



The daily spillover and crossover of emotional labor: Faking emotions at work and at home



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ABSTRACT

This diary study among 75 Spanish dual earner couples investigates whether emotional labor performed by employees at work has implications for themselves and for their partner at home. On the basis of the Spillover-Crossover model, we hypothesized that individuals' surface acting at work would spill over to the home domain, and that surface acting at home, in turn, would reduce individuals' levels of well-being. Moreover, we predicted crossover of experiences lived at home between the members of the couple. Participants filled in a diary booklet during five consecutive working days ($N = 150$ participants and $N = 750$ occasions). The results of multilevel analyses show that daily surface acting at work has an indirect relationship with daily well-being through daily surface acting at home. In addition, we found a bi-directional crossover of surface acting at home and well-being between both members of the couple. These findings indicate that emotional labor has implications not only for employees themselves, but also for their partner at home – on a daily basis.

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1. Introduction

Emotions play an important role in our daily lives, including the work domain. Traditionally, researchers on emotions in working life have focused their attention on jobs requiring emotional expression as part of the work role (e.g., the service sector). “Emotional labor” is considered as the core variable in the study of emotions in organizations (Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000). Emotional labor at work requires expressing specific emotions in order to conform to organizational expectations (Grandey, 2003). However, the workplace is not an island in employees' lives: attitudes, stress, emotions and behaviors spill over between work and family domains (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For instance, Yanchus, Eby, Lance, and Drollinger (2010) examined emotional labor also in the family domain, arguing that there are also expected behaviours in the family which may create another form of emotional labor. However, despite the growing interest in analyzing emotional labor at work, there are only a few studies that have examined emotional labor at home. Moreover, there is a lack of research on how the work environment affects those with whom employees interact outside the work domain, such as their partners (Bakker & Demerouti, *in press*). The latter authors propose the Spillover-Crossover Model (SCM) as a framework that integrates work and non-work domains, analyzing first how work characteristics or strain spill over from work to home, and in turn, how it affects partner's well-being. Based on the SCM (Bakker & Demerouti, *in press*), we analyze the spillover and crossover of emotional labor in dual-earner couples.

Our study contributes to the field in several ways. First, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first study investigating the spillover and crossover of emotional labor. The design of the present study is also unique in the field of emotional labor. For instance, although Yanchus et al. (2010) focused on emotional labor both at work and at home, they related both types of

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emotional labor to affective responses within each respective domain. We address this gap by examining the spillover of emotional labor at work to the home domain, and in turn, how it affects indicators of well-being. Second, we use a daily diary design with dual-earner couples. This design allows us to capture dynamic aspects of marital experiences, including the crossover of experiences, that might be lost when using traditional designs (Laurenceau & Bolger, 2005). We measure emotional labor at work in the afternoon, and emotional labor at home in the evening for both partners simultaneously (i.e. on the same day), which reduces retrospective bias because employees report their feelings and cognitions just after they have occurred (Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010). Third, the strategy of analyses that we follow in this study, called actor-partner interdependence model (APIM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2008), is innovative. This strategy allows us to explore (a) how specific work characteristics affect not only employees but also their partner's well-being, and (b) mutual effects between the members of the dyad.

2. Theoretical background and development of hypotheses

The SCM (Bakker & Demerouti, *in press*) provides a useful general framework for our study. This model takes into account experiences in work and non-work domains, integrating two important lines of research. Accordingly, experiences built up at work first spill over to the home domain in the form of negative strain, influencing behavior at home, and then cross-over to one's partner's well-being through social interaction. Evidence for such a process has been found in several between-persons survey studies conducted in different countries, including The Netherlands, Greece, and Japan. For instance, Bakker, Demerouti, and Dollard (2008) found that for both genders job demands were positively related to actor's own work-family conflict, which led to their partner's home demands and exhaustion.

Moreover, Bakker, Demerouti, and Burke (2009) in a study about workaholism showed that employees who worked excessively hard had higher levels of work-family conflict and in turn, offered less support to their partner. This lack of support had a negative impact on partner's relationship satisfaction. Both studies have been replicated in Japanese dual-earner couples (Shimazu, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2009; Shimazu, Demerouti, Bakker, Shimada, & Kawakami, 2011). Recently, the SCM has been extended including aspects such as the impact of exchange in interpersonal relationships (Bakker, Petrou, & Tsaousis, *in press*), and work-self facilitation (Demerouti, 2012).

In the present daily diary study, we examine first the spillover of surface acting at work to the home domain, and in turn, how surface acting at home reduces individual's levels of well-being. Second, we analyze the crossover of experiences lived at home between the members of the couple (i.e., surface acting at home and well-being).

2.1. Emotional labor: the concept of surface acting at work and at home

The study of emotions in organizations has its roots in the concept of emotional labor. This concept was developed by Hochschild (1979), who referred first to "emotion work" as "the act of evoking or shaping", as well as "suppressing feelings in oneself" (p. 561). Later, she used the concept of "emotional labor" defining it as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7).

Hochschild classified emotional labor into two categories: *surface acting and deep acting*. Whereas the first category involves simulating emotions not actually felt, the second category implies trying to actually feel the appropriate emotions for a given situation. Whereas deep acting has traditionally been linked to positive outcomes such as better service performance (Grandey, 2003; Totterdell & Holman, 2003), the negative effects of surface acting are clearer in the literature (Martínez-Iñigo, Totterdell, Alcover, & Holman, 2007). The negative effects of surface acting may be explained by the fact that it is more effortful because one needs to actively change the public display while the internal experience remains the same (Grandey, 2000). Kanfer and Kantrowitz (2002) point out that surface acting involves more effort than deep acting because in surface acting, the emotion is under way. This means that the individuals have already felt a specific emotion but they cannot reveal it. They can only change the observable signs, which may have costs. However, in deep acting, the individual regulates the antecedents of the emotions so that when the emotion is felt, the inner feelings are aligned with the observable behavior.

In the present study, we are interested in surface acting, which implies faking emotions. First, we examine surface acting at work and after that, we examine surface acting at home as a strategy to manage emotions in the non-work domain. Based on Yanchus et al. (2010), we define this concept as the display of emotions (e.g., joy, enthusiasm) that are not felt but expected in the family domain, even when individuals are cognitively, emotionally or physically drained. Taking into account these two types of surface acting, we try to answer these questions: If individuals fake emotions at work, will they do the same at home to conform to family expectations? Consequently, if individuals fake emotions at home, will their partners be more inclined to use the same strategy? What are the implications of faking emotions at work and at home for well-being?

2.2. The daily spillover of surface acting and its effects on well-being

Spillover refers to a process in which "reactions experienced in the work domain are transferred to and interfere with the non-work domain" (Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005, p.267). The literature about work and family has provided considerable empirical evidence for this process. For instance, job characteristics such as long work hours or low job control have been related to higher levels of work-family conflict (Grzywacz & Butler, 2005; Kinnunen, Feldt, Geurts, & Pulkkinen, 2006).

To explain why negative spillover may occur, researchers have often focused on models about the consequences of engaging in different roles. For instance, according to the role scarcity hypothesis (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) managing multiple roles at

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