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Workplace Surface Acting and Marital Partner Discontent: Anxiety and Exhaustion Spillover Mechanisms

Morgan A. Krannitz,
The Pennsylvania State University

Alicia A. Grandey,
The Pennsylvania State University

Songqi Liu, and
The Pennsylvania State University

David A. Almeida
The Pennsylvania State University

Morgan A. Krannitz: mak517@psu.edu; Alicia A. Grandey: aag6@psu.edu; Songqi Liu: sul45@psu.edu; David A. Almeida: dma18@psu.edu

Abstract

Surface acting (i.e., faking and suppressing emotions at work) is repeatedly linked to employee negative moods and emotional exhaustion, but the consequences may also go beyond work boundaries. We provide a unique theoretical integration of these two emotional labor consequences with two work-to-family conflict mechanisms, mood spillover and resource drain, in order to explain why surface acting is likely to create marital partner discontent (i.e., partner's perceived work-to-family conflict and desire for the employee to quit). A survey of 197 hotel managers and their marital partners supported that managers' surface acting was directly related to their partner wanting them to quit, and indirectly to partner's perception of work-to-family conflict via exhaustion consistent with the resource drain mechanism. Anxiety from surface acting had an indirect mediating effect on marital partner discontent through exhaustion. Importantly, controlling for dispositional negativity and job demands did not weaken these effects. Implications for theory and future research integrating work-family and emotional labor are discussed.

Keywords

Surface acting; spillover; work-to-family conflict; exhaustion; manager

In many jobs, employees are expected to "put on a happy face" while at work, even after a long day and during difficult interactions (Diefendorff, Richard, & Croyle, 2006). One way to meet these expectations is *surface acting*, or amplifying the display of positive emotions and suppressing the display of negative emotions (Hochschild, 1983). This term – and the broader concept of emotional labor – was first discussed in Arlie Hochschild's (1983) book, *The Managed Heart*, in which she proposed that emotional labor made smiles an economic

commodity and estranged employees from their inner selves, with personal consequences. In fact, researchers have largely found support for the detrimental effects of surface acting in the form of job dissatisfaction, burnout, anxiety, and psychosomatic complaints (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Pugh, Groth, & Hennig-Thurau, 2011; Wagner, Barnes, & Scott, 2013). We extend this line of research by determining whether, and why, the extent that employees are surface acting at work has implications for their marital partner's discontent at home.

Linking emotional labor to non-work outcomes have been proposed (MacDermid, Seery, & Weiss, 2002; Wharton & Erickson, 1993), yet rarely empirically tested. The few studies that do exist (e.g., Cheung & Tang, 2009; Montgomery, Panagopolou, & Benos, 2005; Montgomery, Panagopolou, de Wildt, & Meenks, 2006; Wagner et al., 2013) show a detrimental relationship between surface acting and the employees' perception that work interferes with family, but we make three contributions beyond these prior studies. First, we integrate the emotional labor and work-family conflict (WFC) literature to explain *why* spillover effects occur, drawing on the theoretical mechanisms of resource drain and negative mood spillover (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). We simultaneously consider whether surface acting interferes with the home domain via the exhaustion from regulating the self at work (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011), or via chronic anxiety from the dissonance of "faking it" performing the work role (Pugh et al., 2011).

Second, we make empirical contributions with our research approach. First and foremost, we assess if surface acting predicts *marital partner's* discontent with the employee's job (specifically, perceptions of work-to-family conflict and desire that the employee quit the job), extending prior research showing surface acting is linked to an employee's own perceptions of work-to-family conflict (e.g., Cheung & Tang, 2009; Wagner et al., 2013). Moreover, we control for both negative affectivity and job demands. Prior studies on emotional labor and work-family conflict have not controlled for trait or situational affect, leaving open the possibility that the relationship is spurious due to negative affect (Cheung & Tang, 2009; Montgomery et al., 2006; Sliter, Jex, Wolford, & McInnerney, 2010; see Wagner et al., 2013 for exception). Lastly, our use of multi-source measures, employee-rated surface acting and marital partner-rated home outcomes, minimizes the concern that relationships between surface acting and home outcomes may be explained by common method bias.

Finally, our results have unique practical implications for understanding the costs of "faking it" among higher-status employees – hotel managers – than typically studied (e.g., sales and marketing employees, Cheung & Tang, 2009; bus drivers, Wagner et al., 2013). Compared to entry-level emotional laborers, managers have similarly high emotional expectations (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002) yet their higher job autonomy and status may protect them from the stress of surface acting (Grandey, Fisk, & Steiner, 2005) and work-to-family conflict (Thomas & Ganster, 1995), thus creating a conservative test of our work-family predictions. Moreover, the hotel industry in particular is known for its high stress and "turnover culture" (Deery & Shaw, 1997), which incurs extraordinarily high direct (e.g., recruitment and selection of new employees) and indirect (e.g., lost productivity) costs (Davidson, Timo, & Wang, 2010). Understanding if surface acting predicts work-to-family conflict, which is linked to psychological distress and marital quality (Matthews, Conger, &

Wickrama, 1996), as well as desire for spousal turnover, which is linked to actual turnover (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004), is practically important for intervention purposes. Overall, our results have implications for future research and theory-building on emotional labor and work-family integration.

Surface Acting at Work and Marital Partner Discontent

Surface acting by faking a positive mood and suppressing negative emotions can be necessary to meet performance expectations with clients and coworkers (Chi, Grandey, Diamond, & Krimmel, 2011; Côté, 2005). Yet, engaging in these behaviors also comes with costs to the self (Hochschild, 1983), with robust empirical links from surface acting to negative affect and job burnout (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). We propose that these personal costs also spillover and affect the family, based on two work-family theoretical mechanisms (for reviews, see Edwards & Rothbard, 2000).

A large body of evidence supports that experiences in, and characteristics of, one domain have implications for the other (see Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005 for an in-depth review). Two mechanisms have commonly been proposed to explain these cross-domain effects (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000): *resource drain* proposes that performing the work role reduces resources (e.g., energy) to perform at home, and *mood spillover* proposes that work induces emotions that are carried home and affect home behaviors. Both of these mechanisms have been shown to explain why work experiences affect home experiences (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Ilies et al., 2007). In other words, surface acting at work is likely to predict marital partner discontent to the extent it reduces employees' energy needed at home and/or induces negative moods that are carried home and impair interactions with the marital partner.

Thus, we argue that the two primary mechanisms employed to explain why surface acting is costly to employees are also congruent with these work-family mechanisms (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). Surface acting is personally costly to employees due to (1) resource depletion from self-regulating, resulting in emotional exhaustion, and due to (2) emotional dissonance between feelings and expressions, resulting in work anxiety (see also Mesmer-Magnus, DeChurch, & Wax, 2012). These two states of exhaustion and anxiety are both unpleasant but are differentiated by their activation or physiological arousal, and thus their behavioral tendencies (Russell, 1980). Exhaustion is a low-activation negative mood (e.g., fatigue), and motivates people to conserve resources by reducing efforts (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Anxiety is a high-activation negative mood, and the physiological arousal motivates action (e.g., fight or flight; Hopp, Rohrmann, Zapf, & Hodapp, 2010). Below we justify how resource drain (i.e., exhaustion) and mood spillover (i.e., anxiety) mechanisms explain why surface acting is likely to induce discontent in the marital partner.

Emotional Labor Affects Marital Partner Discontent through Resource Drain

Surface acting may have indirect effects on one's marital partner via a loss of energy resources. This theoretical perspective assumes that resources are finite and that allocating resources to one domain reduces the number available in other domains (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Based on the Conservation of Resources (COR) model (Hobfoll, 1989),

people are motivated to obtain, protect, and build resources, defined as “those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies” (p. 516). A key premise of COR is that the threat of losing (or the actual loss of) valued resources is stressful and motivational. People are motivated to conserve their resources, especially those that are perceived as limited or are recovered slowly (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002; Muraven, Shmueli, & Burkley, 2006).

Similarly, surface acting has been conceptualized as self-regulatory behavior that drains employees of their cognitive and emotional resources (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998a), which are then unavailable for other tasks or behaviors (Baumeister, Muraven, & Tice, 2000). In fact, surface acting has a robust relationship with energy depletion, measured as job-based exhaustion, across studies (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). Furthermore, surface acting motivates conservation of resources: surface acting is linked to withdrawal from work due to job exhaustion (Chau, Dahling, Levy, & Diefendorff, 2009; Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004). No studies have shown whether this depletion effect transfers to conserving resources at home as observed by marital partners; yet, resources do not magically get restored once a person steps outside the work walls, and resources recover slowly (Muraven et al., 2006). Thus, the employee who is constantly surface acting may struggle to perform expected home behaviors (e.g., chores, childcare) and to meet the marital partners’ relational needs, due to a feeling of depletion or exhaustion. The employee may conserve resources at home in ways that conflict with their partner’s expectation, and motivate the marital partner to want them to quit so they are available again.

Thus, we propose an indirect effect of surface acting on the home via resource drain. We propose that the more the employee is surface acting, the more depleted and thus motivated to conserve – stop investing – the limited resources they have left, which manifests as poorer performance and interpersonal self-regulation at home (Muraven et al., 2006). As such, we expect that surface acting will be positively related to the marital partner’s perceptions of the employee’s work-to-family conflict (due to a lack of resources), as well as the partner’s desire for the employee to quit the job (to restore those lost resources).

> *Hypothesis 1: Job-related exhaustion* explains why manager surface acting is related to the marital partner’s (a) perceptions of WFC and (b) desire for turnover.

Emotional Labor Affects Marital Partner Discontent through Mood Spillover

A second work-family theoretical mechanism is mood spillover (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000), typically with a focus on negative moods or stress (Williams & Alliger, 1994). Negative mood spillover occurs when negative moods generated in one domain influence a general mood state that then interferes with performance and relationships in other domains (Barling & MacEwen, 1992; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Research in the work-family literature has largely supported that negative moods generated at work influence mood and behavior at home (Schulz, Cowan, Cowan, & Brennan, 2004; Williams & Alliger, 1994) in ways that are detrimental for family members (Ilies et al., 2007).

In particular, surface acting may be linked to home outcomes via work-related anxiety, a state of uneasiness and tension (Warr, 1990). Surface acting – suppressing genuine emotions and pretending to have different emotions – creates incongruence between internal states and observable behaviors. This feeling-expression incongruence, or emotional dissonance (Pugh et al., 2011), is uncomfortable and linked to negative moods in the employee (Erickson & Wharton, 1997; Judge, Woolf, & Hurst, 2009). In fact, on days when employees use more surface acting, they tend to experience more anxiety (Wagner et al., 2013). Laboratory studies have supported the direction of causality such that suppressing emotional expressions causes more physiological arousal than showing felt emotions, beyond the emotion itself (Gross, 2002; Hopp et al., 2010).

As surface acting at work elicits more anxiety within the employee, the employee is likely to carry home the negative mood. Anxiety is a high arousal state of unease that evokes a "flight" or avoidance response (Lazarus, 1991) and narrowed and critical thinking (Forgas & Vargas, 1998). Little research has tested these effects. One line of research found that when an employee returns home from work in a negative mood, he/she is more likely to withdraw from family members (Schulz et al., 2004; Story & Repetti, 2006), which means they are less available to help out or support their spouse. Anxious employees who do interact with their partners show less warmth and supportiveness (Matthews et al., 1996; Salovey & Rosenhan, 1989) and perceive others negatively and express more criticism and disapproval (Forgas & Vargas, 1998; Story & Repetti, 2006). Both avoidant and critical interactions are counter to family role expectations (i.e., WFC), and induce a desire for change in the marital partner (i.e., quitting the job). In a daily-diary study, work anxiety did *not* explain why surface acting was linked to self-reported WFC (Wagner et al., 2013). It is possible that accurate awareness of WFC is hindered by work anxiety. Our study permits testing whether negative mood from surface acting impairs relational interactions such that the marital partner reports WFC the more that surface acting increases anxiety. Thus, we propose:

> *Hypothesis 2: Job-related anxiety* explains why manager's surface acting is related to the marital partner's (a) perceptions of WFC and (b) desire for turnover.

Summary

We test two indirect mechanisms – resource drain and mood spillover – that are consistent with theoretical explanations for why surface acting affects the employee (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011) and why work conflicts with family (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Importantly, the indirect effect of surface acting on marital partner discontent through negative mood and emotional exhaustion could be due to individual tendencies to feel negatively and experience job stressors. Both affective tendencies and situational demands increase the need to suppress emotions and affect anxiety and job exhaustion (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998; Burke, Brief, & George, 1993). We control for manager's dispositional negative affectivity and their perceived job demands in order to be more confident that surface acting, not negative tendencies or demands, is what is driving any found relationships.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Data were gathered as part of the Hotel Work and Well-Being Study (see Almeida, Davis, O'Neill, & Crouter, 2012), an institutional review board (IRB)-approved project of the Work, Family & Health Network conducted to investigate how working in the industry affects employees' health, well-being, and social relationships. Trained survey research center personnel conducted the surveys using computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) procedures. All participants were compensated $20 for their participation. Five hundred and eighty-eight department managers (299 males, 289 females) from 50 hotels completed a structured telephone survey assessing personality, workplace, and family characteristics. Given the purpose of our study, we constrained our analysis to managers (a) who were married or living with a romantic partner (381; 64.8% of total met the criteria), and (b) whose marital partner completed a survey as well (197; 51.7% response rate). Note that for the purposes of the present study, "marital partner" referred to a spouse or romantic living partner, which includes same-sex relationships and the increasing numbers of couples choosing to cohabit outside of marriage (Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2012).

It is important to determine whether these criteria result in selection bias, such that our focal sample of managers substantively differs from the excluded managers on surface acting, anxiety, exhaustion, or negative affectivity. We compared the two groups' mean levels on all manager-reported study variables and demographics. *T*-tests did not support any significant differences on these measured variables (all *p*s > .10) for our focal sample of 197 managers and the managers excluded. The only difference was that there were more men in our sample (60% male) compared to the larger sample (50.9% male) ($p < .01$). Thus, managers with participating spouses or partners were not substantively different on our study variables than other managers, minimizing the likelihood of selection biases changing our results.

Our final sample was comprised of 197 managers and their partners (119 male, 78 female) from 46 hotels ($M = 4.28$ dyads per hotel, range = 1 to 17). Of these 197 respondents, 165 couples were married and 32 were cohabiting, and 117 (59.4%) were raising children together. Managers had an average tenure in their current position of 4.24 years ($SD = 4.25$). In terms of race/ethnicity, 71.6 percent of participants were Caucasian, 10.7 percent were African American, 10.2 percent were Hispanic, 6.1 percent were Asian or Asian American, and 1.5 percent were other/unknown/unidentified.

Measures

Surface acting—Surface acting was measured with the most commonly used three-item scale (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011) with a frequency response scale (3 items; 1 = *never*, 5 = *always*). An example item is: "On an average day at work, how frequently do you pretend to have emotions that you really don't have?" ($\alpha = .67$). We conducted item analysis but omitting any single item did not improve the alpha coefficient, and we averaged the three items into a composite.

Job-related exhaustion—Exhaustion was measured using five items from the Job-Related Exhaustion Scale (Wharton, 1993), which assesses the low-activation state of depletion and fatigue from one's job. The response format was adapted from a 0 to 6 frequency format (1 = *never felt this way*, 6 = *I feel this way every day*) to a 1 to 4 agreement format to be consistent with surrounding survey items. An example item is: "You feel emotionally drained from work." Responses were averaged together to create the emotional exhaustion construct (α = .91) and the overall mean was 2.23 (*SD* = .76).

Job-related anxiety—In a section that asked about work reactions, respondents rated the frequency of feeling anxiety (i.e., nervous, distressed, upset, and jittery) in the past two weeks (1 = *very slightly or none of the time*, 5 = *extremely*). These items specifically capture the high-activation negative state of interest, and specifying this time span and the work context has been shown to capture a job-evoked mood state (George, 1989). Responses to the four items were averaged together (*M* = 2.13, *SD* = .81) to create the anxiety construct (α = .73).

Marital partner discontent: Work-to-family conflict (WFC)—We asked marital partners to evaluate the extent to which the manager's work conflicted with performing the family role, or perceived *work-to-family conflict (WFC).* Partners rated WFC over the past year (1 = *never*, 5 = *always)* using four items from the national survey of Midlife Development in the United State (MIDUS) which we averaged to form a composite (α = . 79; *M* = 2.90, *SD* = .80). These items are consistent with strain-based WFC scales (e.g., Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000), which encompass both of the mechanism by which we argue the conflict may occur. Specifically, two items are energy-based (i.e., "Your spouse/ partner's job reduces the effort he/she can give to activities at home", "Your spouse/ partner's job makes him/her feel too tired to do the things that need attention at home"), and two items are mood-based (i.e., "Stress at work makes your spouse/partner irritable at home", "Job worries or problems distract your spouse/partner when he/she is at home").

Marital partner discontent: Desire for turnover—The marital partners also rated how much they felt the manager should quit the job with two items ("I would like my spouse/ partner to look for a job with a different company" and "I would be happy if my spouse/ partner left his/her present company") on a five-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Responses were averaged for an overall score (*r* = .80; *M* = 2.21, *SD* = 1.32).

Control variables—As mentioned above, we controlled for manager negative affectivity and job stressors, as well as gender and parental status. Surface acting is related to negative affectivity and job demands (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Sliter, Jex, Wolford, & McInnerney, 2010) and these indicators of personal and situational negativity also are related to our mechanisms and WFC (Allen et al., 2012; Bakker, Demerouti, & Dollard, 2008; Diefendorff & Richard, 2003). In order to minimize the possibility that any found relationships of surface acting are not due to such spurious relationships, we included both as controls variables. To differentiate dispositional negative affectivity from work mood, we asked participants the extent to which three adjectives generally described them (moody,

worrying, and calm-reversed) on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*a lot*) (α = .64; *M* = 2.18, *SD* = .66). *Job demands* were measured with the seven item scale measuring perceived role stressors (Karasek, 1979; e.g., "You are faced with conflicting demands on your job,", "You feel there is not enough time for you to finish your work.") Responses were on a 4-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*) and were averaged together to create the job demands construct (α = .79, *M* = 3.21, *SD* = .51).

We also controlled for *gender*, which can affect emotional labor processes (Hochschild, 1983), and *parental status* which is related to work-to-family conflict (Mulvaney, O'Neill, Cleveland, & Crouter, 2007). We asked the manager: "Are you raising any children together?" (0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*) in reference to the marital partner respondent.

Validation of Data Analytic Approach

Given the nested nature of the data structure (197 managers within 46 hotels), we first examined the extent to which the hotel in which one worked influenced scores on our dependent variables (see Hofmann, 1997; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). We found that marital partner's WFC rating did not vary by hotel (ICC[1] = −.03, ICC[2] = −.12; $F(45, 196) = .90$, $p > .10$), nor did partner's desire for turnover (ICC[1] = −.02, ICC[2] = −.10); $F(45, 196) = .91$, $p > .10$). The negative ICC values indicate that there is more variability within hotels than there is between hotels. In other words, the hotel in which each manager works is irrelevant to marital partner reactions. Because there were no between-hotel differences in our outcomes, we did not model nesting effects.[1]

Since our predictor and mediating variables were self-reported, we needed to confirm that our data fit the expected factor structure with seven separate constructs. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with the proposed seven-factor structure of employee-reported negative affectivity, job demands, surface acting, job exhaustion, job anxiety, and partner-reported WFC and desire for turnover, fit the data well [χ^2 (N = 197, df = 209) = 378.31, CFI = .92, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .06] based on accepted values for model fit indices (McDonald & Ho, 2002).[2] Alternative models that combined same-source constructs, job-related mediators, negative affectivity and anxiety, and job demands and exhaustion did not improve the fit compared to the seven-factor model, which was thus used for hypothesis testing.

One of the contributions of this paper is examining two mechanisms simultaneously. Because path analysis allows us to test our model in its entirety and provides a more conservative test of the two mechanisms (Hayes, 2013), hypotheses were tested using path analysis in Mplus 6.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2010). To interpret the indirect effects predicted in Hypotheses 1 and 2, we calculated 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals using 1000 resamples. Confidence intervals are typically recommended when

[1]Negative ICC values indicate greater heterogeneity of within-group variances compared to between-group variance. It has been recommended that negative ICC values either be interpreted as a lack of agreement among within-unit respondents, or simply reset to 0 (Bartko, 1976; LeBreton & Senter, 2008). Preliminary tests with multi-level modeling confirmed that the results did not vary by hotel and did not change our conclusions. We present the more parsimonious employee-level analysis.

[2]To improve model stability given our small sample size to number of parameters ratio, we created two balanced parcels for job demands using the single-factor method (Landis, Beal, & Tesluk, 2000). Specific CFA results for the model comparisons are available from the first author upon request.

computing and interpreting indirect effects as other methods (such as the Sobel test) do not take into account the skewed distribution that is typical of indirect effects (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). By using the original data and empirically examining the indirect effect, the bootstrap approach does not assume a normal distribution, and therefore has more power to detect mediation.

Results

Table 1 displays descriptives, correlations, and reliability estimates for study variables.

Descriptive Analyses

Surface acting was positively related to partner's desire for turnover (r = .31) but not WFC (r = .05), and was related to the proposed mediators, job-related exhaustion (r = .41) and job-related anxiety (r = .37). As expected, manager negative affectivity and perceived job demands were positively related to the self-rated surface acting, job-related exhaustion, and job-related anxiety, supporting the use of these control variables. Also consistent with prior research, women were more likely to report experiencing job-related exhaustion and anxiety. Finally, parental status was not related to any of the other study variables, thus we analyzed the data and present results without this control variable; controlling for it did not change results.

Hypothesis Testing

To test the indirect effects, we estimated a parallel mediation model (Hayes, 2013) in which surface acting was the predictor, job-related exhaustion and job-related anxiety were the mediators, and the partner's perception of WFC and desire for turnover were the outcomes. We controlled for the effect of negative affectivity, job demands, and gender on all model paths. Results of the path analysis can be seen in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that surface acting was linked to marital partner discontent via exhaustion from work. In the parallel mediation model, surface acting was positively associated with job-related exhaustion (B = .21, p < .01), which in turn was positively associated with partner's perceptions of WFC (B = .19, p = .04) and desire for turnover (B = .54, p < .01). The bootstrap analyses revealed that the specific indirect effect of surface acting on WFC through job-related exhaustion was significant (indirect effect = .04; 95% bias-corrected confidence interval = .01, .10), confirming Hypothesis 1a. Similarly, the specific indirect effect of surface acting on partner's desire for turnover through exhaustion was significant (indirect effect = .12; 95% bias-corrected confidence interval = .03, .24), confirming Hypothesis 1b.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that surface acting was linked to marital partner discontent via negative work mood. In the parallel mediation model, surface acting was associated with increased job-related anxiety (B = .24, p < .01), but anxiety did not predict partner's perceptions of WFC (B = .03, p > .10) or desire for turnover (B = .02, p > .10). Similarly, based on the bootstrap analyses, the specific indirect effect of surface acting through job-related anxiety on WFC (indirect effect = .01; 95% bias-corrected confidence interval = −.

03, .05) and desire for turnover (indirect effect = .00; 95% bias-corrected confidence interval = −.06, .08) were also not significant. Thus, Hypotheses 2a and 2b were not supported.

Notably, a direct effect from surface acting to partner's desire for turnover still remained (B = .36, p = .01), even after accounting for the effects of job-related exhaustion and job-related anxiety. This suggests there may be additional mechanisms linking the two constructs that were not captured by our study. This possibility and implications for future research are considered in the Discussion section of the paper.

Post-Hoc Analyses

Though anxiety was correlated with surface acting and desire for turnover, the mood spillover effect was overwhelmed by depletion. One may argue that we do not find evidence for the mood spillover effect because we measure chronic (between-person) levels of surface acting and negative moods; in other words, if we had momentary (within-person) surface acting and moods we might be more likely to find the indirect effect through mood spillover. In experience sampling studies, daily negative mood is linked to self-ratings of WFC (Judge, Ilies, & Scott, 2006), but anxiety was not found to be the mechanism of surface acting on self-reported WFC (Wagner et al., 2013). Thus, our between-person approach shows support for resource drain (i.e., exhaustion), and – similar to within-person research – not the mood spillover mechanism.

Another possibility is that anxiety has an indirect effect on the marital partner by the heightened arousal evoking job-related exhaustion. Such an indirect effect would be consistent with COR and stressor-stress-strain models (Lazarus, 1966), such that surface acting is the job stressor that induces stress arousal (anxiety), which over time taxes the body and induces job-based strain (exhaustion), which then evokes coping to conserve or protect resources (WFC, withdrawal). Such indirect effects are consistent with daily diary evidence that surface acting at work is related to daily exhaustion through state anxiety (Wagner et al., 2013).

To examine the possibility that anxiety is indirectly related to marital partner discontent via exhaustion, we tested a serial multiple mediator model (Hayes, 2013). This model differs from the parallel mediator model tested above in that it allows the mediators (exhaustion and anxiety) to be causally related to one another. Results of the post hoc analysis indicated that surface acting indirectly affected partner's perceptions of conflict through a chain reaction (SA→anxiety→exhaustion→WFC, indirect effect = 0.01, bias-corrected 95% confidence interval = .001, .03). In addition, surface acting indirectly affected partner's desire for turnover through a chain reaction (SA→anxiety→exhaustion→ desire for turnover, indirect effect = 0.02, bias-corrected 95% confidence interval = .01, .06). Thus, we still conclude that the resource drain mechanism is how surface acting affects the marital partner, but anxious moods play a role by contributing to the resource drain.

Discussion

With the number of service industry jobs growing every year (Cascio, 2003), it has become more important than ever to understand the effects of emotional labor. Research has largely

confirmed that surface acting will have negative consequences for the employee (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011); however, the broader consequences of emotional labor outside the work domain and for individuals other than the employee have largely remained unexamined. This gap in the literature is notable given that such far-reaching consequences were initially proposed, and are theoretically consistent with the emotional labor literature (Hochschild, 1983).

The aim of the current study was to examine the effects of surface acting on marital partners' reactions to the employees' work, specifically in terms of the mechanisms by which this spillover process occurs. To do so, we integrated the emotional labor and WFC literature, drawing on two primary work-to-family spillover mechanisms (i.e., resource drain and negative mood spillover), which are conceptually linked to the dominant explanations for the detriment of surface acting (i.e., regulatory depletion and emotional dissonance). Theoretical and empirical support exists for both of these mechanisms, yet – to our knowledge – no prior study has tested either mechanism with a non-self-reported outcome, or examined both mechanisms simultaneously. To strengthen our methodological approach, we controlled for the employee's negative affectivity and perceived job demands (which may cause spurious results if unaccounted for), used multi-source measures (to directly assess the partner's perceptions of the manager's work), and surveyed managers whose autonomy may protect them from the costs of emotional labor and WFC (to provide a conservative test).

We found support for resource drain rather than mood spillover as the linking mechanism between surface acting at work and marital partner discontent. Specifically, job-related exhaustion, and not job-related anxiety, mediated the effect of surface acting on marital partner discontent. When the employee's resources are depleted from surface acting at work, the employee lacks energy at home and may conserve his or her resources (Hobfoll, 2002; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). Thus, "faking it" at work makes one unable to perform behaviors expected by the marital partner at home (WFC), and the partner wants the employee to restore those resources by quitting the job where "faking it" seems to be necessary.

Job-related anxiety did not mediate the relationship between surface acting and marital partner discontent beyond the controls and exhaustion, suggesting that surface acting has costs at home through feeling depleted rather than tension. Given the rigorous test of our mediation hypotheses (i.e., using a managerial sample and directly measuring marital partner's perceptions), this finding likely represents a true estimate of the effect, rather than a function of study design weaknesses.[3] But, post hoc analyses revealed that anxiety indirectly links surface acting to marital partner discontent through exhaustion: the high arousal negative mood that comes from faking emotions contributes to energy depletion and thus impacts the marital partner's reactions. This is consistent with prior work theorizing that the inauthentic nature of surface acting is inherently anxiety-provoking, and this hyper-arousal depletes emotional resources (Wagner et al., 2013). In fact, one study found that flight attendants' emotional job demands (defined as emotionally charged interactions with

[3]The authors thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

passengers) were related to increased emotional exhaustion through emotional dissonance (Heuven, Bakker, Schaufeli, & Huisman, 2006). The current findings build on past research illustrating that this chain reaction can further extend and spillover into the home, negatively affecting one's marital partner and family role.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study offer both practical and theoretical implications, as well as a number of avenues for future research. Theoretically, our findings provide support for the far-reaching consequences of emotional labor that have been proposed (Hochschild, 1983), yet to date have received minimal empirical attention. Specifically, the current study demonstrates that the consequences of surface acting do in fact extend beyond the work domain and into the home domain. Moreover, these consequences are perceived by, and affect, close family members. As we are now just beginning to understand the spillover effects of surface acting into the home domain, there is still much left to examine regarding this relationship. For example, if marital partners are affected by an employee's surface acting, might children also be affected? Parents tend to be more withdrawn from their children on days of high workload and interpersonal stress at work (Repetti & Wood, 1997); such consequences may occur as an outcome of surface acting.

The current study also has implications for resource-based theories, particularly as applied to service industry contexts. Given that we used a sample of hotel managers, one might expect that this higher status would help buffer the depleting and spillover effects of emotional labor. In fact, seniority, tenure, and marriage have been proposed as *conditions resources* that ought to increase one's stress resistance and buffer against depletion (Hobfoll, 1989). However, our results suggest that both lower-status and higher-status employees are negatively affected by surface acting, as the managers in our study were not immune to experiencing negative mood, resource drain, and the subsequent home domain consequences. This suggests that having a larger resource reservoir in general – or even more work-related resources in particular – may not be sufficient to mitigate either the depleting or arousing effects of surface acting.

In addition, we extend prior work on the spillover effects of emotional labor by using the new outcome of marital partner perceptions. Interestingly, manager surface acting was *not* directly related to the partners' evaluation of WFC, in contradiction to prior research using self-reported measures (e.g., Cheung & Tang, 2009; Wagner et al., 2013). This suggests that the noticeable conflict of work with family life may only occur indirectly through personal costs to the employee. It is also possible that the employee's beliefs about work conflicting with home are inaccurate; the marital partner may not see things the same way. In other words, the manager's awareness that he or she is surface acting at work may lead the manager to believe that their work is making them less effective at home, but the partner does not necessarily observe such conflict *unless the employee is exhausted from that surface acting*. Considering multiple perspectives in WFC is helpful to tease apart what is happening in these processes.

Integrating the emotional labor and work-family literature provides a structure for understanding not only why, but also how surface acting at work negatively impacts marital

partner perceptions of the work. We focused on the two linking mechanisms of *resource drain* and *negative mood spillover*; however, other manifestations of these mechanisms – or other linking mechanisms entirely – may also be worthy of study. We examined negative mood spillover in terms of anxiety since feelings of tension and dissonance are common consequences of surface acting (Pugh et al., 2011), but other forms of bad mood are also likely and might impact partner reactions as well, such as feeling grumpy, irritated, or dissatisfied with the job. As an example of another possible linking mechanism, *segmentation* occurs when people actively create an emotional, mental, and/or physical boundary between their work and family (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Park, Fritz, & Jex, 2011). According to work/family border theory (Clark, 2000), enacting stronger borders between home and work domains facilitates work-family balance when the two domains differ from one another (e.g., in terms of the behaviors and emotions that are appropriate for each). If surface acting employees are able to separate their work and family domains, such as by quelling negative work-related thoughts and feelings or avoiding technology use for work purposes while at home, they may be less vulnerable to the cross-domain consequences of emotional labor.

Another possible linking mechanism is work-family *facilitation*, whereby the resources and skills from surface acting (e.g., tips, self-regulatory efficacy) help the employee perform better at home. However, this may be more likely when considering other forms of emotional labor. Deep acting, for example, is positively related to emotional performance and personal accomplishment across studies (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). Thus, deep acting "does not only deplete but also replenishes resources" (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011, p. 380), and may ultimately have a positive spillover effect on the home domain via resource gain (Hobfoll, 2002). Under such circumstances, the work role may enrich the family role. In fact, work-family enrichment may lead to an increase in positive marital behaviors and marital satisfaction *beyond* the negative effects of WFC as shown recently (van Steenbergen, Kluwer, & Karney, 2014).

Practical Implications

In terms of practical implications, our results suggest that surface acting directly and indirectly affects how your partner thinks about your work. Surface acting has been linked to employee turnover intentions and withdrawal (Chau et al., 2009), and this study links the acting to partner's desire for turnover as well. Family and friends are a "normative force" that impact an employee's turnover decision (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). More specifically, one's employment has "a high potential impact on the lives of family, friends, and colleagues outside the organizations" (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004, p. 673), and a lack of spouse career support may ultimately lead to employee turnover (Huffman, Casper, & Payne, 2014). Understanding what predicts a manager quitting is critical, especially within the hotel industry given its "turnover culture" (Deery & Shaw, 1997).

The current study finds that surface acting harms the self and this carries over to how one's partner perceives the employee. Importantly, the ill effects of surface acting on the self are robust beyond trait affectivity and job demands, and even for this more autonomous, high status job (Grandey et al., 2005). For employees to mitigate the resource drain from surface

acting, they need to use resource recovery tactics. Psychologically detaching from the work role when off the job allows employees to recover resources and improve overall well-being (Sonnentag & Kruel, 2006). For example, employees can buffer feelings of exhaustion and increase recovery by engaging in leisure activities that are intrinsically motivating (ten Brummelhuis & Trougakos, 2014) or by reducing their work-related use of technology at home (Chesley, 2005). In addition, employees can take a break from self-regulation to be their "true self" with coworkers, allowing employees to recharge throughout the day and avoid job-related exhaustion (Grandey, Foo, Groth, & Goodwin, 2012). In fact, being "real" at home may have the benefit of recharging resources for the next day at work, which may be tested with experience sampling methods across multiple days.

Organizations could also implement practices that ameliorate the depleting effects of surface acting. Such strategies could include valuing and compensating emotional work with financial rewards (Grandey, Chi, & Diamond, 2013) or providing social support (Duke, Goodman, Treadway, & Breland, 2009). In addition, organizations can hire employees who are dispositionally better suited for emotion work. Those who are higher in extraversion can use surface acting with less cost to the self (Judge et al., 2009) and better performance (Chi et al., 2011) than introverts. Employees higher in emotional intelligence also experience less strain as a result of surface acting (Prati, Liu, Perrewe, & Ferris, 2009). As another example, employees high in emotion self-efficacy (defined as belief in one's ability to successfully perform emotional labor) may view surface acting as less stressful or depleting, a perspective that may ultimately become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Heuven et al., 2006; Pugh et al., 2011).

Limitations and Future Research

Like any study, the current study is not without its limitations. First, common method bias is always a concern with self-reported survey methods. Although independent marital partner ratings of our dependent variables were obtained, it is possible that common method bias influenced relationships among manager-reported covariates, predictors, and mediators. We attempted to overcome this issue by varying the response scales to minimize consistency biases, ensuring confidentiality in responses from managers and marital partners, and conducting a CFA to ensure differential responding to our constructs (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). We also attempted to mitigate this concern by statistically controlling for negative affectivity and job demands, which can affect responses to surface acting and stress/strain measures. Another concern might be that this was an overly stringent test that may have controlled for substantive variance of interest, particularly with anxiety as a mechanism (Spector, Zapf, Chen, & Frese, 2000). However, even when we did not control for negativity and job demands, anxiety did not mediate the effect of surface acting on marital partner perceptions.

A second limitation is that we cannot be certain of the temporal ordering of effects. Experience sampling can link surface acting during the day to subsequent daily moods, exhaustion, and work-family, but then these are reliant on one source of data (Wagner et al., 2013). Home conflict could elicit stress-related responses (e.g., burnout) that might increase the need for surface acting (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). To minimize this concern,

we situated exhaustion and anxiety measures within the work context (e.g., "You feel emotionally drained *from work*"). Ideally, future research would be able to show that surface acting during the workday contributes to end of day exhaustion and moods, which then affect marital partners' perceptions of home behavior. These designs are useful for capturing within-person processes and variability and minimizing recall bias (Gunthert & Wenze, 2012). In addition, longitudinal studies following new managers over time may be best suited for examining the cumulative effect of surface acting on detrimental within and cross-domain outcomes, particularly turnover intentions or actual turnover.

Third, it may be argued that the generalizability of our findings is limited by our sample and variables. Managers engage in surface acting with subordinates, coworkers, and customers, but such emotional labor is also distressing (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011; Ozcelik, 2013). In fact, we argue that the mechanisms of surface acting on the home domain are the same, but the spillover effects may actually be stronger for lower status employees since job autonomy and financial resources reduce the stress of surface acting (Grandey et al., 2013, 2005) and can mitigate strain outcomes (Hobfoll, 1989; Valcour, 2007).

Fourth, it is possible that our current sample size of 197 manager and spouse pairs was not large enough to detect the indirect effect of surface acting on marital partner discontent via anxiety if these relationships are relatively small. Given that our sample size is consistent with many of the mediation studies reviewed by Fritz and MacKinnon (2007) and that we employed bias-corrected bootstrapping tests to improve our power to detect mediation (Shrout & Bolger, 2002), we do not see this as a major threat to our overall conclusions. However, future research should attempt to either replicate our results using a larger sample or with a different sample of employees before ruling out anxiety as a possible linking mechanism.

Finally, our surface acting composite had a reliability of .67, which falls just below the generally-accepted cutoff of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). This lower-than-usual reliability may constrain our found relationships, and thus our coefficients provide conservative estimates. We used the most well-established scale for surface acting (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003), and its reliability is usually higher when used in customer service studies. This suggests that managers may respond differently to the surface acting items in a way that makes them less internally consistent. Thus, future research on emotional labor by higher-status employees may need to expand to a multi-item scale that more fully captures how emotions are regulated with others. For example, managers may need to suppress negative emotions and pretend to feel good (the items used and validated with service employees), but they also sometimes need to enhance their negative emotions to motivate others (Van Kleef, Homan, Beersma, & van Knippenberg, 2010) in ways unique to this sample. Attention to how emotional labor is done by leaders (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011) is thus a future point of growth.

In addition to using alternative research designs and samples, future research could also explore additional mechanisms by which surface acting impacts marital partner's desire for the employee to quit. Despite finding that job-related exhaustion linked surface acting to marital partner discontent and job-related anxiety indirectly linked surface acting to marital

partner discontent through exhaustion, we were not able to fully explain the relationship between surface acting and marital partner's desire for turnover. This suggests that other mechanisms not measured in the current study may be influencing this relationship. One explanation could be that surface acting becomes an automatic behavior such that the employee engages in it unconsciously (Mauss, Bunge, & Gross, 2007), even when at home and with family members. Although automatic emotion regulation (AER) is possible and less costly than effortful regulation to the employee, it may result in *behavior-based conflict*, a form of work-family conflict in which "behavior required in one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another role" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 78), as perceived by the marital partner. This is because in intimate relationships, there is more expectation for genuine expressions and looser display rules than in work settings (Diefendorff & Greguras, 2009; Lively & Powell, 2006). Thus, if the employee continues to (automatically) engage in surface acting at home, the marital partner may want the employee to quit the job in order to reduce conflict and regain more genuine expression of the self in the relationship. Future research should examine when and how deliberate emotion regulation becomes automatic, as well as the consequences of this unconscious regulation for both the employee and family members.

Lastly, in our study we measured emotional labor as the extent of showing positive and hiding negative emotions. Another interesting avenue for understanding how emotional labor affects the home is exploring emotional labor demands that are incongruent with the expectations for emotions at home (Wharton & Erickson, 1993). For example, a lawyer may find it difficult to switch from masking emotions in the workplace (i.e., demonstrating emotional neutrality) to displaying integrative emotions (e.g., friendliness, warmth) at home. More research is needed on the relationship between emotional labor and behavior-based conflict, as well as whether behavior-based conflict serves as a mechanism linking surface acting at work to other home-domain consequences (e.g., marital problems, dysfunctional parenting). Finally, we only studied the reactions of a long-term relational partner, but it is possible that friends and other family members (e.g., children) are affected by surface acting as well.

Conclusion

Although the negative effects of surface acting for employee well-being and work-related outcomes are well-established, less is known about the broader consequences of emotional labor. The current study demonstrates that these effects can, and indeed do, spill over and affect the home domain and how a marital partner reacts to the work. This highlights the need for additional research on the cross-domain consequences of surface acting, as well as the need for organizations to be aware of, and take steps to address, the depleting effects of performing emotional labor.

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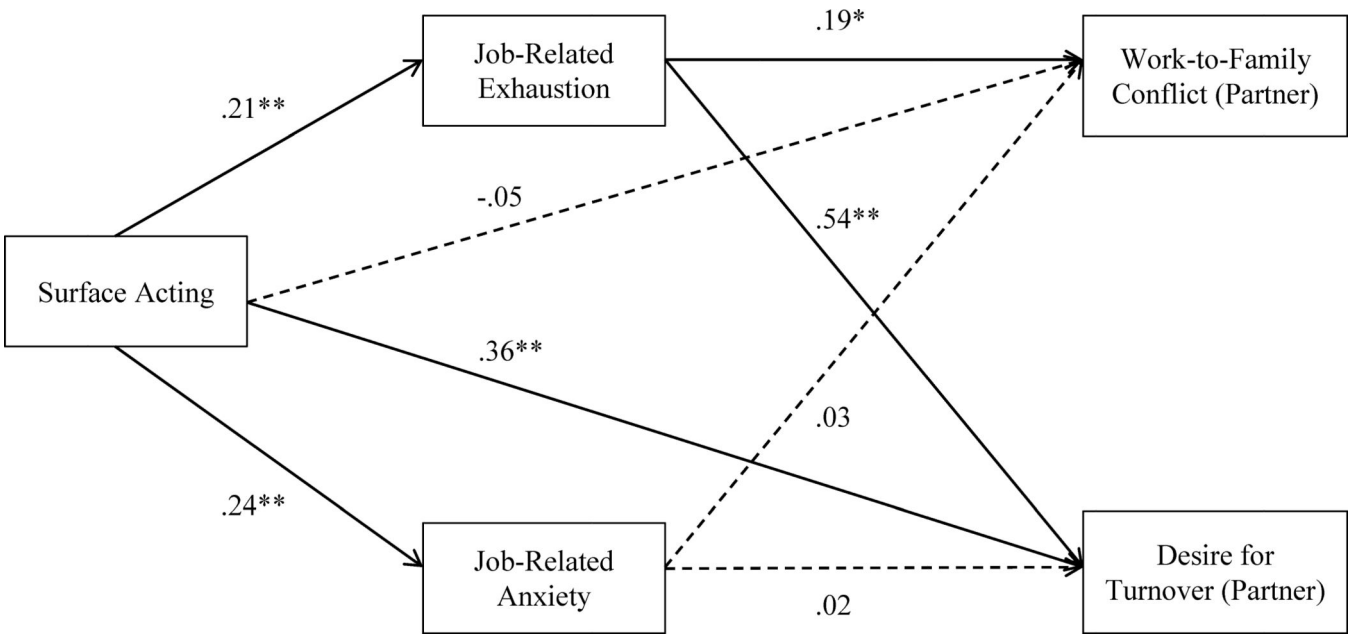

Figure 1.

Multiple mediation model. Work-to-family conflict and desire for turnover represent the marital partner's perceptions of manager's WFC and desire for manager to quit the job. Values indicate unstandardized path coefficients.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations for Study Variables

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	.60	.49	–								
2. Parental Status	.59	.49	.11	–							
3. Job Demands	3.21	.51	−.21**	−.04	*(.79)*						
4. Negative Affectivity	2.18	.66	−.16*	−.10	.27**	*(.64)*					
5. Surface Acting	2.49	.78	−.03	−.11	.28**	.30**	*(.67)*				
6. Job-Related Exhaustion	2.23	.76	−.14*	−.11	.56**	.43**	.41**	*(.91)*			
7. Job-Related Anxiety	2.13	.81	−.14*	−.10	.33**	.45**	.37**	.48**	*(.73)*		
8. WFC (Partner)	2.90	.80	.14*	.12	.06	.14	.05	.17*	.11	*(.79)*	
9. Desire for Turnover (Partner)	2.21	1.32	.06	.02	.10	.17*	.31**	.33**	.20**	.41**	*(.89)*

Note: N = 197. Gender (0 = female, 1 = male); Parental status (0 = No, 1 = Yes). WFC = work-to-family conflict. Reliability coefficients are shown along the diagonal. Managers reported gender, parental status, negative affectivity, surface acting, exhaustion, and anxiety. Marital partners reported perceptions of the manager's work-to-family conflict and desire for turnover.

* $p < .05$,

** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Indirect effects and 95% Confidence Intervals for Mediational Analyses

	Mediator			
	Exhaustion		Anxiety	
Pathway	**Estimate**	**BC 95% CI**	**Estimate**	**BC 95% CI**
Surface Acting → WFC	.04	[.01, .10]	.01	[−.03, .05]
Surface Acting → Desire for Turnover	.12	[.03, .24]	.00	[−.06, .08]

Note. *N* = 197. BC 95% CI = bias-corrected 95% confidence interval with 1,000 resamples. WFC = work-to-family conflict.