. At this point it should be reiterated that the ratio of cases to variables was always above the limits that permit valid statistical conclusions. Furthermore, it is not the sample size that determines the applicability of statistical conclusions to the population under consideration; but rather the extent to which the sample is representative of that population (e.g., Best, Krueger, Hubbard & Smith, 2001; Forster, 2000; Scheaffer, Mendenhall & Ott, 1990). Although we cannot be certain that the sample was representative of the population of frontline employees in the Hellenic banking sector, the fact that participants were frontline service employees from different banks in different locations provides some confidence in this respect.

Finally, the study was conducted in the frontline services environment of the banking sector. The extent to which the findings are generalizable to other occupations that involve performance of emotion work (e.g., waiters, cabin crew personnel, health professionals) is an issue that needs to be investigated in future research.

The present work indicated the importance of considering all dimensions of emotion work and, especially, their interactions. In addition, it suggested a link between national cultural features and the nature of the relationship of emotion work with outcomes of importance to both employees and organizations. The latter implies that optimal ways to deal with negative phenomena associated with emotion work vary across national contexts. Taking into account the scarcity of empirical confirmatory research on emotion work, it is imperative that further research is conducted in various national cultural environments; so

cultural differences in the way emotion work relates to important outcomes are identified, and culturally optimal human resource practices are formulated.

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#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>The terms “emotion work” and “emotional labour” signify exactly the same construct and should be seen as synonymous (see Zapf, 2002, pp. 238-239).

<sup>2</sup>It has been legitimately suggested that the construct of emotion work should be expanded to include interactions with co-workers as well (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Tschan et al., 2005; and see Totterdell & Holman, 2003). However, the present work adhered to the original or traditional meaning of the construct as pertinent exclusively to interactions with customers. Empirical findings indicate that the requirement for displaying prescribed emotions is substantially greater (by a factor of three) in interactions with customers than in interactions with co-workers (Tschan et al., 2005).

<sup>3</sup>These two studies, by Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) and by Brotheridge and Lee (2003), utilized the same sample and measured four of the dimensions of emotion work with identical scales (only the assessment of frequency of emotional display was accomplished with different items, see Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002, pp. 23-24 and pp. 34-35, and Brotheridge & Lee, 2003, pp. 369-370). To avoid misunderstandings, the studies had different aims. However, the parts of these studies that are pertinent to the present work are identical, hence, their respective findings are treated as a single report.

<sup>4</sup>The Hellenic educational system is structured as following: elementary school (six years duration); gymnasium (three years duration; equivalent to junior high-school); lyceum (three years duration; equivalent to senior high-school); technical/vocational education (variable duration; leads to a technical/vocational qualification); higher education (three to four years duration; equivalent to a Polytechnic or two/three-year College degree); highest education (four to five years duration; equivalent to a University or College degree); and postgraduate education. Attendance of education up to Gymnasium level is compulsory, hence, this was the minimal educational qualification included in the questionnaire.

<sup>5</sup>This increase in the amount of variance accounted for by a set of predictors after the addition of what is in essence a control variable (emotional exhaustion in the present case) must not be seen with surprise or suspicion. It can be explained by means of the relationship between the new variable in the equation and the other predictor variables, which can result in changes in the relationship of the latter with the criterion (e.g., see Howell, 1987).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations ( $N = 110$ ).

	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age (in years)	36.78	8.07	—											
2. Tenure (in years)	13.60	9.28	.79	—										
3. Tenure in a frontline service position (in years)	10.89	8.06	.64	.81	—									
4. Surface acting	2.87	.77	-.22	-.22	-.26	—								
5. Deep acting	2.59	.85	.09	-.04	.04	.30	—							
6. Frequency of emotional display	3.25	.70	-.01	-.11	-.02	.30	.43	—						
7. Intensity of displayed emotions	2.19	.87		.20	.12	.05	-.11	-.03	.02	—				
8. Variety of displayed emotions	2.91	.84	.06	0	.05	.08	.36	.24	.49	—				
9. Emotional exhaustion	2.84	.77	.17	.12	-.02	.08	.07	.15	.13	.11	—			
10. Job satisfaction	3.34	.67	-.09	-.07	-.03	.12	-.05	.14	-.04	-.07	-.43	—		
11. Organizational commitment	3.17	.66	.15	.27	.34	-.16	-.12	.01	0	-.23	-.37	.54	—	
12. Turnover intentions	2.09	1.03	-.13	-.13	-.19	.25	.02	.09	.12	.16	.37	-.50	-.59	—

Note. Correlations  $\geq |.16|, |.19|, |.25|, |.31|$  are significant at  $p < .10$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively.

Table 2

The hierarchical regression model predicting emotional exhaustion on the basis of emotion work (N = 110).

Variables	$\beta$	t value	
Step 1: forcible entry			
Age	.20	2.1*	
Gender	.28	2.93**	
$\Delta R^2$			.069
F $\Delta$			5.03**
Step 2: stepwise			
No variables retained			
Step 3: stepwise			
Surface acting x Frequency	.17	1.8*	
$\Delta R^2$			.015
F $\Delta$			2.82*
Step 4: stepwise			
Deep acting x Intensity	.18	1.92*	
$\Delta R^2$			.023
F $\Delta$			3.68*
$R^2$			.107
F			4.27**

Notes. Adjusted  $R^2$  values are presented. Beta coefficients in the final model are presented.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 3

The hierarchical regression models predicting work attitudes on the basis of emotion work (N = 110).

Variable	Job satisfaction		Organizational Commitment		Turnover intentions	
	$\beta$	$t$ value	$\beta$	$t$ value	$\beta$	$t$ value
Step 1: forcible entry						
Tenure			-.01	-.04		
Tenure in frontline service			.37	2.67**	-.15	-1.63 <sup>†</sup>
$\Delta R^2$					.096	.028
$F\Delta$					6.76**	4.1*
Step 2: stepwise						
Surface acting					.18	2.01*
Variety			-.26	- 3.09**	.23	2.56**
$\Delta R^2$					.051	.050
$F\Delta$					7.42**	3.97*

Notes. Adjusted  $R^2$  values are presented. Beta coefficients in the final models are presented.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .1$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



Table 3 (continued)

The hierarchical regression models predicting work attitudes on the basis of emotion work (N = 110).

Variable	Job satisfaction		Organizational Commitment		Turnover intentions	
	$\beta$	$t$ value	$\beta$	$t$ value	$\beta$	$t$ value
Step 3: stepwise						
Surface acting x Intensity	-.19	-1.98*			.22	2.52**
$\Delta R^2$			.025			.022
$F\Delta$			3.78*			3.6*
Step 4: stepwise						
Surface acting x Deep acting					-.30	-3.22**
Deep acting x Intensity			-.16	-1.88*		
Intensity x Variety	.16	1.75*	.40	4.85***		
$\Delta R^2$			.018		.146	.074
$F\Delta$			3.05*		12.01***	10.36**

Notes. Adjusted  $R^2$  values are presented. Beta coefficients in the final models are presented.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .1$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 3 (continued)

The hierarchical regression models predicting work attitudes on the basis of emotion work (N = 110).

Variable	Job satisfaction		Organizational Commitment		Turnover intentions	
	$\beta$	$t$ value	$\beta$	$t$ value	$\beta$	$t$ value
$R^2$			.043		.293	.174
$F$			3.45*		10.06***	5.59***

Notes. Adjusted  $R^2$  values are presented. Beta coefficients in the final models are presented.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .1$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .