

# Emotional Labor and Burnout: Comparing Two Perspectives of “People Work”

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Although it has often been presumed that jobs involving “people work” (e.g., nurses, service workers) are emotionally taxing (Maslach & Jackson, 1982), seldom is the emotional component of these jobs explicitly studied. The current study compared two perspectives of emotional labor as predictors of burnout beyond the effects of negative affectivity: job-focused emotional labor (work demands regarding emotion expression) and employee-focused emotional labor (regulation of feelings and emotional expression). Significant differences existed in the emotional demands reported by five occupational groupings. The use of surface-level emotional labor, or faking, predicted depersonalization beyond the work demands. Perceiving the demand to display positive emotions and using deep-level regulation were associated with a heightened sense of personal accomplishment, suggesting positive benefits to this aspect of work. These findings suggest new antecedents of employee burnout and clarify the emotional labor literature by comparing different conceptualizations of this concept. © 2002 Elsevier Science

The burnout syndrome entails three distinct states in which employees feel emotionally “spent” (emotional exhaustion), display a detached attitude toward others (depersonalization), and experience a low sense of efficacy at work (diminished personal accomplishment) (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Burnout has been consistently linked with physiological and affective outcomes (Burke & Greenglass, 1995; Cherniss, 1992; Lee & Ashforth, 1993; Maslach & Leiter, 1998) as well as with organizational consequences such as increased turnover, increased intention to leave, negative work attitudes, and reduced levels of performance (Cameron, Horsburgh, & Armstrong-Stassen, 1994; Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Wolpin, Burke, & Greenglass, 1991; Wright & Bonett,

Order of authorship is alphabetical. Both authors contributed equally to this article. The authors thank Russell Cropanzano and Cynthia Cordes for their comments on an earlier version.

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1997; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Given the forgoing, research that extends the ability to predict burnout is important.

Although emotional exhaustion is at the core of burnout, the burnout literature has rarely considered emotional work demands as predictors of burnout. Previous research assumed that it was the frequency or *quantity* of interactions with clients/customers that caused role overload and burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Maslach, 1978). As is evident from research in other areas (Frone, 1999), the *quality* of experiences must also be considered. Frequent interaction with people may be tiring in itself given its implications for workload, but such interaction can also involve the need for employees to regulate their emotional expressions in mandated ways (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). This lack of attention to the emotional nature of interpersonal encounters as predictors of burnout has been acknowledged by burnout researchers (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993). The current study employed an emotional labor framework as a means of explicitly examining the emotional demands of work and the individual styles of responding to these emotional demands, which have been proposed as contributing to employee stress (Hochschild, 1983).

## AN EMOTIONAL LABOR FRAMEWORK FOR PREDICTING BURNOUT

Although some degree of convergence exists regarding the definition of burnout, emotional labor has been conceptualized in two main ways. First, *job-focused emotional labor* denotes the level of emotional demands in an occupation. This has been measured as occupational titles such as service jobs that are thought to represent “people work” (Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 1996), work demands such as frequency of interactions with customers (Morris & Feldman, 1996, 1997), and job expectations to express certain emotions (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000; Wharton & Erickson, 1995). Second, *employee-focused emotional labor* denotes employee process or experience of managing emotions and expressions to meet work demands. This has been measured as emotional dissonance—when expressions differ from feelings (Abraham, 1998; Morris & Feldman, 1997) and as emotion regulation processes when one attempts to modify expressions to meet work demands (Brotheridge, 1998; Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Pugliesi, 1999).

As is well known from the stress literature, both job characteristics and individual characteristics contribute to the reported levels of stress. To pursue the emotional characteristics of the job that predict burnout, we drew on both the burnout and emotional labor literatures and considered both the occupational type and the reported interpersonal demands and emotional control required by the job. These variables can be configured onto Karasek’s (1979) demands–control stress theory. In contrast to previous applications of this theory (Pugliesi, 1999), in this article the construct of “demands” refers exclusively to demands inherent in employee–customer interactions, and the construct of “control” refers to the perception that one has autonomy over one’s emotional expressions at work. In considering the aspects of the employee that predict burnout, we drew on the

literature of emotion regulation (Gross, 1998) to propose how employees modify expressions for organizational purposes. We compared these two approaches to determine the extent to which the emotional quality of the job and the employee's emotion management process contribute to burnout.

Thus, the current research had three research questions that consider the contribution by different perspectives of emotional labor. First, do employees with "people work" occupational titles report higher levels of emotional demands and lower control over emotions than in other occupations? Second, do levels of emotional demands and required emotional control, the job-focused emotional labor approach, predict burnout levels? Third, does employee-focused emotional labor, the process of managing emotions in response to work demands, contribute uniquely to the prediction of burnout beyond the job-focused variables? No known study has considered different occupations and their emotional demands or has compared the different definitions of emotional labor as predictors of all three dimensions of burnout.

### *Occupational Differences in Burnout and Emotional Labor*

The occupational perspective views occupational grouping as being relevant in and of itself, such that workers employed in the categories of "high emotional labor" jobs (Hochschild, 1983) and "high burnout" jobs (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) report significantly higher levels of employee stress than do other workers. This study examined how emotional demands differ for employees in people work.

*Occupational differences in burnout.* It has been commonly assumed that there is something unique about health care, social service work, teaching, and other "caring" professions that make their occupants more likely to experience burnout (Cherniss, 1993; Jackson et al., 1986; Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Schaufeli et al., 1993). Researchers have demonstrated differences in dimensions of burnout for different service and caring professions (Singh et al., 1991) and have developed taxonomies of "high-burnout" jobs based on their frequency of interactions (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) and the emotion control needed while interacting with the public.

In the emotional labor literature, the focus is customer service, where interactions are less spontaneously "emotional," yet high emotional control is needed to maintain positive relations with customers across time and situations (Hochschild, 1983; Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). Hochschild (1983) proposed a list of "emotional labor jobs" that involve frequent customer contact and emotion displays controlled by the organization. However, comparing the occupations on Hochschild's list to nonemotional labor jobs has not been very effective in predicting stress and burnout (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000; Wharton, 1996; Wharton & Erickson, 1995). In other words, employees in the "high emotional labor" grouping do not report significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion than do those in the "low emotional labor" grouping. This may be because emotional labor is not a dichotomous variable; there may be a range of emotional labor demands, and many jobs have *some* level of these demands (Morris & Feldman, 1996; Pugliesi, 1999).

The current study merged these two perspectives by comparing the burnout levels of traditional “people work” jobs to those of three other occupational types rather than using a dichotomous measure (yes/no) of emotional labor jobs as a predictor. Thus, the first prediction was consistent with the burnout literature and Hochschild’s (1983) work but expanded the comparisons to find burnout differences where the dichotomous approach had not.

*Hypothesis 1a.* Employees in “people work” jobs (e.g., service, sales, caring professions) experience more burnout than do employees in other occupational groups (e.g., managers, clerical workers, physical laborers).

*Occupational differences in job-focused emotional labor.* The main focus of the current study was to explore the emotional nature of “people work.” If the job-focused view of emotional labor is accurate, then there should be higher levels of emotional demands for persons in service occupations. Using Hochschild’s (1983) criteria for emotional labor jobs, the current study measured the perceived interpersonal work demands and lack of emotion control. We compared these demands across five occupational categories: human service workers, service/sales, managers, clerical workers, and physical laborers. Interpersonal demands, such as the intensity and frequency of client interactions and the expectations for positive displays, were expected to be much greater for customer service representatives (Hochschild, 1979, 1983) and for human service workers than for other employees (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Hawthorne & Yurkovich, 1994; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989; Smith, 1991). Managers, clerical workers, and physical laborers have been studied less often within the emotional labor or burnout literatures, although recent studies have included broader job categories (Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996; Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo, & Schaufeli, 2000). The research on emotional intelligence suggests that managers have emotional demands and a high need for emotional control (Goleman, 1995). One study reported that affective requirements were higher for clerical workers than for service professionals and faculty (Pugliesi & Shook, 1997), although the authors noted that the actual differences were quite small. Physical laborers, by nature of their jobs, should report less frequent and less emotionally laden interactions with the public.

*Hypothesis 1b.* Employees in “people work” jobs (e.g., service, sales, caring professions) report higher interpersonal demands and lower personal control over emotions than do employees in other occupational groups (e.g., managers, clerical workers, and physical laborers).

The differences between service work (prototypical emotional labor job) and caring work (prototypical burnout job) were tested in an exploratory way. Likewise, differences in employee-focused emotional labor were explored and not proposed.

#### *Job-Focused Emotional Labor Predicting Burnout*

As predicted above, different occupational categories differ in mean level of interpersonal work demands. However, employee perceptions of emotion work demands across jobs may be more predictive of burnout levels than their occupational categories; more differences may exist within a specific occupational

category than between categories. Regardless of their occupational category, the perception of work demands and control over the personal expression of emotions may engender stress (Hochschild, 1983; Karasek, 1979).

*Interpersonal work demands.* The frequency or quantity of interactions has been considered a main cause of burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Likewise, the expectations for long interactions with clients and the level of intensity and variety of emotional expressions needed have also been proposed as defining dimensions of emotional labor and predictors of burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Morris & Feldman, 1996). Indeed, Maslach (1978) found that employees who had less emotionally charged interactions with clients reported less emotional exhaustion than did those whose interactions were more intense. However, in a sample of human resource professionals, the interpersonal demands of frequency, duration, and intensity were not significant predictors of emotional exhaustion (Cordes, Dougherty, & Blum, 1997). Likewise, Morris and Feldman (1997) did not find support for frequency and duration as predictors of emotional exhaustion, and Bulan, Erickson, and Wharton (1997) found that frequency of public contact was unrelated to feelings toward work for bank and hospital employees. This lack of support has raised the question of whether emotional demands are actually stressful. We examined multiple occupations to clarify these mixed findings.

*Emotion control: Perceived display rules.* Emotion control for organizational purposes has also been referred to as *display rules* (Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989; Wharton, 1993), which remove emotional autonomy from the employee. These display rules refer to the degree to which showing and hiding emotions is seen as an expected part of employee performance (Wharton & Erickson, 1995). Hochschild's (1983) view—that organizational control of emotional displays is inherently stressful—has received mixed support in both qualitative (Leidner, 1999; Tolich, 1993) and quantitative research. In one study, the requirement to hide negative emotions was positively associated with burnout (Best, Downey, & Jones, 1997). Similarly, the perceived requirement to express positive emotions and hide negative emotions was related positively to physical symptoms for employees in one organization (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000). A study with a bank and hospital employees found that the requirement to be friendly was unrelated to feelings about work (Bulan et al., 1997). The current study attempted to clarify these mixed results by using a broader occupational sample and testing hypotheses consistent with the emotional labor literature and Karasek's demand-control perspective. Thus, it is proposed that higher levels of interpersonal work demands and lower levels of autonomy of emotional expression will predict burnout. Previous works have not tested both emotion work demands and display rules with all three dimensions of burnout and with a sampling of different jobs and organizations.

*Hypothesis 2a.* Perceived work demands, including frequency, duration, variety, and intensity of employee-customer interactions, relate positively to burnout.

*Hypothesis 2b.* Perceived emotion display rules relate positively to burnout.

*Employee-Focused Emotional Labor Predicting Burnout*

Emotional labor may also be viewed as an individual process in which employees' emotion management processes predict burnout levels (Hochschild; 1979, 1983). In this view, emotional demands and display rules are stressful because they create the need to manage emotional states for the organizational goals, and this emotion work is the more proximal predictor of stress (Grandey, 2000). Hochschild's (1979, 1983) research suggested two main processes of emotional labor—surface acting and deep acting—that represent *how* employees manage emotions to meet work role demands. This perspective expands studies that have focused on emotional dissonance, a state of tension, as emotional labor (e.g., Abraham, 1998). This internal approach to emotional labor is congruent with general emotion regulation theories that can be used to make predictions (Brotheridge, 1998; Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998).

*Employee-focused emotional labor: Surface acting.* In surface acting, employees modify and control their emotional *expressions*. For example, employees may enhance or fake a smile when in a bad mood or interacting with a difficult customer. The inauthenticity of this surface-level process, showing expressions discrepant from feelings, is related to stress outcomes (Abraham, 1998; Brotheridge, 1999; Erickson & Wharton, 1997; Pugliesi, 1999; Pugliesi & Shook, 1997) due to the internal tension and the physiological effort of suppressing true feelings (Gross & Levenson, 1997; Morris & Feldman, 1997; Pugliesi, 1999). Hochschild (1983) argued that acting inauthentic over time may result in feeling detached not only from one's true feelings but also from other people's feelings, suggesting a relationship with the dimension of depersonalization. Feeling diminished personal accomplishment is also likely if the employee believes that the displays were not efficacious or were met with annoyance by customers (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Brotheridge, 1999). Thus, surface acting is expected to relate to all three dimensions of burnout.

*Employee-focused emotional labor: Deep acting.* Deep acting is the process of controlling internal thoughts and feelings to meet the mandated display rules. Emotions involve physiological arousal and cognitions, and deep acting works on modifying arousal or cognitions through a variety of techniques (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994; Folkman & Lazarus, 1991; Gross, 1998; Lazarus, 1991; Totterdell & Parkinson, 1999). Hochschild (1979, 1983) argued that doing "emotion work" was a way of decreasing a state of emotional dissonance and may also result in a feeling of accomplishment if the performance is effective. Thus, deep acting might not relate to emotional exhaustion because it minimizes the tension of dissonance. We expected deep acting to relate to lower depersonalization and more personal accomplishment because deep acting involves treating the customer as someone deserving of authentic expression, and the positive feedback from the customer may increase a sense of personal efficacy.

We examined employee-focused emotional labor in relation to each burnout dimension beyond job-focused emotional labor (e.g., frequency, display rules).

*Hypothesis 3a.* Surface acting relates positively to emotional exhaustion.

*Hypothesis 3b.* Surface acting relates positively, and deep acting relates negatively, to depersonalization.

*Hypothesis 3c.* Surface acting relates negatively, and deep acting relates positively, to personal accomplishment.

In sum, we tested three sets of hypotheses regarding: (a) occupational differences in emotion work demands and burnout, (b) the impact of emotional demands and control on burnout, and (c) the impact of emotional regulation on burnout. We included negative affectivity as a control variable because those who are dispositionally negative may report higher levels of emotional demands and emotion management at work (Abraham, 1999; Morris & Feldman, 1996) as well as more stress and somatic symptoms (Brief, Burke, George, Robinson, & Webster, 1988; Burke, Brief, & George, 1993; Elliott, Chartrand, & Harkins, 1994; Necowitz & Roznowski, 1994; also see review in Kinicki, McKee, & Wade, 1996).

## METHOD

### *Participants and Procedures*

A total of 238 full-time Canadian employees participated in this study as part of a larger study on emotions in the workplace (Brotheridge & Lee, 1998). Participants were a convenience sample, recruited through undergraduate business students who received a small sum of money for their assistance in recruitment. Of the employee participants, 55% (130) were female and were, on average, about 27 years old. Job titles of the participants included retail sales clerk, restaurant server, bank teller, accountant, human resource consultant, engineer, construction worker, nurse, and social worker. A research assistant identified these titles as fitting into one of five categories. This categorization was reviewed by the first author, and no changes were made. The sampling of occupational type consisted of human service workers (29), service/sales employees (143), managers (15), clerical staff (22), and physical laborers (29).

### *Measures*

*Control variables.* Sex was included as a control variable in all analyses (men coded as 0 and women coded as 1) because women typically do more emotion work, both at work and at home (Hochschild, 1989; Wharton & Erickson, 1995). As this suggests, there were more women than men in the human service professional (76%), service/sales (59%), and clerical (68%) categories. Negative affectivity was also included as a control variable given its potential relationship with both emotional labor and burnout (Brief et al., 1988; Burke et al., 1993). The PANAS trait-based measure of negative affectivity was employed (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) with a 5-point scale (1 = *very slightly or not at all*, 5 = *extremely*). Respondents were presented with 10 emotion words (e.g., irritable, hostile) and were asked to indicate the extent to which they generally felt this way ( $\alpha = .83$ ).

*Job-focused emotional labor: Interpersonal work demands.* Job-focused emotional labor was measured with items from the Emotional Labour Scale

(Brotheridge & Lee, 1998) (see Appendix). Respondents were asked to rate “on an average day at work how frequently” they performed interpersonal behaviors on a 5-point Likert-type response scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*). This scale measured the *variety* of emotional expression (three items,  $\alpha = .76$ ) and *intensity* of emotional expression (two items,  $\alpha = .74$ ). *Duration* of interpersonal interactions was measured with one item requesting the average number of minutes required for a typical transaction. Perceived *frequency* of customer interactions was measured with one item that asked respondents to rate the extent to which they interact with customers on an average day.

*Job-focused emotional labor: Perceived display rules.* The Emotion Work Requirements Scale (Best et al., 1997), a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *always required*), tapped the level to which employees reported that their emotional displays were controlled by their jobs (see Appendix). Items ask the extent to which the employee is required to show (or hide) emotion in order to be effective on the job. These items form two strong factors in preliminary studies, with a weaker third factor (Grandey, 1998; Jones & Best, 1995). The items from the two-factor structure were included here and used to form composites. The first composite taps the requirement to display positive emotions (four items,  $\alpha = .78$ ), and the second measures the requirement to hide negative emotions (three items,  $\alpha = .77$ ).

*Employee-focused emotional labor.* Items measuring surface and deep acting came from the Emotional Labour Scale (Brotheridge & Lee, 1998) (see Appendix). These items were based on a review of emotional labor literature and tapped the ideas of regulating emotions by hiding feelings, faking feelings, and modifying feelings as part of the work role. During item development, other emotion researchers examined the items for their clarity and content sampling, and the items were pilot-tested with two working samples. Analyses show that the items form two independent but related factors (Brotheridge & Lee, 1998; Grandey, 1998). Three items measure surface acting ( $\alpha = .74$ ) and refer to modifying and faking expressions, and three items measure deep acting ( $\alpha = .83$ ) and tap the extent to which the employee modifies feelings to meet display rules.

*Employee burnout.* Using a 7-point Likert-type scale (0 = *never*, 6 = *every day*), the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) measured emotional exhaustion (nine items,  $\alpha = .91$ ; sample item: “I feel emotionally drained from my work”), depersonalization (six items,  $\alpha = .80$ ; sample item: “I’ve become more callous toward people since I took this job”), and diminished personal accomplishment (seven items,  $\alpha = .79$ ; sample item: “I feel exhilarated after working closely with my customers” [reverse scored]). Validation evidence for these measures is provided by Cordes and Dougherty (1993). The MBI was originally intended for use with human service workers, but researchers have employed the MBI in occupations as diverse as computer professionals, police officers, lawyers, banking personnel, postal workers, personnel managers, small business owners, and customer service representatives (Boles, Dean, Ricks, Short, & Wang, 2000; Evans & Fischer, 1993; Gaines & Jermier, 1983; Jackson, Turner, & Brief, 1987; Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996; Matthews, 1990; Singh, Goolsby, &

Rhoads, 1994). This frequent extension of the concept of burnout to nonhuman service workers led to the development of a revised measure of burnout (the MBI-GS) with dimensions that parallel the original scale: emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy (Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996; Schutte et al., 2000). However, given the need to examine aspects of burnout such as depersonalization that stem directly from service interactions (rather than other aspects of one's work), the present study adopted the conceptualization of burnout as originally proposed and measured by Maslach and Jackson (1986).

## RESULTS

Results are organized below by hypothesis and method of analysis. The third dimension of burnout, diminished personal accomplishment, was reverse scored to represent a (positive) sense of personal accomplishment for ease of reporting.

### *Hypothesis 1: Analysis of Variance and Tukey Tests*

Hypotheses 1a and 1b were tested with one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Tukey post hoc comparisons. See Table 1 for complete results.

TABLE 1  
Results from One-Way ANOVA and Tukey Comparisons of Job-Focused and Employee-Focused Emotional Labor and Burnout ( $N = 238$ )

Variable	Human service ( $n = 29$ )	Service/Sales ( $n = 143$ )	Manager ( $n = 15$ )	Clerical ( $n = 22$ )	Physical Labor ( $n = 29$ )
Emotional exhaustion	2.15 (1.09)	2.43 (1.32)	2.30 (1.20)	1.89 (0.95)	2.25 (1.19)
Depersonalization	0.81 <sup>b,d,e</sup> (0.84)	2.10 <sup>a,b</sup> (1.27)	2.17 <sup>c,d,f</sup> (1.48)	0.93 <sup>a,c</sup> (0.71)	1.69 <sup>b,e,f</sup> (1.43)
Personal accomplishment	4.75 <sup>a,d</sup> (0.88)	3.66 <sup>a</sup> (1.03)	4.28 <sup>b</sup> (0.95)	4.15 <sup>c</sup> (0.90)	3.20 <sup>b,c,d</sup> (1.08)
Frequency	4.79 <sup>b</sup> (0.56)	4.56 <sup>a</sup> (0.91)	4.40 <sup>c</sup> (0.74)	3.73 <sup>a,b</sup> (1.08)	2.93 <sup>a,b,c</sup> (1.49)
Intensity	2.86 <sup>a,b</sup> (0.94)	2.40 (0.88)	2.53 (0.81)	1.95 <sup>a</sup> (0.55)	2.05 <sup>b</sup> (0.90)
Variety	3.48 <sup>a,b,c</sup> (1.06)	2.87 <sup>a</sup> (0.86)	2.89 (0.96)	2.61 <sup>b</sup> (0.94)	2.32 <sup>a,b</sup> (1.00)
Duration	24.33 <sup>a,b</sup> (44.58)	9.43 <sup>a</sup> (11.36)	20.38 (15.65)	11.90 (14.22)	6.70 <sup>b</sup> (9.86)
Display rules: Show positive	3.49 <sup>a,b,c</sup> (0.76)	2.70 <sup>a</sup> (0.80)	2.91 (0.78)	2.52 <sup>b</sup> (0.77)	2.32 <sup>a,c</sup> (0.63)
Display rules: Hide negative	2.46 (0.68)	2.45 (0.79)	2.45 (0.62)	2.22 (0.65)	2.12 (0.67)
Surface acting	2.75 (0.63)	3.08 <sup>a,b</sup> (0.77)	2.78 (0.78)	2.50 <sup>a</sup> (0.75)	2.52 <sup>b</sup> (0.88)
Deep acting	3.09 <sup>a</sup> (0.98)	2.83 (0.81)	2.91 (0.99)	2.74 (1.07)	2.38 <sup>a</sup> (0.85)

*Note.* Cells with matching superscripts have significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) mean value. Burnout is on a 7-point scale. All other multi-item scales use a 5-point scale.

*Burnout.* Consistent with previous emotional labor studies (Wharton, 1993), the current study did not find significant occupational differences in emotional exhaustion levels (Table 1). The absolute highest value (2.43) was for service/sales occupations, but this did not differ significantly from the other values. The mean levels of depersonalization were significantly higher for service/sales employees (2.10) and managers (2.17) than for clerical employees (0.93) and physical laborers (1.69). Human service workers reported significantly *lower* levels (0.81) of depersonalization than did service/sales employees, managers, and physical laborers, which is not in the proposed direction. The third burnout dimension, recoded to represent a sense of personal accomplishment, was *highest* for human service workers (4.75), significantly higher than that for service/sales employees and physical laborers. In sum, this data did not support the hypothesis that “emotional labor jobs” (Hochschild, 1983) or the “caring professions” (Maslach, 1978) per se created higher levels of burnout than those for managers, clerical employees, and physical laborers.

*Job-focused emotional labor.* Hypothesis 1b, regarding the occupational differences of job-focused emotional labor, was partially supported. As expected, service/sales employees and human service workers reported significantly greater *frequency* of interacting with customers than did clerical employees and physical laborers, with managers reporting a moderate level between these categories. Also as expected, human service workers reported higher levels of all of the emotional work demands—greater *duration* (24.33 min) of interactions with clients, greater *intensity* of emotional interactions (2.86), and greater *variety* (3.48) of emotional demands than those of clerical employees and physical laborers. Service/sales employees reported significantly more *variety* of expression than did physical laborers. In comparing the “burnout” and “emotional labor” categories, human service workers reported significantly greater *variety* of emotions and longer *duration* of interactions than did service/sales workers. This supports the view that service/sales workers show predominantly positive expressions and that the typical service encounter tends to be brief (Gutek, Bhappu, Liao-Troth, & Cherry, 1999).

In terms of perceived display rules, human service workers were required to show positive emotions to a much greater extent (3.49) than were clerical employees, physical laborers, and even service/sales employees. Service/sales employees reported the expectation to show positive emotions (2.70) to a significantly greater extent than did physical laborers (2.32) and somewhat higher (but not significantly) than clerical employees. Managers reported a high mean level (2.91) of positive display expectations, but not significantly higher than those of the other occupational groups. There were no significant differences in the extent to which negative emotions needed to be suppressed, although the physical laborers reported the lowest mean level.

*Employee-focused emotional labor.* No hypotheses were made for occupational differences in how employees managed their emotions at work, although we suggested that human service workers might be more inclined to be authentic with their clients/patients, whereas service workers might be more likely to fake their

TABLE 2  
Bivariate Correlations of Job-Focused and Employee-Focused Emotional Labor and Burnout

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Frequency of interactions	—											
2. Intensity of expression	.23**	.74										
3. Variety of expression	.18**	.56**	.76									
4. Duration of interactions	.11	.21**	.12	—								
5. Display: Show positive	.35**	.39**	.47**	.18**	.79							
6. Display: Hide negative	.28**	.29**	.28**	.00	.65**	.73						
7. Surface acting	.24**	.21**	.15*	.02	.21**	.39**	.74					
8. Deep acting	.17**	.42**	.49**	.29**	.36**	.25**	.27**	.83				
9. Emotional exhaustion	.01	.08	.06	-.03	.10	.15*	.20**	.02	.91			
10. Depersonalization	.10	.10	.03	-.12	.06	.24**	.38**	.00	.62**	.80		
11. Personal accomplishment	.20**	.18**	.27*	.15*	.36**	.09	-.18**	.27**	-.11	-.29**	.79	
12. Negative affectivity	-.10	.10	.08	-.05	.08	.16*	.17**	.04	.55**	.45**	-.22**	.83

Note. Values in the diagonal are the internal consistency coefficients for multi-item scales.

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

expressions. Surface acting was significantly more likely to be used by service/sales employees (3.08) than by clerical workers (2.50) or laborers (2.52). Human service workers reported the highest mean level of deep acting (3.09), although this was only significantly different from that for laborers (2.38). Thus, there is evidence that those in “people work” are doing emotion work as part of the job, although not to a much larger extent than those in other occupations.

### *Hypothesis 2: Bivariate Correlations*

The above results suggested that burnout was not significantly higher for “people work,” consistent with the emotional labor studies that have compared occupations with a dichotomous categorization (Wharton, 1993). It is likely that the use of occupational categories obscures variations of people and jobs within the categories. Table 2 presents the bivariate correlations across occupational categories. The interpersonal demands were moderately correlated with each other. Thus, those who reported higher levels of emotion work demands also reported higher control expectations, in support of the occupational view. However, these correlations ranged from  $r = .11$  ( $ns$ ) to  $r = .56$  ( $p < .01$ ), suggesting variability in the occupational demands for individuals. Hypotheses 2a and 2b proposed relationships between the job-focused emotional labor variables and the burnout dimensions across occupations. The bivariate correlations supported previous null findings that

self-reported frequency of interactions is not a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion (Cordes et al., 1997; Morris & Feldman, 1997). Interestingly, frequency, intensity, variety, and duration of interactions were related *positively* with personal accomplishment. None of these interpersonal demands was significantly related to emotional exhaustion or depersonalization. Hypothesis 2a was not supported.

In line with Hypothesis 2b, the display rule to hide negative emotions correlated significantly with emotional exhaustion ( $r = .15, p < .05$ ) and depersonalization ( $r = .24, p < .01$ ). In contradiction to the hypothesis, the display rule to show positive emotions was related only to personal accomplishment ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ) and in the opposite direction as predicted. These relationships with burnout, above and beyond the controls and each other, are shown in Table 3.

### *Hypothesis 3: Bivariate Correlations and Hierarchical Regressions*

Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c referred to the relationships of surface and deep acting on burnout, above and beyond job-focused emotional labor and negative affectivity. The bivariate correlations suggested overlap among the job demand and emotion management variables. The work requirements to hide negative emotions and surface acting were moderately correlated ( $r = .39$ ). This correlation is expected, such that the expectation to hide negative emotions should contribute to the amount that employees fake expressions. Deep acting, the good-faith effort, was related to the work demands of intensity, variety, duration, and positive display rules to a greater extent than was surface acting.

The correlation matrix (Table 2) showed that the bivariate correlations supported the hypotheses for the most part. Surface acting correlated significantly with emotional exhaustion ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ), depersonalization ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ), and personal accomplishment ( $r = -.18, p < .01$ ) in the expected directions. Deep acting was not significantly related to depersonalization but correlated positively with personal accomplishment ( $r = .27, p < .01$ ) as predicted. Hierarchical regressions determined whether these relationships remained when the other variables were entered. Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were regressed separately on two demographic variables in step 1 (sex and negative affectivity), all job-focused emotional labor variables in step 2, and surface and deep acting in step 3. Occupational grouping was added as a third control variable for depersonalization and personal accomplishment given that the levels of these dependent variables varied with the occupational grouping of the respondents (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Table 3 shows the coefficients for initial and total effects on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

*Emotional exhaustion.* In the first step, the control variables sex and negative affectivity explained 30% of the variance in emotional exhaustion. In the bivariate correlations, emotional exhaustion was significantly correlated with the requirement to hide negative emotions, but this effect was washed out by the other variables. The employee-focused emotional labor step had a significant and unique

TABLE 3  
Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Burnout with Job-Focused and Employee-Focused Emotional Labor

Variable	Emotional exhaustion			Depersonalization			Personal accomplishment		
	$\beta^i$	$\beta^f$	$\Delta F$	$\beta^i$	$\beta^f$	$\Delta F$	$\beta^i$	$\beta^f$	$\Delta F$
Controls									
Sex (male = 0, female = 1)	.01	.02	45.17**	-.10	-.10	33.74**	.11	.00	6.28**
Negative affectivity	.54**	.53**		.46**	.43**		-.21**	-.18**	
Occupational group	—	—		-.11	.00		-.18**	-.09	
Job-focused emotional labor									
Duration	-.01	.00	11.44**	-.06	-.05	14.06**	.02	-.01	7.01**
Frequency	.05	.03		.15*	.11		.09	.13*	
Intensity	.03	.03		.09	.08		-.02	-.02	
Variety	-.02	-.01		-.09	-.09		.13	.10	
Display: Hide negative	.05	.01		.16*	.06		-.16*	-.07	
Display: Show positive	.02	.04		-.04	.01		.36**	.31**	
Employee-focused emotional labor									
Surface acting		.12 <sup>†</sup>	9.57**		.28**	14.62**		-.28**	8.03**
Deep acting		-.07			-.09			.19**	

Note.  $N = 141$ .  $\beta^i$ , initial beta weight when first entered;  $\beta^f$ , final beta coefficient after all variables have been entered. Occupational groups: 1 = human service workers; 2 = service/sales employees; 3 = managers/professionals; 4 = clerical staff; 5 = physical laborers.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ .

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

contribution but with a small effect size ( $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The beta coefficient for surface acting was in the predicted direction but did not reach traditional levels of significance ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $p < .08$ ). Negative affectivity was the only significant predictor ( $\beta = .54$ ,  $p < .01$ ) of this stress outcome. Hypothesis 3a was not supported.

*Depersonalization.* The control variables sex, negative affectivity, and occupational grouping explained 32% of depersonalization. Negative affectivity was a significant predictor (Table 3). Two job-focused emotional labor variables, frequency of interactions and hiding negative emotions, had significant positive coefficients with depersonalization beyond negative affectivity and sex. The entry of employee-focused emotional labor contributed unique variance to the equation ( $\Delta R^2 = .07$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and surface acting had a significant, positive beta coefficient as predicted ( $\beta = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In the final equation, surface acting and negative affectivity, but not frequency and hiding negative emotions, had significant beta coefficients. This suggested a mediating effect of job-focused emotional labor through employee-focused emotional labor, as suggested elsewhere (Grandey, 2000). Deep acting was not a significant predictor beyond the other variables. Hypothesis 3b was partially supported.

*Personal accomplishment.* The control variables sex, negative affectivity, and occupational grouping explained 8% of personal accomplishment. Negative affectivity and occupational category were significant predictors. The emotion control variables had coefficients in opposite directions; showing that positive emotions were related positively, and hiding negative emotions were related negatively, to personal accomplishment. Once employee-focused emotional labor was entered, explaining an additional 7% of the variance in personal accomplishment, there were four significant beta coefficients. Hypothesis 3c was fully supported, with surface ( $\beta = -.28$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and deep acting ( $\beta = .19$ ,  $p < .01$ ) significantly related to personal accomplishment in the expected directions. The requirement to show positive emotions remained significant ( $\beta = .31$ ,  $p < .01$ ), as did negative affectivity ( $\beta = -.18$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The coefficient for frequency became significant at this last step, suggesting a slight suppressor effect from the employee-focused variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Because frequency was correlated significantly with personal accomplishment, surface acting, and deep acting, the slight increase in weighting was not surprising.

## DISCUSSION

The current research examined three questions regarding the overlap of emotional labor and burnout literatures. First, we compared the emotional demands and levels of emotional control perceived by employees in two forms of "people work" and three other occupational categories. Second, we assessed the operationalization of emotional labor as work requirements by assessing the relationship of job demands and emotional control with the three burnout dimensions. Third, we tested the additive value of operationalizing emotional labor as the employees' process of modifying emotions and emotional expressions.

### *Do Occupations Differ in Reported Burnout and Emotional Labor?*

The first question concerned the burnout and emotional nature of the job for employees performing “people work” relative to employees in other occupations. Consistent with previous research (Wharton, 1993; Wharton & Erickson, 1995), this study found that employees in “people work” did not report significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion than did respondents employed in other occupations. Service/sales employees reported the highest overall mean, consistent with Hochschild (1983), but this was not a significant difference. Human service workers reported significantly *lower* levels of depersonalization and *higher* levels of personal accomplishment than did workers in other occupations. As suggested earlier, employees caring for others in nursing and child care facilities may be intrinsically motivated to be genuine and truly care about their patients/clients (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Hawthorne & Yurkovich, 1994). Thus, they may try to avoid depersonalizing or objectifying these clients and may feel that the emotional demands of the job make it meaningful and thus rewarding. As argued by Van Eck Peluchette (1993), employees who experience a level of success in their work are more likely to invest in their performance. In support of this view, these employees reported the highest level of deep acting, measured as the extent to which employees attempt to modify their internal feelings to be more genuine with clients. In contrast, physical laborers reported higher levels of depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment relative to human service workers. This provides some evidence for the rewards of people work as suggested by qualitative research (Tolich, 1993).

So what is different about “people work”? This study found significant differences in the nature of prototypical emotional labor occupations (service/sales) and burnout occupations (caring work) compared to other occupational categories. The results suggested the existence of a hierarchy of emotional labor expectations, with human service professionals reporting the highest levels of frequency, variety, intensity, and duration of emotional display and expectations for control over emotional expressions. Customer service workers also reported high levels of these emotional demands, although lower than those of the human service workers. Interestingly, managers’ emotional labor expectations were not significantly different from those of the more prototypical “people work” jobs. The small sample size for this group limited its potential to find significant differences, but managers reported the highest mean level of display rules to show positive expressions. This expectation for emotion work has been suggested elsewhere (e.g., Jackall, 1988), and this study’s results support that managers deserve further attention in this literature. Overall, there were no significant occupational differences in the display rules for hiding negative emotions, suggesting that a lack of incivility is expected in all occupations. Even clerical workers and physical laborers reported a non-zero level of the emotional demands, acting as a reminder that interactions with the public and emotion control are required in almost any job. This is especially true as the economy has become more service oriented and most industries need to be customer focused (Bitner, Booms, & Treault, 1990).

Overall, emotion demands are high and emotional autonomy is low for “people work,” suggesting that workers will report more burnout as argued by Karasek (1979). The fact that these groups reported similar levels of emotional exhaustion suggests that people work may have unusual work demands but that these may act as both stressors and resources for the employees. The results for the next two research questions support this conclusion.

*Does Job-Focused Emotional Labor (Emotion Demands-Control) Predict Burnout?*

Recent research in both burnout and emotional labor literatures has found mixed or nonsupportive results for the frequency of interactions and the display rules of the job (Cordes et al., 1997; Morris & Feldman, 1997; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1990; Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000), and this was true for this study as well. The perception that the job required high levels of hiding negative emotions, such as anger and fear, was the only factor that was significantly related to emotional exhaustion. The relationship was small and became nonexistent once the effect of dispositional negative affectivity was partialled out. Most intriguing were the unexpected results for personal accomplishment, which is the least well-studied dimension of burnout (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). The bivariate correlations showed that the frequency and duration of customer contact, intensity and variety of emotional expressions, and greater expectations to show empathy and friendliness toward customers all related positively to employees feeling efficacious and accomplished at their jobs. This lends support to personal accomplishment as a separate dimension of burnout, with different predictors than emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Qualitative work has shown that although emotional labor may be tiring, it can also be rewarding (Tolich, 1993), and these findings support the need to expand the traditional stress perspective of emotional labor.

*Does Employee-Focused Emotional Labor Predict Burnout?*

In addition to suggesting the characteristics of emotional labor jobs, Hochschild (1983) proposed that employees regulate emotions to meet the emotion demands. Previous work focused on emotional dissonance—when one feels differently from what emotion is expressed—as a predictor of emotional exhaustion (Abraham, 1998, 1999; Morris & Feldman, 1996, 1997). Measuring surface acting and deep acting is more process oriented, viewing emotional labor as an effortful aspect of work. Surface-level regulation (e.g., faking, putting on a “mask”) and deep-level regulation (e.g., changing internal feeling states) were predicted to have different patterns of relationships (Grandey, 2000). No other study, to our knowledge, has compared the effects of employee-focused emotional labor on burnout to those of job-focused emotional labor on burnout.

As predicted, surface acting was significantly related to emotional exhaustion, which is consistent with previous research on suppressing anger being costly to physiological and immune system functioning (Gross & Levenson, 1997;

Pennebaker & Beall, 1986). However, in the regression analyses it was not significant beyond the other variables. Our results are more conservative than those of studies measuring emotional dissonance or faking that have not controlled for the emotion work demands or for dispositional affectivity. As predicted, surface acting was a significant predictor of depersonalization beyond the other variables: The more employees reported faking their emotional expressions at work, the more they also reported distancing themselves from customers and treating them as objects. Although frequency of customer contact and hiding negative displays were significantly associated with depersonalization, the beta coefficients became non-significant when the employee-focused emotional labor variables were entered, suggesting a mediated relationship (Grandey, 2000). Surface acting can be seen as a way of detaching from others while at work.

Hochschild (1983) proposed that surface acting may create guilt and dissatisfaction with work efforts and that deep acting may create a sense of satisfaction in the quality of the provided services. This is the first known study to test these ideas. As predicted, surface acting contributed to a diminished sense of personal accomplishment, whereas deep acting contributed to a greater sense of personal efficacy at work. These relationships with personal accomplishment existed beyond the other variables. In addition, frequency of interactions and the display rule to show positive emotions both were related to a heightened sense of personal accomplishment, contradicting burnout and emotional labor arguments that high customer contact is inherently stressful. However, the results also indicate that if employees were faking their emotions, then the sense of personal accomplishment was diminished. This supported Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993) argument that only sincere expressions have beneficial outcomes for employees. Overall, these results suggested that burnout and emotional labor research consider employee-focused emotional labor in addition to the occupational category or job-focused emotional labor. Furthermore, the conditions under which employees experience a sense of accomplishment and other positive outcomes with customers should be investigated.

The different sample sizes for each occupational group represent a limitation of this research. In particular, the number of service/sales employees was much higher than the numbers of employees in other occupations, and the small samples for managers and physical laborers might have kept us from finding significant occupational differences. However, this is a reflection of the actual work population given the growth of the service sector (Lorence, 1992), and in this case, "to artificially equalize the  $n$  is to distort the differences and lose generalizability" (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996, p. 48). The current study was cross-sectional, so the direction of causality cannot be tested. Burnout level may influence how the employees experience the work environment and the style of emotional labor they use. The directions of relationships proposed here are theory based (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996), but longitudinal studies to test the causal direction are sorely needed. Finally, the current study did not include variables currently known to predict burnout (e.g., Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Given that many of these emotional demands and emotion regulation variables

had not previously been tested, it was appropriate to focus on this set of variables. However, future research should examine the contribution of emotion regulation processes in predicting burnout over and above previously tested predictors such as role stressors.

The current study has implications for both the burnout and emotional labor literatures. The results suggested for the burnout literature that there are emotional differences in the nature of “people work.” More interesting is that the results suggested that future researchers consider the emotional demands of jobs such as management. These results discourage the use of frequency of contact as the main predictor of emotional exhaustion, in line with other studies (e.g., Bulan et al., 1997; Morris & Feldman, 1997). The results with the other job-focused and employee-focused emotional labor variables suggested that these components of work are particularly predictive for the personal accomplishment dimension of burnout. These relationships support that the emotional demands and emotion management styles can create positive outcomes, not just stress.

For the emotional labor literature, the comparison of job-focused and employee-focused emotional labor shows somewhat stronger effects for surface and deep acting than for emotion work demands. Surface acting, or faking emotional expressions at work, was related to feeling exhausted and detached, whereas deeper emotion work was related positively to personal accomplishment. Hochschild (1983) recognized deep acting as having potential benefits for the employee and customer outcomes but warned against organizations treating employees’ feelings as a commodity. However, theory and research on mood regulation has suggested training employees to engage in deep emotional labor techniques (Grandey & Brauburger, in press; Totterdell & Parkinson, 1999). If, indeed, “jobs are not as easily molded as are people” (Loscocco & Roschelle, 1991, p. 187), then training may be an effective means for employees to adjust to their work situations. This suggests some intriguing and practically useful future research.

## APPENDIX

### Emotional Labour Scale (Brotheridge & Lee, 1998)

#### *Duration*

A typical interaction I have with a customer takes about \_ minutes.

#### *Intensity*

Express intense emotions.

Show some strong emotions.

#### *Variety*

Display many different kinds of emotions.

Express many different emotions.

Display many different emotions when interacting with others.

*Surface Acting*

Resist expressing my true feelings.  
 Pretend to have emotions that I don't really have.  
 Hide my true feelings about a situation.

*Deep Acting*

Make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display to others.  
 Try to actually experience the emotions that I must show.  
 Really try to feel the emotions I have to show as part of my job.

**Emotion Work Requirements Scale (Best, Downey, & Jones, 1997)***Requirement to Display Positive Emotions*

Reassuring people who are distressed or upset.  
 Remaining calm even when you are astonished.  
 Expressing feelings of sympathy (e.g., saying you "understand," you are sorry to hear about something).  
 Expressing friendly emotions (e.g., smiling, giving compliments, making small talk).

*Requirement to Hide Negative Emotions*

Hiding your anger or disapproval about something someone has done (e.g., an act that is distasteful to you).  
 Hiding your disgust over something someone has done.  
 Hiding your fear of someone who appears threatening.

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Received December 5, 2000; published online September 4, 2001