DIFFERENTIATING THE DOMAINS OF DIRTY WORK IN ANIMAL EUTHANASIA

by

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ABSTRACT

ROBERT MICHAEL BICKMEIER. Differentiating the domains of dirty work in animal euthanasia. (Under the direction of DR. STEVEN G. ROGELBERG)

This study distinguished two domains of taint in dirty work empirically and theoretically in terms of involvement with a core dirty task and relationships with individual-level variables. Archival data from a web-based survey of a large sample of animal euthanasia workers (N = 556) from shelters across the United States were analyzed. Physical taint and moral taint significantly related to a hypothesized dirty task (animal euthanasia). Physical taint significantly related to both emotional drain and job satisfaction, whereas moral taint did not significantly relate to either emotional drain or job satisfaction in the presence of physical taint. These relationships were observed while controlling for the effects of a core dirty task indicating that taint has a unique relationship with emotional drain and job satisfaction. The reports of taint and the relationships observed in this study strongly challenge previously held notions that taint and dirty work should be studied prescriptively. Instead, results from this study suggest that dirty work should be studied from the perspective of dirty workers, and the taint of dirty work should be examined across distinct domains.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CFA	confirmatory factor analysis
COR	Conservation of Resources
EFA	exploratory factor analysis
MBI	Maslach Burnout Inventory
MOAQ	Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire
SDS	Shelter Diagnostic System
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SJT	System Justification Theory

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In addition to the usual challenges associated with work, some jobs and the people who undertake those jobs are stigmatized and systematically devalued for their very purpose. That is, some core aspect of the work is tainted on one or more domains: physical, moral, or social (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Hughes, 1962). This taint, or dirtiness, drives others to denigrate or view the dirty work with disgust, so they ultimately stigmatize those who do the work (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Kreiner, Ashforth, & Sluss, 2006). Naturally, the effects of such stigma have serious consequences for individuals trying to develop a valuable, esteem-enhancing social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986): their work identity may be consistently devalued by others (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Kreiner et al., 2006). Thus, that work identity may be a source of dissatisfaction and strain at work (Baran et al., 2009; Reeve, Rogelberg, Spitzmüller, & DiGiacomo, 2005). Consequently, we expect that valuable, personal resources will be dedicated to managing and developing one's work identity in spite of its associated dirt, and those resources will be expended negating, normalizing, and otherwise combating the effects of stigma arising from the taint of that dirty work (COR Theory: Hobfoll, 1989; 2001; Baran et al., 2012). Ultimately, the depletion of those personal resources produces deleterious effects such as increased work-related strain and emotional exhaustion, and reduced job satisfaction (Baran et al., 2009; Reeve et al., 2005). Essentially, the environment which fosters the development of work-related identity becomes more draining and less satisfying in the presence of the taint of dirty work.

In the following study, animal shelter workers are examined vis-à-vis their experiences with animal euthanasia (a core dirty task marked by both physical and moral taint), the taint of their dirty work, and their reports of emotional drain and job satisfaction.

In addition to managing the day-to-day stress and hassles of work in animal shelters, those workers who conduct euthanasia also grapple with the taint (and resultant stigma) of their dirty work (Baran et al., 2012; Reeve et al., 2005). Previous research has broadly linked animal euthanasia to variables such as job satisfaction and strain (Baran et al., 2012; Reeve et al., 2005), and one study has even looked at the psychological salience of conducting euthanasia as a predictor of these variables (Baran et al., 2012). For the first time, the aforementioned domains of taint relevant to shelter workers are separated empirically and examined for their distinct relationships to individual variables. In other words, this study does not view dirty work as a monolithic construct to be ascribed by the researchers. Instead, we distinguished the domains of taint theoretically and empirically and measured the experience of taint as reported by the workers themselves.

Dirty Work. Observers socially construct the "dirty work" of occupations around three domains of taint. Namely, physical taint concerns work associated with such dirty substances as grime, filth, or waste. Socially tainted work involves interaction with or as one of society's undesirables: criminals, the mentally ill, etc. Morally tainted work involves actions of a dubious or objectionable nature, e.g., exotic dancing, handling of the dead, or animal euthanasia, or activities that violate some norm (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Kreiner et al., 2006). Society at large routinely expects these dirty tasks to be completed, yet its citizens stigmatize such dirty workers as a means to separate the taint of dirty work from the rest of the public (Hughes, 1962). Naturally, dirty workers are thus ousted to a social out-group, while the rest of society retains its status as a separate, 'clean' in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In response, dirty workers navigate a complicated identity process as they grapple with systematic stigma, internal and external threats to their self-definitions, and difficulties

in finding a socially-validating, esteem-enhancing in-group in addition to the challenges normally faced by 'clean' workers.

Constructing the dirty work identity. As argued by Kreiner et al. (2006), dirty work can be best understood by integrating Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and System Justification Theory (SJT; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek; 2004; Jost & Elsbach, 2001). SIT predicts that people seek a socially-validated, esteem-enhancing identity, and they attain such an identity by grouping themselves and others by membership in socially constructed in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Dirty workers, unlike other "clean" workers, face a challenge in constructing socially-validated, esteem-enhancing identities from their occupations by virtue of the taint therein. Animal shelter workers, in particular, must rationalize values such as the desire to care for animals and preserve animal life with the necessity of euthanasia and the taint associated with the death and the dirt of caring for such animals.

Systematic stigma. Davis (1984) observed that some dirty workers acknowledged and then accepted that their work is dirty. This is in part because dirty workers enter their occupations with many of the same values as those who will come to stigmatize them. In other words, those individual who become dirty workers very likely once considered the work they now do as tainted. Upon taking a dirty work occupation, such dirty workers must manage conflicting accounts of the value of their work. Dirty workers' previous beliefs, which mark dirty work as something to be stigmatized, are at odds with a new piece of the dirty workers' self-definitions: finding value in tainted work. Just as external forces (e.g. clients, coworkers) devalue dirty work and the people who do it, dirty workers must rationalize their own previously-held beliefs (that such work is dirty) in their quest for a

valuable, esteem-enhancing social identity. That is, dirty workers face both external threats and internal threats to their identities.

System Justification Theory explains that, under certain conditions, individuals will come to perceive such threats of stigma as part of a "just system," ultimately accepting and internalizing those threats (Jost et al., 2004; Jost & Elsbach, 2001). Just as dirty workers learn from their peers how to negate, deflect, and deny stigma associated with their work, they encounter forces that legitimate those sources of stigma. Stigma may originate from otherwise credible sources such as the dirty worker's social network (especially those important or close individuals who are not dirty workers themselves), institutions such as general media, and/or social superiors (Jost & Elsbach, 2001; Kreiner et al., 2006). In other words, only a just system could produce the values which lead to the dirty worker's stigma (Jost et al., 2004; Jost & Elsbach, 2001). Ultimately, dirty workers must rationalize a core, meaningful identity (their occupational selves) that both members of the world around them and they themselves find reason to stigmatize. Those animal shelter workers who conduct euthanasia place their need to find value in their work at odds with deeply-held values for the preservation of animal life and against the destruction of animal life.

Intensity of taint. Taint can vary in strength. Kreiner et al. (p. 621, 2006) distinguish between breadth of taint, "the proportion of work that is dirty or the centrality of the dirt to the occupational identity," and depth of taint, "the intensity of dirtiness and the extent to which a worker is directly involved in the dirt." Simply put, some tasks are stigmatized more strongly than others, and some occupations are defined more strongly by some stigmatized task(s) than others. Animal euthanasia workers perform a strongly stigmatized task—the killing of animals—and they also perform less strongly stigmatized tasks, such as cleaning

animal waste. Although occupations within animal shelters may vary in how central the dirtiness of the associated tasks are, animal euthanasia workers are almost certainly defined by the morally and physically tainted task of euthanasia. Indeed, research suggests that for animal euthanasia workers, euthanasia is an onerous and centrally defining task (e.g. Baran et al., 2009; Reeve et al., 2005). Moreover, work associated with multiple forms and sources of taint should result in stronger reactions, i.e. dirtier work (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2014).

Differentiating the domains of taint. Ashforth & Kreiner (2014) also propose that moral taint is qualitatively different from physical or social taint. Sanitizing restrooms or driving a taxi may be dirty due to the tasks' association with physical and social taint, respectively, but euthanizing animals is "*evil"* due to its moral taint. The conditions of physically and socially tainted work serve some necessary, valued purpose (i.e. cleanliness, transportation) which outweighs the stigma associated with the work. In other words, office workers may separate themselves from the custodial workers who clean and dispose of trash and stigmatize them for the dirty work that they do, yet demand and even expect such services to be performed. To clarify, physical and socially tainted tasks, e.g. collecting garbage and apprehending criminals, are necessary for the normal function of society, despite the dirt or taint associated with them. Workers who undertake those tasks are thus afforded a sort of protection or "necessity shield" (Ashforth & Kreiner, p. 84, 2014). Reeve et al., (2005) gathered some initial evidence supporting the notion of a necessity shield in animal shelter workers: animal shelter workers who saw euthanasia as more of a necessity tended to report less euthanasia-related strain.

Morally tainted tasks, in contrast, are not altogether necessary—more important, they may be viewed as too wrong or dirty to be afforded the necessity shield given to physically

or socially tainted work. For example, animal euthanasia workers, when associated with the death of unwanted animals, may be seen as perpetrators of wrongdoing—"dog killers" or worse despite the fact that euthanasia is typically a function of society's negligence of animals and/or unwillingness to adopt "used" animals (cf. http://www.americanhumane.org/animals/adoption-pet-care/issues-information/pet-overpopulation.html). That is, the stigma associated with morally-tainted work is greater relative to the perceived value of the work than in comparison to the stigma of physically or socially tainted work. As a result, Ashforth & Kreiner (2014) propose that morally tainted work will be perceived as dirtier than physically or socially tainted work. Thus, we respond to Ashforth & Kreiner (2014) by investigating the empirical distinctiveness of two domains of taint as they relate to work.

Studying animal euthanasia workers. We have chosen to study animal shelter workers who conduct euthanasia for precisely these reasons: they have previously been described as conducting dirty work tainted in multiple domains (physical and moral), and must contend with the consequences of such work in addition to their normal duties. However, scant research has examined the relationship between the various domains of taint and personal variables. Indeed, only very recently have researchers begun to consider the value of treating the domains of taint as empirically distinct predictors of variables in dirty work (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2014; Lai, Chan, & Lam, 2013). Specifically, we examine how perceptions of taint *by domain* relate to dirty task involvement, and how those separate domains of taint predict employee-level variables. We build on previous research with animal shelter workers (Baran et al., 2012) to investigate the relationship between how involvement in a dirty task relates to how employees believe others perceive their job. We go beyond linking task involvement to

negative evaluation of a task: we seek to explain the magnitude of perceived taint as it relates to the degree of dirty task involvement. First, we examine whether each theorized domain of taint is associated with the core dirty task. In other words, are jobs merely dirty, or are they tainted by specific domains? Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Degree of dirty task involvement (average number of hours, days per week) positively relates to perceptions of physical taint.

Hypothesis 1b: Degree of dirty task involvement (average number of hours, days per week) positively relates to perceptions of moral taint.

Taint and resource loss. Hobfoll's (1989; 2001) Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory can be invoked to explain how individuals experience perceptions of taint. According to COR Theory, individuals act to acquire, retain, develop, and protect valued personal, psychological, social, and other resources (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001). These resources are valued as ends in and of themselves, and as means to other valued ends, such as personal health, wellbeing, and a positive sense of self (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001). Furthermore, personal resources protect individuals against the negative and even harmful effects of strain and stress. People act to avoid losing resources, because they experience resource loss more strongly than resource gain (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001). That is, the effects of resource loss are felt more strongly than a gain of resources of equivalent magnitude. Even the perceived threat of resource loss, which is demonstrably more pervasive and salient to individuals possessing fewer resources than their peers, can drain and exhaust valuable resources (Baran et al., 2012; Hobfoll, 1989; 2001). Finally, more experienced workers may possess superior strategies to protect against resource loss or deflect the effects of taint than less-experienced workers, so we control for organizational tenure in the study analyses.

Occupational prestige. COR Theory also predicts a "rich get richer, poor get poorer" effect. Those individuals with fewer resources in the first place, such as individuals of lower social status, find resource gain more challenging than their more resource-rich peers, and people with fewer resources are also more prone to resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001). For some dirty workers, they may work in positions that are both stigmatized and low prestige, or low status. For example, the National Opinion Research Center (from the 1989 General Social Survey) reports an occupational prestige score of 21.16 for animal caretakers—compare to similar scores for maids (20.05), janitors (22.33), and kitchen workers (24.08) and contrast with scores around or above 70 for the top-rated occupations, i.e. CEO, engineer, professor. Thus, dirty workers, such as animal shelter workers, likely possess fewer resources to begin with relative to their 'clean' peers, making the sting of resource loss or the threat thereof that much more severe. These potential cycles of resource gain and/or loss underscore how employees approach and respond to the demands of work and their personal lives. For animal shelter workers, euthanasia is often the core dirty task from which taint is derived, though routine care and cleaning of animals may also act as a source of taint (Baran et al., 2009; Baran et al., 2012; Reeve et al., 2005; Rogelberg et al., 2007). Hence, animal euthanasia workers represent an ideal sample to focus on in this paper seeking to understand dirty work, taint, and indicators of resource loss as they perform tainted work without the benefit of occupational prestige.

The effects of perceptions of taint. In addition to facing the myriad demands that other workers face in their day-to-day activities, workers who engage with core, dirty tasks devote considerable resources to simply validating who they are—dirty workers are taxed by frequent threats (stigma) to their identity. For example, animal shelter workers might remind

themselves that euthanasia is necessary for some animals, note that it is not the animal shelter worker's fault that the animal must be euthanized, vent their feelings, and/or emotionally detach themselves from *all* animals in the shelter (Baran et al., 2009). These efforts ultimately diminish the dirty workers' abilities to derive satisfaction from the work itself and increase the stress associated with the work itself (Baran et al., 2012).

As these personal resources are exhausted, individuals become more and more likely to appraise the demands of work and personal life as draining and to find the work itself less satisfying (Hobfoll, 2001). Animal euthanasia workers grapple with maintaining a positive identity in light of the physical taint (association with animal detritus and death) and moral taint (willful destruction of animal life) of their work. Moreover, animal euthanasia directly contradicts the efforts of animal shelter workers to preserve animal lives, and allows the public at large to vilify and stigmatize them for euthanizing unwanted or unhealthy animals. It is no surprise then that Baran et al. (2012) observed that animal euthanasia workers reported euthanasia-related strain and guilt in addition to coping with the stigma of animal euthanasia. To elaborate, the taint associated with work uniquely relates to personal variables like emotional drain and satisfaction with the work itself. Whether dirty workers successfully identify with their peers and actively deflect any stigma-based threats to their social identities or fail to enact any such strategies to counter the effects of taint, they expend additional effort, will, and personal resources merely to maintain their self-definitions.

For animal euthanasia workers, euthanasia produces its own associated strain (cf. Baran et al., 2012; Reeve et al., 2005), but the actual physical and moral taint of euthanasia and, more broadly, animal care spurs the stigmatized identity process which accounts for its unique, personal costs. That is, even animal euthanasia workers who actively discredit

members of a stigmatizing public devote some amount of additional resources to countering the otherwise negative effects of taint, thereby increasing job-related emotional drain and decreasing job-related satisfaction. Ashforth & Kreiner (2014) propose that dirty workers associated with moral taint will rely more heavily on other morally-tainted dirty workers for support and enact more stigma-negation tactics than dirty workers associated with physical or social taint. The consequences should be clear: if morally-tainted dirty workers rely more on other dirty workers for support (i.e. have fewer options for interpersonal support), and undertake more activities to combat stigma (i.e. expend more resources managing stigmatized identities), then they should have fewer resources at their disposal, and thus more emotional drain and less satisfaction at work. Because euthanasia involvement should relate to both perceptions of taint and personal variables, we include it as a control variable in the analyses.

Emotional drain as a consequence of taint. More recent conceptualizations of burnout identify emotional exhaustion (i.e. emotional drain) as the core mode of burnout (Koeske & Koeske, 1989). As individuals face increasing demands and stress at work, the resulting strain may manifest as emotional exhaustion, and even depersonalization if such exhaustion persists (Koeske & Koeske, 1989). In a COR Theory lens, the effects of grappling with dirty work on emotional drain should be clear: each tactic applied to negate, normalize, or combat stigma presents a demand on the dirty worker. Moreover, the resources allocated to the management of stigma and a dirty work identity leave fewer resources to cope with other work demands. Therefore, other aspects of the work should be even more emotionally draining as fewer resources are available to the dirty worker to face the travails of work. In addition, animal euthanasia workers have reported a need to separate themselves from

euthanasia, to perform it less frequently, and to take more frequent breaks. Some respondents even noted reducing euthanasia involvement is necessary to avoid getting "burned out" or that mental health days were needed (Rogelberg et al., p. 337, 2007). Indeed, Koeske & Koeske (1989) argue that emotional drain results directly from the demands of work and limited ability of workers to meet those demands over time. Taint should act as an additional demand on dirty workers, drawing precious resources away from other tasks. For animal euthanasia workers, the internalized conflict between finding value in their work and encountering threats to that value (i.e. stigma), should result in emotional drain above and beyond that associated with euthanasia itself. That is, taint should be uniquely associated with emotional drain, controlling for the effects of actual euthanasia involvement. To date, no study has fully examined the relationship between perceptions of taint and emotional drain. Instead, some studies have linked the actual task to emotional drain (e.g. Reeve et al., 2005). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2a: Perceptions of taint (physical and moral) independently, positively associate with emotional drain.

Reduced job satisfaction as a consequence of taint. Similarly, the resource depletion inherent in dirty work should entail considerable dissatisfaction (Hobfoll, 2001). That is, the tainted conditions which produce stigma (close proximity to death, violation of internalized norms) interfere with processes that might lead the work to be satisfying. For example, dirty workers struggle to find meaning (as a result of internal and external threats to the validity of their occupational identities), or they may work under undesirable conditions (dirt, filth, death, etc.)—that is, both the process of devoting additional resources to manage the stigma of the work and the tainted conditions in which the work is undertaken should result in

dissatisfaction. Animal euthanasia workers expend resources managing the stigma of euthanizing animals, and often work under cramped conditions. Moreover, limited organizational resources often result in the need to euthanize animals which could have otherwise been adopted out. Indeed, Reeve et al. (2004) identified euthanasia of healthy animals as a major downturn for employee experiences with euthanasia. The taint surrounding animal euthanasia should produce conflicting accounts of the value of the work itself. That is, even justified euthanasia should be tainted. In addition, Reeve et al. (2005) linked euthanasia-related strain to reduced job satisfaction; however, they did not examine the specific effects of taint. For animal euthanasia workers, the stigma of euthanasia should contribute to dissatisfaction with their jobs: they manage a self-definition that consistently faces legitimate, devaluing threats from others. In other words, the value or worth of their work, from which they could otherwise derive satisfaction, is diminished by virtue of being tainted. We propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2b: Perceptions of taint (physical and moral) independently, negatively associate with job satisfaction.

Potential moderators of the effects of taint. In addition to the direct relationships listed above, we hypothesize several potential moderators in the relationship between taint (physical and moral) and job satisfaction and between taint and emotional drain. Namely, tenure and euthanasia involvement can each influence the relationship between taint and job satisfaction and between taint and emotional drain. As noted above, COR Theory outlines how resources may be depleted, and how resource depletion may affect individuals and their appraisals of the environment (Hobfoll, 2001). COR Theory also notes that resources may act as buffers against demands and the effects of strain (Hobfoll, 2001). That is, some qualities

of the environment and individual differences (i.e. tenure) may protect against resource loss, and more specifically, the consequences of such losses. Other variables, i.e. euthanasia involvement, may have a multiplicative effect with taint. That is, such variables may strengthen or otherwise enhance the relationship between taint and other variables. We outline two hypothesized moderators below.

Tenure as a buffer. We expect tenure in the organization to moderate the relationship between either form of taint and emotional drain and between taint and job satisfaction such that shorter tenure strengthens the relationship between taint and the variables, and longer tenure diminishes the strength of the relationship between taint and the variables. Indeed, Reeve et al. (2004) identified several turning points that engendered downturns or upturns in employee reactions to euthanasia. Specifically, first-time euthanasia experiences and difficult euthanasia experiences were both associated with downturns in employee reactions (Reeve et al., 2004). Both scenarios are more likely to occur (and to have occurred more recently) among less-experienced animal euthanasia workers, for they lack the skills and experience to handle more challenging euthanasia cases. Upturn scenarios included additional euthanasia technical training, improved euthanasia methods, and reduced amount of euthanasia for the individual (Reeve et al., 2004). These occurrences are more prevalent among more seasoned animal euthanasia workers, because they have likely had more access to euthanasia training over time and more experience to improve euthanasia methods.

More-experienced workers may be privileged in the assignment of tasks, thereby receiving a lower euthanasia workload than the ‘fresh’ or newer animal euthanasia workers. Newer employees likely face more challenges developing their identity and orienting themselves to the work, and they may possess fewer and less effective strategies to combat

the stigma of dirty work. The more experienced employees have likely had more time to identify with an in-group of stigmatized peers. They are also likely to have developed a broader suite of tactics to combat taint, and those tactics are likely to be more successful and practiced. Consequently, those tactics may demand less effort and more fully negate the effects of taint. Indeed, some of the more experienced workers may bear the mark of stigma as a 'badge of honor' (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Thus, we hypothesize that tenure should act as a buffer between both forms of taint and emotional drain and job satisfaction:

Hypothesis 3a: Organizational tenure moderates the relationship between taint (physical and moral) and emotional drain and between taint and job satisfaction. When tenure is greater, the strength of the relationship between taint and the variables should be diminished, and when tenure is less, the strength of the relationship between taint and the variables should be stronger.

Euthanasia involvement enhancing the effects of taint. Involvement with a core dirty task should make the tainted aspects of the work more cognitively available. This is because dirty workers expend efforts managing a stigmatized work identity, actively reflecting upon the taint and the work itself (Baran et al., 2012). Baran et al. (2012) examined how euthanasia involvement and identification of euthanasia as the most negative task predicted various variables. Specifically, Baran and colleagues (2012) found that frequency and duration of euthanasia involvement negatively related to job satisfaction and likelihood of discussing work with others and positively related to some indicators of strain. In addition, employees who identified animal euthanasia as the most negative task at work demonstrated higher levels of types of strain. As noted previously, euthanasia-related strain relates to a host of unpleasant variables uniquely beyond work stress, including reduced job satisfaction

(Reeve et al., 2005). In other words, animal euthanasia and that taint constructed around it present unique demands, drawing resources away from other duties and activities. Consequently, we expect that involvement in the dirty task, animal euthanasia, should make the taint of the work more salient (Baran et al., 2012). That is, as workers engage in more animal euthanasia on average, the relationship between taint (both physical and moral) and both job satisfaction and emotional drain should be greater. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3b: Involvement with euthanasia moderates the relationship between taint (physical and moral) and job satisfaction and between taint and emotional drain. When involvement with euthanasia is more frequent, the strength of the relationship between taint and the variables should be greater, and when involvement with euthanasia is less frequent, the strength of the relationship between taint and the variables should be less.

CHAPTER 2: MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample and procedure. In order to investigate multiple domains of taint and its relationship to a core dirty task, we chose to focus on animal shelter workers who currently conduct animal euthanasia. Previous research (e.g. Baran et al., 2012), has noted that animal shelter work in general is tainted, and more specifically, animal euthanasia is a strongly tainted task. Data for this study were made available for archival records from the Shelter Diagnostic System, a consulting unit specializing in serving animal shelters, collected data from shelters across the United States. Initially, data were provided by 1,724 employees from 29 different cross-sectional data collections (27 different organizations were surveyed, with one organization providing data from 3 years). We then separated the data into subsets for analyses. We retained a subset of the data (N = 1195) in which we conducted an exploratory factor analysis. Only those employees who indicated that they participate in euthanasia (n = 556, Mean size per organization = 20, SD = 13.9) were included in a subset for hypothesis analyses because of our focus on euthanasia involvement.

For each organization, a shelter director or manager initially contacted the Shelter Diagnostic System for consulting services (i.e. analysis of employee attitudes, perceptions and opinions). Shelter directors then spoke via phone with either the Shelter Diagnostic System program director or assistant director to discuss the specific shelter and its needs. By policy, only shelters employing 10 or more part-time or full-time individuals are eligible to participate in order to preserve the confidentiality of data. After that initial phone call, shelter directors were supplied with a link to a web-based survey for their employees to complete. The survey consisted of original items that were developed specifically to suit shelter needs. Items were developed to assess key focus areas for shelters, such as opinions about

leadership and management, experiences with volunteers and the euthanasia process, satisfaction with the job and specific tasks, stress, perceptions of taint, etc. Shelter directors or managers informed employees of the consulting service, and employees and managers were encouraged to complete the survey. Data were then collected directly from employees at all levels within the organization via an anonymous link. All responses were confidential and self-report. Typically, data were collected at once, over the course of 1 to 2 weeks. All employees were asked to indicate whether they participate in the euthanasia process. Those who affirmed that they participate in euthanasia were then directed to an additional set of items assessing experiences with the euthanasia process (i.e. training, confidence, and satisfaction) and both frequency and duration of involvement with euthanasia.

Measures

The following variables were derived from the Shelter Diagnostic System survey. With the exception of job level, each variable is a focal variable for the following analyses. Job level was recorded as a control variable. The taint items for the Shelter Diagnostic System survey were initially developed based on feedback from animal shelter workers, literature reviews, and consultations with subject matter experts as part of a selection of indicators intended to capture a broad, rich description of the experience of dirty work. The final constituent items for physical taint and moral taint were derived via exploratory factor analysis and supported via confirmatory factor analysis in separate samples. Single-item indicators (emotional drain and job satisfaction) were supplemented with additional validity evidence in a post-hoc measurement study.

Physical taint. Physical taint is the degree to which work is associated with activities and substances that are dirty, foul, noxious, or dangerous, i.e. animal waste. The items were

thus derived from the literature on physical taint to capture a broad assessment of work closely associated with filth and physical dirt. Specifically, the items captured how the respondent believed *others* perceived the work to by physically tainted. The instructions read as follows: "How do you think your specific job is viewed outside of your place of work? In other words, in your opinion, what are others' impressions of what you do for a living? They would say my specific job is (rate each phrase). . ." Respondents then indicated agreement to each word or phrase using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Physical taint consisted of the average of 3 items: "foul," "disgusting," and "dirty." Cronbach's alpha for the items are 0.83.

Moral taint. Moral taint indicates the extent to which work is done by violating culturally held norms or values, i.e. euthanizing animals. Like the physical taint items, the moral taint items were thus derived from the literature on moral taint to measure the extent to which work exhibits morally dubious qualities. Specifically, the items captured how the respondent believed *others* perceived the work to by morally tainted. The instructions read as follows: "How do you think your specific job is viewed outside of your place of work? In other words, in your opinion, what are others' impressions of what you do for a living? They would say my specific job is (rate each phrase). . ." Respondents then indicated agreement to each word or phrase using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Moral taint consisted of the average of 2 items: "immoral" and "shameful." Specifically, the factor assesses how the respondent believed *others* perceive the work to be morally tainted. Cronbach's alpha for the items are 0.91.

Euthanasia Involvement. Participants responded to two separate open-ended items indicating how many hours, on average, in a week they spend engaged in the euthanasia

process, and how many days, on average, per week they spend engaged in the euthanasia process. The researchers then recoded those responses into a continuous variable. Respondents who indicated ranges (i.e. 1-2 days per week) were scored as reporting the mathematical average of that range. For example, someone who reported participating in euthanasia 1-2 days per week for 1-2 hours per day would be recorded as participating in euthanasia 1.5 days per week for 1.5 hours per day, respectively. In order to facilitate comparisons across the two scales (hours per day and days per week), these variables were converted to z-scores, and then the two z-scores were averaged to create a single indicator of euthanasia involvement. This indicator provided a measure of total typical amount of time spent conducting euthanasia (duration of involvement) and dispersion of time spent conducting euthanasia (frequency of involvement).

Emotional drain. Emotional drain is one of the core dimensions of burnout as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Emotional drain can best be described as a sense of depletion associated with excessive demands or insufficient available resources to meet those demands. Emotional drain was measured using a single-item developed to capture the core experience of emotional drain at work. In fact, it very closely resembles one of the emotional drain items from the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Respondents were asked to indicate "To what extent do you agree or disagree with each item below?" They responded to the item, "my job is emotionally draining," by indicating agreement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is defined in this study as the extent to which an individual is satisfied with one's job in general. That is, facet satisfactions are not included. Job satisfaction was measured using a single item developed to capture general job

satisfaction. It closely resembled items from well-researched measures of job satisfaction (e.g. the Job in General scale, the Job Diagnostic Survey, the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire). Respondents were instructed "For each item below, please indicate the extent to which you are satisfied or dissatisfied" and rated satisfaction according to the following item: "my job in general." Participants indicated their satisfaction using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = very satisfied).

Note that for both emotional drain and job satisfaction, we used a single-item indicator to assess these variables. Both items appear highly face-valid (indeed, the job satisfaction item resembles items from multiple job satisfaction scales, and the emotional drain item is nearly identical to an item from the MBI). Nevertheless, we understand that single-item indicators may raise measurement concerns. In order to support claims made using the job satisfaction and emotional drain items as indicators, we conducted a post-hoc validity study with an additional, separate sample of shelter workers. We correlated each item with an established measure of the variable of interest: we paired the single-item job satisfaction indicator with the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire General Job Satisfaction (MOAQ) subscale and we paired the emotional drain item with the emotional drain/exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. In addition, we conducted a reliability analysis in which we included the single-item indicator from the SDS survey as part of a single scale with the items from the established measure.[1]

We found significant correlations with meaningful effect sizes when we correlated each single-item indicator with the composite score for the matching scale (emotional drain:

[1] Data were collected via anonymous web-survey. Two local shelter directors were contacted to see if they would allow their employees to participate in a brief survey. One shelter director accepted. The shelter director was then provided with a link to the web-survey, which s/he distributed to his/her employees. Employees then completed the single-item indicators from the original SDS survey alongside the multiple-item scales from the established measures. $N = 19$.

$r = 0.80$, $p < .01$; job satisfaction: $r = 0.56$, $p < .01$). We also saw improvements in reliability when we added the single-item indicators to the appropriate scales. The emotional drain items from the MBI demonstrated a reliability of $\alpha = .81$, and when we added the single-item indicator for emotional drain from the SDS data, reliability increased to $\alpha = .84$. Similarly, the job satisfaction items from the MOAQ exhibited a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .88$, and when we added the single-item indicator for job satisfaction from the SDS data, reliability increased to $\alpha = .92$. Taken together, these results suggest that both of our single-item indicators converge on the constructs we expect them to (i.e. significantly correlate), and they tap into the same content domain as more well-established, multiple-item scales (i.e. they improve the reliability of those scales). Namely, reliability coefficients for both the emotional drain and job satisfaction scales increased when the single-item indicators were added to the scales, suggesting that the single-item indicators in fact duplicated some aspect of the content domain tapped by the established scales.

Job Tenure. Participants responded to an open-ended item, "how long have you worked in the shelter?" We recoded the responses to produce a continuous variable measured in months. Job tenure may relate to emotional drain, job satisfaction, reactions to euthanasia, and resources at work, so we included it as a control and a potential moderator in the analyses. On average, respondents had worked at their respective shelters for 54 months ($M = 54.52$, $SD = 57.58$).

Job Level. Respondents indicated whether they were part of management or general (i.e. non-managerial) staff. 72% of employees identified as staff and 28% identified as management. We dummy-coded the variable (Staff = 0, Management = 1) and inserted it as a control variable in our analyses. Managers may have access to more organization-level and

other resources, thereby affecting their appraisals of stress. They may have more autonomy in their responsibilities, and thus greater satisfaction than non-managerial employees. Ashforth et al. (2007) reported managers of dirty workers across the different domains of taint, and those managers reported devoting personal time and resources to normalizing and combatting the stigma leveraged at their employees. Finally, management-level employees may enjoy some level of status for their positions which is protective against (but distinct from) stigma.

Deriving the Taint Items

Exploratory factor analysis. For the following exploratory factor analysis, we used SPSS 18 and conformed to the following procedures: we selected principal axis-factoring and oblimin rotation on a subset (N = 1195) of the larger sample of 1,724 employees. This subset (N = 1195) consisted of animal shelter workers separate from the sample used for the hypotheses analyses. That is, we derived our measures of taint using EFA from a first sample, then conducted our hypothesis tests on a second sample. We examined a scree plot and retained factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 (i.e. the Kaiser rule). Only items demonstrating a factor loading of 0.3 or greater and clearly loading on only a single factor were retained (see Table 1 for complete list of factors in use in this study and associated factor loadings).

These items were developed to assess how respondents thought others would view their jobs; that is, perceptions of taint. In order to construct the physical and moral taint measures, 12 items from the survey were factor analyzed using the procedure described above. For these 12 items, respondents were asked to indicate “How do you think your specific job is viewed by others outside of your place of work? In other words, in your

opinion, what are others' impressions of what you do for a living? They would say my specific job is. . ." and then respondents were presented with the following list of short descriptors: "important," "useful," "valuable," "a good one," "foul," "honorable," "disgusting," "healthy," "dirty," "worth doing," "immoral," and "shameful." Seven of the items are 'positive-valence' (important, useful, valuable, a good one, honorable, healthy, and worth doing), and the remaining five items are 'negative-valence' (foul, disgusting, dirty, immoral, and shameful). All of the descriptors were scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

The 7 positive-valence items constituted a distinct factor from the taint items. In other words, positive perceptions of one's job are not merely mathematical opposites of taint perceptions. In an effort to be thorough, the positive-valence items were then reverse-scored and the factor analysis repeated. Again, the same factor structure emerged, with the positive-valence items distinct from the measures of taint. Three items emerged as clear indicators of physical taint (dirty, foul, and disgusting), and two items emerged as clear indicators of moral taint (immoral and shameful).

In addition to conducting an EFA, the researchers conducted a Q-sort task with the 12 job descriptor items listed above. Each researcher independently assigned the 12 items into theoretically-meaningful categories that would best represent the hypothesized factor structure. Agreement between the researchers was 100 percent: a "positive appraisal" dimension containing the 7 positive-valence items, a "physical taint" dimension containing the three indicators listed in Table 1, and a "moral taint" dimension including the two descriptors in Table 1. Note that the third dimension of taint, social, is absent from these analyses. As noted previously in the paper, animal shelter workers most commonly

experience moral and physical taint, thus items likely to be relevant to those domains were developed for use with the survey.

Confirmatory factor analysis. In a subset of the available data used for hypothesis testing (N = 534 due to missing data), we used AMOS 18.0 to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis of the moral taint and physical taint items. Because χ^2 tests are sensitive to sample size and our sample exceeded 500 cases, we chose to exclude the index as a descriptor of model fit. Our comparative fit index (CFI) and our standardized root mean residual (SRMR) both demonstrated excellent fit (CFI = .98, SRMR = .05). The root mean square of approximation (RMSEA) demonstrated poorer fit (RMSEA = .13). RMSEA, however, is sensitive to low degrees of freedom (*df*) and can thus be inflated as a result—our model had only 4 *df*. Taken together, these results suggest that our model fit for physical and moral taint is more than adequate. In addition, the confirmatory factor analysis supports the factor structure exhibited in the exploratory factor analysis and provides convergent validity evidence.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

Examining the independence of the data. The data provided for this study were nested—employees working in shelters. In order to examine the effects of organizational level variables, multi-level analyses were conducted using MPlus 6. Unfortunately, the available data violated assumptions for sample size in two-level models. That is, despite the large number of individual respondents (over 500), the number of organizations (fewer than 30) provided insufficient power for testing and detection of organization-level statistics. Typically, minimum sample size for two-level models ranges from at least 30 (Kreft, 1996) to at least 50 (Cheung & Au, 2005) for each level. Unsurprisingly, the multi-level modeling did not produce evidence for an organization-level effect. In addition, intra-class coefficients (ICC) were calculated to detect the presence of potential organization-level effects. If sufficient agreement among raters existed, then support for an organization-level effect could be inferred. Kreft and de Leeuw (1998) recommend that ICC values greater than 0.10 suggest the presence of organization-level effects. We used the guidelines set forth by LeBreton & Sentor (2008) to calculate ICC values for the variables of interest. None of the variables approached an ICC value of 0.10, so we focused our analyses at the individual-level.

Correlations and descriptive statistics. Table 2 includes the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations for the variables of interest. We tested whether euthanasia involvement relates to perceptions of taint along with the relationships between the job satisfaction and emotional drain, predictor variables, and control variables. Indeed, euthanasia involvement significantly, positively correlated with both physical taint ($r = .37$, $p < .01$) and moral taint ($r = .34$, $p < .01$). Thus, both Hypothesis 1a & 1b are supported. The variables largely correlated as expected. Job level and job tenure, however, correlated only

with euthanasia involvement (r = -.11, p < .05, and r = .09, p < .05, respectively). In other words, management level personnel are participating in euthanasia less frequently, yet workers who have been employed at the shelter for longer are conducting euthanasia slightly more often. Physical taint modestly, negatively correlated with job satisfaction (r = -.23, p < .01) and positively correlated with emotional drain (r = .33, p < .01). Likewise, moral taint negatively correlated with job satisfaction (r = -.19, p < .01) and positively correlated with emotional drain (r = .24, p < .01). Physical taint and moral taint significantly correlated with each other (r = .50, p < .01).

Given the correlation coefficient between the two forms of taint we argue that the forms of taint are distinct, yet related variables. It is worth noting that, on average, animal euthanasia workers in this sample reported less moral taint ($\bar{X}$ = 1.93) than physical taint ($\bar{X}$ = 2.84), and that difference is significant (p < 0.01). This finding was contrary to our expectations and to those who have researched taint in animal euthanasia before us. Moreover, this contradiction of our expectations calls into question the utility of ascribing taint to workers instead of measuring the actual experience of taint. Despite the differences in actual levels of taint, physical and moral taint tended to associate similarly with the variables of interest, and most notably, the proposed core dirty task of animal euthanasia.

Taint's unique effect on emotional drain. We used hierarchical multiple regression to assess the unique contribution of each form of taint to emotional drain (see Table 3). In step 1, job level and job tenure were inserted as controls. In step 2, euthanasia involvement was inserted. Finally, in step 3, both forms of taint were inserted. Neither job level nor tenure significantly predicted emotional drain in any version of the model. In step 2, euthanasia involvement significantly, positively predicted emotional drain (β = 0.33, p < 0.01),

supporting previous evidence that euthanasia is a strain for animal shelter employees (e.g. Reeve et al., 2005). In step 3, physical taint significantly, positively related to emotional drain ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$). Moral taint did not uniquely predict emotional drain, though it related in the predicted direction ($\beta = 0.07$, *n.s.*) in the presence of physical taint. In addition, the regression coefficient for euthanasia involvement dropped (to $\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.01$) in the full model, though it still remained significant. In a separate post-hoc regression, we repeated the same hierarchical multiple regression, this time excluding physical taint to see if moral taint would predict emotional drain in the absence of physical taint. Indeed, when physical taint was removed from the model, moral taint uniquely predicted emotional drain ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, Hypothesis 2a is partially supported.

Taint's unique effect on job satisfaction. Again, we used hierarchical multiple regression to assess the unique contribution of each form of taint to job satisfaction (see Table 3). In step 1, job level and job tenure were inserted as controls. In step 2, euthanasia involvement was inserted. Finally, in step 3, both forms of taint were inserted. Neither job level nor tenure significantly predicted job satisfaction in any version of the model. In step 2, euthanasia involvement significantly related to job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.17$, $p < 0.01$). In step 3, physical taint significantly, negatively related to job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.15$, $p < 0.01$). Moral taint did not uniquely predict job satisfaction in the presence of physical taint, though it related marginally in the expected direction ($\beta = -0.10$, $p < 0.10$) in the presence of physical taint. In addition, the regression coefficient for euthanasia involvement dropped (to $\beta = -0.11$, $p < 0.01$) in the full model, though it still remained significant. As above, we repeated the regression, this time excluding physical taint to see if moral taint would predict job satisfaction in the absence of physical taint. As with emotional drain, when physical taint

was removed from the model, moral taint uniquely predicted job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.17$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, Hypothesis 2b is partially supported.

In addition, we explored whether either form of taint could moderate the relationship between the other form of taint and job satisfaction or emotional drain. The interaction of physical and moral taint did not significantly predict either job satisfaction or emotional drain. Thus, it does not appear that multiply tainted jobs (i.e. animal euthanasia) necessarily result in more severe outcomes for dirty workers; in other words, additional forms of taint do not appear to strengthen (or diminish) the effects of other forms of taint on employee variables.

Testing the interactions. In order to detect any moderators, we created several interaction terms. First, we mean-centered the variables of interest, and then we created the interaction term from the product of those mean-centered variables. Namely, we examined job tenure and euthanasia involvement as potential moderators. We tested for each moderator independently for each form of taint using hierarchical multiple regression. For each regression, we inserted the mean-centered measure of taint and the mean-centered moderator in Step 1 of the regression, and we inserted the interaction term in Step 2 of the regression. For all statistically significant interaction effects, we followed the recommendations of Aiken and West (2001) and graphed our interactions. Figures and interpretations for each hypothesized interaction are provided below.

Tenure as a buffer. The interaction between tenure and taint was significant for moral taint when predicting emotional drain (see Fig. 1). Tenure did not consistently buffer the relationship between moral taint and emotional drain. When both tenure and moral taint are low, emotional drain is lower, and when moral taint is low and tenure is greater, emotional

drain is greater. However, low tenure and high taint situations result in slightly more emotional drain than high tenure, high taint situations. In other words, it appears that any protective properties of tenure occur only at the lower levels of moral taint, and as taint increases, it can override those protective properties of tenure. Tenure did not moderate the relationship between either form of taint and job satisfaction. It appears that tenure neither amplifies nor buffers the relationship between taint and job satisfaction or between taint and emotional drain. Thus, Hypothesis 3a is partially supported. Taken together, these results suggest that greater tenure does not directly nor consistently result in the sort of resources and strategies which may affect the relationship between taint and these variables; however, less-tenured or newer employees may be better-equipped to handle low-taint situations, and more-tenured or more-experienced employees may be slightly better equipped to handle high-taint situations.

Euthanasia involvement as an enhancer. Euthanasia involvement moderated the relationship between moral taint and emotional drain at work, but it did not moderate the relationship between physical taint and emotional drain at work (see Fig. 2). Specifically, emotional drain was greatest when euthanasia involvement was high. Emotional drain increased slightly from conditions of low moral taint to higher moral taint when euthanasia involvement was high. Altogether, emotional drain was slightly greater when euthanasia involvement was high than when euthanasia involvement was low across either level of taint. Low taint, low euthanasia involvement conditions demonstrated the least emotional drain. As taint increased while keeping euthanasia involvement low, emotional drain likewise increased. Frequency of euthanasia involvement did not moderate the relationship between either form of taint and job satisfaction. Thus, Hypothesis 3b is partially supported. Taken

together, these results suggest that more frequent euthanasia involvement can lead the morally tainted aspect of dirty work (i.e. the wrongness of killing animals) to be more deleterious to workers, though limiting euthanasia involvement will not necessarily reduce any negative effects of taint on job satisfaction.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

Taint and euthanasia. Our results suggest an interesting, more complex relationship between dirty work and personal variables than previously thought. First, we built on previous work examining the relationship between dirty task involvement (animal euthanasia) and perceptions of taint by measuring extent of task involvement and degree of perceived taint (e.g. Baran et al., 2009; Reeve et al., 2005). Euthanasia involvement positively related to both forms of taint despite the significantly lower ratings of moral taint. The results underscore the importance of minimizing dirty task involvement, or "sharing the load" of dirty work. Moreover, the results tentatively suggest that workers may benefit from limiting the amount of time and/or number of days spent conducting euthanasia in terms of perceived work dirtiness.

Taint with emotional drain and job satisfaction. Building on those results, we investigated the relationship between perceptions of taint and emotional drain and job satisfaction. Taken together, our results indicate a nuanced relationship between perceptions of taint and emotional drain and job satisfaction. As noted above, animal shelter work is often considered physically tainted due to its close association with animal waste and death (animal euthanasia) and morally tainted because of the capture, detainment, and destruction of otherwise helpless animals. Physical taint consistently predicted the variables of interest, yet moral taint did not uniquely predict emotional drain or job satisfaction in the presence of physical taint. In an independent regression excluding physical taint, moral taint significantly predicted emotional drain and job satisfaction. When considering the stigma of animal euthanasia workers, physical taint—rather than moral taint—contributes to emotional drain and job satisfaction. These findings align with expectations from COR Theory (Hobfoll,

1989, 2001) and previous work by Baran et al. (2012): perhaps additional resources are spent managing the deleterious effects of physical taint, thereby increasing overall perceptions of emotional drain, and decreasing overall job satisfaction.

The results across physical and moral taint are initially perplexing but not altogether unexplainable. In the absence of knowledge of the actual identity process and stigma management strategies undertaken by the dirty workers in this study, it appears that the significantly more prevalent form of taint (physical taint, $M = 2.84$, moral taint, $M = 1.93$), physical taint, accounted for these employee variables over moral taint. In other words, perceptions of physical taint may override perceptions of moral taint for the dirty worker. That is, animal euthanasia workers are reporting greater perceptions of physical taint. It may be that moral taint is more locally-defined than culturally-sanctioned: some animal euthanasia workers may face more frequent or more severe reactions by the public to euthanasia by consequence of the prevailing norms of the region in which they work. Moreover, it may be easier for animal euthanasia workers than the general public to see the purpose in animal euthanasia, thereby discrediting perceptions of moral taint and limiting its relationship with variables like emotional drain and job satisfaction. Cognitive dissonance could play a role: animal shelter workers who undertook their jobs under the auspices of helping animals and preserving animal life may act to reduce the dissonance between those goals and acts of animal euthanasia, thereby reporting lower levels of moral taint overall. Regardless, these results call into question previous approaches to dirty work which treat the taint of dirty work as prescriptive endeavor. Dirty work is a lived experience, and theory cannot yet accurately ascribe taint to work.

Moderators of taint. The pattern of interactions tells another interesting story. Tenure does not buffer the relationship between taint and emotional drain or job satisfaction across all conditions of taint. It appears that greater tenure does not necessarily accompany greater resources or superior strategies with which to combat stigma and manage the dirty work identity. Tenure buffered the relationship between taint and emotional drain only in instances of low moral taint: individuals with lesser organizational tenure demonstrated lower emotional drain in low taint conditions than individuals with greater organizational tenure. Moreover, the protective properties of tenure occurred in a different condition than anticipated. After all, greater tenure did not necessarily demonstrate more protective effects. Perhaps newer employees are less sensitive to lower levels of taint, whereas more-tenured employees are more keenly aware of the taint associated with their work. It may be the case that for some workers, greater tenure means more isolation or burnout, thereby diminishing the available resources to direct toward managing the stigma of dirty work. For other workers, tenure may have no relation to available resources, or the added experience may yield superior resources and techniques. In fact, job tenure did not correlate with either form of taint, emotional drain, or job satisfaction. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that job tenure does not consistently buffer the relationship between taint and these variables.

Finally, euthanasia involvement moderated the relationship between moral taint and emotional drain, but not between physical taint and job satisfaction or emotional drain. It appears that conducting euthanasia relates to the moral dirtiness of the work, making salient the emotionally draining qualities of ending the very lives animal shelter workers seek to preserve. The strength of the relationship between moral taint and emotional drain in conditions of high euthanasia involvement was greater across both conditions of taint than in

conditions of low euthanasia involvement, meaning that it is crucial to manage involvement in tainted tasks in order to limit the deleterious effects of tainted work. These results corroborate findings from studies of animal euthanasia workers' coping strategies: many advocate limiting the frequency of or time spent conducting animal euthanasia or rotating euthanasia responsibilities among staff. Moreover, these results shed light on how the taint of work and the work itself may interact to relate to employee-relevant variables.

Contribution. Broadly, we have demonstrated that taint relates, as expected, to a core dirty task, supporting the notion that some core aspect of the work is tainted. Perhaps more important, we have demonstrated that our domains of taint are distinct both by our focal analyses (investigation of each domain of taint's association with a dirty task and each domain of taint's ability to predict employee variables) and a supplementary confirmatory factor analysis. Our theorized domains of taint separate into two factors in a model with adequate fit, and we were able to predict variables with the physical taint domain. The implications are twofold: first, taint needs to be examined as a multidimensional construct, and second, taint can be investigated as a unique correlate of personal variables. Furthermore, in terms of Conservation of Resources Theory, we have provided initial evidence that taint might have a relationship with resource loss. As we predicted, physical taint (and when physical taint was removed from the model, moral taint also related as expected) related to both job satisfaction and emotional drain. As well, these relationships held even when controlling for the core dirty task of animal euthanasia. That is, taint uniquely related to job satisfaction and emotional drain beyond the core dirty task itself. Although we did not formally measure resources in this study, we did measure indicators of resource loss (i.e. emotional drain and job satisfaction). Thus, we have provided yet more reason to investigate

dirty work through a Conservation of Resources Theory lens. Altogether, our findings underscore the need for continued, thoughtful research into the experiences of dirty workers.

Practical implications. In practical terms, managers or other professionals responsible for job design can reduce the potentially deleterious effects of perceived taint or dirtiness by limiting the frequency of exposure of their workers to core dirty tasks. Moreover, they can enrich the work environment (i.e. increase job satisfaction) by reducing how often workers are called upon to do dirty tasks. These results echo suggestions from earlier studies in which animal euthanasia workers themselves suggested that shelter managers distribute euthanasia responsibilities in order to limit the frequency and duration of animal euthanasia (Baran et al., 2009; Rogelberg et al., 2007). In addition, reduced satisfaction and increased emotional drain may be early warning indicators of dirty work overload. If managers are keen to keep employees satisfied and to reduce turnover, cutting back on dirty work may improve factors linked to turnover, like job satisfaction.

Since physical taint uniquely predicted emotional drain and job satisfaction beyond the effects of the core dirty task, euthanasia, managers could make strides to reduce or eliminate sources of taint in the work environment. Specifically, physical taint arises from sources of waste, actual dirt, and other effluvia associated with the work and its association with death. In addition to having employees 'share the load' of a core dirty task like euthanasia, managers can act to sanitize and clean the work environment to remove the actual dirt and waste from which physical taint derives. That is, by reducing dirt and other sources of taint from the work environment, managers can aid employees in reframing their work as clean, or at least less physically tainted. Even if managers cannot actively shape perceptions of taint toward dirty workers among clients, customers, and others who interact with the dirty

work (and indeed they try, e.g. Ashforth et al., 2007), if managers can provide strong reasons (i.e. an untainted work environment) to deflect ascriptions of taint, their employees should benefit by a reduction in the impact of taint on personal variables.

Alternatively, managers could develop interventions geared toward aiding employees in coping with the stigma of dirty work. Indeed, some animal shelter employees have suggested this very sort of program (Baran et al., 2009; Rogelberg et al., 2007). If it is unreasonable or impractical to directly attack and reduce or eliminate source of taint in the work, managers may be better served by coaching employees to better manage the taint associated with the work. For example, managers can encourage their employees to reaffirm their own valuation of the work instead of paying heed to how clients, the media, or others think of the work. More broadly, simply providing resources and support should provide generally improved ability to cope with the negative, resource-depleting effects of taint, per Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001). In other words, the taint of dirty work should not be regarded as some inherent fact of life. The dirt of dirty work can be confronted as a workplace factor to be improved upon.

Future directions and limitations. These results provide two important stepping stones for future research. First, we have provided initial evidence supporting a distinction between physical and moral taint. Naturally, researchers should look to include all three domains of taint in future research to search for empirical distinctiveness among all three domains of taint. Second, we have demonstrated that taint itself has a unique relationship with important, employee-level variables. In the future, researchers should examine whether social taint or more strongly morally-tainted work can uniquely predict employee-level variables. In addition, researchers can continue to tease apart the relationship between dirty work

involvement, perceptions of taint, and related resource expenditure (per COR Theory: Hobfoll, 1989; 2001), building upon these results. More thorough measures of emotional drain and even burnout in its entirety as well as measures of workplace stress and strain could better describe the relationship between taint and individual level variables.

As we have noted, the cross-sectional nature of our study precludes any inferences of causality. It may well be that reduced job satisfaction or increased emotional drain lead to greater reports of taint, even when respondents are asked to indicate how they believe others view their jobs. As measures of taint become more sophisticated, the next step should be to conduct longitudinal studies to more strongly establish the link between taint and other variables as well as determine causality. Moderators and related variables such as work-related identity and available personal resources need to be included in future investigations. In our study, we found that moral taint did not predict variables in the presence of physical taint, but two variables (tenure and involvement with core dirty task) moderated the relationship between moral taint and the variables of interest. Given this pattern of results, it should be worthwhile to investigate any mediators of taint as well.

Researchers should endeavor to expand the current dirty work toolbox with more thorough measures of the experience of taint. Our measures are entirely self-report; however, cause for concern over common method variance is ameliorated somewhat by our use of several objective count variables (time spent doing euthanasia, job tenure, job level), highly reliable measures, appreciable effect sizes that line up with theoretical expectations, and several non-significant associations (i.e. physical taint predicts emotional drain whereas moral taint does not). Going forward, researchers examining dirty work should venture to capture both personal ratings of taint (i.e. “I think my job is dirty) and other-ratings of taint

(i.e. “people think my job is dirty”) alongside observer ratings of taint (i.e. ratings from people outside of the dirty work context) in order to triangulate the full experience of taint. That is, discrepancies and commonalities between ratings of taint would provide a rich set of data for additional hypothesis testing. For example, interested researchers could examine the normalization and negation techniques enacted by dirty workers vis-à-vis personal and other ratings of taint.

Moreover, a measure of taint assessing multiple domains of taint could be used to test propositions set forth by Ashforth & Kreiner (2014): are morally tainted jobs “dirtier” than physically or socially tainted jobs? Finally, a thorough validation study could assess the empirical distinctiveness of the third domain of taint, social, and address any deficiency or contamination of the domains of taint as measured in the present study—our measure of perceptions of taint does not include a separate factor or set of items representing social taint, for example, and our limited number of indicators for each form of taint raises concerns about content deficiency. Our indicators were, at the least, reliable, and retained factor structure in a CFA, abating those concerns somewhat. This study may be used as a stepping stone for the design and validation of an even more robust measure of the lived experience of dirty work.

In fact, a much-needed next step will be to develop such a measure of dirty work. While our results are promising, and we have gathered some initial evidence, dirty work research needs a robust, reliable instrument to capture the varied experiences of dirty work. We suggest that researchers back away from a prescriptive approach to dirty work and taint in developing measures. Instead, dirty work measures should be derived from the experiences of a variety of dirty workers. For example, “foul,” “dirty,” and “disgusting” match theoretical

descriptions of physical taint, but dirty workers may think of their work in different terms, and just as important, the clients, media, general public, etc. who apply such labels to dirty work may use different descriptors. Moreover, the experience of taint may shift as norms and cultural-level values change. For example, if rescue animals increase in popularity, that taint associated with cleaning up after and caring for such animals may lose its potency—to quote Ashforth & Kreiner (2014), the care of such animals may be seen as much more necessary than evil. Thus, it is necessary to collect data on actual levels of taint with any dirty work research.

Researchers also need to weigh the benefits of a general measure of dirty work-related taint and a job-specific measure. While it may initially appear that developing a general or global measure of dirty work would be superior, such a measure may miss the nuances of taint inherent to a specific job. For example, our somewhat general measure of taint may have failed to capture the truly morally-tainted aspects of animal euthanasia, whereas an even more specific instrument might have more accurately represented taint among animal euthanasia workers. We may have failed to detect some of the characteristics of taint most salient to animal euthanasia workers. Hence, the focus of any instrument intended for dirty work measurement should align with the goals of the research project.

Related, dirty work research must include data on the identity process and stigma normalization tactics undertaken by dirty workers. Indeed, the current study is limited by its lack of data regarding identification processes and tactics to combat stigma. It is unclear, for example, if moral taint was significantly lower in this sample because animal euthanasia workers typically view their work as less morally tainted than physically tainted or if moral taint was less because individuals in this sample enact superior strategies to negate the effects

of moral taint. Thus, it may be the case that certain stigma normalization and negation techniques may be better suited for different domains of taint. Conversely, different forms of taint may encourage or discourage specific techniques and strategies or may relate to different identity processes. For example, physically tainted jobs may encourage workers to make comparisons to other dirtier jobs whereas workers in morally tainted jobs may attempt to view their tainted work as part of a just system (Kreiner et al., 2006). Ultimately, it is crucial to understand how and why ratings of taint vary.

Conclusion. Our results indicate that work-related taint is not a monolithic construct (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2014). The physical and moral domains of taint demonstrated empirical distinctiveness within our sample. First, there is a significant, positive relationship between engagement in dirty work and, separately, both physical and moral perceptions of taint. That is, greater involvement in dirty work associates with greater perceptions of each form of taint. Our second contribution lies in distinguishing the two aforementioned domains of taint. By taking a descriptive approach to the workers' experiences of dirty work, we have allowed the data to speak for themselves. Indeed, our sample's reports of taint suggest that animal euthanasia workers experience taint differently (i.e. more physical taint than moral taint) than how researchers ascribe taint to them. We propose that the explanatory power of perceptions of taint can be improved by delineating among domains of taint and differentiating by degree. Third, we have demonstrated that taint can predict employee-level variables independent of the effects of the dirty work itself. That is, our study suggests that it is not appropriate to simply blame the work itself for any unpleasant experiences among workers. Instead, that taint that is a part of dirty work contributes to the experience of such negative consequences. That is, taint is an issue itself.

Table 1.
Scale and items and factor loadings

Scale and Items	Factor Loadings
Physical Taint	
Foul	.818
Disgusting	.818
Dirty	.639
Moral Taint	
Immoral	.705
Shameful	.712

Table 2.
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Study Variables

Variables	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Physical Taint	2.84	0.96	*.83*						
2. Moral Taint	1.93	0.93	.50**	*.91*					
3. Euthanasia Involvement	-0.01	0.90	.37**	.34**	*n/a*				
4. Emotional Drain	3.75	1.10	.33**	.24**	.26**	*n/a*			
5. Job Satisfaction	3.86	0.96	-.23**	-.19**	.16**	-.29**	*n/a*		
6. Job Tenure	54.52	57.58	-.04	.08	-.11**	.06	.06	*n/a*	
7. Job Level	0.27	0.44	-.03	-.00	.09*	.06	.06	.26**	*n/a*

Note: N = 551 to 556 due to missing data.
Values on the diagonal in italics are Cronbach alpha reliability estimates.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

Table 3.
Hypothesis 2a & 2b Regression Results

	2a. Emotional Drain			2b. Job Satisfaction		
Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Job Level	.12 (.12)	.04 (.11)	.09 (.11)	.10 (.10)	.14 (.10)	.11 (.10)
Job Tenure	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00) †	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Euthanasia Involvement		.33 (.05)**	.19 (.06)**		-.17 (.05)*	-.07 (.05)
Physical Taint			.29 (.06)**			-.15 (.05)**
Moral Taint			.07 (.06)			-.10 (.05) †
R^2 *(df)*	.01 (495)	.08 (494)**	.14 (492)**	.01 (495)	.03 (494)**	.07 (492)**
Adjusted R^2	.00	.07	.14	.00	.03	.06
ΔR^2	.01	.07**	.07**	.01	.03**	.04**

Note: N = 497 due to missing data
Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported along with standard errors in parentheses. Degrees of freedom are in parentheses for R^2.
†p < .10.
*p < .05.
**p < .01.

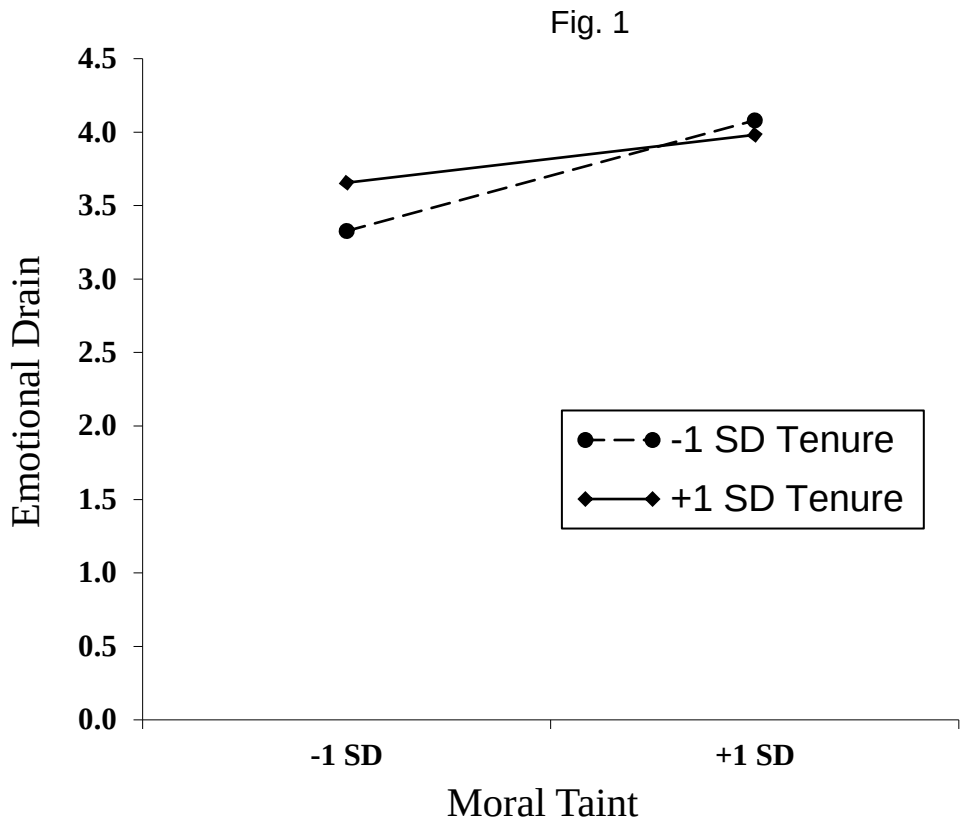

Figure 1. Interaction of moral taint and tenure predicting emotional drain.

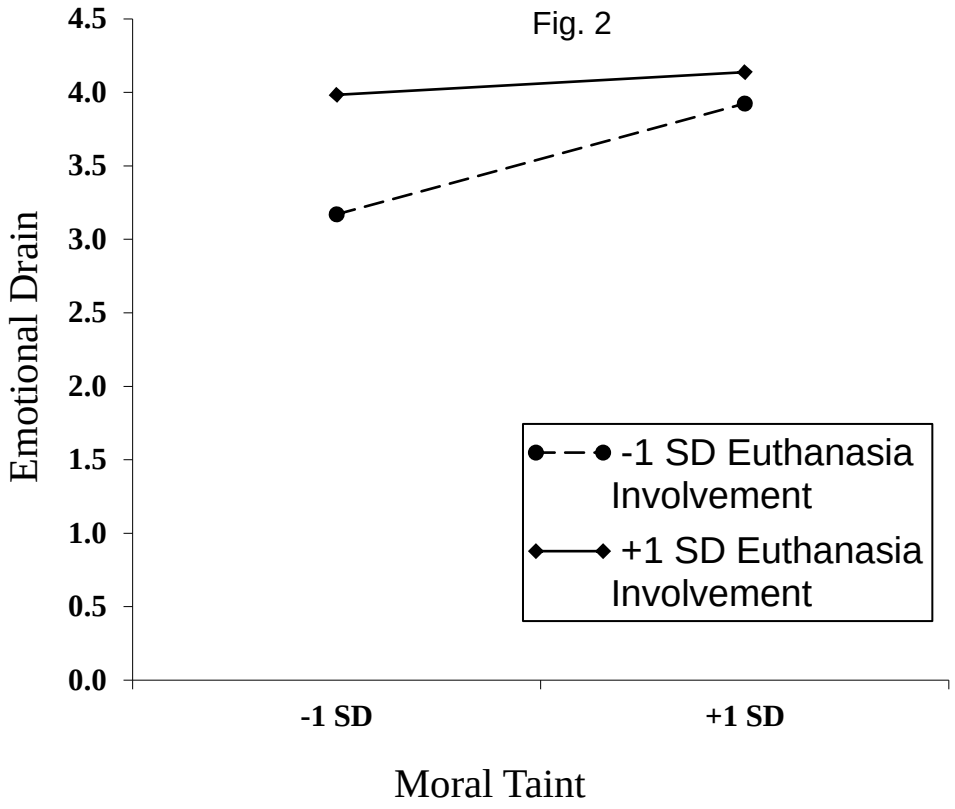

Figure 2. Interaction of moral taint and euthanasia involvement predicting emotional drain

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