

ORIGINS AND DESTINATIONS, DISTANCES AND DIRECTIONS: ACCOUNTING FOR THE JOURNEY IN THE EMOTION REGULATION PROCESS

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The literatures on emotion regulation and emotional labor have generated a considerable amount of knowledge on the relative effectiveness of how people regulate their emotional displays when their feelings are misaligned. By comparison, scholars have ignored the importance of what emotions individuals were feeling prior to the emotion regulation attempt vis-à-vis the emotions they made an effort to display. The consideration of individuals' emotional origins and destinations during an emotion regulation episode leads to the key tenet that both distance and direction are essential concepts that must be integrated into theory and research on emotion regulation. Accordingly, we reconceptualize emotion regulation as a journey involving the joint interplay of distance, direction, and method of travel. Drawing from the circumplex model of affect, we introduce the concepts of "emotional distance" and "emotional direction" to map the discrepancies between the emotion an individual currently feels and the emotion that individual attempts to display via emotion regulation. We describe how emotional distance and emotional direction augment constructs and theories relevant to emotion regulation, and we explain how the combined consideration of distance, direction, and method of travel is necessary to fully understand the intrapersonal consequences of regulating emotion.

At work and at home, with close companions as well as with perfect strangers, we often face circumstances where the emotions we are feeling are not those that we would prefer to show. *Emotion regulation*, as well as its more specific label in the workplace, *emotional labor*, refers to the process by which individuals attempt to modify their emotional displays in a given situation (Gross, 1998, 2013; Hochschild, 1983). At their core, the constructs of emotion regulation and emotional labor are both about closing the gap between a felt emotion (e.g., disappointment) and a desired emotional display (e.g., happiness). To close this gap, individuals may employ antecedent-focused strategies, such as deep acting, whereby feelings are modified in accordance with desired displays (e.g., recalling a pleasant memory to change felt emotion from disappointment to happiness). Alternatively, they may

employ response-focused strategies, such as surface acting, whereby displays are modified without changing underlying feelings (e.g., faking happiness while continuing to feel disappointment; Grandey, 2000; Grandey & Melloy, 2017; Gross, 1998; Hochschild, 1983). Meta-analyses summarizing research on the consequences of these strategies for actors have revealed a consistent picture, with deep acting benefiting and surface acting harming various indicators of well-being—for instance, job satisfaction, strain, and burnout—and performance—for instance, task and emotional performance (Hülshager & Schewe, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Mesmer-Magnus, DeChurch, & Wax, 2012).

Despite the voluminous body of literature that has emerged concerning the relative effectiveness of how individuals cultivate desired emotional displays when their feelings are misaligned, the specific emotions that individuals are currently feeling

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versus trying to display and the nature of the gap between the two have been overlooked. To draw an analogy, emotion regulation is similar to taking a trip. There is an origin (an initial felt emotion), a destination (a desired emotional display that is different from the felt emotion), and a method of travel (an emotion regulation strategy, such as surface acting). As with taking a trip, the joint consideration of emotional origins and destinations leads to the key tenet that both *distance* and *direction* are essential to fully understand the nature of a given journey. That is, we argue that some emotion regulation journeys are “farther” than others because they involve traveling between more discrepant emotional states. For example, moving from anger to excitement involves traveling a greater “distance” relative to moving from happiness to excitement. Moreover, the origin and destination matter because some “directions” are more difficult to travel relative to others. For example, we propose that the emotion regulation journey that would take one from anger to excitement is qualitatively different relative to the journey moving in the opposite direction.

If emotion regulation is analogous to taking a trip, then it is fair to say that scholars have fixated on the method of travel (i.e., comparing deep acting with surface acting) while ignoring distance and direction, which limits the ability of theory and research to fully explain the emotion regulation process. To put it more directly, the emotion regulation and emotional labor literatures could be likened to a body of literature in which researchers are trying to determine the effects of traveling across different time zones (i.e., “jet lag”) by only considering the type of plane someone took. Yet to fully understand jet lag, one must also know the distance (i.e., longer trips create more jet lag) and direction (i.e., traveling west to east creates more jet lag). Incorporating the concepts of distance and direction into theory and research would represent a fundamental change in the way we think about emotion regulation because it would acknowledge that the consideration of *which* emotions individuals regulate to and from is just as if not more important than *how* individuals regulate emotion.

Accordingly, our aim is to reconceptualize emotion regulation¹ as a journey, or process, involving the joint interplay of distance, direction, and method of travel. To provide a foundation for our theorizing,

we draw from the circumplex model of affect (Schlosberg, 1941, 1952; see also Larsen & Diener, 1992; Russell, 1980; Watson & Tellegen, 1985), which orders specific emotional states on the circumference of a circle according to their valence and level of activation. We use the circumplex model to pinpoint emotional origins and destinations, define the concepts of *emotional distance* and *emotional direction*, and understand why and under what conditions emotional voyages are more or less “laborious” for individuals. In particular, we explain how different combinations of distance, direction, and method of travel influence the two most commonly examined categories of outcomes in the literature: well-being—for example, consisting of domain satisfactions, burnout, strain, and affect—and performance—for example, task performance, withdrawal behavior, and emotional performance (Grandey, 2000; Grandey & Melloy, 2017; Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). By demonstrating that distance, direction, and method of travel are all essential to fully understand the nature and consequences of emotion regulation, our framework extends and alters what is currently known about emotion regulation based on existing theories and provides a more holistic explanation of this complex phenomenon.

THE AFFECT CIRCUMPLEX

Originally proposed by Schlosberg (1941, 1952), the circumplex model of affect posits that the structure of affective experience can be captured by a circle, with specific, discrete emotions positioned at various points around that circle. The dissimilarity between any two emotions, or affective states, is presumed to increase as their distance from each other on the perimeter of the circle increases. Empirically speaking, emotions should be less positively correlated with each other as the separation between them reaches 90 degrees. Emotions separated by 90 degrees are uncorrelated with each other (e.g., elated and relaxed), while emotions separated by 180 degrees are negatively correlated with each other (e.g., elated and sluggish).

In prior research scholars have posited two major bipolar dimensions that govern the ordering of discrete emotions around the perimeter of the affect circumplex. The dominant conceptualizations of these two underlying dimensions were provided by Russell (1980) and Watson and Tellegen (1985). Russell (1980)

¹Like others before us (e.g., Côté, 2005; Côté, Van Kleef, & Sy, 2013), we refer primarily to *emotion regulation*, an umbrella term encompassing the more specific workplace concept of emotional labor (see Gross, 2013).

postulated an evaluation (or pleasure-displeasure) dimension that runs east-west and captures valence and an arousal dimension that runs north-south and captures activation. Watson and Tellegen (1985) proposed an alternate set of dimensions, labeled positive affect and negative affect, obtained by rotating the evaluation and arousal dimensions 45 degrees.

Together, these two conceptualizations result in eight categories, or octants, of affective experience within which various discrete emotions can be placed (Larsen & Diener, 1992; Remington, Fabrigar, & Visser, 2000). Starting from due north and moving clockwise, they include (1) no valence/high activation (e.g., *active, intense*), (2) positive valence/high activation (e.g., *elated, enthusiastic*), (3) positive valence/mid activation (e.g., *happy, pleased*), (4) positive valence/low activation (e.g., *calm, relaxed*), (5) no valence/low activation (e.g., *inactive, quiet*), (6) negative valence/low activation (e.g., *discouraged, sluggish*), (7) negative valence/mid activation (e.g., *sad, discontented*), and (8) negative valence/high activation (e.g., *angry, irritable*) (see Figure 1). Research testing the affect circumplex has generally supported this proposed structure. Indeed, in their meta-analysis Remington et al. (2000: 298) concluded that “the circumplex model remains a viable representation of the structure of affect.”²

Although the concepts of arousal and activation are associated with the intensity of affective experience, in theory, any emotion on the affect circumplex can be experienced with greater or lesser intensity. For example, despite the fact that anger is higher on the activation dimension than sadness, the intensity with which one experiences anger in a given moment could be lower than the intensity with which one experiences sadness (e.g., during times of grief). Consequently, activation and intensity are related but distinct characteristics (Feldman Barrett & Russell, 1999; Reisenzein, 1994). Although our theorizing considers intensity, we focus primarily on valence and activation as the key drivers of emotional distance and emotional direction because those concepts are fundamental for distinguishing between discrete emotions.

²The primary exception regards emotions that are presumed to be either high or low in activation yet have no valence (e.g., active and inactive). Those states (on the North and South poles) tend to have a valence associated with them, with high-activation emotions tending to be positively valenced and low-activation emotions tending to be negatively valenced.

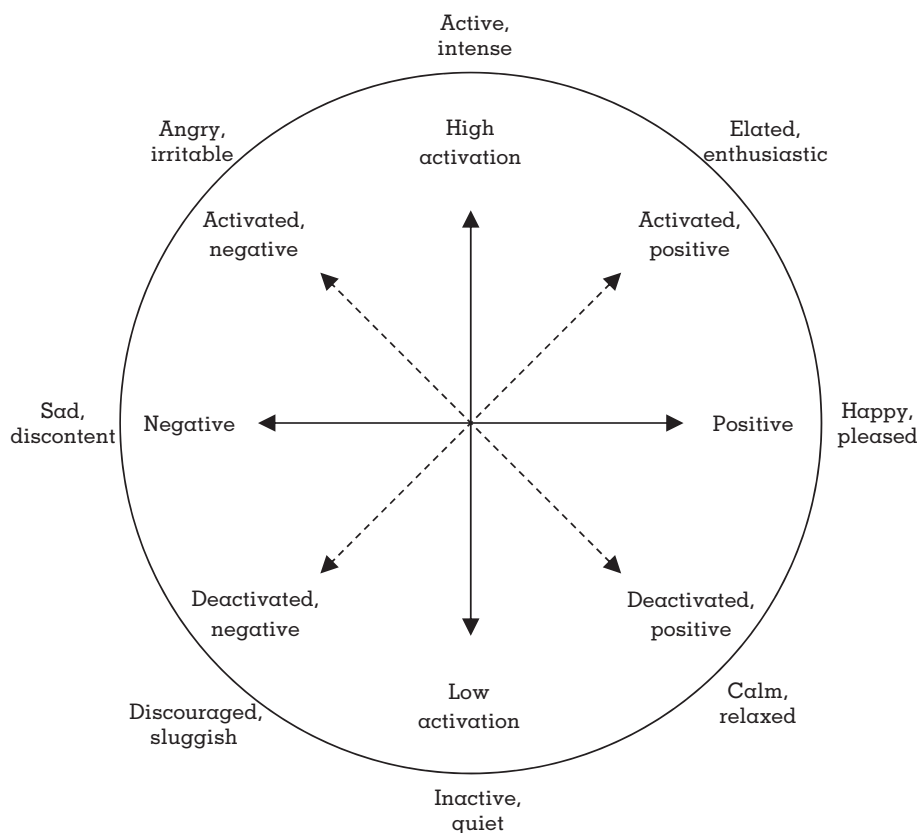
DEFINING EMOTIONAL DISTANCE AND EMOTIONAL DIRECTION

The differences in valence and activation stipulated by the affect circumplex establish the foundation for conceptualizing emotional distance and emotional direction. Emotional distance refers to the gap (in terms of valence and activation) between the emotion an individual currently feels (i.e., the origin) and the emotion the individual ultimately displays through the process of emotion regulation (i.e., the destination). Emotions consist of several interrelated components, including facial and bodily expressions, autonomic changes, subjective feelings, and states of action readiness (Ekman, 1973; Frijda, 2007). Consequently, as the difference in the valence and activation between the emotional origin and destination increases, individuals must make greater adjustments to achieve their desired displays, regardless of the method of travel used (i.e., surface or deep acting). Thus, for example, an individual experiencing discouragement (a negatively valenced, low-activation emotion) who uses emotion regulation to generate a display of enthusiasm (a positively valenced, high-activation emotion) “travels further,” so to speak, compared to an individual experiencing calmness (a positively valenced, low-activation emotion) who similarly uses emotion regulation to generate a display of enthusiasm, because the former employee changes both their valence and level of activation, whereas the latter employee changes only their level of activation.

Emotional direction refers to the route (in terms of valence and activation) an individual takes to achieve the desired display—specifically, whether valence is changed positively or negatively and/or activation is increased, maintained, or decreased during the emotion regulation process. Emotional direction is especially important for distinguishing between trips of equal distance. For example, an individual experiencing discouragement who uses emotion regulation to generate a display of enthusiasm (i.e., goes from a negative to a positive state and from a deactivated state to an activated state) takes a qualitatively different trip than that of an individual experiencing enthusiasm who uses emotion regulation to generate a display of discouragement (i.e., goes from a positive to a negative state and from an activated state to a deactivated state), even though both trips are equivalent in terms of emotional distance.

Conceptualizing emotional distance and emotional direction as a function of differences in valence and activation (as opposed to differences in

FIGURE 1
The Affect Circumplex



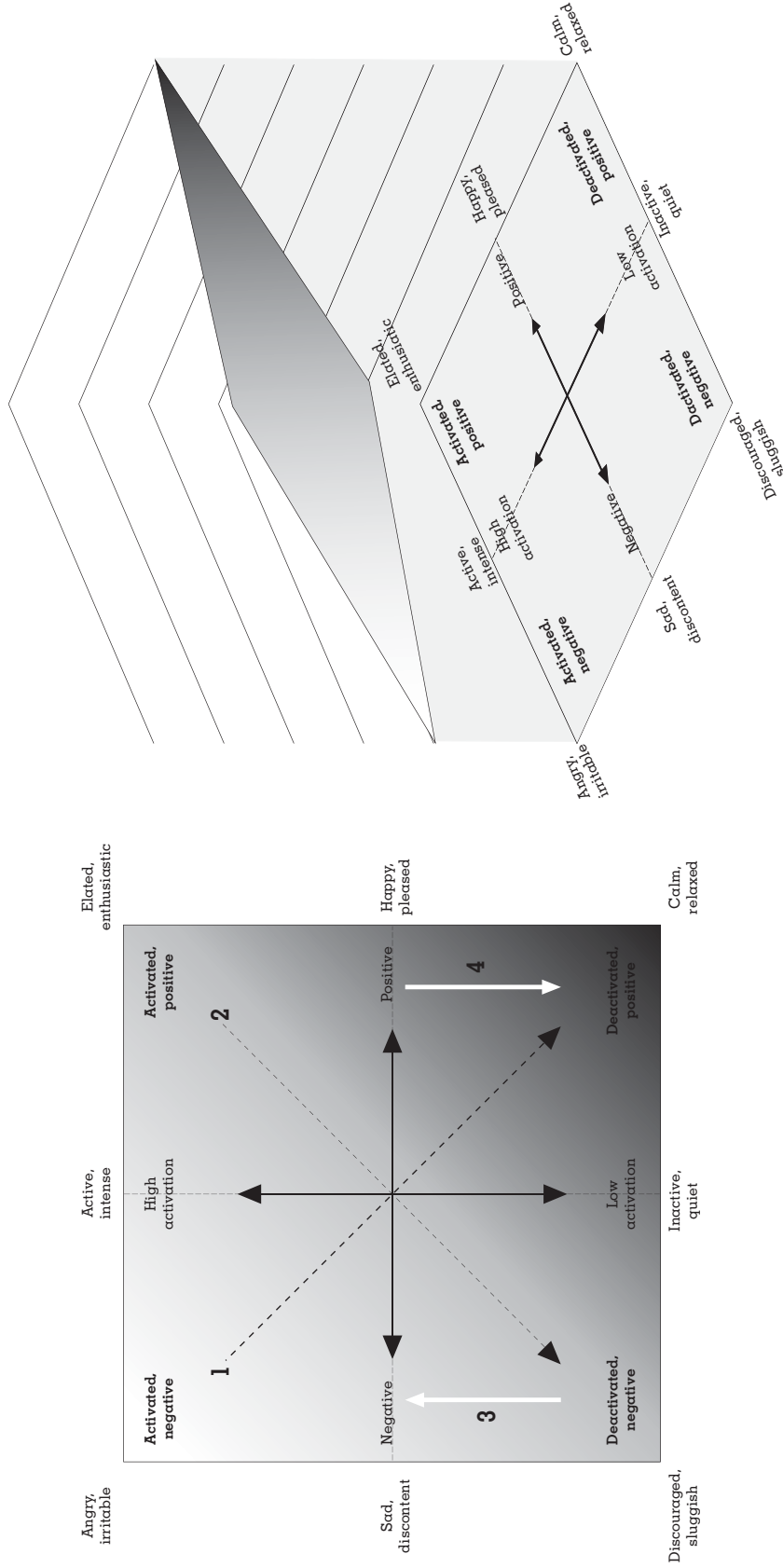
the number of degrees separating two emotions on the affect circumplex) provides greater theoretical precision to the process of emotion regulation. For example, moving from happiness to sadness is equal in the number of degrees to moving from calmness to anger (both are 180 degrees apart), yet the former only requires changing valence, whereas the latter requires changing both valence and activation and is therefore conceptualized as more distant. As another example, although moving from elation to calmness is equal in distance to moving from calmness to anger, the two trips are conceptualized as different because of their direction and will therefore have different effects on the regulator.

Accordingly, our conceptualizations of emotional distance and emotional direction suggest that the affect circumplex, when viewed through an emotion regulation lens, should not be depicted as a flat circle but, instead, as a topographic square (see Figures 2 and 3). In both figures the map on the left shows the top-down perspective (with example journeys indicated by the dashed black and solid white lines), while the map on the right shows the elevation

perspective. The square shape captures the notion that journeys along the diagonal entail the greatest distance because both valence and activation are changed to the maximum extent. For example, if one's emotional origin is anger (i.e., the northwest corner), then a destination of calmness (i.e., the southeast corner) would be farther away than any of the other emotional destinations on the map—a notion that would not be captured if the map remained a circle.

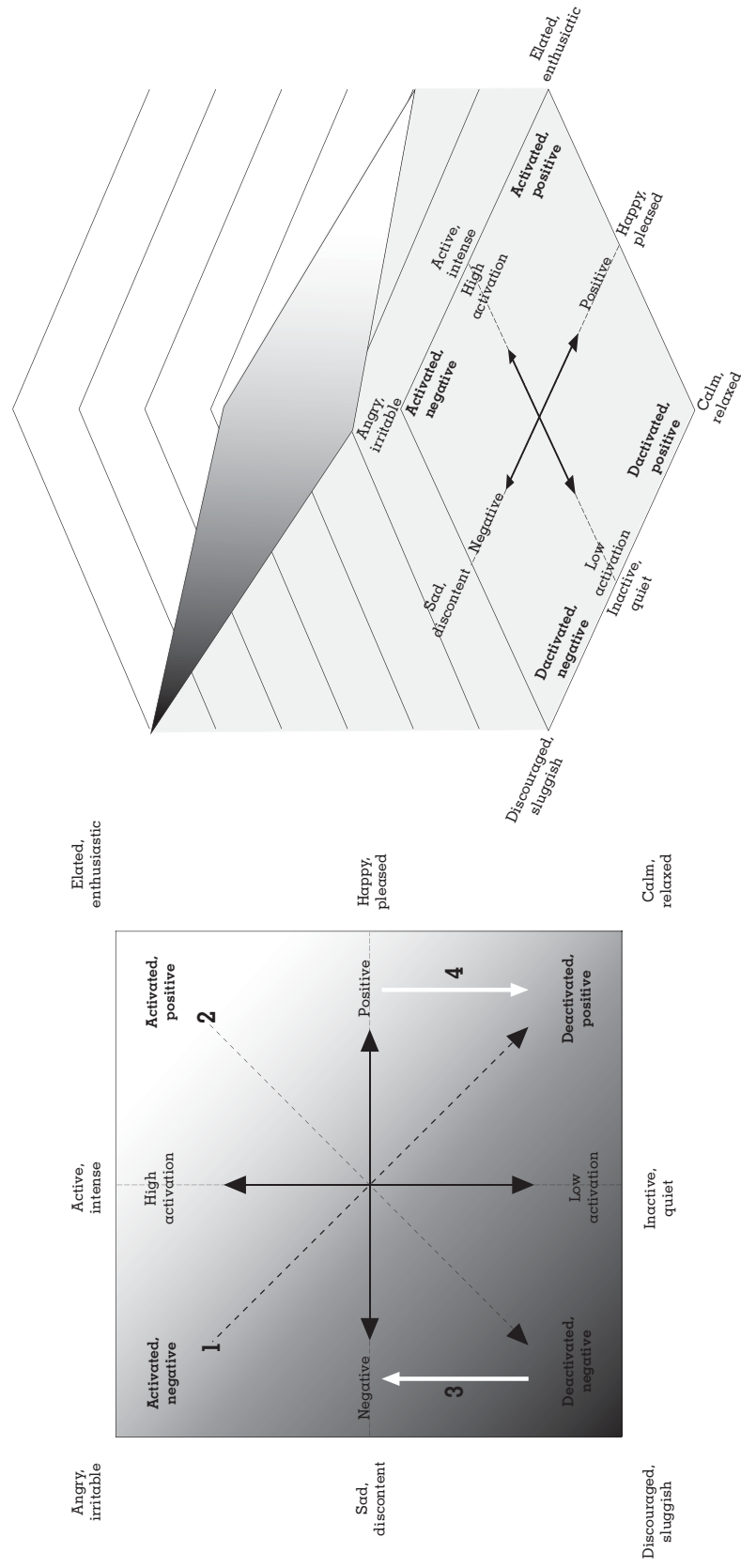
The topography reflects the idea that some directions are more difficult because they involve traveling "uphill" (i.e., journeys from lighter to darker shading), whereas others are easier because they involve traveling "downhill" (i.e., journeys from darker to lighter shading). As we noted at the outset, a comprehensive theory of emotion regulation must recognize the joint interplay of all three components of a given journey: distance, direction, and method of travel. Accordingly, Figures 2 and 3 depict how the topography of the map changes depending on whether individuals use surface acting (Figure 2) or deep acting (Figure 3) as the method of travel. Specifically, the use of surface acting versus deep acting

FIGURE 2
Topographical Map of Emotion Regulation Journeys Using Surface Acting as the Method of Travel^a



^aThe map on the left depicts the top-down perspective (with "north" representing high activation—active, intense—and example journeys indicated by the dashed black and solid white lines), while the map on the right shows the elevation perspective (with journeys from lighter to darker shading being more "uphill" and difficult and movements from darker to lighter shading being more "downhill" and less difficult), as viewed from the southwest corner of the map to achieve an unobstructed view of the topography.

FIGURE 3
Topographical Map of Emotion Regulation Journeys Using Deep Acting as the Method of Travel^a



^aThe map on the left depicts the top-down perspective (with "north" representing high activation—active, intense—and example journeys indicated by the dashed black and solid white lines), while the map on the right shows the elevation perspective (with journeys from lighter to darker shading being more "uphill" and difficult and movements from darker to lighter shading being more "downhill" and less difficult), as viewed from the southeast corner of the map to achieve an unobstructed view of the topography.

TABLE 1
Related Constructs and Their Consideration of the Elements Involved in the Emotion Regulation Journey

Construct	Elements Involved in the Emotion Regulation Journey				
	Emotional Origin	Emotional Destination	Emotional Distance	Emotional Direction	Method of Travel
Emotion-display dissonance	Implicit: nonequivalent to the destination, but differences not recognized	Implicit: nonequivalent to the origin, but differences not recognized	Implicit, but differences not recognized	Not recognized	Explicit: produced by surface acting but not deep acting
Emotion-rule dissonance	Implicit: nonequivalent to the destination, but differences not recognized	Implicit: nonequivalent to the origin, but differences not recognized	Implicit, but differences not recognized	Not recognized	Implicit: surface acting or deep acting may be needed
Affect shift	Explicit, but restricted to negative affect	Explicit, but genuinely felt positive affect	Not recognized	Explicit, but relevant to one direction (negative to positive) and to genuine emotion only	Not recognized
Affect spin	Explicit, recognizes differences	Not recognized	Not recognized	Not recognized	Not recognized

will alter where the peaks and valleys are located. For reasons we discuss below, journeys from the northwest to the southeast will be particularly difficult when surface acting is used. In contrast, journeys from the northeast to the southwest will be particularly difficult when deep acting is used—a notion that would not be captured if the map remained flat (or circular). In the sections that follow we use Figures 2 and 3 to illustrate how our approach differs from existing constructs and theories, as well as to develop novel propositions that challenge conventional wisdom about the intrapersonal consequences of emotion regulation.

EMOTIONAL DISTANCE AND EMOTIONAL DIRECTION VIS-À-VIS RELATED CONSTRUCTS AND THEORIES

Table 1 juxtaposes the central elements of our framework (i.e., emotional origin, emotional destination, emotional distance, emotional direction, and method of travel) with ostensibly similar constructs that have been the subject of research on emotion and emotion regulation—namely, emotional dissonance, affect shift, and affect spin. Table 2 juxtaposes those same elements with the dominant, peer-reviewed conceptual frameworks in management, peer-reviewed conceptual frameworks in management as well as related disciplines (i.e., social psychology, sociology) that organizational

scholars have primarily drawn from to understand emotion regulation and emotional labor.³ In each table we note whether the elements making up our framework are recognized explicitly, implicitly, or not at all, and we elaborate on these comparisons below.

Comparisons With Ostensibly Similar Constructs

In terms of ostensibly similar constructs, we begin with emotional dissonance, two types of which have been identified and discussed. *Emotion-display dissonance* takes place after emotion regulation and occurs when feelings do not match displays (Hochschild, 1983; Zerbe, 2000), while *emotion-rule dissonance* takes place before emotion regulation and occurs when feelings do not match display requirements (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989; see also Holman, Martinez-Iñigo, & Totterdell, 2008, and Zerbe, 2000). Both are forms of conflict and create feelings of tension within the individual (e.g., Humphrey, Ashforth, & Diefendorff, 2015). Although each construct implicitly recognizes that emotional origins and destinations differ from one another (otherwise, no feelings of dissonance

³Collectively, these nine articles have been cited over 5,000 times, according to Web of Science.

TABLE 2
Prominent Theoretical Frameworks and Their Consideration of the Elements Involved in the Emotion Regulation Journey

Publication	Elements Involved in the Emotion Regulation Journey				
	Emotional Origin	Emotional Destination	Emotional Distance	Emotional Direction	Method of Travel
Hochschild (1979)	Implicit, but differences not recognized	Explicit: can vary	Not recognized	Not recognized	Explicit: recognizes surface acting versus deep acting
Rafaeli & Sutton (1989)	Implicit, but differences not recognized	Explicit: can be positive or negative	Not recognized	Not recognized	Not recognized
Ashforth & Humphrey (1993)	Implicit, but differences not recognized	Explicit: can vary	Not recognized	Not recognized	Explicit: recognizes surface acting versus deep acting
Wharton & Erickson (1993)	Implicit, but differences not recognized	Explicit: can vary	Not recognized	Not recognized	Implicit, but differences not recognized
Morris & Feldman (1996)	Implicit, but differences not recognized	Explicit: can vary	Not recognized	Not recognized	Implicit, but differences not recognized
Gross (1998)	Implicit, but differences not recognized	Explicit: can vary	Not recognized	Not recognized	Explicit: recognizes different methods
Grandey (2000)	Implicit, but differences not recognized	Explicit: can vary	Not recognized	Not recognized	Explicit: recognizes surface acting versus deep acting
Diefendorff & Gosserand (2003)	Implicit, but differences not recognized	Explicit: can vary	Implicit, but differences not recognized	Not recognized	Explicit: recognizes surface acting versus deep acting
Côté (2005)	Implicit, but differences not recognized	Explicit: can vary	Not recognized	Not recognized	Explicit: recognizes surface acting versus deep acting

would occur), neither construct explicitly considers variability in origins and destinations and how their specific combinations would influence the amount of dissonance experienced. Consequently, neither construct acknowledges the impact of different emotional distances and directions on the actor.

Since emotion-display dissonance occurs after emotion regulation, its presence or absence depends on the method of travel utilized by the individual (Zerbe, 2000). In particular, because surface acting maintains a gap between displayed and felt emotion whereas deep acting eliminates that gap, emotion-display dissonance is created by surface acting but not by deep acting (e.g., Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). When surface acting is used as the method of travel, distance and direction should predict the degree of emotion-display dissonance that is felt as a result of the discrepancy between feelings and displays. However, current perspectives on emotion-display

dissonance fail to consider how different combinations of origins and destinations influence feelings of emotion-display dissonance and, therefore, treat all trips as equivalent.

To illustrate, consider the "top-down" map shown on the left in Figure 2, where surface acting is used as the method of travel. One employee (Daenerys) is indicated by the dashed black arrows (arrows 1 and 2), while another employee (Jon) is indicated by the solid white arrows (arrows 3 and 4), and each arrow depicts an emotional journey taken by the individual. In each case, compared to Jon, Daenerys always faces a larger gap between her current emotion and the display associated with her desired emotion. Current frameworks of emotion-display dissonance would assume that Daenerys and Jon experience equal amounts of tension simply because surface acting was used, yet Jon will experience little dissonance because his underlying feeling (e.g., discouraged) and display (e.g., sad) are closer than are Daenerys' (e.g., angry

and calm; compare arrow 3 to arrow 1 in Figure 2). The direction should also matter; for example, Daenerys will experience less dissonance on her trip from elation to discouragement than on her trip from anger to calmness if she is high in positive affectivity, because the former trip allows her underlying feelings to remain consistent with her natural predisposition (see Abraham, 1998, and Morris & Feldman, 1996; compare arrow 2 to arrow 1 in Figure 2). Thus, it is the emotional distance and direction, combined with the method of travel (i.e., surface acting), that produces the extent of emotion-display dissonance. Consequently, our framework augments the construct of emotion-display dissonance by explaining differences *within* a method of travel, which is important considering that emotion-display dissonance only explains differences *between* methods of travel.

Turning to emotion-rule dissonance, it occurs before emotion regulation and represents a form of person-role conflict whereby there is a mismatch between an individual's values (i.e., typical felt emotions), and the specific emotional display requirements (Morris & Feldman, 1996; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989; Zerbe, 2000). Consequently, emotion-rule dissonance indicates that a method of travel is needed. However, it does not by itself indicate that one will be utilized and a trip will occur (i.e., that the individual will use surface acting or deep acting to cover some distance and travel in some direction to eliminate the mismatch). Instead, emotion-rule dissonance would likely predict the typical distance and direction traveled by a given individual when a trip is taken (e.g., a bill collector, high in positive affect, would tend to travel from the northeast to the northwest to obtain compliance from debtors). Along with the method of travel, distance and direction should thus serve as key mechanisms explaining the impact of emotion-rule dissonance on indicators of well-being and performance (cf. Hülshager & Schewe, 2011).

Models of *affect shift* (Bledow, Schmitt, Frese, & Kühnel, 2011; see also Bledow, Rosing & Frese, 2013) posit that the dynamic interplay of positive and negative affect during a given time period impacts employee behavior. For instance, Bledow et al. (2011) found that a reduction of negative affect followed by an increase in positive affect is beneficial for work engagement. Similarly, Yang, Simon, Wang, and Zheng (2016) observed that co-occurring increases in both positive and negative affect increase task performance. Although affect shift models explicitly recognize the importance

of direction, they are concerned only with shifts from negative to positive affect. More important, they are restricted to shifts in genuine or felt emotions, which not only could occur in the absence of purposeful emotion regulation but also would exclude situations where the emotional voyage leads to a disingenuous display. Beyond this fundamental difference, emotional distance and direction go beyond the dichotomy of the affect shift models' focus on positive and negative affect by denoting the movement of individuals between discrete emotions on the affect circumplex, including those that share the same valence (e.g., enthusiastic and calm).

Finally, *affect spin* (Beal, Trougakos, Weiss, & Dalal, 2013) is an individual difference reflecting the extent to which a person experiences different emotional states around the affect circumplex. Distinct from neuroticism (Beal & Ghandour, 2011), those low in affect spin have low variability in states and fluctuate between a limited set of emotions (calm, happy), whereas those high in affect spin experience a diverse array of states (angry, enthusiastic, calm, sluggish, sad, etc.) over relatively short periods of time. Accordingly, affect spin focuses explicitly and exclusively on variability in emotional origins—it is not concerned with emotion regulation per se. As an individual difference, however, it has implications for the distances and directions traveled when emotion regulation takes place. As an individual's level of affect spin decreases, variability in emotional distance and direction across episodes of emotional labor should likewise decrease, because emotional origins become more stable from one point in time to the next. Regardless of whether the context is one where a single display rule dominates (e.g., anger for bill collectors; Sutton, 1991) or one where multiple display rules are present, by experiencing similar emotional origins over time, individuals low in affect spin should more easily develop routines and scripts, reducing the effort required for their journeys (Abelson, 1976; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Indeed, this could explain why Beal et al. (2013) found that individuals low in affect spin are less depleted by acts of emotion regulation.

Comparisons With Theories of Emotion Regulation and Emotional Labor

Turning to Table 2, a fundamental tenet of theory concerning emotion regulation is the existence of

an initial emotion (i.e., an origin) that differs from a desired emotional display (i.e., a destination) in type and/or intensity. Indeed, if origins and destinations were identical, then there would be no need to regulate via a method of travel (Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003). Although the importance of one's emotional origin has been implicitly recognized in theoretical frameworks on emotion regulation, the impact that different origins may have on the emotion regulation process has not. Instead, scholars have generally assumed that individuals are experiencing some sort of negative emotion prior to an emotion regulation attempt. For example, Hülshager and Schewe (2011: 366) noted that, with surface acting, "the individual will continue to experience this very negative emotion," but deep acting "turns the negative emotion into a positive one." This is an oversimplification, though, since factors such as events (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and dispositions (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003) could elicit in individuals any of the emotional origins shown in Figures 2 and 3.

In contrast, emotional destinations have been given explicit attention in extant conceptual frameworks, which is perhaps not surprising given that destinations are the goals of emotion regulation. For example, Wharton and Erickson (1993; see also Morris & Feldman, 1996, and Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989) noted that situations differ according to *display rules* (Ekman, 1973), and they identified three primary groups of emotions that individuals may be required to display: integrative (positive emotions such as happiness and pride), differentiating (negative emotions such as fear and anger), and masked (neutrality). As another example, Côté (2005) acknowledged the importance of different emotional destinations, theorizing that receivers respond differently to positive and negative emotional displays that have been strengthened or weakened through deep acting, which, in turn, influences the actor's level of strain.

Theoretical frameworks have certainly recognized the importance of the method of travel. In many, such as those from the pioneering works of Hochschild (1979), Gross (1998), and Grandey (2000), the recognition has been explicit, distinguishing between strategies (e.g., surface acting and deep acting) that individuals use to close the gap between felt emotions and desired displays. In others, a method of travel has been implied, but differences between methods of travel have not been discussed (e.g., Morris & Feldman,

1996; Wharton & Erickson, 1993). The lopsided emphasis on the method of travel has produced hundreds of empirical studies, overwhelmingly focused on contexts involving positive emotional destinations (e.g., customer service employees), comparing the effectiveness of surface acting and deep acting (Hülshager & Schewe, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012).

However, no theory has explicitly connected the dots between different emotional origins and destinations to recognize the diversity in the distances and directions of individuals' emotional journeys. If reducing the gap between an emotional origin and an emotional destination is a fundamental aspect of emotion regulation (Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand, 2005), then it stands to reason that the size and nature of that gap should be considered—along with the method that individuals use to eliminate it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL DISTANCE AND EMOTIONAL DIRECTION

Having described the concepts of emotional distance and emotional direction, we now develop propositions about the critical role those concepts play in influencing the well-being and performance of actors engaging in emotion regulation. In explaining why emotion regulation has downstream effects on well-being and performance, theory and research have identified several key proximal mechanisms: effort/resource consumption (i.e., depletion), underlying felt emotions as a result of regulation, and inauthenticity felt by the actor and perceived by observers (e.g., Côté, 2005; Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). Our overarching view is that a more complete understanding of the intrapersonal consequences of emotion regulation can be obtained by considering how these proximal mechanisms are jointly influenced by all three elements of a given journey: distance, direction, and method of travel.

Depletion

At its core, emotion regulation involves resource expenditure through planning, effort, and control (Morris & Feldman, 1996; see also Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). When a gap between felt emotion and a desired display is recognized, attentional resources are allocated toward reducing that gap, with greater resource expenditure occurring when

discrepancies are larger (Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003). Interestingly, there have been conflicting views in the literature as to which method of travel (i.e., surface acting or deep acting) requires more attentional resources and, thus, is more depleting, with some scholars arguing for surface acting (e.g., Beal, Trougakos, Weiss, & Green, 2006; Grandey & Melloy, 2017; Gross, 1998; Richards, 2004) and others arguing for deep acting (e.g., Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Liu, Prati, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2008).

We submit that these conflicting views have arisen because the method of travel is not the primary determinant of the amount of effort and attentional resources (and subsequent depletion) involved in an emotion regulation episode. Instead, the primary determinant is the emotional distance and direction involved in the journey. Regardless of how individuals reduce a gap between felt and displayed emotion (e.g., by surface acting or deep acting), doing so requires that they have "traveled" in some direction, have covered some distance, and have expended resources as a result. If there is no gap, or if a gap is present but disregarded, then no "trip" has been taken and individuals continue to express what they are feeling without any effort to modify their display. Consequently, *the emotional distance and direction traveled by an individual reflect the degree of emotion regulation* and, therefore, are the essential predictors of the amount of effort and attentional resources expended during an emotion regulation episode. This is not to suggest that the method of travel is unimportant; rather, the use of surface acting or deep acting is a boundary condition that triggers the presence of other mechanisms linking emotion regulation to well-being and performance.

Beginning with emotional distance, regardless of the emotion regulation strategy used, journeys that require individuals to make changes to multiple dimensions of emotion (e.g., reverse valence and activation) will require greater effort and self-control and, thus, deplete attentional resources to a greater extent than episodes where only minor adjustments are required (e.g., raise activation slightly while maintaining valence). Such minor adjustments will, in turn, require more effort than making no adjustments at all. To illustrate, we return to Figures 2 and 3, where the two managers, Daenerys (indicated by the dashed black arrow labeled 1) and Jon (indicated by the solid white arrow labeled 4), need to display calmness to a

subordinate whose high level of anxiety is causing problems for both that subordinate and the subordinate's coworkers. Daenerys starts from a state of anger because she has just come from a contentious meeting where her boss told her she was going to be transferred, whereas Jon starts from a state of happiness because he has just been informed by his boss that he is being promoted.

If Daenerys surface acts to close the gap (Figure 2), then she must reverse both the valence of her display (e.g., shift from a negative, angry expression to a positive, calm expression by unfurrowing her brow, unclenching her teeth, etc.) and the activation level of her display (e.g., shift from a more activated, angry expression to a less activated, calm expression by speaking in a quieter, even tone, relaxing her posture, etc.; see Ekman & Rosenberg, 2005, and Waxer, 1977), all while suppressing an emotion that greatly differs from her displayed emotion. By comparison, if Jon surface acts to display calmness, he needs only to decrease his displayed level of activation (e.g., appear more relaxed, slow, and leisurely) while remaining in a positive state. Although both emotional journeys utilize the same method of travel, the numerous changes that Daenerys must make will require more effort and consume more resources than those required of Jon, thereby reducing well-being and performance (Hobfoll, 1989).

A similar argument applies if Daenerys and Jon deep act (see Figure 3). One way that individuals deep act is to deploy attention by thinking about events or memories that generate the emotions they wish to feel (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998; Hochschild, 1983). However, there is a tendency for individuals to exhibit mood-state dependent memory such that they more easily recall information that is affectively congruent with the state they are experiencing (Bower, 1981). Overcoming this natural tendency will require more effort than yielding to it (Oullette & Wood, 1998). Thus, closing the larger gap between emotions that are dissimilar in terms of valence and activation (e.g., from anger to calmness) will be more taxing to individuals compared to closing the smaller gap between emotions that are more similar (e.g., from happiness to calmness).

Consequently, as the emotional distance traveled by an individual increases, depletion will increase, harming well-being and performance. There is some indirect empirical evidence to support this notion, since research has shown that displaying naturally felt emotions (where no

emotional distance is covered) is associated with greater well-being (Diefendorff et al., 2005; Martínez-Iñigo, Totterdell, Alcover, & Holman, 2007; see also Arnold, Connelly, Walsh, & Martin Ginis, 2015, and Gardner, Fischer, & Hunt, 2009) and performance (Hülshager, Lang, Schewe, & Zijlstra, 2015) compared to using surface acting or deep acting (where some emotional distance is covered). The identical square shapes in Figures 2 and 3 reflect the idea that journeys along the diagonal, regardless of the method of travel, entail the maximum distance and are the most depleting (e.g., Daenerys's journeys shown in arrows 1 and 2 are more depleting than Jon's journeys shown in arrows 3 and 4).

Turning to emotional direction, moving from a more activated emotion to a less activated emotion (i.e., north to south in Figures 2 and 3), regardless of the method of travel used, will be more effortful and depleting than moving from a less activated emotion to a more activated emotion. If surface acting is used, then the individual must not only display the desired emotion but also suppress their true emotion (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998). However, emotions may nevertheless leak through, despite attempts to suppress them (Ekman, 1992; Porter & ten Brinke, 2008). Interestingly, it has been suggested that emotional leakage is more likely to occur with more activated and intense emotions because concealing such emotions reduces attentional resources (Porter, ten Brinke, & Wallace, 2012: 26). Support for this idea also comes from Sutton's (1991) study of bill collectors, who found that conveying calmness (a low-activation emotion) toward debtors (who often elicited reciprocal feelings of anger in collectors) was an emotional norm that collectors struggled with the most. Thus, when surface acting is used, moving to a less activated display will be more harmful to the actor compared to moving to a more activated display. The same logic also applies to situations where surface acting is used to lower the intensity of the same emotion (e.g., from intense to mild enthusiasm).

A similar pattern is expected when deep acting is used, although the pattern is not due to the greater difficulty in hiding more activated emotions. Instead, the effects for deep acting are attributable to the challenges involved in actually lowering one's level of arousal versus raising it. Autonomic nervous system activity is regarded as a fundamental component of emotion (for a review see Kreibig, 2010). Part of the peripheral nervous system, the autonomic nervous system innervates

internal organs (e.g., heart, lungs) and glands (e.g., sweat, salivary) and is divided into the sympathetic and parasympathetic branches. While the function of the sympathetic branch is to release energy and prepare the body for action (e.g., increase heart rate and breathing), the function of the parasympathetic branch is to conserve and restore energy (e.g., decrease heart rate and stimulate digestion). In line with the notion that the sympathetic branch evolved to promote survival (Porges, 2001), it is a faster, mobilizing system, whereas the parasympathetic branch is a slower, dampening system (Ernst, 2014).

Importantly, notable differences in autonomic responses between emotions have been observed. In general, more activated emotions are associated with greater sympathetic activity, whereas less activated emotions are associated with greater parasympathetic activity. Specifically, heart rate is higher during the experience of more activated negative (e.g., anger, fear, and disgust) and positive (e.g., elation) emotions, but it is lower during the experience of less activated negative (e.g., discouragement) and positive (e.g., calmness) emotions. The activation level of emotions is also positively associated with respiratory and electrodermal activity (Kreibig, 2010).

At first blush, the greater frequency with which individuals work to calm themselves down as opposed to work themselves up suggests that it may require more effort to raise activation through deep acting. However, neuropsychological research has shown that down-regulating emotion (i.e., moving to a less activated state) through deep acting strategies such as reappraisal is more taxing than up-regulating emotion. In particular, reappraisal activates regions of the prefrontal cortex implicated in working memory and attention, and shifting from more aroused and intense states to less aroused and intense states activates those regions in greater quantity and strength (Morawetz, Bode, Derntl, & Heerkeren, 2017). The greater activation of those regions suggests the need for additional cognitive and attentional resources (Morris, Leclerc, & Kensinger, 2014; Urry & Gross, 2010). When deep acting to lower activation, an individual must expend resources to physically and mentally mitigate the sympathetic nervous system—a system that evolved over millennia for adaptation and survival—and initiate the slower parasympathetic system. Thus, it requires more effort and attention to settle oneself down than hype oneself up, and we would expect this to also hold in situations where deep acting is employed

to lower the intensity of the same emotion (e.g., from intense to mild anger).

Returning to Figures 2 and 3, the topography in each map reflects the notion that emotional journeys from the north to the south are more “uphill” and depleting because they involve lowering activation, whereas journeys from the south to the north are more “downhill” and less depleting because they involve raising activation. Thus, for example, the trip that Jon takes from the east to the southeast (e.g., from pleased to calm in an effort to settle down a worried subordinate; see arrow 4) will be more depleting than the trip that he takes from the southwest to the west (e.g., from sluggish to sad in an effort to show support for a colleague passed over for a promotion; see arrow 3). Together, we suggest that emotional distance and emotional direction exhibit main, additive effects on depletion, leading to the following proposition.

Proposition 1: Emotional distance and emotional direction jointly determine the depletion involved in an emotion regulation journey such that journeys become more depleting as (a) distance increases and/or (b) the direction is from a more activated state to a less activated state, regardless of the method of travel (i.e., surface acting or deep acting).

Underlying Emotions

As noted previously, in seeking to understand why emotion regulation influences well-being and performance, scholars have pointed to underlying emotion as a critical mechanism. In particular, it is thought that surface acting leaves felt emotion negative, which harms well-being and performance, but deep acting engenders positive emotion, which benefits well-being and performance (e.g., Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). Indeed, research has shown that surface acting is associated with increases in negative mood, while deep acting is associated with increases in positive mood (e.g., Scott & Barnes, 2011). However, these findings are an artifact of focusing on a single emotional direction—namely, where one travels from a negative emotional origin to a positive emotional destination. Consequently, the method of travel is not sufficient to determine the valence of the emotion that remains as a result of the emotion regulation endeavor; rather, it is the combination of the method of travel with the emotional direction.

Traveling from a negative to a positive emotion (i.e., from west to east in Figures 2 and 3) versus traveling from a positive to a negative emotion (i.e., from east to west in Figures 2 and 3) has critical implications for the intrapersonal consequences of emotion regulation. According to hedonic models of well-being, individuals prefer to experience positive emotions over negative emotions (Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, & de Chermont, 2003; Wegener & Petty, 1994). From a neurological perspective, positive emotions are preferred because they are associated with increased levels of dopamine—a neurotransmitter associated with reward (Ashby, Isen, & Turken, 1999). Consequently, the natural tendency of individuals is to approach situations that elicit positive emotions and avoid situations that elicit negative emotions (Higgins, 1997).

This basic hedonic principle—that people prefer pleasure over pain (Freud, 1950/1920)—is vital when one considers different combinations of emotional direction and method of travel. If surface acting is used, the individual’s underlying emotion remains unchanged. Research has revealed that instead of the fake display of the emotion eliciting a corresponding emotion through facial feedback (Tomkins, 1962), both the self-reported experience and the physiological signs of the original emotion do not weaken as a consequence of surface acting (Gross, 1998; Gross & Levenson, 1997). In fact, attempting to mask emotion can result in the ironic effect of exacerbating it (Scott & Barnes, 2011). Therefore, if individuals are currently experiencing a negative emotion (e.g., anger) and they feign a positive emotion (e.g., happiness), they do nothing to mitigate that negative emotion, which is distressing to experience. In contrast, if individuals are currently experiencing a positive emotion (e.g., happiness) and they feign a negative emotion (e.g., anger), they continue to enjoy the hedonic benefits of feeling the positive emotion.

From a control theory perspective (see Diefendorff & Gossard, 2003), we would expect the immediate intrapersonal outcomes of faking negative emotion to be beneficial, since the feigned display allows the actor to accomplish a goal while continuing to feel positive on the inside (e.g., faking anger during a negotiation to intimidate one’s opponent; Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006). In this case, faking a negative emotion serves multiple higher-level goals (i.e., satisfying a display rule and maintaining a pleasant hedonic state), which is more beneficial than attaining a single goal. Thus, the situation where a negative

emotional display is generated through surface acting will provide a greater hedonic benefit to the individual compared to the situation where a positive emotional display is generated. Consistent with this notion, Glomb and Tews (2004) found that faking negative emotions is less exhausting than faking positive emotions.

These ideas are illustrated by the topography in Figure 2, where surface acting is used as the method of travel. When the emotional destination is feigned, then trips from the west to the east are more “uphill” and worse for individuals because their underlying emotion remains negative. In contrast, trips from the east to the west are more “downhill” and better for individuals because their underlying emotion remains positive. Thus, for example, the trip that Daenerys takes from the northwest to the southeast (see arrow 1) will be more harmful than the trip that she takes from the northeast to the southwest (see arrow 2).

The opposite occurs if deep acting is used. If individuals are currently experiencing a positive emotion and they deep act to cultivate a negative emotion, then they intentionally create an emotion that is aversive to experience. In contrast, if individuals are currently experiencing a negative emotion and they deep act to generate a positive emotion, then they should experience the benefit (at least in the short term) of the boost to their well-being that deep acting engenders (Scott & Barnes, 2011). Thus, the cultivation of a positive emotion through deep acting will provide a greater hedonic benefit to the individual compared to the situation where a negative emotion is cultivated.

These ideas are illustrated by the topography in Figure 3, where deep acting is used as the method of travel. When the emotional destination is actually generated and felt through deep acting, then trips from the east to the west are more “uphill” and worse for individuals because their underlying emotion becomes negative. In contrast, trips from the west to the east are more “downhill” and better for individuals because their underlying emotion becomes positive. Thus, for example, the trip that Daenerys takes from the northeast to the southwest (see arrow 2) will be more harmful than the trip that she takes from the northwest to the southeast (see arrow 1).

Overall, the underlying emotion felt as a consequence of the emotion regulation process is, as scholars have pointed out (e.g., Hülshager & Schewe, 2011), an important mechanism linking emotion regulation to well-being and performance.

Indeed, the power of felt emotions to influence assessments of well-being through their impact on the retrieval of memories and their infusion into judgments (e.g., Bower, 1981; Forgas, 1995; Thoresen et al., 2003), as well as performance through the elicitation of states of action readiness that take control precedence over other concerns (e.g., Beal, Weiss, Barros, & Macdermid, 2005; Frijda, 2007), should lead to situations where surface acting is more beneficial than deep acting (i.e., when the journey involves moving from east to west). Consequently, the incorporation of emotional direction challenges the consensus that surface acting is bad and deep acting is good (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). Accordingly, our arguments involving emotional direction and the method of travel lead to the following proposition.

Proposition 2: Emotional direction and method of travel jointly determine the underlying emotions that are felt as a result of an emotion regulation journey. Journeys from negative to positive emotion are more harmful (more beneficial) when surface acting (deep acting) is used, whereas journeys from positive to negative emotion are more beneficial (more harmful) when surface acting (deep acting) is used.

Inauthenticity

In addition to depletion and underlying emotions, the amount of inauthenticity—as experienced by the actor, as well as perceived by observers—will also be influenced by emotional distance and emotional direction. As noted above, surface acting creates feelings of dissonance and inauthenticity in actors themselves, whereas deep acting does not (e.g., Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). Thus, when the method of travel is surface acting, emotional distance will increase those feelings because a larger gap is created between displays and underlying emotions. Suppressing one’s true emotions while displaying a different emotion creates tension (Beal et al., 2006; Gross, 1998), so the greater the emotional distance traveled, the greater the tension. Thus, for example, the two journeys taken by Daenerys in Figure 2 (see arrows 1 and 2) should produce greater feelings of dissonance and inauthenticity compared to the two journeys taken by Jon (see arrows 3 and 4), because Daenerys’s emotional origins and destinations

are more discrepant than Jon's (in terms of valence and activation).

Emotional direction should matter as well. If the emotions that remain after surface acting are at odds with an individual's affective disposition, then feelings of inauthenticity should be strengthened. Two candidate traits are extraversion and neuroticism, given that the experience of positive emotions lies at the core of extraversion while the experience of negative emotions lies at the core of neuroticism (Watson, 2000). For example, if Daenerys is highly extraverted, then the trip that she takes from anger to calmness (see arrow 1) should elicit greater feelings of inauthenticity compared to the trip that she takes from elation to discouragement (see arrow 2), because the underlying emotion felt during the former trip (i.e., anger) is more at odds with her natural disposition to be positive. In contrast, if Daenerys is highly neurotic, then the trip that she takes from elation to discouragement should elicit greater feelings of inauthenticity compared to the trip that she takes from anger to calmness, because the underlying emotion felt during the former trip (i.e., elation) is more at odds with her natural disposition to be negative (see also Abraham, 1998, and Morris & Feldman, 1996). These arguments are consistent with theories of trait-behavior congruence (see Little, 2000, and Moskowitz & Côté, 1995), which stipulate that individuals experience strain and harm to their well-being when they act and feel "out of character" (Little, 2000: 96). Thus, the joint consideration of emotional distance, emotional direction, and method of travel is needed to fully understand when and to what extent feelings of dissonance and inauthenticity occur.

In terms of observers, although the focus of our theory is on the intrapersonal consequences of emotion regulation, those consequences do not occur in a vacuum and can also be shaped by interpersonal processes. In particular, according to Côté's (2005) social interaction model, displaying inauthentic emotions elicits adverse reactions in receivers. As noted above, when emotional displays are achieved through surface acting, felt emotions are involuntarily expressed and "leak," manifesting as fleeting microexpressions (Ekman, 1992; Porter & ten Brinke, 2008). Emotional distance should affect this process, since leaked expressions of emotions that are highly discrepant from feigned emotions will appear more inauthentic to observers compared to emotions that are more similar, leading to lower-quality interactions and

adversely impacting the well-being and performance of the actor.

The specific emotions that are leaked versus feigned will depend on the emotional direction. If activated emotions are more likely to leak through and be detected compared to deactivated emotions (Porter et al., 2012), then journeys from the north to the south (see Figure 2) will result in greater perceptions of inauthenticity on the part of observers compared to journeys from the south to the north. In terms of valence, an expansive body of literature has shown that people are adept at identifying fake displays of positive emotions such as happiness, which involve muscular contractions around the mouth only (Ekman, Davidson, & Friesen, 1990) and are more asymmetric (Ekman, Hager, & Friesen, 1981) and irregular (Hess, Kappas, McHugo, Kleck, & Lanzetta, 1989) than authentic displays.

In contrast, people are less adept at discriminating between authentic and inauthentic expressions of negative emotions, performing no better than chance (Porter & ten Brinke, 2008). Instead, there is a bias toward believing that such displays are real (Gosselin, Kirouac, & Doré, 1995). This bias likely exists because there are advantages to taking negative emotions at face value (Gosselin et al., 1995). Negative emotions signal problems that demand immediate attention, and, therefore, it is more adaptive to take them seriously as opposed to ignore them (Taylor, 1991). On this point research has shown that individuals recall and pay more attention to displays of negative emotion than displays of positive emotion (Dasborough, 2006). Consequently, journeys from the west to the east will result in greater perceptions of inauthenticity on the part of observers compared to journeys from the east to the west. Together, this suggests, for example, that Daenerys's surface-acted journey from the northwest to the southeast shown in Figure 2 (see arrow 1) is especially likely to be viewed as inauthentic by others and to elicit adverse receiver reactions, because this journey involves (a) attempting to suppress a more activated emotion that is likely to leak through and (b) feigning a positive emotion, which is more likely to be detected as fake.

Proposition 3: Emotional distance, emotional direction, and method of travel jointly determine the amount of inauthenticity felt during an emotion regulation journey. When surface acting (but

not deep acting) is used, actors' feelings of inauthenticity increase as (a) distance increases and/or (b) the direction is more trait incongruent.

Proposition 4: Emotional distance, emotional direction, and method of travel jointly determine the amount of inauthenticity perceived by observers during an emotion regulation journey. When surface acting (but not deep acting) is used, observers' perceptions of inauthenticity increase as (a) distance increases and/or (b) the direction is from a more activated negative state to a less activated positive state.

Summary

To recap, our theory proposes that different combinations of emotional distance, emotional direction, and method of travel influence key mechanisms (i.e., depletion, underlying emotions, and inauthenticity) linking emotion regulation to actors' well-being and performance. Depletion is influenced by distance and direction (but not method of travel), underlying emotions are influenced by direction and method of travel (but not distance), and inauthenticity (experienced by the actor as well as perceived by observers) is influenced by distance, direction, and method of travel.

When considered together, Figures 2 and 3 and the propositions derived from them point to "worst-case scenarios" for individuals regulating emotion. When surface acting is used as the method of travel (Figure 2), the "peak of the mountain," so to speak (indicated by the darkest, most elevated area), lies in the southeast, and the worst-case scenario (in terms of harm to well-being and performance) occurs for the trip (shown by arrow 1) that Daenerys takes from the northwest to the southeast. That trip entails the maximum distance, involves lowering activation (Proposition 1), and leaves felt emotion negative (Proposition 2). In addition, this maximum distance, coupled with the particular direction (i.e., attempting to hide an activated negative emotion while feigning a positive emotional display) will elicit strong feelings of inauthenticity in Daenerys (Proposition 3), as well as perceptions of inauthenticity in Daenerys's interaction partners (Proposition 4). In contrast, when deep acting is used as the method of travel

(Figure 3), the "peak of the mountain" lies in the southwest, and the worst-case scenario occurs for the trip (shown by arrow 2) that Daenerys takes from the northeast to the southwest. Although feelings and perceptions of inauthenticity are eliminated via deep acting, this trip entails the maximum distance, involves lowering activation (Proposition 1), and changes felt emotion to negative (Proposition 2). Overall, our theorizing illustrates how a more holistic understanding of individuals' emotion regulation journeys can only be obtained by the joint consideration of distance, direction, and method of travel.

DISCUSSION

What we know about the intrapersonal consequences of emotion regulation has resulted from comparing the specific strategies that individuals use to change their emotional displays when their natural feelings are misaligned. Although theories of emotion regulation have recognized (either implicitly or explicitly) that emotional origins and destinations vary both within and between people, the resultant concepts of emotional distance and direction unfortunately have been overlooked. Surely, though, it seems reasonable to suggest that when trying to gain an understanding of what happens to individuals when they regulate their emotions, we should consider the emotions that individuals regulate to and from. If we do not consider the rich differences in distances and directions that exist when we jointly consider emotional origins and destinations, then we have ignored the "emotion" element of "emotion regulation."

Theoretical Implications

Our key point is that to fully comprehend an emotion regulation journey, one needs to consider all three elements of that journey: distance, direction, and method of travel. One cannot understand the effects of taking a trip without knowing where a person went to, came from, and how they got there. By utilizing the affect circumplex as a starting foundation to map emotional journeys in terms of their distance and direction, our model is more holistic and encompassing because it captures a more comprehensive range of emotion regulation situations and explains differences not only

between emotion regulation strategies but also between regulating versus not regulating. Shifting the spotlight to distance and direction fundamentally changes the scholarly conversation about emotion regulation in three key ways—a conversation that, to date, has fixated on comparisons between methods of travel.

First, our theory proposes that emotional distance and emotional direction, rather than the method of travel, make emotion regulation effortful and depleting. This notion is a complete departure from what extant theory would predict, and it helps resolve the debate about whether surface acting or deep acting is more depleting by shifting the focus from the method of travel to the critical distance and direction predictors that have been overlooked. Second, we argue that the combination of emotional direction and method of travel determines the valence of the underlying emotion that remains as a result of emotion regulation. This leads to the prediction that, depending on the direction, surface acting can at times be better for individuals than deep acting, which runs counter to the current consensus (see Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). Finally, our theory asserts that all three elements of the journey are needed to understand when (and to what extent) inauthenticity (as felt by the actor and as perceived by observers) occurs. This also represents a fundamental shift, because the current conversation surrounding inauthenticity focuses only on differences between methods of travel. Accordingly, extant theories are unable to make more nuanced predictions about the extent of inauthenticity during emotion regulation episodes.

The theory that we develop also challenges and extends existing theory in other ways. For example, Morris and Feldman (1996) proposed that greater effort is required when emotional displays (i.e., destinations) are frequent and involve a greater variety of emotions. They also suggested that feelings of dissonance are more likely when emotional displays are restricted in their range, because this “simply increases the chances that expected emotion will conflict with genuinely felt emotion” (Morris & Feldman, 1996: 994). These propositions, however, are incomplete. Whether frequent shifts in destinations require effort will, as we have shown, depend on the distance and/or direction traveled. Moreover, a greater variety of emotional destinations would only increase effort and regulation, and a restricted range of emotion would only increase dissonance, if one’s emotional origin did not coincide. Take, for example, a

context where a single display rule is prevalent (e.g., anger for bill collectors; Sutton, 1991). An employee high in affect spin, or an employee who faces a variety of positive and negative events, would require a great deal of emotion regulation and effort because their emotional origins would routinely depart from their emotional destination. If the individual were high in trait negative affectivity, or if negative events were the norm at their work, then they would experience little dissonance because their emotional origins would routinely match their emotional destination.

As another example, Côté (2005) theorized that receivers respond to surface acting in an unfavorable way, decreasing the actor’s well-being. However, if the distance traveled by the actor is low (e.g., the actor traveled from mild happiness to excitement), then receivers should not perceive that the actor is behaving inauthentically and react adversely as a result. The actor’s emotional origin and destination dictate what suppressed emotions are leaked and what emotions are displayed during the surface acting attempt and, thus, impact the extent to which receivers perceive the actor as behaving inauthentically. Côté (2005) also proposed that using deep acting to suppress negative emotions such as anger and contempt will decrease strain. Although receivers may react favorably to the resultant display, if the actor uses deep acting to take a lengthy journey toward a less activated or intense emotion, then the depletion associated with that trip should mitigate or offset any positive effects of the receiver’s response.

Empirical Implications

In addition to theory, the recognition of emotional distance and emotional direction should prompt us to revisit past empirical findings. A prime example is research showing that surface acting is “bad” but deep acting is “good” (e.g., Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). This consensus emerged because researchers ignored distance and direction, instead drawing comparisons between surface acting and deep acting in singular contexts involving positive emotional destinations. Our framework suggests that whether a given emotion regulation journey is “good” or “bad” depends on the simultaneous consideration of all three elements of that journey. If on one journey the distance is short, involves an easier “downhill” trek to a more activated emotion, and leaves underlying

emotion positive, but on another journey the distance is long, involves a harder “uphill” trek to a less activated emotion, and leaves underlying emotion negative, then surely these factors matter. They combine to produce a situation where surface acting to accomplish the former trip is “good” and deep acting to accomplish the latter trip is “bad.”

As another example, research examining the effects of stable traits on the emotion regulation process has shown that those high in negative affectivity are more likely to use surface acting, whereas those high in positive affectivity are more likely to use deep acting or the expression of naturally felt emotion (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). This corresponds to research on the effects of transient states, which has shown that people are more likely to surface act when feeling negative and deep act when feeling positive (Totterdell & Holman, 2003). Accordingly, findings that individuals high in negative affectivity experience lower well-being and performance when regulating their emotion, whereas individuals high in positive affectivity experience higher well-being and performance when regulating their emotion (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013), are very likely an artifact of the greater emotional distance and particular emotional direction traveled by those individuals. That is, in positive display contexts, those high in negative affectivity travel further, which is more depleting, and their proclivity to use surface acting results in an underlying emotion that remains negative. In contrast, those high in positive affectivity are close to their emotional destination, and their proclivity to use deep acting maintains or intensifies an underlying positive emotion. A similar case could be made for emotional states such that the greater harm associated with surface acting compared to deep acting is an artifact of distance and direction (i.e., in positive display contexts, if people surface act more when feeling negative, then they have further to travel and the direction of travel leaves their underlying emotion negative).

Practical Implications

In terms of practice, our framework suggests that the emotional distance and direction faced by a given individual should dictate the method of travel. In addition to avoiding the worst-case scenarios illustrated in our figures, if individuals need to display negative, activated emotions (e.g., anger, anxiety) when they are feeling positive, deactivated

emotions (e.g., calmness, relaxation), then using surface acting should be the most beneficial for well-being and performance. In other words, surface acting should be employed when individuals travel from southeast to northwest on the affect circumplex. In contrast, if individuals need to display positive, activated emotions (e.g., excitement, enthusiasm) when they are feeling negative, deactivated emotions (e.g., boredom, sluggishness), then using deep acting should be the most beneficial. In other words, deep acting should be employed when individuals travel from southwest to northeast on the affect circumplex.

A second practical implication pertains to outcomes of emotion regulation, which should vary as a function of the emotional distance and direction traveled. Take, for example, two employees—Tyrion and Sansa—whose jobs require creative thought and outputs. Because experiencing high-activation positive emotions typically aids the creative process (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005; Fredrickson, 1998), Tyrion and Sansa engage in deep acting to put themselves into enthusiastic emotional states. Although both successfully achieve such states, Tyrion’s initial felt emotion is calmness, whereas Sansa’s is sadness. Thus, Sansa travels a greater emotional distance that requires a change in both valence and an increase in activation (whereas Tyrion only has to increase his activation level). Unfortunately, Sansa’s journey requires more effort and attention, leaving her feeling depleted and at a disadvantage when it comes to subsequent creative behavior (see Johnson, Muraven, Donaldson, & Lin, 2018). As a result, Tyrion will generate more creative thoughts and outputs, even though both he and Sansa are in high-activation positive emotional states. Other affect-laden work behaviors (e.g., citizenship, voice, and counterproductive behaviors; Johnson, Tolentino, Rodopman, & Cho, 2010; Lee & Allen, 2002) should similarly be affected by the emotional distances that employees travel, above and beyond what their current emotional states are.

Testing Our Framework

In addition to the above implications, our framework also has the potential to stimulate future research. A first step would be to empirically test our framework to ascertain its predictive validity. In laboratory settings, this can be accomplished by experimentally inducing various emotions around the

affect circumplex and then instructing individuals to display emotions that differ in distance and direction through either surface acting or deep acting. Initially, scholars should focus on key movements relevant to our framework (i.e., north-south, east-west) and then eventually should examine more complex movements (i.e., northwest-southeast, northeast-southwest). In field settings, the use of experience-sampling methodology, whereby individuals are surveyed multiple times over a short period (e.g., twice a day for two weeks), would allow scholars to capture the effects of emotional distance on an episodic, within-individual basis (see Beal, 2015). Scholars using such an approach would benefit from including occupations likely to display both positive and negative emotions toward others (e.g., managers, coaches, police officers, etc.). Subjective, self-reported measures could be created by asking individuals to report the extent to which they altered the valence and activation level of their display (to assess emotional distance), as well as the extent to which they altered their display in a particular direction (e.g., from negative to positive, from more activated to less activated).

Even better, emotional distance and direction should be derived by capturing episodes (e.g., through event-contingent experience sampling) where an emotion was displayed toward another individual and assessing the specific emotion individuals felt prior to the episode and the specific emotion displayed during that episode. For example, individuals could be presented with a list of prototypical emotions shown in Figures 2 and 3 and asked to choose the emotion that best represents what they were feeling just before the interaction, as well as the emotion that best represents the emotion they displayed during the interaction. Assessments of the extent to which they experienced and displayed emotion would then be coded into continuous measures capturing changes in valence and activation, as well as the direction of those changes.

For example, an individual who reports that they were experiencing anger "to a great extent" yet displayed calmness "to a great extent" would be coded as higher in emotional distance than another individual who reports that they were experiencing anger "to a great extent" yet displayed disappointment either "to a great extent" or "to little extent," because the former individual altered both the valence and activation level of their display, whereas the latter altered activation only. Although we

stipulated that valence and activation both contribute to emotional distance, by coding valence and activation separately, researchers would be able to ascertain whether one factor is more influential than the other (i.e., their relative importance) or to explore the possibility of interactions between changes in valence and activation. Alternatively, valence and activation could be combined into a single distance score. For direction, the particular changes made should be coded (e.g., whether the movement was from positive to negative or vice versa, whether the movement was from activated to deactivated or vice versa).

Although we urge scholars to assess distance and direction during emotion regulation episodes, there is still a need to capture the method of travel used during a given episode. Interestingly, the most frequently used measures of surface acting and deep acting do not reference the specific emotions being displayed (which only reinforces our point that the literature has ignored emotional origins and destinations). For example, surface acting measures include statements such as "I just pretended to have the emotions I needed to display" and "I faked the emotions I showed," whereas deep acting measures include statements such as "I tried to actually experience the emotions I must show" and "I made an effort to actually feel the emotions that I needed to display" (Grandey, 2003; see also Diefendorff et al., 2005). Consequently, existing measures of these strategies would pair well with our above suggestions concerning measures of emotional distance and direction, regardless of the specific emotional destination.

In terms of analysis, the use of polynomial regression and response surface analyses (e.g., Edwards, 2002) would allow researchers to examine the joint effects of emotional distance, emotional direction, and emotion regulation strategy on outcomes such as effort and depletion, dissonance, inauthenticity, and subsequent well-being and performance. The joint examination of all three aspects of the emotion regulation journey would allow scholars to determine their relative importance, eventually culminating in topographical maps and response surfaces that reflect the accumulated evidence. The actual maps that result from empirical research may reveal that distances theorized to be equivalent (e.g., journeys from the northwest to the southwest are equal in distance to journeys from the northeast to the southeast) are not (in terms of their effects on actors), which would alter the square

shape of each map. Similarly, it may be that changes in activation (i.e., journeys from north to south or south to north) are not equivalent (in terms of their effects on actors) to changes in valence (i.e., journeys from east to west or west to east), which would alter the topography of each map. In essence, scholars should determine whether the effects of distance and direction are additive (as we have proposed) or interactive and more complex, which would alter the surfaces shown in Figures 2 and 3 (e.g., from flat to curved).

Extending Our Framework

Beyond testing our propositions directly, there are several ways scholars can extend our framework. For example, when discussing the importance of the emotional direction, we focused on movements from positive to negative emotions (and vice versa) but did not make specific predictions about neutral emotion. Neutrality is often described as dispassion, restraint, and the absence of strong feelings (e.g., Morris & Feldman, 1996; Wharton & Erickson, 1993). By definition, it lacks a clear valence (i.e., neither positive nor negative). In terms of activation, neutrality is not intensely felt and, thus, represents a more deactivated than activated state (Rubin & Talarico, 2009), placing it near the south in the affect circumplex. Consequently, we expect that our propositions involving emotional distance would generally apply to displays of neutral emotion (e.g., one can travel far emotionally when neutral emotions are involved, and the journey is still depleting). However, we suspect that our proposed relationships would be weaker when final displays involve neutrality. That is, when surface acting is used, changing valence from negative to neutral is less harmful to individuals than changing valence from negative to positive, because less distance is traveled in the former situation. When deep acting is used, changing valence from positive to neutral is less harmful to individuals than changing valence from positive to negative, because less distance is traveled in the former situation and felt emotion is less negative.

Researchers should also examine situations where individuals feel emotionally ambivalent, since evidence suggests that people can feel, for example, happy and sad at the same time (Larsen & McGraw, 2011). Although such bittersweet situations are the exception rather than the norm, they would have interesting implications for our framework. It

may be that if one's emotional origin contains elements of one's emotional destination, then emotional distance will be reduced because part of one's destination will already have been reached. However, if there is no overlap between one's emotional origin and emotional destination, then the emotional journey may be especially difficult as the individual wrestles with conflicting emotions and attempts to achieve a different display. Scholars should examine these possibilities by capturing not only the dominant emotion an individual is feeling prior to an emotion regulation attempt but also the extent to which the individual feels other secondary emotions.

In developing our arguments about directions involving changes in valence, we assume that most people prefer to experience positive emotions over negative emotions. Although this assumption is consistent with hedonic models of well-being (Thoresen et al., 2003; Wegener & Petty, 1994), the notions of trait congruence (see Little, 2000, and Moskowitz & Côté, 1995) and self-verification (Swann, 1983) suggest that some individuals (e.g., those high in neuroticism) are more comfortable with feeling negative states than others. In addition, characteristics such as self-monitoring may mitigate the effects of travel, regardless of direction, because high self-monitors are more comfortable with changing their emotional displays to meet the demands of a given situation (Scott, Barnes, & Wagner, 2012). Thus, individual differences relevant to emotional displays and experiences likely serve as important boundary conditions for our framework and are therefore worthy topics for future research.

Conclusion

Our theoretical framework suggests that we could learn much more about emotion regulation by conceptualizing it as a journey characterized by the *distance* and *direction* one travels, rather than just by one's method of travel (i.e., surface and deep acting). To date, the extant literature has overlooked people's emotional origins and has assumed a limited set of emotional destinations, thereby obfuscating possible changes in the valence and activation of people's emotions. By virtue of the variety of emotions that individuals experience on a day-to-day basis and the emotions they may need to express in a given situation, the emotional journey they undertake when regulating their emotions may be far in some cases and near in others, and the

specific route they take on that journey may be difficult in some cases and easy in others. As our theory makes clear, a joint consideration of these differences in emotional distance and emotional direction holds great explanatory power for people's subsequent well-being and performance. We hope that our theoretical framework motivates organizational scholars to take roads less traveled in order to construct a broader and more complete map of the emotional journeys faced by individuals at work.

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