Help Me Out! How Coworkers Can Influence Genuine Emotions

by
Brody Larson

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

Honors College

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Management
(Honors Associate)

Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Business Administration
(Honors Associate)

Presented June 6, 2018
Commencement June 2018

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Brody Loyis Larson for the degree of <u>Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Management</u> and <u>Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Business Administration</u> presented on June 6, 2018. Title: <u>Help Me Out! How Coworkers Can Influence Genuine Emotions</u>.

Abstract approved: _____

<div align="center">Lawrence Houston, III</div>

On a daily basis, employees in the service industry manage their emotional and physical displays, both to their coworkers and customers. Whether this management is for personal gain or organizational requirement, these attempts to manage other's impressions can have important personal effects. Specifically, when managing emotional displays to customers, there are more personal costs when someone must fake or suppress their emotions, compared to displaying genuine emotions. Using an experiential sampling method, this study attempts to explain one way in which employees may be influenced to display genuine emotions towards customers. It is theorized that ingratiation, attempting to seem likeable by one's coworkers, will lead to the employee feeling a sense of relatedness with their coworkers. This sense of relatedness is postulated to function as a personal psychological resource for the employee, helping them to express genuine emotions. Results suggest that ingratiation can have a slightly positive effect on perceptions of relatedness, which in turn has a positive effect on individuals displaying genuine emotions to customers.

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<u>Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Management</u> and <u>Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Business Administration</u> project of Brody Loyis Larson presented on June 6, 2018.

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

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Brody Loyis Larson, Author

Help Me Out! How Coworkers Can Influence Genuine Emotions

"How do I feel by the end of the day? /

(Are you sad because you're on your own?) /

No, I get by with a little help from my friends"

-The Beatles, "With a Little Help from My Friends", 1967

The United States is largely a service based economy, with 80% of gross domestic production being accounted for by services, and over half of the US population employed in the service industry (Central Intelligence Agency). The shift towards service employment has brought about many changes for employees, including the job requirements that they are expected to adhere to. As suggested by Hochschild (1983), employers in the service industry have attempted to gain a competitive advantage by creating "a market for emotional labor", by requiring employees to display positive emotions to customers that they may or may not feel. It can be easily understood why organizations may want to mandate the emotions that are displayed to customers, as service employees are seen as the public representation of the company (Grove & Fisk, 1992), and positive emotional displays by employees have been shown to have a positive effect on the customer evaluation of the service quality (Pugh, 2001). This has created an expectation for employees to provide "service with a smile", which is believed to enhance the customer's impressions and appraisal of the service encounter, but it is often difficult to control the authenticity of that smile (Grandey et al., 2005).

In order to follow the display rules set by service organizations, employees at times must "fake it to make it", or put on a fake smile, suppressing or enhancing their

emotions. This act of managing feelings to create publicly observable facial and bodily displays is the act of emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983). Unfortunately, faking displayed emotions comes at a cost, potentially compromising individual and organizational outcomes (Roberts, 2005). Prior research suggests that if the audience knows that the person is displaying a false image, the employee may be discredited and socially sanctioned (Gardner & Martinko, 1988). In addition, Gardner, Fisher, and Hunt (2009) found that negative impressions are more prominent when the audience concludes that the actor is presenting a false image.

When first categorizing certain forms of emotional labor, Hochschild (1983), refers to "worked-up warmth of feeling" as deep acting, and "put-on smiles" as surface acting. Deep acting focuses on modifying one's perception of a situation, such as thinking of positive events to bring up positive emotions, or thinking of the situation positively to alter emotions (Gross, 1998). Surface acting focuses on directly manipulating one's emotional display or response (Gross, 1998). Surface acting has been proven to have more negative effects for the individual (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011), and surface actors are more likely to be viewed as inauthentic from the audiences perspective (Grandey, 2000; Groth et al., 2009). Prior research has shown that employees who perform deep acting have less negative consequences than those who surface act, but both forms of acting are considered emotional labor and can cause emotional exhaustion (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2001). As prior research shows that the audience can perceive whether a smile (expression) is genuine or fake (Ekman, 2003), theory (Grandey, 2000) and research suggest that inauthenticity will undermine the assumed benefits of "service with a smile" (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). Therefore, research providing information

about circumstances when employees have the energy and personal resources necessary

to consistently display genuine emotions is important for service managers and

organizational theorists (Grayson & Shulman, 2000).

<div align="center">Theory</div>

Prior research shows that suppressing or faking emotions often causes employees

to exert more self-control resources than they have accumulated (Grandey, Rupp, &

Brice, 2015), and this resource loss can lead to more ineffective self-presentation (Vohs

et al., 2005). Although previous research explains the positive effect that genuine

expressions have on the individual and organizational outcomes (Gardner & Martinko,

1988; Roberts, 2005), there is little research on how service employees may acquire the

resources necessary to express genuine emotions to customers. Therefore, the aim of the

present study is to examine how individuals may gain personal psychological resources

or gain certain perceptions that encourage or allow them to display genuine emotions

when interacting with customers. Specifically, I focus on how individuals may be able to

obtain these resources by feeling a sense of relatedness with their coworkers, or having

their relational needs satisfied.

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) argues that

there are universal psychological needs, and suggests that humans will be motivated and

display well-being in organizations to the extent that they experience psychological needs

satisfaction within those organizations (Deci et al., 2001). One of the three main

psychological needs is relatedness, or a feeling of belonging, which can be defined as the

opportunity to relate in meaningful ways with others (Ryan & Deci, 2000). As Hobfoll

(1989) argued that social relations are regarded as valued resources if they help to satisfy

situational needs, the sense of relatedness with one's coworkers may function as a personal resource within a service employment context.

Conservation of resources theory explains that there are different types of personal resources that individuals have, broadly defined as states, conditions, or other things that people value, with one of the most important being personal psychological resources such as self-esteem and social support (Hobfoll, 1989). This theory also explains that individuals value personal resources, and therefore are motivated to retain their current resources and pursue new resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Prior research examines the effects that coworker interactions may have on buffering or replenishing already experienced resource loss, such as a high climate of authenticity contributing to self-replenishment (Grandey, Foo, Groth, & Goodwin, 2011). In contrast, this research attempts to explore how coworker interactions may give employees the resources to express genuine emotions more often, helping them to experience less resource depletion. I theorize that individuals will gain psychological resources by having a sense of relatedness with their coworkers, and therefore be more able to express genuine emotions to customers.

Hypothesis 1: When an employee perceives to have relational needs satisfaction at work, they will be more likely to express genuine emotions.

Prior research shows that employees differentiate between emotional expressions towards customers and to coworkers (Diefendorff & Greguras, 2009; Tschan et al., 2005). One prior study specifically showed that a climate of authenticity (coworker interactions), was related to surface acting (customer interactions) (Grandey, Foo, Groth, & Goodwin, 2011). Regarding prior research showing that service employees

differentiate between emotional management towards coworkers and customers, it can be

reasoned that these distinct interactions with others may affect one another. Thus, it is

important to examine how coworker interactions can influence genuine emotional

displays, as it is known that genuine displays have more positive outcomes for the

organization and individual than faking or suppressing emotions (Humphrey, Ashforth &

Diefendorff, 2015).

     The process by which employees seek to influence the image that their coworkers

have of them is known as impression management (Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan,

1995). This is a strategic process for some, who are trying to create a particular self-

image, or a more unconscious reaction (Jones & Pittman, 1982). One of the main forms

of impression management, ingratiation can be defined as acting agreeable or helpful to

others, in the pursuit of them perceiving you to be likeable (Jones & Pittman, 1982). This

impression management tactic has also been explained as a proactive behavior used to

enhance attractiveness and the probability of receiving desired rewards in the future

(Aryee, Wyatt, & Stone, 1996). A meta-analytic study of the impacts of ingratiation

found that this action had a strong positive effect on judgements of interpersonal

attraction, such as liking (Gordon, 1996). There are four main categories of ingratiation

identified by previous literature: favor doing, opinion conformity, other enhancement

(showing someone that they are likeable, or that you benefit from their relationship), and

self-presentation. When examining lateral interpersonal attachment (defined as: close

relationships characterized by trust, mutual support, interpersonal attraction, and

cohesion), Strutton and Pelton (1998) found that favor rendering, other-enhancement, and

behavioral conformity were all positively related to lateral interpersonal attachment, in

that order. Prior research shows that when an individual attempts to seem friendly and helpful, their interpersonal relationships and attachment with coworkers are positively influenced (Gordon, 1996; Strutton, Pelton, & Tanner, 1996). Therefore, prior research (Strutton, Pelton, & Tanner, 1996), and theory suggest that ingratiation should enable service employees to satisfy their need to feel a sense relatedness.

As explained by self-determination theory, relatedness is a psychological need to relate to others in meaningful ways (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and as argued by conservation of resources theory, social relations are regarded as valued resources (Hobfoll, 1989). It is important then, to find ways in which employees may gain a sense of relatedness, as this is a basic human need. One way that individuals might gain a sense of related needs satisfaction from their coworkers is through ingratiation. As an impression management tactic, ingratiation has been shown to lead to interpersonal attraction, mutual support, cohesion and trust among coworkers (Strutton, Pelton, and Tanner, 1996). Therefore, to the extent that ingratiating towards coworkers provides individuals with desired relationships that satisfy their relational needs, service employees may have the energy and personal resources necessary to express genuine emotions when interacting with customers.

Hypothesis 2: When employees ingratiate towards their coworkers, they will perceive to have relational needs satisfaction at work.

Hypothesis 3: If employees ingratiate towards their coworkers, there relational needs will be met, giving them more personal psychological resources, making them more likely to perform genuine emotional displays towards customers.

Method

One hundred fifty-seven individuals that were employed in the service industry

consented to participate in the study and provided their contact information. The majority

of participants were undergraduate students from Oregon State University, and all

participants worked at least part-time in some service job, mainly: retail food, retail

clothing, and health and fitness. In exchange for their voluntary participation, participants

were offered an Amazon gift card, with a maximum value of $30, based on the amount of

surveys completed.

This project used an experiential sampling methodology (ESM) to explain daily

variance in the participant's experiences, and their feelings and emotions at work. In her

overview of emotional labor, Grandey, (2000) speaks of emotional events as specific

interactions with customers that require emotional regulation, and she concludes that

more emotional events result in more effort to regulate emotions, creating a cumulative

effect on stress and wellbeing. This study asked participants to report their feelings and

emotions over a two week period, consistent with prior research claiming that a two week

period represents a generalizable sample of individual's interactions with other people

(Barnes et al., 2015; Reis & Wheeler, 1991).

First, participants completed an initial survey, containing demographic and

personality characteristic questions and provided contact information for daily survey

distribution. Participants were then administered online surveys twice a day for the two

week distribution period. The participants were sent the first daily post-work survey

(Time 1) at 12PM on Monday, and asked to complete it at the end of their workday; this

same survey was then distributed each day at the same time during the two week period

(12PM on Tuesday represents Time 3). This post-work survey asked participants about their emotional displays at work that day, and about their interactions with customers and coworkers, including the independent and dependent variables. The participants were then sent daily pre-work surveys at 5AM starting on Tuesday (Time 2), which asked about how their interactions with coworkers went yesterday and how they felt about going to work today, including the moderator. This allowed for temporal precedence, with the independent variable being measured at Time 1, the mediator being measured at Time 2, and the dependent variable being measured at Time 3.

One hundred and fifty-seven participants completed the initial survey and provided contact information to be sent the daily surveys. Based on prior research, only participants who completed at least three full days of surveys were used for analysis to limit bias and maximize statistical power (Liu, Song, Li, & Liao, 2017; Trougakos, Hideg, Cheng, & Beal, 2014). One full day is considered a post-work survey and a pre-work survey (in succession), due to the dependent and independent variables being included in the post-work survey and the moderator being included in the pre-work survey. The final sample consisted of 52 employees and 210 data points. The final sample participants were 30% male and 72% identified as White. The majority of participants were ages 18 - 24, and had 5 years of average work experience.

<div align="center">Measures</div>

(Time 1) Ingratiation towards Coworkers. After leaving work for the day, participants were asked to respond to the question: Today at work, how often did you perform the following actions? Using a 5 point Likert scale, ranging from "Very Often" to "Not at all", participants responded to the following Ingratiation tactics, from Bolino and

Turnley, (1999): Complimented your colleagues so they will see you as likeable; Took an interest in your colleagues' personal lives to show them that you are friendly; Praised your colleagues for their accomplishments so they will consider you a nice person; Did personal favors for your colleagues to show them that you are friendly.

(Time 2) Relational Needs Satisfaction. Before going to work, participants were asked to discuss how they felt about work that day. Using a 5 point Likert scale, ranging from "Clearly describes my feelings" to "Does not describe my feelings", participants responded to the following Needs Satisfaction measures regarding Relatedness, suggested by Deci, Ryan, Gagné, Leone, Usunov, and Kornazheva, (2001): I feel cared about at work; I feel a lot of distance in my relationships at work; and I feel a lot of closeness with my colleagues at work.

(Time 3) Genuine Displays of Emotion. After leaving work for the day, participants were asked to indicate how often they felt and expressed various emotions to others at work that day. Using a 5 point Likert scale, ranging from "Very Often" to "Not at all", participants indicated how often they felt and expressed the 10 emotions suggested by Glomb and Tews, (2004): Contentment, Concern, Happiness, Liking, Enthusiasm, Aggravation, Irritation, Anger, Distress, and Disliking.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Hypothesis 1 predicted that when individuals indicated that they felt a sense of relatedness with their coworkers, they would be more likely to display genuine emotions to customers. As shown in Table 1 and depicted in Figure 1, this prediction was supported ($b = .29$, $p < .01$).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that individuals who indicated that they engaged in ingratiatory tactics towards coworkers would feel a sense of relatedness with them. This prediction was not supported, (b = .09, p > .05), but this result was trending towards significance (p = .11). These findings are shown in Table 1 and depicted in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that individuals who engaged in ingratiatory tactics towards their coworkers would engage in more genuine displays towards customers, because they would feel a sense of relatedness with their coworkers. Hypothesis 3 was not supported, (b = .00, p > .05) as it relied on the outcomes of Hypotheses 1 and 2. These findings are shown in Table 1 and depicted in Figure 1.

In sum, this study provides evidence that employees are able to gain personal psychological resources through a feeling of relatedness with their coworkers. Those who felt a sense of relatedness with their coworkers were more likely to display genuine positive emotions in accordance with service climate display rules. It was theorized that this sense of relatedness would be fostered by ingratiating towards one's coworkers, and though this hypothesis was not supported, the results were trending towards significance, and may be supported upon more data collection. These findings have the benefit of demonstrating the relationship between personal needs, psychological resources and genuine emotional displays within a realistic service context.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore how individuals working in the service industry may be influenced by coworker relationships to display genuine emotions towards their customers. Although there has been an increasing amount of research on the topics of emotion management, there has been little research done on how emotion

management towards one's coworkers may 'spill-over' to affect one's emotion

management towards customers. Based on prior theory and research, it is known that

individuals have better personal outcomes when they do not fake or suppress emotional

expressions, and that personal resources are important for individuals to have the ability

to genuinely express emotions based on organizational display rules. Using conservation

of resources and self-determination theories, I anticipated that feeling a sense of

relatedness with one's coworkers would provide employees with psychological resources,

enabling them to act genuinely during customer interactions. The findings that feeling a

sense of relatedness with one's coworkers is positively related to displaying genuine

emotions to customers is important given previous findings that faking or suppressing

emotions has negative consequences for the employee (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). I

theorized that ingratiation, an impression management tactic attempting to elicit liking

from coworkers, would lead customer service employees to feel a sense of relatedness

with their coworkers, influencing them to display genuine emotions to customers.

Although ingratiation has previously been shown to be an effective impression

management tactic (Gordon, 1996), and to create interpersonal attachment among

coworkers, (Strutton & Pelton, 1998), it has not before been linked to an individual's

need to feel a sense of relatedness. The data did not significantly support that ingratiation

towards one's coworkers provided a sense of related needs satisfaction, but the results

indicated that this link may be supported upon further research.

Implications

To the author's knowledge, this is the first time that a specific impression

management tactic that is focused on coworker relationships was proposed to be linked to

emotional displays towards customers. Though this link was not significantly supported, the data was trending towards significance, and is worth further research. In addition, this is the first time, to the author's knowledge, that conservation of resources and self-determination theories have been used in conjunction, specifically having the outcomes of self-determination theory being used to provide resources as in conversation of resources theory. There has been research concerning conservation of resources theory being applied to emotional labor (Grandey, Foo, Groth, & Goodwin, 2011), but this prior research has focused on the ability of the employee to replenish psychological resources after they have been lost, due to faking or suppressing emotions. This research may open up the possibility for researchers to explore ways in which individuals may attempt to mitigate the initial loss of resources. Through feeling a sense of relatedness with coworkers, employees were able to be more genuine, and therefore not experience resource depletion. It would be useful then, to research more ways to encourage genuine displays, as employee well-being will be increased if there is less resource loss experienced (Grandey, Rupp, & Brice, 2015; Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986).

On a practical level, this research is important because knowing that a needs-meeting environment will have a positive effect on emotions displayed to customers, organization leaders can work to foster a sense of relatedness among their team. Though some authors argue that emotional display rules in the service industry are unethical and should be replaced (Grandey, Rupp, Brice, 2015), it is hard to believe that this will happen anytime soon, as employees displaying positive emotions to customers has been shown to have a positive effect on the customer's evaluation of the service quality (Pugh, 2001). If display rules for service employees are unlikely to change, employers and

employees should both prefer that individuals use genuine displays towards customers, as

genuine displays have customer interaction benefits (Grandey, 2000) and have less

consequences for the individual than faking and suppressing emotions (Humphrey,

Ashforth & Diefendorff, 2015). By understanding techniques to encourage genuine

emotions, employers may alleviate burnout, a stress outcome related to suppressing and

faking emotional expressions (Gross & Levenson, 1997). This research is important as it

explains a potential avenue for individuals to be more genuine towards customers, by

gaining psychological resources from coworker relations. When employees feel a sense

of relatedness and belonging within their work team, they may use this psychological

resource to be more genuine towards customers.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

Though this study benefits through the collection of data within realistic service

industry interactions, there are some limitations that must be addressed in future research.

To add to this study's findings, more research could be done focusing on the resource

rational that was used, specifically asking participants about their perceived personal

resources related to both their emotional expressions and their needs satisfaction. This

could be performed in a lab or field study, and would not only strengthen the current

argument, but allow for more applications of conversation of resources theory.

The distribution of this survey, being focused on employees of target service

organizations and service employees who were students at Oregon State University, did

not provide a seemingly random sample. With 70% of the population being female, and

72% of the population identifying as White, the data used in this analysis could be

strengthened by increasing the diversity of the population. With the addition of more

respondents from different demographics, not only would the current data be

strengthened, but the researcher would also be able to analyze the potential differences in

perceptions and displays of the demographic groups.

Through the data collection, the participants were much more likely to complete

the pre-work survey, compared to the post-work survey, which may speak to the effort

consumed on a daily basis at work. Participants may have chosen not to complete the

post-work survey because they were tired or frustrated after work, or they may have

forgotten to complete the survey, being tired and not wanting to complete another task

after their workday. This made data collection challenging, as there were many

participants who did not have enough consecutive data points to be considered significant

(Liu, Song, Li, & Liao, 2017; Trougakos, Hideg, Cheng, & Beal, 2014). The methods

used, surveying both the independent and dependent variables in the post-work survey

and the moderator in the pre-work survey also eliminated many data points, as Time 1

could only be used to analyze the independent variable. By conducting a second

distribution period to gain more respondents, the current results could be strengthened.

<div align="center">Future Research</div>

At this project's conception, the broad ideas of emotional labor and impression

management were the topics of focus, with the goal of providing some comparison

between these two phenomena that the researcher believes to be very similar. This project

attempted to analyze ingratiation and its' potential impact on relational needs satisfaction.

For further research, the connection between impression management tactics and social

support should be analyzed, as there is existing research concerning the positive impact

that social support has on stress and burnout (Abualrub, 2004; Cobb, 1976; Ladd &

Henry, 2000), which are often caused by emotional labor. Though social support should be studied, the researcher feels that the current findings may be more useful, as an organization should not be expecting the same employees who must regulate their emotions towards customers to also be consistently supportive of their coworkers.

This study focuses on genuine expressions of emotions at work, specifically towards customers in the service industry. The different types of emotional expressions, and their effects on the employee have been increasingly studied lately. One aspect of genuine emotional expression that, to the author's knowledge, has yet to be studied, are genuine emotional expressions as catharsis. The differentiation between these cathartic expressions being towards coworkers and customers would need to be formed before researching, but the effect that a cathartic genuine emotional expression may have on an employee's well-being, state of resources and social relationships is interesting. This would relate to both a climate of authenticity in the workplace and social support between coworkers, both previously mentioned in this article.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

As the great lyricists John Lennon and Paul McCartney suggested in the quote from "With a Little Help from My Friends" to preface this article, many customer service employees experience negative outcomes from their job, some as a result of the requirement that they alter their emotions towards customers. This study attempted to introduce one way in which these employees may be encouraged to express genuine emotions towards customers, instead of suppressing or faking their emotions. By having their relational needs satisfied at work, employees can gain personal psychological resources, allowing them to express genuine emotions to customers. One proposed way in

which these relational needs may be satisfied is through ingratiating towards one's

coworkers, fostering a likeable perception from them. Although the author agrees with

Grandey, Rupp, Brice (2015) to a degree, that emotional display rules are harmful to the

employee and should be modified to be more humane, it is unforeseeable that many

organizations will make such changes anytime soon. For this reason, it is important for

researchers and organizations to look at ways to improve service employee well-being,

and encouraging them to express genuine emotions is one way to do so. As this study

suggests, employees may be encouraged to display more genuine emotions to customers

if they feel a sense of relatedness with their coworkers, which some may gain by

attempting to seem likeable, in other words: "with a little help from my friends".

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Appendix

Table 1: Correlations			
	Ingratiation Towards Coworkers	Related Needs Satisfaction	Genuine Displays Towards Customers
Ingratiation Towards Coworkers	--	.367*	.296
Related Needs Satisfaction	.367*	--	.332**
Genuine Displays Towards Customers	.296	.332**	--

+ p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01

	Figure 1	
(b = .09, p > .05)	Related Needs Satisfaction	(b = .29, p < .01)
Ingratiation Towards Coworkers	(b = .00, p > .05)	Genuine Displays Towards Customers