

RECOVERY AT WORK: UNDERSTANDING THE RESTORATIVE SIDE OF “DEPLETING” CLIENT INTERACTIONS

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Research on burnout has considered client interactions solely as depleting, with work recovery possible only while employees are off the job. Drawing on an episodic perspective of work, I argue that there is unaccounted for variability in the nature of a caregiver's client interactions such that some are actually restorative rather than depleting. I outline the foundations of such variability through simultaneous consideration of the extent to which a given interaction is (1) depleting of regulatory resources and (2) generative of three particular resources shown to compensate for the effects of ego depletion. Beyond the depleting interactions that have been the focus of research to date, the resulting typology reveals two restorative interaction types (replenishing and breakthrough) that I theorize positively shape compassionate care provision in both the short and long term. Replenishing interactions primarily serve as a regulatory break with momentary effects on caregivers' subsequent ability to self-regulate, while breakthrough interactions have a more lasting effect on caregivers' positive professional identity. This framework articulates how restorative experiences may be concurrent with the accomplishment of work and provides a more nuanced alternative to the long-held view of client interactions as a source of caregiver depletion.

[Compassionate] care requires the provider to be able to adjust his or her responses to the patient's needs, along with the clinical expertise and professionalism to respond effectively and appropriately. The provider must also be aware of how his or her reactions affect interactions with the patient and decisions about care. A related requirement is the provider's ability to use self-awareness to manage his or her emotions, in order to act in the patient's best interest. These abilities are not necessarily apparent to patients, but patients do perceive and desire the behaviors that emerge from them: respect; appropriate expressions of caring concern; and information and decision-making processes that are tailored to patients' needs (Lown, Rosen, & Martilla, 2011: 1772).

For those known alternatively as human service providers, helping professionals, or care-

givers¹ (e.g., social workers, nurses, therapists, physicians; Hasenfeld, 2010; Kahn, 1993, 2005), the compassionate care provision described above is an ideal, complex, and skilled endeavor. The extensive efforts required in such caregiving interactions have led to the labeling of human services as a high emotional-labor occupation, with an associated high risk of burnout (Hochschild, 1983). Burnout, the syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, was first described by Maslach as a “response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings” (1982: 3), and this assumption regarding the depleting nature of client interactions has shaped subsequent decades of research on burnout (for a review see Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Burnout is costly in both human and financial terms, impacting the caregivers who suffer its

For incredibly helpful feedback and suggestions on earlier drafts, I am grateful to guest editor Sara Rynes and three anonymous reviewers, as well as Sally Maitlis, Glenda Fisk, and Gretchen Spreitzer. I also thank participants from the 2010 and 2011 May Meaning Meetings, the Queen's School of Business OB Brownbag, the Boston University School of Management OB group, and the School of Labor and Employment Relations at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign for the opportunity to present these ideas and the generative conversations that followed.

¹ Kahn developed the term and category of caregiving organizations to encompass human, health, social services, and helping professions that have in common the bringing together of “one group of people who need some form of care with another group of people, who provide for such care” (2005: 5). Following this, I use the terms *human service worker* and *caregiver* interchangeably.

symptoms, the organizations that must shoulder the financial burden associated with replacing and training employees in a sector where turnover can reach over 60 percent (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Mor-Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001), and the quality of care provided to the clients when it is compromised by an emotionally exhausted, disengaged, and rotating workforce (Kahn, 2005; Mor-Barak et al., 2001). Of course, not all caregivers suffer from burnout, which raises a key practical question for human service providers and theoretical challenge for scholars that also goes to the heart of this special issue: in the face of such challenging work, what might contribute to the continued ability to engage in compassionate caregiving for some human service workers?

The research that speaks to this question has highlighted the important role of recovery activities undertaken during off-work times (for a review see Trougakos & Hideg, 2009). In this article I suggest there are complementary but little-understood recovery opportunities that occur alongside the doing of work. Specifically, I show that consideration of as yet unaccounted for variation in the nature of client interactions illuminates a spectrum whereby some of the interactions typically viewed as a source of depletion may instead serve as a series of "daily uplifts" (Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1981), with both momentary and lasting implications for compassionate care provision. With a particular focus on client interactions as the core work activity of human service professionals, this article thus responds to Spreitzer, Lam, and Quinn's prompt that "while we have some understanding of how breaks and time away from work can be restorative for human energy, we know less about how the context of work itself and the way that it is accomplished may also be restorative" (2011: 164).

The framework I develop here builds on the growing body of research on work recovery showing that work performance and burnout are both influenced by restorative activities, such as vacation (Westman & Eden, 1997; Westman & Etzion, 2001), leisure time during nonwork hours in the evening or on the weekend (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2005; Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005; Sonnentag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2008), and on-site breaks throughout the workday (Trougakos, Beal, Green, & Weiss, 2008). The primary focus on the importance of nonwork breaks is, in part,

a function of a core assumption within both the ego depletion literature and work recovery literature that work activities are effortful and, thus, regulatory resource depleting (Sonnentag, 2001). As such, recovery is thought to require engagement in nonwork activities that do not further tax regulatory resources (Sonnentag, 2001; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007).

A number of recent developments, however, converge to bring this assumption into question and raise the possibility that work activities in the form of client interactions could themselves also be experienced as restorative. First, the advance of the episodic perspective of work has provided a more nuanced view whereby the different episodes that make up one's workday have varying levels of regulatory demands (Beal, Trougakos, Weiss, & Green, 2006; Beal, Weiss, Barros, & MacDermid, 2005), some extensive and others minimal.

Second, researchers have shed light on the seemingly contradictory view of client interactions put forth by the literature on emotional labor and job design (Grandey & Diamond, 2010; Grant & Parker, 2009). Rather than solely a source of emotional labor and depletion, models of job design offer the alternative possibility of the motivating and energizing potential of interactions with the public (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). There are mixed findings regarding the fundamental assumptions of these two perspectives, as summarized by Grandey and Diamond (2010). This lends additional weight to the possibility that distinct client interactions may be experienced as varyingly depleting or energizing, which could account for mixed findings about the experience of client interactions found at the job level.

Third, there is increasing acknowledgment that viewing work activities as effortful and leisure time as noneffortful may be an oversimplification, with the view being advanced that recovery depends on the balance of resources that are generated versus drained (Binnewies, Sonnentag, & Mojza, 2009). Emerging research suggests that even highly challenging, cognitively effortful activities can be experienced as energizing if they also provide a sense of progress (Amabile & Kramer, 2011) or victory (McGonigal, 2011).

Fourth, and related, there is mounting evidence that there are particular experiences that can actually compensate for the effects of regu-

latory resource loss on immediate subsequent performance (Muraven & Slessareva, 2003; Schmeichel & Vohs, 2009; Tice, Baumeister, Shmueli, & Muraven, 2007). Finally, recent research suggests that the use of some work-related energy-management strategies are more highly correlated with self-reports of subjective vitality than are nonwork break activities (Fritz, Lam, & Spreitzer, 2011).

Taken together, the conditions are ripe for the core theoretical claim of this article: that client interactions are distinct and variable in nature such that some of the very interactions typically thought to contribute to caregiver burnout might actually be experienced as restorative. In particular, I argue that the different interaction episodes that make up a caregiver's workday vary along two key dimensions: (1) the degree to which they require regulatory resources and (2) the degree to which they are generative of three particular resources shown to counteract the effects of regulatory resource drain and/or protect against burnout (positive affect, self-affirmation, and perceived prosocial impact). Simultaneous consideration of both dimensions will illuminate that certain interactions will be experienced as more restorative than depleting, with short- and longer-term implications for compassionate care provision and burnout.

I first review current understanding of the nature of human service work and the importance of recovery experiences, highlighting the existing opportunity to consider recovery as part of, rather than only separate from, work. Next, I review the foundations of the variability that a caregiver experiences across different interactions, building to the claim that particular interaction types will be experienced as restorative. I then articulate how two kinds of restorative interactions positively influence caregiver effectiveness in both proximal and distal ways. I conclude with a discussion of the key theoretical contributions of this model, practical implications, and opportunities for future research.

CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF WORK RECOVERY AND RESOURCES

As described above, human service work encompasses a range of occupations, such as social worker, nurse, therapist, physician, teacher, mental health provider, and home support worker, all of which are marked by what Kahn

calls the "essential gesture of some people caring for others" (2005: 1). Doing this kind of work effectively is reflected in what Lown et al. (2011) identify in the opening quote of this article as compassionate care, where one is called upon to respond empathically to the needs and concerns of clients through comfort, aid, and advice (Kahn, 2005; Maslach et al., 2001; Miller, Birkholt, Scott, & Stage, 1995) while bringing about behavioral change and eliciting the cooperation of one's clients (Hasenfeld, 2010). Given this range of demands, the client interactions that form the primary task of caregiving work are thought to put human service workers at risk of burnout (Maslach, 1982; Miller et al., 1995).

Central to research into why the "chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings" (Maslach, 1982: 3) leads to burnout for some but not all caregivers is the concept of "resources," which have been defined broadly as "entities valued in their own right . . . or that act as a means to obtain centrally valued ends" (Hobfoll, 2002: 307). From this broad definition scholars have made a distinction between job resources, or aspects of the work environment (e.g., supervisory support, autonomy; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), and personal resources, or aspects of the self (e.g., self-efficacy, optimism) that enable the successful management of one's environment (e.g., Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis, & Jackson, 2003; Taylor, Kemeny, Reed, Bower, & Gruenwald, 2000), including functioning and well-being at work (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010).

One personal resource type that features prominently in work recovery research is *regulatory resources*. Regulatory resources refer to a limited energy source expended only during activities that require self-control (or self-regulation) of one's thoughts, emotions, urges, and behavior (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998). The strength model of self-control suggests that all acts of self-control deplete regulatory resources, and this, in turn, diminishes people's momentary ability to regulate subsequent behavior (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). This state of diminished self-control was termed *ego depletion* by Baumeister and colleagues (1998), and investigation of the effect of ego depletion on the impairment of subsequent self-control has been the focus of significant scholarly research. This body of research is captured in a recent meta-analytic review of eighty-three

studies providing strong evidence for the detrimental impact of ego depletion and support for the strength model of self-control (Hagger, Wood, Stiff, & Chatzisarantis, 2010). In addition, researchers have suggested that, in the longer term, the experience of ego depletion without opportunities for regulatory resource recovery can lead to burnout (Hockey, 1996; Maslach et al., 2001; Zijlstra, 1996). Thus, work recovery research has focused on the relationships between opportunities for the replenishment of regulatory resources depleted through the accomplishment of work and both (1) episodic task performance (Trougakos et al., 2008) and (2) the avoidance of various forms of strain, including burnout (e.g., Sluiter, Van der Beek, & Frings-Dresen, 1999; Westman & Eden, 1997).

A long-held view is that the only way to replenish regulatory resources is to engage in a "regulatory break," during which no further self-control is required. This has been the primary focus of research on work recovery, which has identified a number of kinds of breaks that can aid in resource recovery. Initial research on work recovery focused on vacations (Westman & Eden, 1997; Westman & Etzion, 2001) and uncovered key relationships between vacation experiences and decreases in job stress and burnout symptoms. Recognizing that the effects of vacation fade relatively quickly, with well-being returning to prevacation levels upon return to work, Sonnentag (2001) suggested that people may require more regular opportunities for resource recovery. As such, subsequent research pioneered by Sonnentag and colleagues has focused on ongoing kinds of opportunities for resource recovery, such as leisure time during weekends (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2005; Sonnentag, 2003) and evening hours (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005; Sonnentag et al. 2008).

Until recently, this body of research neglected to examine the kinds of on-site breaks that typically mark people's workdays (e.g., lunch breaks) as an opportunity for resource recovery (see Trougakos & Hideg, 2009). However, Trougakos et al. (2008) identified such within-workday breaks as an important opportunity for resource recovery and provided further support for ego depletion theory through their finding that people are better able to engage in regulatory behavior following on-site breaks (or "respite"). This study provided an important step forward in the understanding of work recovery through

an episodic approach and examination of "momentary recovery" throughout the workday.

Thus, research on work recovery to date has provided significant evidence for the importance of off-job activities—ranging from vacations to weekend and evening activities to coffee and lunch breaks—as opportunities for regulatory resource recovery that enable employee well-being (e.g., reduced stress and burnout) and effective work performance. However, this research has left underexamined the possibility that work-based activities themselves could form an additional opportunity for recovery. Given the long-standing assumption that replenishment of regulatory resources can occur *only* during breaks from regulation or effortful activity that is foundational to work activities (Baumeister et al., 1998), such activities have not been considered as a restorative opportunity.

There is emerging recognition, however, that work activities themselves *could* be experienced as restorative. Some work recovery researchers have suggested that defining work activities as effortful and regulatory resource depleting, and time away from work as non-effortful and therefore restorative, may be an oversimplification. As Fritz and Sonnentag (2005) and Trougakos et al. (2008) have asserted, how one spends leisure time may be more predictive of level of recovery than simply having time away from work. In this view, for example, weekend leisure time may not constitute an opportunity for recovery if "daily hassles" that demand effort and attention crop up (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2005). On the flip side, Sonnentag and Fritz (2007) have suggested that even effortful recovery experiences can be experienced as restorative, such as "mastery experiences" that require a certain degree of effort but that provide learning opportunities and development of new skills (e.g., volunteer work; Mojza, Sonnentag, & Bornemann, 2010). There is also increasing cross-fertilization between the literature on job design and the literature on emotional labor, which hold contrasting assumptions about work activities and client interactions in particular as motivating versus depleting, respectively. Recognition of these contradictory assumptions (Grant & Parker, 2009) has led to attempts to understand "when interactions with the public are motivating and beneficial versus draining and dysfunctional" (Grandey & Diamond, 2010: 339). Work recovery

research is beginning to build on this long-standing basic insight about the motivating potential of work from the job design literature (Humphrey et al., 2007), as reflected in Spreitzer and colleagues' (2011) proposal that restoration can be concurrent with the accomplishment of work. Fritz et al.'s (2011) subsequent empirical study provides evidence for the relationship between engagement in work-related energy management strategies (e.g., seeking feedback) and self-reports of subjective vitality and fatigue. As Fritz et al. (2011) point out, while this correlational research does not provide evidence of causality, these findings provide an important springboard for my core claim here that work activities can be a source of restoration. They also signal the importance of unpacking the mechanisms and dynamics underlying work-based restorative activities.

Finally, and of particular relevance to the framework developed here, there are insights from an emerging body of research aimed at understanding the conditions that might serve to counteract the effects of ego depletion. This line of research was prompted by findings of Muraven and Slessareva's (2003) study showing that perceptions of prosocial impact can compensate for a lack of self-control resources. Specifically, ego-depleted individuals who believed that a self-control task would help others performed better on a subsequent task.

This research was followed by a series of studies on the potential moderating effect of positive affective experiences. A set of four experiments carried out by Tice et al. (2007) using a variety of manipulations and measures provided robust evidence that positive affect can also counteract the effects of ego depletion. Further evidence for the compensatory role of positive emotion recently was provided by Thoman, Smith, and Silvia (2011), with a particular focus on the affective experience of interest. Finally, a series of four experiments by Schmeichel and Vohs (2009) showed beneficial effects of self-affirmation on self-control.

In summary, there is growing evidence that particular personal resources (perceived prosocial impact, positive affect, and self-affirmation) can counteract the ego-depleting effects of effortful work. Having laid this foundation, I turn to examining how different client interactions might vary in the degree to which they are both

generative of these particular personal resources and depleting of regulatory resources in ways that can provide restorative opportunities.

ALL CLIENT INTERACTIONS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

The framework developed in this article focuses on between-interaction variation in the level of resources both required by and generated during different interactions. This focus builds on a long-standing push by emotion regulation scholars for a more microlevel examination of emotional demands than has been traditional (Beal et al., 2005; Wharton, 1993). Wharton (1993), for instance, suggested that one limitation in the capacity to consistently predict burn-out was rooted in the predominant focus on *occupations* as more or less emotionally laborious (cf. Hochschild, 1983). In response, scholars have pushed for examination of affective demands of work at the episodic level (Beal et al., 2005) and interaction level (Bailey & McCollough, 2000; Côté, 2005). In this article I build on this momentum by considering variation in the regulatory demands that caregivers experience across the interactions that make up their workdays, and I extend these arguments through additional consideration of the variation in resources generated.

Some understanding of the variable nature of a caregiver's interactions with different clients is reflected in the emotional labor literature yet has not been systematically accounted for as consequential in the body of research on burn-out. On the one hand, qualitative research has helpfully identified the existence of "more difficult" clients (Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000; Bailey & McCollough, 2000). In addition, well-established models of emotional labor have included characteristics of client interactions that should influence whether the consequences of client interaction are negative or positive, such as authenticity (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2000), dissonance (Morris & Feldman, 1996), reciprocity (Buunk & Schaufeli, 1993), and client responses to emotional displays (Côté, 2005).

On the other hand, subsequent empirical tests of these various theoretical models have reflected conceptualization and measurement of these characteristics as an average of *all* clients, with no differentiation made between cli-

ents. For example, Brotheridge and Lee measured client reciprocity with the following kinds of items: "I get very little thanks or recognition from my customers in return for my efforts" (2002: 62). Similarly, Bakker, Schaufeli, Sixma, Bosveld, and Von Dierdonck measured reciprocity in the following way: "How often do you feel you give your patients a lot of time and attention, but meet with little appreciation?" (2000: 431). Empirical research testing Côté's (2005) social interaction model (e.g., Martínez-Iñigo, Totterdell, Alcover, & Holman, 2007) has similarly measured client/customer response as a general characteristic of all clients, rather than varying with different client interactions.

Thus, while qualitative research points to between-client differences, and models of emotional labor and burnout suggest that there are characteristics of specific client interactions that will influence how they are experienced, this theoretical insight has been washed out in research that treats client interactions as a homogenous set. Through failing to fully account for such differences, scholars have lost a potential additional source of explanatory power for understanding variation in burnout. Viewing caregiver-client interactions through the episodic perspective put forth by Beal et al. (2005: 2006), however, opens new possibilities for a more nuanced understanding of variability in client interactions. I unpack the foundations of such variability in the next section.

UNPACKING VARIABILITY IN CLIENT INTERACTIONS: TOWARD A TYPOLOGY OF INTERACTIONS

As noted above, the episodic performance perspective (Beal et al., 2005) is foundational for reexamining the standard view of client interactions as resource depleting to consider the possibility that some interactions may serve a restorative function. According to this perspective, one's daily work experience can be divided into "naturally segmented, relatively short episodes" (Beal et al., 2005: 1055) that vary in terms of the regulatory resources they require. Building on and extending the episodic perspective, I argued above for consideration of how a caregiver's segmented and time-bound client interactions vary along two dimensions: (1) the degree to which they require regulatory resources and

(2) the degree to which they generate key personal resources.

While each new interaction that makes up the typical workday of a caregiver varies in any number of ways that can impact these two dimensions, three interaction features can be most clearly theoretically linked to regulatory resource depletion and/or generation of the key personal resources: (1) the quality of the connection between caregiver and client, (2) the nature of the task(s) involved, and (3) the outcome of the interaction. As a foundation for the identification and illustration of each interaction type, I first review the connection between each of these interaction characteristics and resource dynamics (regulatory resource depletion and personal resource generation).

Quality of the Caregiver-Client Connection and Resource Dynamics

Organizational scholars have had a longstanding interest in the quality of interpersonal connections at work. Dutton and Heaphy (2003) have helpfully articulated the idea of "connections," capturing the gamut of interaction types. Specifically, a connection involves an interaction between two people that may be (but is not necessarily) recurring, without assumption of a prior history or ongoing bond (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Thus, connections encompass more fleeting interactions, as well as longer-term relationships. Dutton and Heaphy (2003) define high-quality connections as those marked by a sense of vitality, positive regard, and mutuality. The idea of connections is particularly useful in thinking about the widely varying nature of client interactions, which can be fleeting and one-time (i.e., as in the case of an emergency room physician and his or her patients) or recurring (as would be seen with a social services caseworker and his or her clients).²

Dutton and Heaphy's (2003) focus on the importance of the quality of connections builds on other related bodies of literature, including leader-member exchange (LMX; for reviews see Gerstner & Day, 1997, and Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). LMX research is predicated on the understanding that leaders' connections with certain

² I thank an anonymous reviewer for providing this helpful insight and example.

subordinates are consistently quite different from those with other subordinates, with high-quality LMX characterized by a variety of dimensions, including trust, assistance, and mutual support. Similarly, the mentoring literature has shown that there is natural variation in the perceived quality of connection (interpersonal compatibility) that a mentor perceives with potential protégés, where high compatibility can spark an informal mentoring relationship (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). Applying the basic insights from these bodies of literature, it is reasonable to expect that a caregiver will have similar variation in the quality of connections with different clients in ways that shape resource dynamics.

Quality of caregiver-client connection and regulatory resource requirements. As noted earlier, one form of self-control of particular relevance for compassionate care provision is the regulation of expressed emotions (Beal et al., 2006; Lown et al., 2011; Maslach, 1982; Trougakos et al., 2008; Zapf, Seifert, Schmutte, Mertini, & Holz, 2001). The quality of the caregiver-client connection will shape the emotion regulation requirements of the interaction through the degree of emotional dissonance to be overcome in order to engage in appropriate empathic emotional expressions (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Specifically, during low-quality connections, there will be a greater dissonance between felt emotions and desirable emotions that should be expressed than there will be during high-quality connections. Recent research shows that leaders with a poor LMX connection with a subordinate must engage in a greater degree of regulation of emotion during their encounters than those enjoying a high-quality connection (Glaso & Einarsen, 2008). Similarly, during interactions marked by low connection quality, caregivers will have to expend greater regulatory resources to manage the dissonance between felt (e.g., frustration or anger) and appropriate emotional expressions (e.g., empathy; Hojat, 2007; Mullen & Abeles, 1971). As noted earlier, this form of emotional expression is central to compassionate care (Lown et al., 2011) and has been consistently shown to positively influence client outcomes (Greenburg, Elliot, Watson, & Bohart, 2001; Orlinsky, Grawe, & Parks, 1994).

On the other hand, of course, when relational quality is high, empathic concern will be more naturally felt (Bartal, 1976; Singer et al., 2006),

and, thus, such interactions will be marked by what Ashforth and Humphrey describe as “instances whereby one spontaneously and genuinely experiences the expected emotion” (1993: 94). Because empathy will be more naturally felt and expressed under conditions of high-quality connection (Zapf, 2002), such interactions will be low in affective regulation requirements.

Quality of caregiver-client connection and personal resource generation. A number of bodies of literature point to the ways that high-quality caregiver-client connections can generate all three key personal resources. Self-affirmation and perceived prosocial impact can be generated in two ways. High-quality connections are related to a heightened ability to take the perspective of another (Parker & Axtell, 2001), which may shape how effectively a caregiver can discern and respond to that client's needs, thus spawning gratitude from the client. In turn, expressions of gratitude as a form of reciprocity (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002) are more likely during high-quality connections (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Expressions of gratitude represent positive feedback, which is a key self-affirming event (for a review see Sherman & Cohen, 2006), as well as provide information about one's prosocial impact (Grant, 2007). Finally, expressions of gratitude may build a sense of pride in one's work, a key positive affective experience (Fredrickson, 1998).

Proposition 1a: The higher the quality of connection between a caregiver and client, the lower the regulatory resources required during their interaction.

Proposition 1b: The higher the quality of connection between a caregiver and client, the greater the personal resources generated during their interaction.

Nature of the Task and Resource Dynamics

Caregiver-client interactions are often based around the accomplishment of a particular task. Characteristics of the task that may contribute to the degree of regulatory resources required or personal resources generated include task complexity (Campbell, 1989), task significance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), and whether the

task represents a “necessary evil”—that is, it involves emotional or physical harm to the client required to achieve a greater good or purpose (Molinsky & Margolis, 2005).

Nature of the task and regulatory resource requirements. First, a robust finding in ego depletion research is that task complexity is associated with a greater exertion of regulatory resources than are more straightforward tasks (Muraven, Tice, & Baumeister, 1998). While many of the tasks that a caregiver engages in with a client may be quite straightforward and require little regulation of emotion or attention (e.g., a nurse conducting a routine physical examination on a child), other more difficult tasks will draw more heavily on these resources (e.g., the same nurse noticing signs of physical abuse during that examination). Similarly, awareness that a task will have a significant impact on the life of another (Grant, 2007) could add a layer of pressure to its successful completion in ways that demand additional regulatory resources. Finally, since the heart of human service work involves trying to meet the needs of others while “helping them with their often difficult tasks of healing, growing, and learning” (Kahn, 2005: 21), there will be variability in the degree to which a task requires unavoidable emotional and/or physical harm to a client (Molinsky & Margolis, 2005). As Margolis and Molinsky (2008) illustrate, this can be seen when medical personnel must put a patient through a painful procedure or a counselor must engage in “tough love” to modify the behavior of a client. The tasks themselves are performed to help the client yet can draw heavily on regulatory resources as the caregiver attempts to do this work in an interpersonally sensitive manner (Molinsky & Margolis, 2005).

Nature of the task and personal resource generation. Task characteristics can also shape the degree to which an interaction generates key personal resources. Completion of a complex task can serve as a source of positive affect (e.g., pride; Weiner, 1986), as well as self-affirmation of a caregiver’s professional efficacy (Roberts, 2000). The significance of the task or the degree to which it impacts the client (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) may have important salutary effects on a caregiver’s perceived prosocial impact (Grant, 2007). Furthermore, it is important to consider the resource generation potential of engaging in emotionally challenging tasks for the good of the client and the client’s well-being,

growth, or healing (Kahn, 2005; Molinsky & Margolis, 2005). In particular, engaging in a task that has an intended or perceived benefit for the client will heighten a caregiver’s perceived prosocial impact (Grant, 2007; Grant & Campbell, 2007). Finally, performance of a necessary evil in an interpersonally sensitive way may be self-affirming of a caregiving identity (Margolis & Molinsky, 2008).

Proposition 2a: The more complex, significant, and emotionally demanding a task, the more regulatory resources will be required during the interaction.

Proposition 2b: The more complex, significant, and emotionally demanding a task, the more personal resources will be generated during the interaction.

Outcome of the Interaction and Resource Dynamics

A final characteristic of an interaction that may shape resource dynamics is its outcome, or whether the interaction could be considered a source of progress. This argument is based in part on recent research pointing to the fundamental importance of feeling that one has made progress in one’s work (Amabile & Kramer, 2011; McGonigal, 2011). In line with the “Peak-End Rule” (Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993), during a client interaction, this outcome may occur at the end of an interaction, or salient moments of progress (or regression) may occur throughout the interaction (for a review see Kahneman, 2000). The degree of progress experienced during an interaction will shape resource dynamics.

Outcome of the interaction and regulatory resource requirements. As Hasenfeld (2010) describes, human service work involves attempts to elicit client cooperation to bring about improvement. There may exist barriers to progress during the course of an interaction that require greater regulation of emotions. For instance, staff working with clients with intellectual disabilities who exhibit challenging behaviors that slow progress report feeling sadness, annoyance, despair, anger, fear, and disgust (Bromley & Emerson, 1995), all of which are dissonant with desired emotional expressions (Ashforth & To-

miuk, 2000). To illustrate, during an interaction with a victim of repeated domestic violence who is not yet ready to exit the abusive relationship, a social worker may need to exert considerable effort to mask visible signs of frustration, to remain empathic, and to consider his or her words carefully in working with the client to discuss next steps (Shea, Mahoney, & Lacey, 1997). However, if during that interaction the client begins to acknowledge the gravity of the situation and appears ready to take steps forward, regulatory efforts on the part of the social worker will be reduced.

Outcome of the interaction and personal resource generation. Research draws a strong connection between the outcome of an interaction and positive affective experiences (Amabile & Kramer, 2011; McGonigal, 2011). Specifically, on days when employees report making progress on their tasks, they also report more positive emotions, including joy and pride (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). I suggest that this dynamic would show up even more strongly if assessed immediately following progress in a particular interaction. The progress described above in the case of the social worker would generate such an affective experience for the social worker after experiencing a breakthrough with his or her client. This outcome would also influence perceived prosocial impact and the degree to which an interaction is experienced as self-affirming, as a signal to this social worker that he or she is

making a difference in the life of that client (Grant, 2007) and as a source of feedback that affirms a valued professional identity (Roberts, 2000).

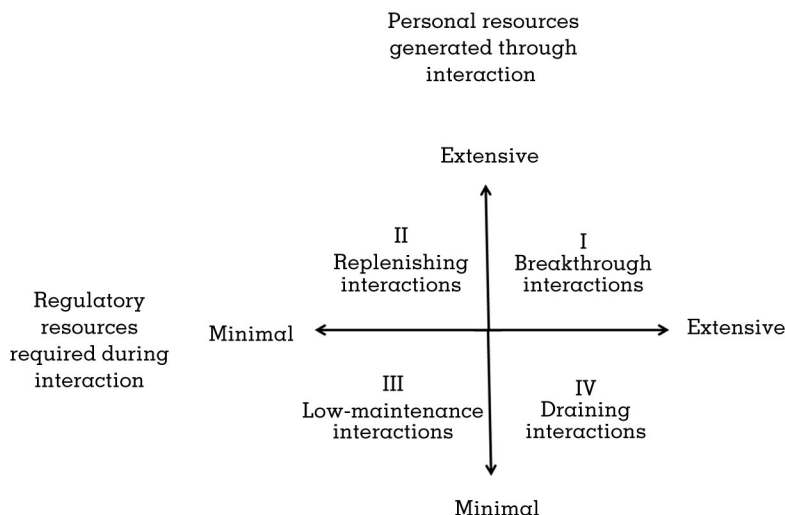
Proposition 3a: Progress made during a client interaction will be associated with lower regulatory resource requirements.

Proposition 3b: Progress made during a client interaction will be associated with higher personal resource generation.

A Typology of Client Interactions

Each of the three above interaction characteristics (quality of the connection, nature of the task, and outcome) shapes the degree to which regulatory resources are required and personal resources are generated during an interaction. Simultaneous consideration of both dimensions results in a typology of interactions represented in Figure 1. The bottom half of the figure is representative of the predominant focus of the burnout literature, where client interactions are seen as primarily depleting. In contrast, and of focal interest in this article, are the interactions on the more restorative side of the spectrum captured in the top part of the figure. To bring these interaction types to life, I elaborate each of

FIGURE 1
A Typology of Interactions



them below through an illustrative scenario inspired by the broader caregiving literature.

Draining interactions. Quadrant IV captures *draining interactions*, or those requiring a high degree of regulatory resources while generating minimal personal resources. An extreme illustrative example of this interaction type would involve an obstetrician who is guiding a patient through a challenging delivery, only to ultimately lose the baby and turn his or her efforts to comforting the grieving parents (inspired by White, Reynolds, & Evans, 1984)

Low-maintenance interactions. Quadrant III represents less-depleting *low-maintenance interactions*, in which some regulatory resources are required yet few resources are generated to compensate for even a minor degree of resource loss. An illustrative example of this interaction type could involve a routine visit between a home care worker and a client with whom the care provider has a low-quality connection. While the home care worker takes pride in the relatively routine tasks involved in the interaction, such as bathing and meal preparation, he or she senses little gratitude from the client, nor does there seem to be any improvement in the client's ability to provide self-care as a result (inspired by Karner, 1998).

Replenishing interactions. Quadrant II represents interactions marked by the above-noted combination of low required regulatory effort and extensive generation of personal resources that counter the effects of ego depletion, or *replenishing interactions*. This interaction type can be illustrated through an interaction between a nurse aide and a nursing home resident. This resident reminds the nurse aide of his or her own grandfather, which provides a foundation for a high-quality connection. The interaction is pleasant and requires little regulation of emotion. During a routine task of getting this resident out of bed and into a wheelchair for breakfast, the resident shows signs of being able to walk to the dining hall (inspired by Lopez, 2006).

Breakthrough interactions. *Breakthrough interactions* (Quadrant I) involve a high degree of regulatory resource requirements yet are marked by significant generation of personal resources. An illustrative example of this interaction type can be seen in the interaction between a child protection worker and a family who is at risk of having a child removed from the home. The family is understandably hostile to

the case worker's presence, and the case worker feels some disgust about the conditions of the home. Thus, the case worker must exert significant regulatory resources to remain empathic yet professional in his or her explanations of what will need to happen to allow the child to remain. Over the course of the interaction, the family members recognize that they and the case worker are on the same side, and they express gratitude to the case worker for his or her efforts, pledging to do what it takes to make the home a safe environment (inspired by Conrad & Keller-Guenther, 2006).

In summary, proponents of the episodic performance perspective (Beal et al., 2006) have urged consideration of the variable degree to which a particular work episode more or less depletes regulatory resources. Consideration of *both* the degree of regulatory resources required and the particular personal resources generated during a given interaction reveals four broad interaction types.

Proposition 4a: An interaction during which extensive regulatory resources are required and minimal personal resources are generated will be experienced as draining.

Proposition 4b: An interaction during which minimal regulatory resources are required and minimal personal resources are generated will be experienced as low maintenance.

Proposition 4c: An interaction during which minimal regulatory resources are required and extensive personal resources are generated will be experienced as replenishing.

Proposition 4d: An interaction during which extensive regulatory resources are required and extensive personal resources are generated will be experienced as breakthrough.

THE IMPACT OF WITHIN-WORKDAY RESTORATIVE INTERACTIONS

While the work recovery literature has provided evidence for the positive consequences of nonwork restorative activities, the effects of some activities (e.g., vacation; Westman & Eden, 1997) fade over time. This suggests that it is

important for caregivers to find regular ways to recover during the course of a workday. I argue here that restorative interactions that are part of, rather than detached from, a caregiver’s work activities will have parallel effects on the ability to provide compassionate care and the likelihood of burnout in ways that reflect positive upward spirals for future interactions. The set of relationships proposed below is captured in the framework represented in Figure 2.³

The Momentary Impact of Replenishing Interactions

A replenishing interaction that takes place during one’s workday—that is, one that requires few regulatory resources and is highly generative of key personal resources—can serve as an interruption of resource drain with important

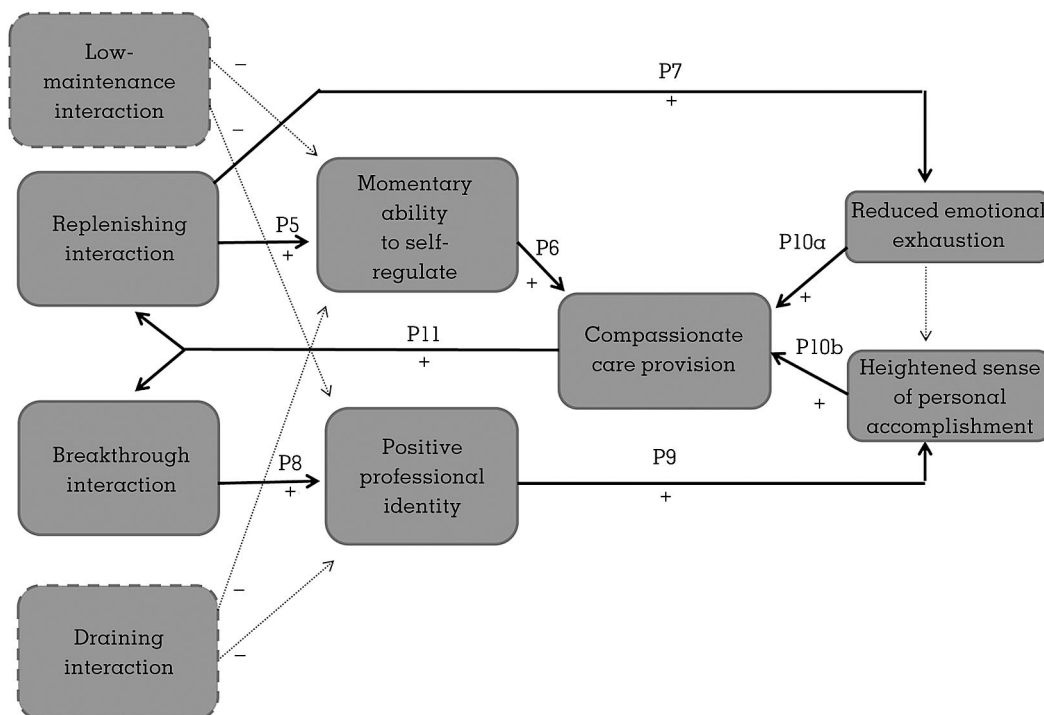
momentary effects on the provision of compassionate care and burnout. As noted earlier, it is a well-replicated finding that regulatory resource depletion predicts worsened performance in subsequent tasks that require self-control (Hagger et al., 2010). On the flip side, experiences that require few regulatory resources and generate key personal resources (self-affirmation, positive affect, and perceived prosocial impact) can help to offset the deleterious effects of ego depletion. Restorative opportunities can counteract this depletion and improve self-regulation capability (e.g., Tice et al., 2007). Thus, a replenishing interaction (low regulatory effort/high personal resource generation) will serve to counter the effects of ego depletion, enabling self-regulation in subsequent client interactions.

Proposition 5: A replenishing interaction will heighten a caregiver’s ability to self-regulate.

Hasenfeld (2010: 9) notes that clients report that “there are significant differences in the degree of caring and responsiveness” they receive during interactions with a caregiver. I propose

³ While I include both depleting and restorative interaction types in Figure 2, the propositions and accompanying theoretical development focus only on the impact of the two restorative interaction types (replenishing and breakthrough) since the impact of depleting interactions is well-established in the literature.

FIGURE 2
The Impact of Restorative and Depleting Client Interactions



here that some of this variation in compassionate care provision can be explained in part by a caregiver's ability to self-regulate. Self-regulatory ability can shape compassionate care provision in two ways. First, it enables caregivers to regulate their attention, which, in turn, can help them discern the needs of their clients. Second, self-regulatory capacity can shape caregivers' ability to respond to these needs through appropriate affective displays. Trougakos and colleagues (2008) recently demonstrated that nonwork breaks (or respites) from emotion regulation enhance people's ability to engage in subsequent affective displays. In caregiving this is of particular importance in the case of empathic expressions, given the robust relationship between client perceptions of caregiver empathy and therapeutic outcomes (for a review see Orlinsky et al., 1994).

Proposition 6: The ability to self-regulate will enhance compassionate care provision through a caregiver's heightened ability to attend to the needs of a client and to engage in appropriate affective displays.

Finally, replenishing interactions will shape caregiver burnout. Emotional exhaustion, a primary marker of burnout, results from prolonged exposure to emotional demands without an opportunity for recovery (Maslach, 1982). The work recovery literature points to the implications of resource replenishment for burnout symptoms (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2005; Sonnentag, Cuttler, & Fritz, 2010), demonstrating that evening activities that allow for the recovery of regulatory resources have an immediate effect on levels of emotional exhaustion at the beginning of the following workday. Based on this logic for replenishing interactions, I propose the following.

Proposition 7: A replenishing client interaction that allows for the recovery of regulatory resources will reduce feelings of emotional exhaustion.

The Lasting Impact of Breakthrough Interactions

While low-effort/high-reward interactions (i.e., replenishing interactions) can provide a regulatory break with momentary effects on compassionate care provision, the combination of high

regulatory effort and high personal resource generation (i.e., breakthrough interactions) is likely to have a more lasting effect because it may change the way caregivers see themselves or may contribute to a positive identity (Dutton et al., 2010). This idea is foundational to our understanding of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977); only under challenging circumstances will success heighten a sense of mastery. Pratt, Rockmann, and Kaufmann (2006) suggest that particular events can trigger sensemaking processes (Weick, 1995) and professional identity construction. Because breakthrough interactions are assumed to be relatively rare occurrences, such interactions could similarly represent a type of "jolt" that creates an opportunity for sensemaking. The successful navigation of challenging client interactions, what Thoits (1991) calls "identity relevant stressors," may have a lasting positive impact on how a caregiver perceives him/herself.

Proposition 8: Breakthrough interactions will be associated with a caregiver's positive professional identity.

Positive professional identity, in turn, may shape a caregiver's sense of personal accomplishment. A reduced sense of personal accomplishment is a key symptom of caregiver burnout (Maslach, 1982). While early models of burnout suggested a sequential ordering from emotional exhaustion to depersonalization to reduced personal accomplishment (Leiter & Maslach, 1988), more recent evidence suggests that reduced personal accomplishment can develop independently and is better predicted by the availability of resources than by job demands (e.g., Leiter, 1993). In particular, Hobfoll and Freedy (1993) and Leiter (1993) have shown that personal resources reflecting positive self-efficacy are predictive of a sense of personal accomplishment. Building on this insight, I suggest that the positive professional identity that is strengthened by a breakthrough interaction will act to mitigate burnout symptoms (as reflected in a heightened sense of personal accomplishment).

Proposition 9: The stronger a caregiver's positive professional identity, the greater his or her heightened sense of personal accomplishment.

Restorative Interactions Trigger Upward Spirals

A final series of propositions suggests that restorative interactions may serve as triggers of upward spirals (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002) of compassionate care provision and may increase the likelihood of future restorative interactions. Returning to a foundational motivation for this article, burnout in the human services is a key issue in part because of its negative impact on the quality of care (Kahn, 2005; Mor-Barak et al., 2001). I proposed above that both types of restorative interaction will contribute to a reduction in burnout symptoms, with replenishing interactions influencing emotional exhaustion and breakthrough interactions shaping personal accomplishment. Given the connection that has been established between burnout and work performance more generally (for a review see Shirom, 2003), and quality of care more specifically (e.g., Leiter, Harvie, & Frizzell, 1998), restorative interactions will shape the longer-term likelihood of compassionate care provision through their impact on burnout symptoms (specifically, reduced emotional exhaustion and heightened personal accomplishment).

Proposition 10a: Reduced emotional exhaustion will positively predict compassionate care provision.

Proposition 10b: Heightened personal accomplishment will positively predict compassionate care provision.

In turn, interactions in which caregivers are able to provide compassionate care are likely to be more restorative than depleting. Recall that the degree to which an interaction is more restorative or more depleting is a function of the quality of the connection, the nature of the task, and the outcome of the interaction. While the nature of the task is not malleable, compassionate care provision on the part of the caregiver may contribute positively to the quality of the connection and the outcome of the interaction in important ways. Compassionate care provision involves the expression of positive emotions on the part of the caregiver (Lown et al., 2011). These expressed positive emotions, in turn, have been shown to be contagious (e.g., Barsade, 2002; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994; Pugh, 2001) and can shape client response in ways that enhance interpersonal functioning

(e.g., Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Staw & Barsade, 1993), such as interpersonal attraction (see Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994, for a review) and satisfaction of customers and clients with services provided (Pugh, 2001). Beyond the impact on quality of connection, compassionate care provision can also shape interaction outcome via interpersonal influence and creative solutions. Specifically, clients are more likely to cooperate with a caregiver who expresses positive emotions (Isen, 1987; Staw et al., 1994) because of enhanced caregiver likability (Cialdini, 1984) or because of a desire to reciprocate caregiver efforts to respond to the clients' needs (Gouldner, 1960). Contagious positive emotions will also broaden the thought-action repertoires (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002) of both caregiver and client in ways that may result in creative solutions to complex client issues (Fredrickson, 1998). Taken together, I argue the following.

Proposition 11: A caregiver's ability to engage in compassionate care provision will shape the quality of the caregiver-client connection and the outcome of the interaction in ways that determine whether the interaction is replenishing or breakthrough.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The framework developed in this article was motivated by unaccounted for variability in the nature of client interactions and by the question of whether (and how) some of the very client interactions long assumed to be drivers of burnout could actually serve to buffer caregivers from this syndrome. The framework proposed here lies at the intersection of and makes key contributions to our understanding of work recovery processes, the episodic and varied nature of client interactions, and the nature of emotional demands in human service work. This model also opens up possibilities for new future research directions and has practical implications for those engaged in human service work. I discuss each of these issues below.

Theoretical Contributions

The framework developed here makes key contributions to the literature on work recovery, episodic performance, and emotional labor, re-

spectively. First, in building our understanding of the dynamics of variation in how caregivers experience client interactions and by proposing that some interactions may be restorative, this article offers an expanded understanding of what constitutes a restorative opportunity. Whereas work recovery research has tended to focus on breaks away from work, by proposing that work-related activities in the form of interactions with select clients can be restorative, this article adds weight to the theoretical possibility that the accomplishment of some work activities can lead to feeling recovered (Spreitzer et al., 2011), and it unpacks mechanisms for the relationships noted in Fritz et al. (2011).

A second contribution is to the growing interest in episodic models of work performance. While this framework has been developed in the context of human service work, the broader theoretical insight that holds across multiple contexts is that it is useful to simultaneously consider the way that work activities vary in regulatory resources required and other personal resources generated. Beal and colleagues (2005) have identified the need to consider the variable regulatory resource requirements of the performance episodes that make up a workday. Consideration of how episodes vary along both dimensions may provide a more complete view of the variable nature of different performance episodes that make up a workday. As Beal et al. (2005) suggest, consideration of the regulatory requirements of different work activities may allow for effective organization of daily activities to avoid regulatory overload. I extend this idea to include the consideration of the resource-generating potential of work activities (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). Importantly, this basic insight can be applied to a range of occupations beyond the human services.

Third, by highlighting the variable nature of client interactions and the implications of such variation, this article answers calls from Wharton (1999) and others (e.g., Côté, 2005; Martinez-Inigo et al., 2007) for a more micro view of emotional labor than the occupational categories proposed by Maslach (1982). In illuminating the value of considering between-interaction differences, this article helps to move forward the conversation around the seeming contradiction about the nature of client interactions found in research on emotional labor versus job design recently noted by Grant and Parker (2009)

and Grandey and Diamond (2010). Specifically, whereas Grandey and Diamond (2010) propose that there are particular dimensions of jobs that shape whether one generally experiences interactions with clients as depleting or energizing, I suggest that drilling down to look at the characteristics of different interactions, within jobs, will help to illuminate the mechanisms underlying this variability even more clearly.

Practical Implications

The framework proposed here has some important implications for those engaged in human service work, either as frontline caregivers or managers. As Cross, Baker, and Parker point out, "People are quick to recognize that they have energizers and de-energizers in their lives" (2003: 52), and under typical circumstances this information informs people's relational choices (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) by, for example, driving them to seek out positive social interactions (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008) and avoid those marked by negative interpersonal affect (Cascario & Lobo, 2008). Human service workers, however, have very little such ability to choose their clients; ties to clients are instrumental or task based, rather than based on interpersonal attraction. Where caregivers may have some degree of freedom is in how they sequence various interactions. The recognition that interactions with clients are not all created equal and that some interactions might serve a restorative function gives human service workers a powerful tool with which to potentially conserve their resources throughout the workday and thereby enhance the quality of caregiving they provide to all clients. As Beal et al. suggest, "Perhaps workers could be trained to schedule their activities in ways most conducive to episodic performance and that balance resource requirements through the day" (2005: 1065).

With that said, there may be potential ethical concerns associated with encouraging caregivers to consider the nature of their different client interactions. If, as argued above, caregivers do come to expect particular interactions to be more depleting and others to be more restorative, two issues could arise. In the first instance, given the importance of expectations, there may be a self-fulfilling prophecy involved with expectations that an interaction will be draining. This could, in turn, result in reduced

quality of care provided, as well as lost opportunities for a more positive, resource-generative interaction that might have resulted from more optimistic expectations. In the second instance, interactions with a client that are typically experienced as restorative may sometimes be experienced quite differently, setting up the possibility for disappointment. Thus, those caregivers who have the opportunity to sequence their interactions need to manage and recognize the impact of these expectations and to think of restorative interactions as an additional tool in the larger toolkit of restorative activities identified in both the work recovery literature (i.e., leisure activities) and caregiving literature (e.g., the importance of support from one's coworkers; Kahn, 1993).

Finally, and perhaps as a way to counter the ethical concerns noted above, this framework suggests ways to increase the likelihood or proportion of restorative interactions. First, in a context where clients are assigned to specific caregivers, attention to the quality of caregiver-client fit may be a helpful step. Examples of these efforts specific to one organizational context (nursing homes) can be found in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's "Better Jobs, Better Care" initiative-based research. While traditional considerations during resident assignment may have been limited to basic availability of a nurse aide's schedule, demographic similarity, or specialized clinical knowledge in resident-nurse aide assignment, increasing attention is being paid to the quality of the connection between caregivers and clients. While certainly challenging, to the degree that optimal client-caregiver interpersonal fit is possible, such an effort would represent what Lopez has called for in terms of "hospitable conditions for the development of caring relationships between service providers and recipients" (2006: 137).

A second broader strategy is training caregivers to enhance the likelihood that a given interaction will involve the experiences that help to compensate for regulatory resource drain. One approach could involve prompts for understanding caregiver impact on the lives of clients. Grant's body of work on the influence of perceived prosocial impact on clients (summarized in Grant, 2011) highlights some relatively simple yet powerful ways to cue caregivers about the impact of their work, including sharing client testimonials. A complementary approach could

involve enabling opportunities for caregivers to reflect on their successes, in particular the "breakthrough" experiences that they have with clients. Research on the importance of savoring successes suggests that the opportunity to share a positive event with others builds both personal and social resources (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004) in ways that amplify a single experience, providing a future source of hope in the face of more draining interactions.

Future Research Directions

The framework developed in this article opens up interesting possibilities for future research. While there is sufficient suggestion from other domains (e.g., relationships between coworkers; relationships between supervisors and subordinates) regarding the existence of and basis for variability in interactions between caregiver and clients, this has yet to be explored empirically. Thus, a fruitful first step would be to follow the model of Molinsky and Margolis (2005), who first proposed a theoretical framework related to "necessary evils" and then elaborated this framework through an interview-based study (Margolis & Molinsky, 2008). Second, research should aim to illuminate the frequency of restorative interactions relative to more depleting ones. The framework developed here is a first attempt to offer an alternative to the idea that client interactions necessarily fall into Quadrants III and IV (depleting interactions), and, thus, it will be important for research to capture how common restorative interactions are. Third, while the interaction characteristics identified in this framework are discussed independently for the sake of parsimony, there may be some important interactions between them. For example, the regulatory resources required to carry out a necessary evil may be more extensive when the quality of a caregiver-client connection is high (i.e., when a caregiver has more invested in interpersonal sensitivity). Future research should examine this possibility.

It is important to note that one challenge in this line of research may be caregiver reluctance to acknowledge this kind of variation, since there may be strong professional norms that guard against admitting to anything resembling preference for one client over another. As such, any interview questions will need to be carefully phrased to highlight that this variation

is common in other contexts so as to open rather than shut down the discussion. As well, in the same way that acknowledging the "normalcy" of burnout allows caregivers to proactively pull away before emotional demands become overwhelming (Meyerson, 1994), I suggest here that acknowledging the ordinariness of experiencing interactions with one's clients as varyingly depleting or restorative is an important first step in encouraging caregivers to proactively identify ways to improve more depleting interactions and capitalize on more restorative ones.

Testing the core claims proposed above would require a methodology that captured the episodic and variable nature and consequences of different client interactions. As noted earlier, traditional measures have obscured variability in client interactions by asking respondents to report on average characteristics; as such, the adoption of experience sampling methodology (also referred to as ecologic momentary assessment; Beal & Weiss, 2003) would be an appropriate approach and important methodological shift consistent with recent work recovery research by Trougakos et al. (2008). Viewing caregiver-client interactions through the episodic perspective put forth by Beal et al. (2006, 2005) and adopting research methods capturing this variation would provide an enhanced methodological fit (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

Conclusion

Being effective in a caregiving role is challenging work that requires a toolkit of opportunities for recovery. By treating a human service worker's interactions with clients as depleting and interchangeable and by focusing solely on off-work breaks, scholars have previously overlooked the possibility that some client interactions can themselves represent a source of restoration. The framework developed in this article provides the basis for an alternative understanding of client interactions and practical considerations for how human service work can be organized such that workers are more likely to be effective in their caregiving roles. In so doing, this paper provides insights into how to enhance the effectiveness of organizations in the business of providing compassionate care.

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