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Introversion and Trait Incongruent Work Demands: Episodic Misfit at Work

Connie R. Wanberg[1] | YoungAh Park[2] | Shuai L. Ren[3]

[1]Department of Work and Organizations, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA | [2]School of Labor and Employment Relations, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, USA | [3]Department of Human Resource and Management, DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada

Correspondence: Connie R. Wanberg (wanbe001@umn.edu)

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ABSTRACT

Even if individuals are in a job or organization that is generally a good fit for them, they can still experience misfit with specific work demands. This study examines the proximal experiences of trait-incongruent work demands among highly introverted individuals, offering a novel episodic and trait-specific perspective on workplace misfit. Through narrative surveys and semi-structured interviews, we identify four broad trait-incongruent work demands that spur episodic misfit at work for introverts. We introduce an integrated process model that reveals how individuals' reactions to introversion-incongruent work demands evolve in the time proximal to the work demand. We build theory about (1) how individuals navigate and cope with introversion-incongruent work demands before, during, and after they occur (and how these adaptations affect immediate and subsequent reactions); (2) why reactions of individuals are sometimes amplified or attenuated across various experiences of trait-incongruent work demands; and (3) how subsequent exposure to these work demands (i.e., experience) plays a role in repeating this cycle. We offer new insights into how and why individual reactions to episodic misfit evolve before, during, and after a specific situation, and factors that may moderate these reactions—a topic that has received scant attention in the person-environment fit literature. We provide propositions for future research and practice-related implications.

1 | Introduction

Research on person-environment fit has demonstrated that compatibility between an employee's personality, interests, and work skills and their work environment is related to desirable work outcomes such as higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance (Greguras and Diefendorff 2009; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson 2005). Furthermore, individuals gravitate to occupations and work cultures that align with their personality, interests, and skills and tend to leave those that do not (Schneider et al. 1998; Van Iddekinge et al. 2011).

Yet even if an individual is in a job or organization that is generally a good fit, employees experience misfit with specific work demands, encountering occasional job tasks, social interactions, and aspects of organizational culture that do not match their preferences or skills (Christiansen, Sliter, and Frost 2014; Tett et al. 2013). The person-environment fit literature has provided insight into misfit as a condition people seek to resolve through turnover or other longer-term strategies, such as job crafting or working to fundamentally change the self (Follmer et al. 2018). Little attention, however, has been given to understanding how individuals react to and navigate trait-incongruent work demands in the time proximal to the work demand (i.e., episodic misfit)

including before, during, or immediately and hours after the work demand. Additionally, scholarly evidence is scarce regarding how individuals' adaptation strategies affect their immediate and subsequent psychological experiences of misfit. Recent reviews have highlighted the need for research to elucidate reactions and adaptations to misfit experiences from new temporal perspectives that are not long-range (Kristof-Brown, Schneider, and Su 2023; Vleugels et al. 2023) as well as to reveal more about factors that amplify or "mitigate experienced misfits" (van Vianen 2018, 92).

In addition, there is a gap in understanding job-related attributes that produce misfit for only some individuals. Research on person-environment fit or misfit has rarely examined how individuals with distinctive personal attributes react and adapt to instances of misfit. Most available fit research adopts a broad perspective, evaluating individuals' overall assessments of the fit between their abilities and needs and their jobs or organizations (van Vianen 2018; Vleugels et al. 2023).

Focusing on individuals with a distinctive personal attribute provides more specific insight into how employees successfully or unsuccessfully navigate and adapt to trait-incongruent work demands. Trait activation theory, a more specific unit theory under the umbrella of person-environment fit (Aguinis and Cronin 2022), posits that a lack of fit between an individual's personality and their work demands can result in lower job performance and turnover (Tett and Burnett 2003). Although broader research has offered valuable insights into general person-environment fit, it has not explored how employees experience and navigate personality-work demand-related misfit in the moments before, during, and immediately following the work demand in trait-relevant situations (Tett et al. 2021). Focusing on a specific trait is crucial for obtaining the precise insights needed to complement existing research and deepen our understanding of how (e.g., through what mechanisms) trait incongruence affects job performance and turnover.

Myriad personal characteristics are of interest for attribute-focused examinations of episodic misfit. In this paper, we examine the experience of episodic misfit among highly introverted individuals. Introversion, the opposite of extraversion, involves low levels of sociability, assertiveness, positive emotions, and a less "energetic approach toward the social and material world" (John, Naumann, and Soto 2008, 120). Introversion is associated with low hedonic reward sensitivity and a preference for less external stimuli (Zuckerman et al. 1993). Our emphasis on introversion is driven by the persistent mention of episodic misfit in relation to this trait (more so than for the other Big Five personality traits) in the context of work and by the lack of commensurate academic inquiry into this phenomenon. For example, the online platform and podcast "Introvert Dear" suggests that US workplaces emphasize features with which highly introverted individuals are uncomfortable, such as open offices, heavy collaboration, and expectations of being social (Burk 2019). The Society for Human Resource Management also provides considerable discussion on the role of introversion in the workplace, asking "Have we gone too far in promoting collaboration?" (Kahnweiler 2018) and labeling introversion as "the latest diversity frontier" (Hastings 2012).

Overall, while existing research on person-environment fit theory (and trait activation theory more specifically) has provided significant insights, there is a need to understand how personality/work demand misfit is experienced and navigated in the moments close to the work demand and what conditions amplify or diminish the difficulty of such misfit. In this paper, we use a primarily inductive, qualitative approach (complemented by some quantitative assessment) to inform three overarching questions:

1. *How do organizational members with high introversion experience introversion-incongruent work demands immediately before, during, and after they occur?*
2. *How do these individuals navigate and adapt to these work demands, and how do their adaptations affect their immediate and subsequent reactions?*
3. *Why are the reactions of individuals sometimes amplified or reduced across various experiences of trait-incongruent work demands?*

Our findings extend trait activation theory as well as the broader person-environment fit literature in four key ways. First, we provide new temporal insights by revealing how individual reactions evolve from before to after a trait-incongruent work demand, including understudied experiences such as appetite loss, heart pounding, dry mouth, and a blank mind. These experiences illustrate how job performance can be affected by trait-incongruent demands (Tett and Burnett 2003). Notably, we describe the prevalence of anticipatory misfit, which occurs when an individual anticipates a trait-incongruent work demand, a concept that has received limited attention in the literature.

Second, our findings extend the theory about specific adaptations individuals with high introversion employ to navigate trait-incongruent work demands. Unlike existing research focusing on longer-term coping strategies (Follmer et al. 2018), our study reveals trait-specific emotion- and behavior-focused strategies at the episodic level and their immediate and subsequent psychological impacts. These strategies include understudied adaptations such as preparation and avoidance of work demands due to fear and dread. We also show that while negative reactions can improve with job experience, this improvement is limited, indicating non-linear changes over time.

Third, we respond to calls for advancing boundary and moderating conditions that influence fit/misfit experiences (Kristof-Brown, Schneider, and Su 2023; Tett et al. 2021; van Vianen 2018). Our findings delineate introversion-specific situational factors (e.g., structural features and characteristics of others involved) that can amplify or reduce reactions to trait-incongruent work demands. Understanding the conditions under which reactions are pronounced is crucial for extending theory.

Finally, we introduce an integrated model of the proximal experience of trait-incongruent work demands for individuals high in introversion (Figure 1). Our framework offers a novel perspective on person-environment fit, presenting an integrated, proximal, and episodic view of misfit. We present research propositions to guide future research and describe practical contributions in the discussion section.

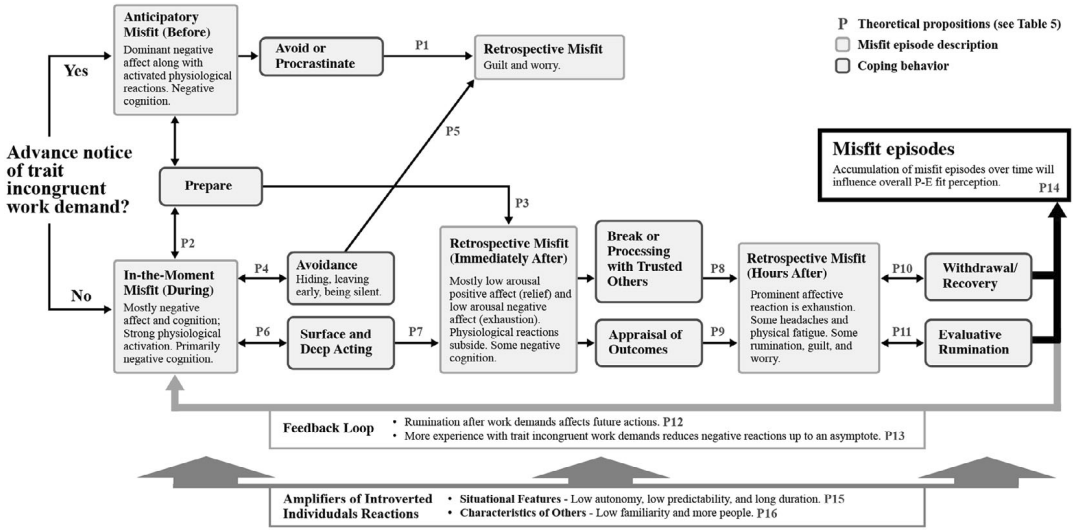

FIGURE 1 | An introverted individual's proximal experience of trait-incongruent work demands. P indicates proposition.

1.1 | Theoretical Background and Introversion Incongruence

Trait activation theory is particularly relevant to our investigation because it focuses on how specific situations, such as work demands, affect personality expression and work outcomes (Tett and Burnett 2003). According to this theory, individuals have an inherent drive to express their personality. External cues can trigger trait expression when a situation is trait-relevant (Tett and Guterman 2000). For example, individuals are more likely to express extraversion at a bar or party (Matz and Harari 2020) than in less relevant settings. Individuals assess the value of expressing specific traits in different contexts (Judge and Zapata 2015; Tett and Burnett 2003) and can adapt when necessary by temporarily amplifying their trait expression (Fleeson 2007).

When an individual's trait level aligns with the requirements of a specific work demand (e.g., high extraversion for an extraversion-related work demand), the work demand is trait-congruent. Trait-relevant, trait-congruent work demands for highly introverted individuals involve fewer social interactions (Huang et al. 2016), less external motivation or reward (Stewart 1996), less need to express enthusiasm (Bono and Vey 2007), and reduced teamwork and high-profile situations (Tett and Burnett 2003). In contrast, when an individual's trait level is inconsistent with a work demand (e.g., low extraversion for an extraversion-related work demand), then the work demand is trait-incongruent. Trait relevant, trait-incongruent work demands for introverted individuals likely involve increased social interactions, external motivation or reward, a need to express enthusiasm, more teamwork, and high-profile situations.

Situation strength is also an important dimension in trait-activation theory (Tett et al. 2021). Situations that more strongly push people to engage in specific behaviors are considered strong, rather than weak, situations (Meyer et al. 2018). At work, high autonomy environments allow employees the most discretion in expressing preferred traits (Tett et al. 2013). In contrast, primary work demands (the core deliverables of the job) allow less discretion. However, it remains unclear how employee experiences with trait incongruence vary in stronger and weaker situations.

Some research using trait activation theory and other person-environment fit perspectives has examined the role of extraversion[1] and affective, physiological, and behavioral outcomes in trait-congruent and incongruent situations. For instance, highly extraverted individuals report more unpleasant affect when they engage in trait-incongruent behaviors, such as being submissive at home, work, or during recreational activities (Côté and Moskowitz 1998). Additionally, emotional labor is more challenging for introverts compared to extraverts; introverts exhibit higher negative affect and emotional exhaustion during surface acting, and lower positive affect during deep acting (Judge, Woolf, and Hurst 2009).

Although Tett and Burnett (2003) do not discuss physiological reactions in their explication of trait activation theory, some evidence outside of the workplace suggests introverts experience such reactions in trait-incongruent situations. For example, undergraduates high in extraversion had a higher heart rate in a trait incongruent situation (i.e., being in an anger/irritation condition) in contrast to a trait congruent situation (i.e., being in an enthusiasm condition) (Bono and Vey 2007). Highly extraverted individuals, compared to individuals low in extraversion, display better physiological response recovery after social stress, irrespective of stress intensity (Lü and Wang 2017; Lü et al. 2018). Additionally, students low in extraversion show more tension while preparing a speech and slower muscular relaxation following a stressor compared to those high in extraversion (Kaiser et al. 1995).

Some behavioral responses to misfit have also been identified, such as leaving the organization or seeking an internal transfer (Follmer et al. 2018; van Vianen 2018). However, this research examines longer-term general misfit rather than the immediate, time-proximal behavioral responses of individuals with distinctive personal attributes to episodic work demands. Trait activation theory and related work suggest extraversion (and personality in general) is more highly predictive of job

performance in situations that are trait-relevant (Tett and Burnett 2003). However, further research is needed to understand how situations and trait specificity affect trait expression, and how this expression affects individuals' characteristic adaptations or habits at work over time, which may impede or facilitate work performance (Judge and Zapata 2015; Tett et al. 2021).

1.2 | Summary and Goals of the Study

Research shows that individuals in trait-incongruent situations may experience affective, behavioral, and physiological reactions. However, there is a significant gap in understanding the immediate, episodic experiences of employees while engaging in trait-incongruent work demands, particularly those with distinctive traits like high introversion. To address this research need, this study explores how individuals high in introversion navigate and adapt to trait-incongruent work demands, along with conditions that may amplify or mitigate the difficulty of these work demands. We use qualitative methods supplemented by quantitative assessments for sampling and validity checks (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2012). Qualitative methods are especially valuable for elaborating theory and deepening insights into individuals' experiences, even in generally mature areas of investigation such as person-environment fit (Chuang et al. 2015; Follmer et al. 2018).

2 | Methods

This study was approved by the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (STUDY00008215 "Extraversion and Recovery Study"). We followed a "methodological bricolage" approach (Pratt, Sonenshein, and Feldman 2022) rather than adhering to a singular qualitative method template. This allowed us to develop a methodological approach optimally aligned with answering our research questions. To achieve "internal coherence" (Howard-Grenville et al. 2021) and ensure trustworthiness in our qualitative work, we engaged in three phases of data collection and analysis. Phase 1 and 2 data collection was conducted during the spring/fall of 2020, while Phase 3 data collection occurred during the fall/winter of 2021. Various strategies were employed to ensure our analysis and theoretical development were firmly rooted in the data. An overview of our methods in each phase appears in Figure 2. We review our methods in detail below. Supportive materials are posted on the OSF website for this study.

2.1 | Phase 1: Participants and Sampling Procedure

To identify a sample with high introversion for the research question, we invited 11,111 undergraduate and graduate alumni of a Midwestern business school to participate in a screening survey as a sampling procedure. The survey was sent via email and had an approximate open rate of 40%. A total of 588 individuals who opened the email were employed (a condition of eligibility) and willing to complete a screening survey for introversion. The screening survey was quantitative and featured the full set of 60 items from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) to assess participant levels of introversion/extraversion (Goldberg 1999; https://ipip.ori.org). Our use of the extensive 60-item screening survey was meant to provide a high level of reliability and validity (Anglim et al. 2020). The items tightly parallel the NEO PI-R (Maples et al. 2014), which has been shown to have internal consistency and discriminative predictive power (Johnson 2014). Items were answered on a scale from 1 (*very inaccurate*) to 5 (*very accurate).* Low scores indicate high introversion. We also assessed levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and neuroticism for descriptive purposes, using the mini-IPIP personality inventory and a 1 (*very inaccurate*) to 5 (*very accurate)* Likert scale (Donnellan et al. 2006). In Phase 1, compensation for participation was $10.

2.2 | Phase 2: Qualitative Survey

In Phase 2, individuals who scored in the bottom 31% ($n = 182$) of the screening survey were invited to complete a qualitative survey, which asked for detailed written accounts of experiences with trait-incongruent situations at work, specific to introversion (see Appendix). Individuals were asked to recollect times at work during which they were called on to "act more extraverted than you tend to be, or times that you do not have an opportunity to be yourself as an 'introvert.'" The survey told them that "more detail is better." Individuals were then asked about their reactions and experiences in proximity to the event, including before, during, and after.

The qualitative survey method was chosen as part of the qualitative methods portfolio as a purposeful strategy (Pratt, Sonenshein, and Feldman 2022) that allowed a large sample of individuals high in introversion to provide details in a trait-congruent manner (i.e., they were able to reflect on and respond in detail about their experiences in a solitary manner). This strategy for collecting data is also consistent with a "critical incident technique," a qualitative method that helps gather information associated with defined situations (Flanagan 1954).

A total of 135 of the 182 participants scoring in the bottom 31% of the extraversion screening scale replied to this qualitative survey and constituted our analyzed sample for Phase 2. Of these, 59% ($n = 80$) were female. Racial groups included White 75% ($n = 99$), Asian 21% ($n = 27$), African American 2% ($n = 2$), Hispanic 2% ($n = 2$), and other 2% ($n = 2$). The average age was 31 years ($SD = 7.08$), ranging from 21 to 55. Respondents held both management and leadership positions (44%; $n = 58$) and non-management positions (56%; $n = 75$) across several industries, with the most prominent being manufacturing, finance and insurance, and professional, scientific, and technical services. They received $10 as compensation for participating in Phase 2.

2.3 | Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interviews

Phase 3 involved iterative semi-structured interviews with 17 respondents from Phase 2. To allow Phase 3 interviews to be iterative (i.e., to change slightly in content over time, based on sequential needs for insight and theory building), a total of 64 respondents from Phase 2 were selected at random and emailed in small batches with a request to participate in the follow-up interview. The interviews with the 17 individuals who agreed

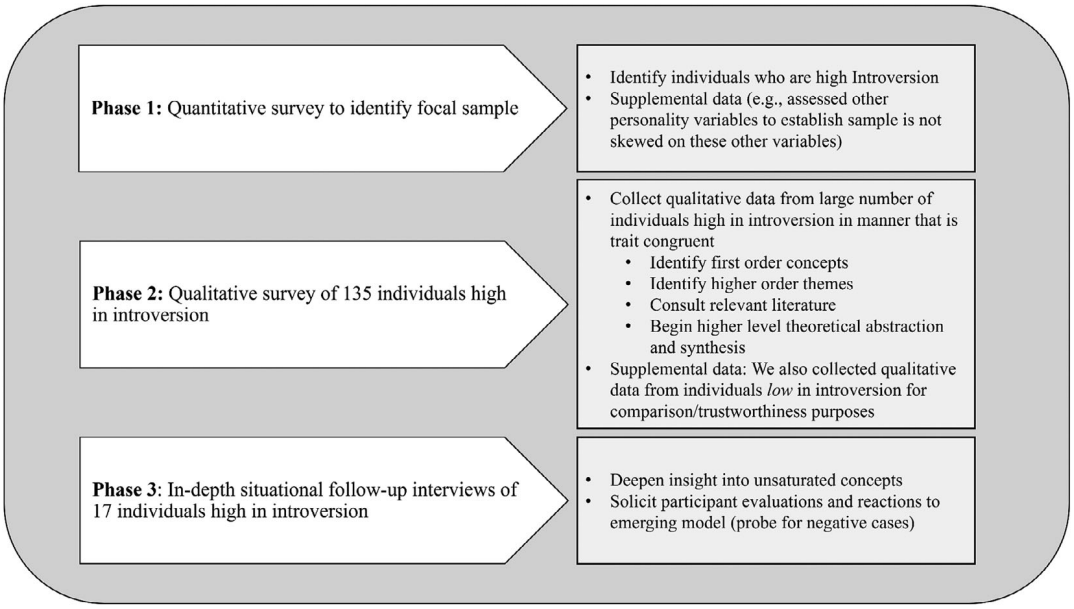

FIGURE 2 | A Summary of methodological procedures of the current study.

to be interviewed were on Zoom and ranged from 45 min to 1 h, and they received $30 as compensation. The interviews were transcribed by rev.com. Only written transcripts were saved and analyzed (i.e., the video recordings were not retained).

The main purpose of the Phase 3 interviews was to deepen insights from Phase 2. For example, we used Phase 3 interviews to explore time dynamics more deeply by having individuals walk us step-by-step through their experiences with a recent work demand that was "at odds with their more introverted personality." Follow-up questions were used to understand more about when the situation occurred, who they were with, and why the situation unfolded as it did. We probed deeper to learn about whether and why some experiences of trait-incongruent events are better than others. We asked questions such as "What differentiates the situations that are more versus less comfortable for you?", "When do you have positive thoughts?", "Which types of situations are the MOST daunting for you?", "Which types of situations are LESS daunting for you?", "Are there things you do before or during the situations that help you?", "Are there things you do after the situation to make yourself more comfortable?" The semi-structured interviews also allowed us to inquire further about physiological reactions after we observed that many individuals had mentioned such reactions in Phase 2.

Toward the end of the Phase 3 data collection, we used time at the end of the interviews to solicit participant reactions to a draft of our model. Using follow-up interviews to probe, elaborate, and evaluate investigator conclusions can reduce reflexivity (whereby the investigator's points of view could affect data interpretation) (Berger 2013; Strauss and Corbin 1997). We explained our emerging model to elicit additional reactions and thoughts and to probe for negative cases (i.e., cases in which individuals say the model does not apply to them).

We stopped at 17 interviews because we no longer found new information to inform, elaborate, or disconfirm themes that had emerged from the 135 Phase 2 qualitative surveys or in these follow-up interviews. In other words, the same themes, categories, and patterns were emerging in new interviews. We found that participant input continued to be consistent and redundant with Phase 2's findings and the previous Phase 3 interviews. A final consideration was that the collected data were sufficiently rich to provide theoretical and practical implications.

2.4 | Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA)

Our analysis of the qualitative data began with an inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) driven by the Phase 2 data. Subsequently, we utilized abductive analysis to develop theoretical insights (Timmermans and Tavory 2012). This process involved several stages, including coding, extensive review of the data and our conclusions, in-depth discussions among the research team, comparisons of newly collected data with previously acquired data, and referencing relevant literature (Charmaz 2014; Corbin and Strauss 2015). Given the relatively large number of cases along with our narrative survey protocol, we coded the data into QDA software (Deterding and Waters 2021). To begin, two coders read through one-third of all responses and identified and labeled lower-level, specific concepts mentioned by participants (e.g., anxiety, dread). We then met to assess alignment of the coding, labeling, and emerging patterns before the remainder of the data were coded in NVivo (QSR 2020). We followed a similar process to organize lower-level concepts into higher-order categories (Corbin and Strauss 2015). The process described above was inductive, allowing the themes to emerge without consulting the existing frameworks to prevent "confirmation bias" (Gioia et al. 2013, 21). In later stages, we used abductive reasoning (Sætre and Van de Ven 2021; Spector 2017) to avoid theoretical redundancies. Specifically, we aligned our labeling of higher-order categories with existing theoretical frameworks if, after comprehensive consideration, we felt existing frameworks were accurate reflections of our data. For example, participants' affective responses to work demands aligned with categories suggested by the circumplex model of affect: high-arousal negative affect,

TABLE 1 | Trait-incongruent work demands reported by individuals with high introversion.

Trait-incongruent work demands	Definition
Engaging with unfamiliar people	
Networking events	Attending networking events with crowds of unfamiliar people
Cold calling	Having to make cold calls and being on the phone with unfamiliar others
Initiating conversations	Reaching out to networks for conversations or help
Interacting with new people	Interacting with new people in work settings such as new employees onboarding and meeting new clients
Being cheerful and energetic	
Work-related social events	Attending non-task related social events such as parties or happy hours
High-density meetings	Attending long and frequent meetings that involve social interactions
Engaging in small talk	Engaging in conversation about unimportant matters with colleagues
Being in the spotlight	
Sharing insights on the spot	Having to share insights or answer questions on the spot with several people with little time to prepare
Presentations	Presenting to a group of people in a public setting
Being in charge, being assertive	
Leading	Leading conversations, pushing for clarification, and managing initiatives
Dealing with conflicts	Dealing with confrontation and managing conflicts of interests
Articulating opinions	Expressing opinions explicitly and speaking up for oneself

Note: Work demands described by participants are organized according to lower-level concepts (regular font) and higher-order categories (bold).

low-arousal negative affect, high-arousal positive affect, and low-arousal positive affect (Russell 1980). Similarly, participants' behaviors aligned with problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies (Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub 1989; Lazarus 1991). Several meetings were held to decide on the final concepts and categories. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the lower-level concepts and higher-order categories that emerged from the data.

Consistent with a grounded theory process, our attention moved on to theoretical abstraction and synthesis as we engaged with the data. The important aim of theoretical abstraction and synthesis is to assess the bigger picture of responses, understand links between coded categories, and reveal action/interaction elements involving process, context, and boundary conditions (Corbin and Strauss 2015). As part of this process, we assessed how respondents described their (within-person) changes in reactions to trait-incongruent work demands over the course of the work demand, how coping actions were related to their affective experiences, and which situations were most (and least) difficult along with assessing if these were common patterns across individuals. This synthesis was achieved by recording memos of initial impressions as we engaged with the data, re-reading the data many times, and diagramming and discussing iterative visual depictions of the data. A process model portraying the experience of trait-incongruent work demands by introverts began to emerge from our analysis. We used a shared Google Drive document to make memos of thoughts and of areas we felt were unsaturated and in need of further input, as well as to document many evolutions and improvements of the visual depiction of our findings (Williams and Murphy 2021). There are myriad forms of process models in the literature. Our emergent process model (see Figure 1) describes "changing thoughts, feelings, and interpretations" and how these reactions "evolve over time and why they evolve in this way" (Langley 1999, 691–692). In Phase 3, the focus of our analysis was to elaborate and evaluate the emerging portrayal of our data. We assessed whether new concepts, categories, or insights were emerging and revised and elaborated the model as needed until we felt no new ways of elaborating or depicting the model were emerging.

2.5 | Enhancing Trustworthiness

We engaged in several steps to support the trustworthiness of our inquiry. In the spirit of methodological bricolage or choosing the best methods to suit the research problem, we engaged in the following "data trustworthiness checks" using quantitative assessment. First, to support our contention that our sample is high in introversion (i.e., beyond simply using a scale with strong psychometric properties), we conducted two supplemental checks on our Phase 2 sample of 135 individuals. We asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they self-identify as more introverted than the average person on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*I do not agree at all)* to 5 (*I completely agree*). Participants identified as being more introverted than the average person ($M = 4.33$; $SD = 0.67$). We also compared the mean introversion scores for these individuals against the largest nationally representative sample available, the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (LISS) panel (Schwaba and Bleidorn 2017). This approach is appropriate,

TABLE 2 | Individuals with high introversion: Reactions to trait-incongruent work demand.

Aggregate dimension	Higher-order category	Lower–order concept	Before	During	Following	After
1. Affective	1. High arousal, negative affect	1-1a. Anxious	×	×		×
		1-1b. Nervous or jittery	×	×		
		1-1c. Concerned or worried	×	×	×	×
		1-1d. Fear or dread	×	×		
		1-1e. Impatient or irritable		×		
		1-1f. Frustrated		×	×	
		1-1g. Annoyed	×	×		
	2. Low arousal, negative affect	1-2a. Exhausted or stressed	×	×	×	×
		1-2b. Awkward or embarrassed		×	×	
		1-2c. Uncomfortable		×	×	
		1-2d. Dissatisfied			×	
		1-2e. Sadness		×	×	×
		1-2f. Disappointed			×	
		1-2g. Ashamed		×		
		1-2h. Depressed		×		
		1-2i. Guilty			×	
		1-2j. Lonely				×
	3. High arousal, positive affect	1-3a. Excited		×	×	
		1-3b. Joviality			×	
		1-3c. Self-assurance			×	
		1-3d. Attentiveness		×		
	4. Low arousal, positive affect	1-4a. Relieved			×	×
		1-4b. Glad			×	
		1-4c. Satisfied			×	
		1-4d. Confident	×		×	
		1-4e. Serenity		×	×	×
2. Cognitive	1. Negative thoughts	2-1a. Worries	×	×	×	×
		2-1b. Avoidant thinking	×	×		
		2-1c. Self-doubting	×	×	×	×
		2-1d. Wishful thinking	×	×		
		2-1e. Regret	×	×	×	×
		2-1f. Negative self-evaluation		×	×	
	2. Positive thoughts	2-2a. Self-encouraging	×	×		
		2-2b. Self-convincing	×			
		2-2c. Positive self-evaluation			×	
	3. Neutral thoughts	2-3a. Thought suppression			×	
		2-3b. Blank mind syndrome		×		
3. Physiological	1. Activated	3-1a. Heart pounding	×	×		
		3-1b. Sweating	×	×		
		3-1c. Nausea & stomach in knots	×			
		3-1d. Loss of appetite	×			
		3-1f. Sleep disruption	×			
		3-1g. Dry mouth & throat closed	×			

(Continues)

TABLE 2 | (Continued)

Aggregate dimension	Higher-order category	Lower–order concept	Before	During	Following	After
		3-1h. Face flushed		×		
		3-1i. Headaches			×	×
		3-1j. Physical fatigue			×	×
		3-1k. Sickness/illness				×
		3-1l. Indigestion				×
		3-1m. Anxiety-driven behavioral symptoms (e.g., shaky voice)		×		
	2. Relaxed	3-2a. Appetite returned			×	×
		3-2b. Headaches are gone			×	
		3-2c. Lowered heart rate			×	
4. Coping strategies	1. Problem-focused	4-1a. Preparation	×			
	2. Emotion-focused	4-2a. Surface & deep acting		×		
		4-2b. Avoiding events	×	×		
		4-2c. Procrastinating	×			
		4-2d. Processing with trusted ones			×	
		4-2e. Withdrawal			×	×
		4-2f. Taking recovery time			×	×
		4-2g. Appraisal of outcomes			×	×

Note: Russell's (1980) Circumplex Model of Affect has two dimensions of affect (i.e., low-high pleasure, low-high arousal). In this paper, we replaced the term "low pleasure" with "negative" and the term "high pleasure" with "positive" to report the findings of affective reactions more succinctly. "×" was given to codes that were mentioned by different participants.

given that no widely accepted population norms are available (Goldberg 1999). The mean extraversion score for the 135 individuals in our sample was 2.95 (SD = 0.27), with lower scores indicating higher introversion. The mean score for this same scale in the largest LISS panel from 2008 was 3.30 (SD = 0.63, n = 6949) (Schwaba and Bleidorn 2017). Result from Welch Modified Two-Sample t-test illustrates that our sample is more introverted ($t_{(163.81)} = -14.32$, p = 2.2e-16) than a nationally representative sample with a Cohen's d effect size of −0.72 (see Table S1).

Second, we completed a check to establish that our sample (n = 135) was not uniquely skewed toward individuals who also had discernable tendencies toward other Big Five traits (higher or lower in certain traits). To do so, we ran Welch's t-tests to compare our sample with the LISS 2008 cohort data (see Table S1) and found that the levels of conscientiousness ($t_{(136.10)} = 0.85$, p = 0.40), openness ($t_{(135.90)} = 0.42$, $p = 0.68$), and agreeableness ($t_{(136.12)} = -0.90$, $p = 0.37$) in our sample were comparable to those in the LISS panel data. The neuroticism score was lower in our sample than in the LISS panel data ($t_{(137.69)} = -6.98$, p = 1.133e-10) with an effect size of −0.66, an important finding that refutes any concern that responses to trait-incongruent events are due to high neuroticism. As we reveal in the findings, individuals high in introversion have stress responses when experiencing trait-incongruent events. As such, we provide the neuroticism scores for illustrative quotes (Tables 3 and 4) to show the findings are not explained by high neuroticism.

Third, to illustrate that the trait-incongruent work demands mentioned by our participants are unique to individuals high in introversion, we conducted an abbreviated qualitative examination of individuals *high in extraversion* (i.e., individuals scoring in the top 31% of the 60-item IPIP screening survey described earlier). Findings supported that the trait-incongruent work demands mentioned by introverts are not simply work demands everyone finds difficult. In contrast to work demands described as trait-incongruent by individuals very low in extraversion (reported in the findings), extraverts described very different trait-incongruent work demands, such as (1) not being able to connect with other people (e.g., doing work alone or remotely, being around introverted individuals, engaging in work-only conversations, lacking collaboration and support, and traveling for business alone); (2) having to restrain personal thoughts or opinions (e.g., holding back in meetings, attending structured meetings with little room to participate or improvise); and (3) being in a work culture at odds with their extraversion (e.g., being in a bureaucratic organizational culture with stiff hierarchies or solemn coworkers).

Finally, given the large amount of qualitative data at our disposal, we used NVivo to conduct other assorted trustworthiness checks and provide supplemental information. For example, as a supplemental assessment of changing reactions over time, we conducted specific counts (including assessments of interrater reliability) from NVivo queries to verify statements we were making within the manuscript. For example, we plotted the number of high

TABLE 3 | Example quotes for reactions to trait-incongruent work demands before, during, immediately after, and hours after.

Timing	Reactions	Example quotes
Before the work demand	Affective	"Before the presentation I was very jittery and nervous and I was afraid that I was going to make a fool of myself in front of lots of people." (ID 006, $E = 2.80$, $N = 3.25$, survey)
	Afffective/ Behavioral	"Before I tend to self-sabotage and think of everything that can go wrong. It makes it so hard to focus on what needs to be done at hand and definitely makes me come off as less confident…I most likely didn't sleep the night before as well." (ID 086, $E = 2.53$, $N = 3.50$, survey)
	Cognitive	"Before events, I generally try to think of ways that I can either avoid the event or reduce the amount of talking to people I need to do." (ID 059, $E = 2.52$, $N = 3.00$, survey)
	Cognitive	"One, are they going to like me, meet me in person? Secondly, I wonder if they're going to think that I'm capable in my role, because I'm going to have way, way longer exposure to them than just a 30-minute or hour-long call or a few email exchanges. And also thinking about, "Oh, God, I hope I don't do anything embarrassing," or, "Oh, what am I going to talk to them about? " (ID 037, $E = 3.05$, $N = 1.50$, interview)"
	Affective/ Physiological	"Before feelings: stomach in knots, mind racing, sweating, mouth is dry (usually when I'm really nervous), no appetite" (ID 079, $E = 3.27$, $N = 3.00$, survey)
During the work demand	Affective/ Cognitive	"Honestly, when I get nervous while talking to people, my mind pretty much goes blank. So during the call, I wasn't aware of the thoughts I was having, but I did feel a little panicked." (ID 014, $E = 2.97$, $N = 3.25$, survey)
	Affective/ Cognitive	"I was uncomfortable, nervous, and unsure how to fit into conversations with the guests. How do I insert myself in a group's conversation? How do I relate to these people with much greater experience, stature, wealth, and knowledge? How do I exit a conversation I've entered that feels at a lull?" (ID 008, $E = 2.82$, $N = 2.75$, survey)
	Affective/ Cognitive/ Physiological	"I had thoughts like "no, shoot. don't call on me. please. no." Then I felt a sense of panic when the question was directed at me. My face flushed, my voice felt like it could be shaky at any time. My thoughts were jumbled and I blurted out what came to mind, which resulted in a poor, jumbled answer." (ID 035, $E = 2.85$, $N = 3.25$, survey)
	Affective/ Cognitive	"I felt anxious and even somewhat depressed. I observed other people's actions and attempted to mimic them. I thought of ways to get out of the situation as quickly as possible and watched the clock." (ID 018, $E = 3.17$, $N = 3.50$, survey)
	Affective/ Physiological	"I would feel fear, anxiety, stress, almost as if I was going to pass out from lack of oxygen to the brain because my breathing would not be regular." (ID 063, $E = 2.17$, $N = 2.50$, survey)
Immediately after the work demand	Affective/ Cognitive	"Right after I was glad and relieved that it was over. Then I was worried about how it went and what people's impression was of me. What did they think of the way I answered the question? How could I have done better/answered the questions better/presented myself better. Then I tried to think positive and think of any opportunities to better prepare for next time and think about any lessons learned or opportunities for improvement. Then I moved on." (ID 046, $E = 3.08$, $N = 3.00$, survey)
	Affective	"After the situation, I felt relief that it was all over and resolved. I almost felt a buzzing in my head maybe from some adrenaline, but overall relief." (ID 047, $E = 3.13.$, $N = 2.25$, survey)
	Affective/ Physiological	"Relief but I was also tired and had gotten so nervous and worked up about it that I got a headache. I just wanted to go to bed." (ID 030, $E = 3.20$, $N = 3.75$, survey)
	Affective	"It's exhausting. I feel like if I'm doing all this, talking to other people all this extrovert time, I definitely have to pull back in and either walk away for a few minutes or go do a different task." (ID 004, $E = 3.23$, $N = 2.00$, interview)
	Affective/ Cognitive	"I feel really elated and proud of myself because I'm self-aware enough to know that I achieved something that was hard for me to do. If it didn't go well, I will be really self-critical. So I will feel bad. I'll feel embarrassed. I will take it way too far and think about all the things I could have done differently. I usually don't do anything." (ID 040, $E = 2.67$, $N = 2.50$, interview)

(Continues)

TABLE 3 | (Continued)

Timing	Reactions	Example quotes
Hours after the work demand	Affective/ Cognitive	"I didn't feel as bad about it in a day or two later or whatever, because no one really made any, like my managers were on the call, so they didn't make any comments about doing poorly or anything like that, or talk about like ways to improve. So maybe it didn't go as bad as what I thought it had. And I think my direct manager was surprised by some of the questions and caught off guard a little bit too." (ID 025, $E = 2.47$, $N = 1.75$, interview)
	Affective/ Cognitive	"I'm wiped out. I don't want to talk to anyone. I don't want to have phone calls with anyone. I certainly don't want to be on the computer or on a Zoom call. I'm ready for bed and maybe watching TV, something to disassociate myself with just the outside world. I just want to be in my bubble to decompress and then sleep, and then I'm ready for the next day." (ID 035, $E = 2.85$, $N = 3.25$, interview)
	Affective/ Cognitive	"Many times I get angry at myself and think about what the value may be that I'm missing out on or how awkward I must've looked to other people." (ID 081, $E = 2.88$, $N = 2.00$, survey)
	Affective/ Physiological	"But if it goes poorly because I mean sometimes I'll just have nightmares about it, so it'll bother me the next day. … when something goes poorly and I'm not happy about it, I do get headaches once in a while." (ID 006, $E = 2.80$, $N = 3.25$, interview)
	Affective/ Physiological	"What I've learned is that if I don't take that time, this discomfort or anxiety will just kind of build and build, and then I could have an anxiety attack or just feel really miserable or actually be ill, actually get sick." (ID 040, $E = 2.67$, $N = 2.50$, interview)

Note: Extraversion and neuroticism items were answered on a scale from 1 (*very inaccurate*) to 5 (*very accurate).* Higher scores indicate higher extraversion and neuroticism. Neuroticism scores are provided here to show that the study findings are unlikely to be attributed to high neuroticism. To complement this table, we also provide an additional table that portrays the same participant and their reactions at each phase to a given trait-incongruent work demand (see Table 4). Abbreviations: E = extraversion score; N = neuroticism score.

and low arousal experiences individuals noted before, during, immediately after, and hours after a trait incongruent work demand (see Figure S1).

3 | Findings

Figure 1 captures the unfolding experience of trait incongruent work demands for individuals high in introversion. Based on our findings, we present proposition (P) numbers in the figure. These propositions are elaborated below and are presented in Table 5.

3.1 | How Do Individuals Experience Introversion-Incongruent Work Demands?

The experience of trait-incongruent work demands unfolds from the moments leading up to the episode to several hours afterward. Table 1 reviews the major types of trait incongruent work demands reported by individuals in our sample, while Table 2 details the array of affective, cognitive, and physiological reactions recounted. Table 3 provides vivid accounts from our participants about their reactions to trait-incongruent work demands, and Table 4 illustrates reactions from the same participants over time to specific episodic work demands. Consistent with stress appraisal theories (Scherer et al. 2013), reactions within a time period were synchronized; for instance, higher negative affect often coincided with increased physiological arousal.

Before the trait-incongruent work demand occurred, respondents anticipated misfit if they were aware of it in advance. Participants experienced substantial high arousal negative affect, including anxiety (e.g., nervousness, distress, tense), fear (e.g., afraid, dreading, jittery, panicked), and irritability. Only four cases mentioned positive affect (e.g., confidence), but even these were dominated by negative emotions (e.g., "anxiety and panic masked by outward confidence/cockiness," ID 064, survey). Participants also experienced physiological reactions well before or immediately prior to the work demand, such as heart pounding, sweating, stomach knots, lack of appetite, sleep disruption, and dry mouth, all of which are physiological indicators of stress (Kahn and Byosiere 1992; Spector and Jex 1998). For example, one participant noted, "My heart was pounding and my throat closed up… I felt extremely anxious" (ID 004, survey). Cognition was mostly negative before the episode and included worries, avoidant thinking (e.g., "think of ways I can either avoid the event or reduce the amount of talking to people I need to do," ID 059, survey), and self-doubt (e.g., "you will mess up and look like a fool in front of your coworkers," ID 083, survey). Positive (i.e., "you can do this," ID 043, survey) and neutral cognitions (e.g., "stay calm and stick to the facts," ID 025, survey) were sometimes used to calm negative affect.

During trait-incongruent situations, our introverted respondents experienced the most intense affective, cognitive, and physiological reactions. High-arousal negative affect, such as fear, dread, and anxiety, was prominent, along with low-arousal negative affect like exhaustion, sadness, timidity, and discomfort. Some individuals felt embarrassed, ashamed, or guilty about their performance. Cognitive responses were primarily negative, including avoidant thinking (e.g., "I was looking for any good opportunity to leave for the night," ID 052, survey), wishful thinking about avoiding attention (e.g., "Please don't call on

TABLE 4 | Individuals with high introversion: Reactions to a specific trait-incongruent work demand before, during, immediately after, and hours after.

	Reactions in chronological order for exemplar trait-incongruent work demands			
Work demand	**Before**	**During**	**Immediately over**	**Hours after**
Weekly meeting (ID 004, female, age 28, $E = 3.23$, $N = 2.00$). We have meetings every Friday where we have our sales scoreboard, and the top five people get called on to say how they closed their successful deals.	I obviously want to be successful and get sales, but at the same time, "Oh, please do not let me be in the top five. Please don't make me talk on this meeting in front of everybody." And the hard thing with that is, this is our meeting at the end of the week. So at the beginning of the week, it's more chill than toward the end of the week. You're like, "Oh no, that meeting is on Friday, I hope I'm not in the top five."	If you get called on the spot, it's really, really intimidating. And that's when the whole heart racing thing starts when he's about to put up the scoreboard…	And then after it's just pure relief. It's exhausting. I feel like if I'm doing all this, talking to other people all this extrovert time, I definitely have to pull back in and …walk away for a few minutes.	When I first started in my current role or with my current company, I would definitely still be thinking about stuff like this hours later and replaying it in my mind. I think I have gotten a little bit better of turning off my work brain, so to speak. So in this particular situation, I can say that by the evening I was more or less done thinking about it.
Leading in presentation (ID 015, male, age 33, $E = 3.12$, $N = 1.75$). Basically, anytime I'm giving a presentation …but especially when I'm leading small group exercises on top of that.	Leading up to this meeting, it's almost the only thing I can think about when my brain is not preoccupied with something else. It's constantly on my mind. I'm trying to think of how I can be a more effective speaker. The exact words, trying to recite them and memorize different components of the presentation to make sure that I'm confident when I go into that meeting, and I want to make a good impression.	During the event, it would be more… I think my brain freezes up a little bit. I rely on some of the instincts that I've had. I know the topic really well because I've practiced, I've rehearsed different things, and I'm relying on my preparation more so than being able to flow during the meeting itself. My brain locks up and gets foggy a little bit within those moments as well.	Then after those, I'm usually thinking about the things where I could have done a better job. I'm always nitpicking some of the word choices that I used, or the times where I may have fumbled upon my words. Just constantly thinking about how I could have been better, or I wish I would have done this, that, and how I can get better for the next time that I'm in a situation like that.	Usually, I would tell my wife in advance that I need a break when I get home, and I'm not going to be immediately available for the kids, and I want some time just to decompress. I used to have that a little bit more with my commute home, where I'd be on the bus, and I could regroup.
Happy hour (ID 013, female, age 23, $E = 3.15$, $N = 3.00$). We always have in-person happy hour.	I always fight within myself if I should go. I don't really want to go but I need to go. I always go there several minutes before, so that I can prepare and be prepared and not too early. So, I will maybe wait in the car for several minutes. If there are a lot of people and I will not get noticed, I will avoid those situations.	And during there, it's just pay attention to what people said, and trying to smile or laugh, to join into the conversation. And sometimes I will think if I talk too much or too little.	Most of the time after the happy hour, I feel tired.	After this kind of situation, I will think about it for maybe several days after.

(Continues)

TABLE 4 | (Continued)

Work demand	Reactions in chronological order for exemplar trait-incongruent work demands			
	Before	**During**	**Immediately over**	**Hours after**
Confrontational meeting (ID 002, male, age 22, *E* = 3.07, *N* = 1.75). I have other situations at work where I may have to interact with a client who is somewhat unruly or is somewhat aggressive.	I might have more physiological reactions to that in terms of, I guess, dread, in terms of really not wanting to do it. I don't usually seek out reasons not to go, but I will happily take one if it appears.	I don't avoid the meetings entirely because I can't really, but maybe just mild behavioral avoidance of where usually I'm not the one who has to talk in these meetings, even, it's just being there is stressful. I'll try to work on something else while I'm in that meeting or focus on something else on the side, and as much as possible… I'll move one of my headphone muffs out of one of my ears just, I guess, minimizing hearing it as much as possible, just small things where I want to avoid the situation, but can't, so I try to, I guess, sort of cope during the meeting by doing those sorts of things.	I usually like to have some kind of buffer time afterwards, because it's just kind of a lot of stress at once.	I just kind of get tired. I don't know if it happens for days afterwards. It's usually just for the rest of the day.
Reaching out for advancement opportunities (ID 040, female, age 37, *E* = 2.67, *N* = 2.50). I'd like to talk …about having to ask to join a work group or a team when I know that there's work happening or a project happening that I should be involved in, or that I think offers an opportunity for advancement for me. I have to tell myself, kind of force myself to be extroverted, reach out to people and ask for what I want. That comes up a lot for me.	I need to reach out to the people on the project to ask to be included. I will procrastinate quite a bit and try to do anything to not have to do it, so there's some avoidance for sure. And I think I will also, typically, and this is something that I try not to do, but I imagine the whole conversation ahead of time, which is strange, but I play it all out in my mind. And even though it may not go that way at all.	During, I think, I have learned over time to just fake it. I'm introverted, but I like people. So, I just go for it, open up and talk to people I need to talk to you and get what I need. I would say I struggle the most with asking for things that I want. It's easy for me to listen to people and engage them in conversation that way, but then it's difficult for me to say, "I want this and this is why I should have it." So during, it usually goes okay, because I'm just sort of almost blacking out. So I will feel really fidgety or sweaty. I can't keep still. So that's something that I try to work on, especially if I'm in-person talking to someone and feeling uncomfortable…I do feel things physically and want to kind of get up and walk away. I guess I want to flee.	I feel sort of agitated and I feel all of the emotions that come with being stressed out because it is stressful. So a little bit of relief, a little bit of just anxiety and sort of fear. And then I will say, I think it's important to mention, I always then go back through and redo the whole conversation in my mind after it's done, which is a waste of time, but it's something I've always done my whole life. So I will think back through the whole thing and analyze it and wonder what I could have done differently and even practice in my head like I had said things differently. Very odd, but that's what always happens.	So if it works, if I do get what I want, I do get added to the project, I did successfully reach out to someone, I feel really elated and proud of myself because I'm self-aware enough to know that I achieved something that was hard for me to do. If it didn't go well, I will be really self-critical. I will feel bad. I'll feel embarrassed. I will take it way too far and think about all the things I could have done differently. I usually don't do anything. So those are just sort of the ways that I feel. But my actions, I don't act those things out.

Note: Examples come from Phase 2 interviews. Neuroticism scores are provided here to show that the study findings are unlikely to be attributed to high neuroticism.
Abbreviations: *E* = extraversion score, *N* = neuroticism score.

TABLE 5 | Theoretical propositions on adaptation strategies, experience, and situational moderators affecting reactions to trait-incongruent work demands.

	Coping strategies	How these actions affect immediate and later reactions
Before the work demand	Avoid the work demand (i.e., choose not to engage in the work demand) or procrastinate	**P1:** Avoidance before the work event reduces immediate negative reactions but increases guilt and worry about career consequences later.
	Preparation	**P2:** Preparation mitigates anxiety and boosts confidence prior to the work demand, while also diminishing negative reactions during the work demand. **P3:** Preparation will be associated with more exhaustion immediately after and hours after the work demand
During the work demand	Avoid the work demand (i.e., leave early or participate minimally)	**P4:** Avoidance during the work event will reduce negative reactions in the short term. **P5:** Avoidance increases guilt and worry about career consequences later.
	Surface & deep acting	**P6:** Surface acting masks negative affect and physiological reactions, while deep acting fosters positive affect during the work demand. **P7:** Both surface and deep acting will produce more exhaustion at later stages.
Immediately after work demand	Work breaks/processing with trusted ones	**P8:** Having recovery time by taking a break or processing with trusted others will reduce exhaustion and help recharge energy; lack of recovery time impairs productivity and engagement afterward.
	Appraisal of outcomes	**P9:** Positive appraisals about how the trait-incongruent work demand went will be associated with more positive affect and cognition, whereas negative appraisals will be associated with more negative affect and cognition.
Hours after the work demand	Withdrawal/recovery time	**P10:** Having recovery time and withdrawing from intense social interactions at home will reduce exhaustion and help recharge energy; but not having recovery time will make it difficult to stay motivated and productive in the next working period.
	Rumination	**P11:** Rumination will occur hours after the work demand and affect exhaustion after the event.
Repeating the cycle	Feedback loop & the role of experience	**P12:** Rumination will further affect individuals' fit perceptions and future actions. **P13:** Over multiple experiences, as individuals learn techniques (e.g., preparation, deep acting, focusing on the content) to handle trait-incongruent work demands better, their negative reactions will gradually improve but only to a certain extent, but discomfort will remain with trait-incongruent work demands even after job experience, possibly due to underlying (immutable) trait tendencies. **P14:** While job experience will assist in handling trait-incongruent work demands, if individuals' internal reactions do not improve significantly and the process repeats itself too often, the accumulation of misfit episodes will influence the overall perception of person-environment fit and turnover intentions and decisions.
Amplifiers & downtoners	Structural features & characteristics of others	**P15:** Reactions to trait-incongruent work demands will be amplified (reduced) when the situation is less (more) predictable, less (more) autonomous, and longer (shorter) in duration. **P16:** Reactions to trait-incongruent work demands will be amplified (reduced) when others involved are less (more) familiar and greater (less) in number.

me," ID 035, survey), self-doubt ("oh, shit, I have no idea what I'm doing," ID 002, survey), and blank mind syndrome ("my mind pretty much goes blank," ID 014, survey). Physiological reactions included heart pounding, sweating, and anxiety-driven behaviors like fidgeting, talking fast, and stumbling over words. One participant recalled how she panicked when she was called on in a meeting; her face flushed and her voice felt shaky (ID 035, survey). A small number of individuals reported experiences of positive affect during the work demand when they engaged in emotion regulation, primarily deep acting as we detail later.

Immediately after the work demand, most individuals recalled low-arousal positive affect (especially relief) and low-arousal negative affect (especially exhaustion). Individuals vividly described how they felt drained, with one person saying it felt like their brains were "scrambled." Physiological reactions tended to subside, with appetites returning and heart rates slowing. Another subset of individuals reported more continuous negative affect, with continued physical symptoms and physical fatigue. Cognitions were mixed with positive, neutral, and negative thoughts, differentiated in part by how the work demand was perceived to have gone (appraisal of outcomes). When things did not go well, misfit perceptions were particularly amplified (e.g., "It's hard for an introvert to stand out at this company," ID 015, survey; "Relief that it was over. Doubt about whether I'm in the right role," ID 009, survey; "I felt defeated, and believed I had failed. I considered looking for a new job," ID 040, survey).

Reactions to these trait-incongruent work demands may continue for hours *afterward into the evening*. The prominent affective reaction was exhaustion. Associated physiological reactions included persistent headaches and physical fatigue. Individuals who mentioned their cognitions hours after the work demand had repetitive, evaluative thoughts (e.g., "replay of conversations that I wished would have gone better or differently," ID 043, survey), mostly negative rumination about the event that continued into the evening and sometimes into the following days (e.g., "a few days later you think about it and try your best to ignore it," ID 064, survey). These negative ruminations would often trigger negative effects such as regret and embarrassment (e.g., "Thinking back on it I was ashamed and could become re-embarrassed just thinking about it," ID 064, survey), causing some individuals to "distract myself enough to move on from the repetition of that day's events" (ID 021, survey).

3.2 | How Do Individuals Navigate and Adapt to Introversion-Incongruent Work Demands and How Do Adaptations Affect Their Reactions Over Time?

Individuals use behavior-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies to maneuver and adjust to these work demands (see the light blue boxes in Figure 1). These strategies have implications for reactions in both the immediate and subsequent stages of the process.

In the before stage, individuals **avoid or procrastinate** trait incongruent work demands if they can (e.g., if they have advance notice and the autonomy to do so). For example:

> My company has weekly happy hours, and my team often attends together. I know it's important to go because it's time to get to know my team outside of work, but I often try to find excuses not to attend. When I do go, it's usually not because I want to, but because I feel like I have to. (ID 073, survey)

> There're really two situations that make me the most uncomfortable. The first is doing a planned presentation to a large group of people where there's not any interaction. And then the second is just socializing outside of the working atmosphere, so at dinner or something like that. Those both make me really nervous. And I procrastinate and I try to avoid them as much as possible. So, if people ask me to do a presentation, I sort of say, "Oh, I don't know if I'm the right person," or "Did you ask everybody else?" And then I don't prepare until the very last minute. (ID 024, interview)

When individuals chose to avoid or procrastinate a trait-incongruent work demand, it provided immediate relief. Yet, this tactic often leads to lingering negative affect that can persist for hours or even days. For example, individuals in our study reported ongoing guilt ("I feel guilty and like I'm some kind of hermit who avoids other people," ID 014, survey; "I felt guilty I hadn't reached out sooner," ID 042, survey). They also expressed concerns about the consequences to their career (e.g., "Every time I walk by his office or see him I think that for my career, I really should meet with him and make sure he knows me and my work ethic," ID 123, survey). Thus, avoidance before the work event reduces immediate negative reactions but increases guilt and worry about career consequences later (***Proposition 1***).

Besides avoidance, another dominant coping strategy in the before stage is to **prepare** for the trait-incongruent work demand (e.g., reviewing known details or expectations of the event in their minds or on paper, thinking about or practicing aloud what they would say, and/or engaging in positive self-talk). For example:

> You would see me making a list. I wrote down everything I could think of to tell the new hire ahead of time so I wouldn't be at a loss for words of what to tell him. (ID 003, survey)

> Before such group meetings, I typically experience quite a bit of anxiety. I can start feeling this anxiety hours, even days before I have to actually present in front of a large group. To help combat this, I prepare what I will say down to the exact word and tend to memorize my presentations ahead of time. (ID 045, survey)

Preparation helped individuals manage feelings of anxiety and enhanced their feelings of control before and during the misfit. In addition, preparation sets people up for better reactions hours after the work demands because things are more likely to go

well. For example, "So the prep work, …if that's all done upfront then the end result of this, I think, changes. I think each stage, it changes" (ID 002, interview); "I was also thinking that while this was completely out of my comfort zone, I did a great job…I remember getting praise from my coworkers and feeling like I nailed it" (ID 083, survey). Yet, the extensive time, energy, and worry involved in preparation for these demands contributes to feelings of exhaustion after the work demands are over. One individual noted, "I could finally relax after days of prep" (ID 022, survey). Based on our analysis of the comments provided by participants, we propose the following propositions: Preparation mitigates anxiety and boosts confidence prior to the work demand, while also diminishing negative reactions during the work demand (***Proposition 2***). Preparation will be associated with more exhaustion immediately after and hours after the work demand (***Proposition 3***).

During trait-incongruent work demands, dominant coping strategies were avoidance, surface acting, and deep acting. **Avoidance** behavior during the work demand manifested as hiding (e.g., "I typically feel uncomfortable and most often try to retreat to a table away from the masses," ID 035, survey); trying to be inconspicuous (e.g., shrinking away so as not to get called upon in a meeting); leaving early (e.g., retreating to one's hotel room at a conference), and being silent/not participating. Avoidance behavior during the misfit event also led to negative reactions such as guilt and worry at a later stage (e.g., "I examined my own behavior in retrospect and felt anxious or regretful of my actions," ID 018, survey; "My career has suffered from becoming a wallflower," ID 021, survey). Therefore, avoidance during the work event will reduce negative reactions in the short term (***Proposition 4***), but will produce guilt and worry about career consequences later (***Proposition 5***).

Participants in our study often used **surface acting**—pretending to feel differently than their true emotions (Grandey 2000)—to manage their work demands. They described this as "masking anxiety with outward confidence," "forcing a smile," "getting ready to go out on stage," "playing the part to be extraverted," and "attempting to mimic others' actions."

In contrast, others employed **deep acting**, which involves changing their thoughts and feelings (Grandey 2000). These individuals used self-encouragement and positive reappraisal to reduce negative emotions and boost confidence, particularly when well-prepared. For instance, they reassured themselves of their abilities, downplayed the importance of the audience, and managed their internal states.

> I was thinking how great it [the presentation] is going to be when it is over. I was telling myself that I can do it and it isn't a big deal. I was trying to calm my nerves by moving around before people arrived. I tried to tell myself that the people weren't that important and are just people too. (ID 067, survey)

> Okay, you made it this far. This isn't so bad. Smile. Talk to people. Be charming and gracious for the next four hours. (ID 129, survey)

> Stay calm, you know the answers. You can do it, don't be nervous. Just try your best to explain it, and if they don't understand they can ask questions. Take deep breaths. (ID 054, survey)

> During the situation at first, my heart is racing, and I do get sweaty doing presentations [and] I fidget with something. But as it goes on and it's going smoothly, then that kind of stops, and I can get more comfortable talking to people and people raise their hands. I can get more comfortable with interaction. (ID 006, interview)

Preparation was key to helping individuals engage in deep acting. For example, participants (IDs 022 and 006) noted they would "put together a script to memorize days in advance" and "got reminded of the material, and it kind of distracted me from the fact that I was speaking in front a lot of people," which allowed them to feel more at ease and confident. Surface acting was typically used at the moment to pretend, and in contrast to deep acting, did not seem effective in reducing the stress of the situation (e.g., "I was using all my energy to convey a comfortable and confident exterior…I was thinking of how "fake" it felt to me, and how I really really didn't want to do it," ID 057, survey; "I was using all my energy to convey a comfortable and confident exterior…I feel exhausted. I just want to get away and be alone," ID 035, survey).

Both surface and deep acting contributed to later exhaustion, illustrating the interconnectedness of coping strategies in affecting not only concurrent but also later reactions. As an example, participant 002 (interview) mentioned that pretending or reacting in certain ways in social events takes a lot of energy and is "pretty exhausting." Overall, we propose that surface acting masks negative affect and physiological reactions, while deep acting fosters positive affect during the work demand ***(Proposition 6)*** and both surface and deep acting will result in exhaustion at the end of the work demand and hours later (***Proposition 7***).

Immediately following the work demand, individuals **withdrew or took a break** immediately after trait-incongruent work demands whenever possible. The need for a break was attributed to feelings of exhaustion. Individuals felt exhausted after the time, effort, and energy spent preparing for the work demand (at the anticipatory misfit stage) and engaging in emotional labor, such as surface and deep acting, to manage their emotions (during the current misfit stage). Respondents indicated that this emotion-focused coping strategy helps maintain their productivity and reduce other negative reactions, including the levels of exhaustion hours later. For example:

> I can continue to go to work and be successful and productive, as long as I just have some time to recharge in between. (ID 040, interview)

> I think I would probably do best if I was able to have an hour break after the fact, where I could wind down and then transition back into a productive rest of my day, but that's just not always feasible. (ID 035, interview)

> …right afterwards you're kind of exhausted, but then once you take a little bit of time, like you kind of recover from that. (ID 025, interview)

> I need to recharge myself before interacting with more people because I am feeling low on battery. (ID 078, survey)

When individuals were unable to take a break, they had a hard time making it through the rest of the day with a positive attitude.

> Sometimes the presentations are in the morning and you still have to get through the day. And when that happens, I'm exhausted. You can see it on my face that I'm just really tired. And it gets harder for me to keep up a good energy to a customer or something like that during the day. (ID 024, interview)

An additional emotion-focused strategy included **processing with trusted ones**, such as a close colleague. This is feasible when individuals have access to their social networks after the work demands. By talking to trusted colleagues, they receive social support, which helps release stress.

> Afterwards, I went to a fellow colleague, who I've often consulted in the past in a quasi-mentor relationship. I debriefed with him, and it's helpful because it allows for cooling down and gradually ratcheting down from the stress I feel. (ID 026, survey)

> I remember feeling very relieved and even going to tell one of my close coworker friends that I had completed the phone calls. She gave me a high five and told me that I did a great job. (ID 056, survey)

Having recovery time by taking a break or processing with trusted others immediately after the work demands will help reduce exhaustion and recharge energy; lack of recovery time impairs productivity and engagement in the hours after (***Proposition 8)***.

During breaks or processing periods, individuals often reflected on how the work demand went. These appraisals significantly influence the evolution of reactions post-episode. Positive feedback or successful outcomes led to a greater sense of relief and enhanced positive emotions.

> After the presentation I felt a lot more extroverted than I actually am. I was very glad it was over and that it went well and I was interacting with interns afterwards, and they were asking me questions. I went home happy and had a good day after that because I successfully completed the presentation. (ID 006, survey)

> Initially, I was still flustered but did receive positive feedback from the Assistant Corporate Controller. This helped alleviate my concerns. (ID 032, survey)

In contrast, if the outcome was perceived as less successful, individuals had more negative affect (such as regret, embarrassment, and rumination) following the immediate relief of being done with the work demand.

> I always feel good after I do a big presentation or lead a meeting that went successfully. If it didn't go successfully, I would definitely continue to obsess over everything that went wrong and let it bother me for a long time. (ID 086, survey)

> So if it works, if I do get what I want, I do get added to the project, if I did successfully reach out to someone, I feel really elated and proud of myself because I'm self-aware enough to know that I achieved something that was hard for me to do. If it didn't go well, I will be really self-critical. So I will feel bad. I'll feel embarrassed. I will take it way too far and think about all the things I could have done differently. (ID 040, interview)

> If the conversation doesn't end this way, then I will second guess myself and will likely have anxiety in the middle of the night related to the incident. (ID 099, survey)

In summary, our findings suggest that positive appraisal about how the trait-incongruent work demand went will be associated with more post-episode positive affect and cognition whereas negative appraisal will be associated with more negative affect and cognition (***Proposition 9***).

Finally, individuals reported coping strategies that continued to affect their experience *hours after* the trait incongruent work demand. Continuing to feel they needed a break, many individuals reported reducing social interactions after the workday ended (e.g., "I will avoid hanging out with people unless it's planned in advance or I haven't seen them in a while," ID 027, survey). Failing to have a break for recovery at home through solitude time and/or minimizing social interactions would result in exhaustion or burnout on a longer-term basis.

> It's important to me to feel "recharged" by spending time alone. I feel that I usually need at a minimum 2 evenings a week, and some additional time on weekends where I "recharge." If I am busy enough where this isn't possible I get very tired, unmotivated and sometimes cranky. (ID 011, survey)

> What I've learned is that if I don't take that time, this discomfort or anxiety will just kind of build and build, and then I could have an anxiety attack or just feel really miserable or actually be ill, actually get sick. Sometimes you would have a cold or something. So the breaks help me in that way physically and that way I can just sort of maintain, right. (ID 040, interview)

This leads to ***Proposition 10:*** having recovery time and withdrawing from further social interactions will reduce exhaustion and help regain energy, but not having recovery opportunities will make it difficult to stay motivated and productive.

As mentioned earlier, rumination was common *hours after the work demand*. Individuals often fought to stop thinking about the work demand, but could not, and such rumination further contributed to their feelings of exhaustion and perceptions of misfit. This rumination, in addition to being a reaction, also has adaptive implications for improving future episodes of trait incongruent work demands. Examples of these points follow:

> When I feel like it hasn't gone well, I have to fight the tendency to replay it in my head. But inevitably, there'll be a point, either right after or it might even be later in the day or the next day where you're driving or doing something else and the phrase for how you should have said it comes to mind. And so, that always happens. (ID 016, interview)

> I feel exhausted and often re-think the entire day, trying to recall the people I met or spoke with and how I could have done better. (ID 008, survey)

> I feel tired, like I can't think straight and my brain is scrambled, like I just want to take a nap or stop thinking. Also, sometimes it feels like I can't turn my brain off from replaying how the day went, how I think conversations with certain people went, what I should have said or done differently, what I think other people thought of me, etc. (ID 114, survey)

Thus, rumination will occur hours after the event and affect individuals' exhaustion (***Proposition 11***) and future actions (***Proposition 12***).

3.3 | Feedback Loop and Role of Experience

Figure 1 portrays a feedback loop reflecting participant comments that suggest that having more experience with trait incongruent work demands helps them to better navigate future experiences. When asked to elaborate on why experience helps, individuals indicated they had learned techniques to feel more confident in these situations, got to know the people involved better, and gained more job knowledge. For example:

> I think, personally, experience has helped a ton, where early in my career, I would almost always avoid situations like this, if possible. I would be extremely uncomfortable and nervous. Now, it's something I expect. Maybe I'm spending more time preparing for them or I've learned some of the practices to be better when I'm in these situations, but I do feel a lot more comfortable than I used to in the past and know that I could go in front of a group of 200 people and still do a good job, even if it's not natural for me. (ID 015, interview)

However, for most, such experience provided only a small dampening effect on their reactions to trait-incongruent work demands. Specifically, individuals learn how to better manage work-related events, but they still find these work demands uncomfortable. This means the process in Figure 1 repeats itself, though potentially with reduced intensity, even as individuals gain more experience. Several illustrative quotes follow.

> One of my other responsibilities at work that is at odds with my introverted personality is giving weekly trainings/overviews to my team of 50-60 people. This requires me to put together clear materials and present in front of my colleagues. While I'm not as nervous doing this as I once was, it still makes me somewhat anxious being in the spotlight. (ID 083, survey)

> I think it helps to practice, but I wouldn't say I feel more comfortable. I just think that you learn yourself and your own reactions to things and you can manage your own emotions and expectations and find coping mechanisms that work, and that makes things better. But I don't think that underlying discomfort ever really goes away. To me, that feels like a very core, just part of my personality. If I can deal with it better. So it's sort of both. Yes and no. (ID 040, interview)

> I don't think I feel better about it, but I think I'm better at handling it, if that makes any sense. (ID 037, interview)

> I do think experience definitely helps… I have had quite a bit of experience doing those more formal presentations. [But] that feeling I get before, during, and after has not changed. Sorry. That hasn't changed at all or gotten any easier. So I'm not sure that's ever going to change. (ID 024, interview)

Combing the above suggests that over multiple experiences, as individuals in high introversion learn to handle trait-incongruent work demands better, their negative reactions will gradually improve but only up to an asymptote; however, the discomfort will remain even after job experience over time, possibly due to their underlying (immutable) trait tendencies (***Proposition 13***).

Lastly, some respondents noted that their experiences with trait-incongruent work demands triggered them to question and assess their fit with the job or organization (e.g., "doubt about whether I'm in the right role," ID 009, survey; "I considered looking for a new job and imagined how great it would be to get a new start on a different team that would be a better fit," ID 040, survey). Illustrations follow:

> I felt like my current team, and maybe my organization was not the right fit for me. I thought about looking for external job opportunities. I felt like I was very successful in my role and received feedback that supported that perception, but I questioned if I was in the best role–one that utilized my strengths. (ID 010, survey)

> I handled the situation well, but I honestly felt this was not a thing I would like to do on a regular basis and had doubts about whether I wanted to deal with this as a job. I think back about this and other similar situations and realize I made a good decision to change careers from an engineer at an oil refinery to an actuary in a more white-collar environment at an insurance company. (ID 025, survey)

Therefore, while job experience will assist in handling trait-incongruent job situations, if individuals' internal reactions do not improve significantly and the process repeats itself too often, the accumulation of misfit episodes over time will influence the overall perception of person-environment fit and turnover intentions or decisions, despite their good performance (***Proposition 14***).

3.4 | Why Are Reactions of Individuals Amplified or Reduced Across Various Trait-Incongruent Work Demands?

The intensity and discomfort of reactions across different stages varied based on **structural features** (e.g., amount of autonomy involved, predictability, and duration) and **characteristics of others** (e.g., whether they were familiar and how many individuals were in the situation) in the work demand (see the bottom panel of Figure 1). These situational factors inform the extent to which individuals need to display or suppress their introversion or dial up their extraversion, hence relating to the concept of situational strength (Tett and Burnett 2003).

Lower perceived *autonomy* with respect to engaging with the work demand correlates with more extreme affective, cognitive, and physiological reactions over the misfit episode (e.g., "I don't like the idea of 'forced fun' and it sort of felt like that. Some thoughts that immediately jumped out would be, anxiety, anger, annoyance, dread, shame, fear, and just a general sense of not wanting to be there," ID 007, survey). In contrast, as noted earlier, higher autonomy allows individuals to avoid the work demand, leave early, or participate less (e.g., "Another senior encouraged me to interact with other people but I kind of avoided doing that," ID 126, survey; versus "there was no choice in the matter," ID 034, survey).

Another factor influencing reactions to situations is *predictability*. Enhanced predictability, such as being able to review agendas before meetings, knowing whether one has to speak up or present, and being aware of who will be present, allowed individuals to prepare more effectively. This led to them feeling more at ease and in control, thus increasing their willingness to participate. For example, individuals mentioned that the circulation of meeting agendas in advance makes them feel more comfortable, and having a chance to think things through in advance is preferred. Having little or no information about the upcoming event, on the contrary, would make them less comfortable. For example:

> Whenever we want to address really open-ended questions in a meeting, either over the phone or in person, I feel at odds. I would rather prepare and provide a more rehearsed perspective–I don't enjoy brainstorming with a group and talking about any idea that comes to mind. (ID 027, survey)

> I didn't know what to expect and how the meetings ran so I went into it with no information on how I should prepare and what I should know and what was expected of me. The less information I have about a certain situation the less comfortable I am. (ID 068, survey)

Finally, the *duration* or length of interaction seemed to be another consideration, with shorter trait-incongruent work demands being more tolerable and producing less negative reactions than longer ones. Two individuals explicitly mentioned their preferences for trait-incongruent work demands that are over more quickly (e.g., "I do much better in 15- or 30-minute meetings or presentations, like formal presentations, than I do in long, drawn-out presentations or dinners," ID 024, interview; "Not so much sweating. If I'll have to sit there for a long time then, yeah, it's sweating in my palms," ID 006, interview). If the duration of the event is longer, respondents would report more high arousal negative affect and exhaustion, and it would take longer time to recover.

> Every time I got to my car afterward I would start crying because I was so emotionally exhausted. It was never one thing in particular, just the whole thing being so overwhelming with no breaks. (ID 087, survey)

> The recovery time with just a call, a one-on-one call that pushes me beyond my comfort level is much shorter versus the big social event hours after I'm still going to feel it and probably replay in my mind. (ID002, interview)

Of the characteristics of others that would moderate the trait-incongruent experiences, *familiarity* includes both how well the participants knew the individuals with whom they were interacting and how similar participants felt they were to these individuals in terms of power hierarchy, life experiences, or values. The data suggest that familiarity helps highly introverted individuals to feel more comfortable in trait-incongruent situations while interacting with unfamiliar people or senior leaders would make them feel less comfortable. Illustrations follow:

> Yeah, so I think that the situations I am comfortable in are generally with people I know and closer, trusted allies. I get nervous when it's people I only sort of know.

> I'm actually better with people I don't know at all than with people that I sort of know and I worry what they think of me. So if I have to go into a meeting and work with people I only kind of know, that's something I get nervous about. (ID 024, interview)

> I think that the more similar the other people are to me, the more comfortable I am. And I don't mean that necessarily like gender, race, age—just more similarities in thinking. (ID 040, interview)

> What made me feel uncomfortable in that situation was also not knowing the client. If it were an individual that I knew and had a good relationship with I would not have been quite as stressed about reviewing the information but I was unsure of what reaction any missteps might elicit from this person I had never talked to or worked with. (ID 070, survey)

> I was seated around people that are ranked above me and I did not know well. I was able to converse, but the sustained interaction was tiring. [During] - being more focused on how the conversation seems to be going rather than really listening or enjoying the conversation. (ID 118, survey)

> It is also extra overwhelming being with people who are higher up in the organization than myself. (ID 046, survey)

The *number of individuals* in the situation also matters. Respondents noted that they are more likely to feel at ease in one-on-one conversations than in larger groups.

> If it's a really small group or one-on-one, I feel way more comfortable being able to be in those types of situations, or just myself and two other people. Much more comfortable than a larger group environment where maybe you've got five-plus people. (ID 037, interview)

> The smaller, the better. So 400 people in a room, very uncomfortable, 10 people in the room feels a little bit better. (ID 040, interview)

> Any time I have to speak in front of a large group, especially [if] it consists of many superiors, I get very nervous and uncomfortable. I prefer small groups of people to large, and especially prefer groups of people who know me as an individual, because then I feel like there is less pressure on the presentation itself. (ID 019, survey)

In summary, reactions to trait incongruent work demands will be amplified (reduced) when the situation is less (more) predictable, less (more) autonomous, and longer (shorter) in duration (***Proposition 15***) and when others involved are less (more) familiar and greater (less) in number (***Proposition 16***).

4 | Discussion

4.1 | Empirical and Theoretical Contributions

We introduce an integrated model of the proximal experience of trait incongruent work demands for individuals high in introversion. Our proposed framework extends person-environment fit theory (and trait activation theory more specifically) by unearthing insight from an understudied *temporal and trait-specific perspective*. By focusing on the proximal experience of trait-incongruent work demands, we build a theory about a previously unexplored process, including factors affecting this process. In doing so, we highlight under-researched constructs, organize disparate concepts, and generate new research directions, and components that are important in building theory (Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan 2007).

Consistent with previous findings, we find evidence that misfit can literally be "painful" (Follmer et al. 2018, 447) and unsuccessful attempts to manage misfit will eventually lead to individuals trying to leave their jobs. Extending the conclusions of extant research that has studied the question of what people do and feel following months or years of experiencing misfit, we reveal for the first time how dread, anxiety, and rumination can begin even before a *specific episode* of misfit and evolve into subsequent reactions and behaviors *during, immediately after, and hours after the episode*. Further extending theory about what people do to cope with overall evaluations of misfit (e.g., Follmer et al. 2018), we illustrate coping strategies individuals use *before, during, immediately after, and hours after* experiencing discrete trait-incongruent work demands. We freshly delineate how these coping reactions affect further reactions, why reactions of individuals are amplified or attenuated across various experiences of trait-incongruent work demands, and how subsequent exposure to these work demands plays a role in repeating this cycle.

Our proposed framework highlights the importance of anticipatory misfit, a period that has been largely ignored in both the person-environment fit and trait activation theory literature. Our findings reveal two dominant coping strategies used during the anticipatory misfit stage that affect the way in which the rest of the process evolves. One of these strategies is emotion-focused (i.e., choosing to avoid the work demand), and the other is problem-focused (i.e., preparing for the work demand). We found that preparation is crucial for coping with episodic misfit experiences because it helps individuals feel more equipped and self-assured, potentially fostering deep acting, which aids in managing emotions and reactions more effectively. Our study also uncovers forms of avoidance that occur during trait-incongruent work demands, including hiding, not participating, or leaving the trait-incongruent situation early. Our findings indicate that avoidance strategies can reduce some negative reactions to trait-incongruent work demands. However, they also have costs—avoidance at both the anticipatory misfit stage and during the misfit stage produces subsequent guilt, frustration, and concern that such behavior will affect one's career.

Our findings reveal that the experience of trait-incongruent work demands can produce exhaustion and the need to recover in the hours after the event. The findings also shed light on why this occurs. Participants indicated that their preparation for the work demand, their surface and deep acting during the work demand, and rumination throughout the process contributed to their post-demand exhaustion. In other words, even though preparation during the anticipatory misfit stage and surface and deep acting during the misfit stage helped to accommodate the work demands and manage or improve negative reactions, these adaptive coping actions drained energy. This is mainly because introverted individuals had to continuously exert effort in preparing, dialing up their personality to be more extraverted, and reappraising the situation and their ability to fulfill the demands. Thus, our process model predicts that after a long workday facing trait-incongruent work demands, individuals will need recovery time to unwind and recharge for performance in the next working period. This provides new insights into the importance of short-term recovery time and opportunities in managing the experiences of trait-incongruent work demands.

Our proposed model highlights another new temporal factor that extends the understanding of the person-environment fit and trait activation theory literature—the role of experience. Individuals can become somewhat more comfortable with trait-incongruent work demands after repeated instances. This finding about experience is consistent with work showing that stress appraisals tend to be less intense when a situation is more familiar (Scherer 2005). Yet, the role of experience is rarely factored into misfit research, and it is significant that job experience may allow individuals to become accustomed to trait-incongruent work demands. Our findings newly suggest that although introverted individuals may improve their coping strategies (e.g., learning that preparation is important) and reactions (e.g., reducing their rumination about the work demands or becoming more comfortable with who one is as a person), their discomfort with these work demands never seems to be entirely eliminated. Behaviors and adaptations can improve one's experience, but dispositional trait consistencies remain. If misfit experiences occur more often than the person feels they can manage, this will reduce their overall perception of fit over time.

Our study provides further insights that are directly relevant to trait activation theory (Tett and Burnett 2003). Trait activation theory has focused primarily on job performance as an outcome of trait-incongruent work demands, and indicates that the relationship between a given trait and job performance is strongest when that trait is relevant to the work demands under consideration (Tett and Burnett 2003). Our study contributes to the theory by introducing mediators that help explain this finding for highly introverted individuals. Specifically, individuals high in introversion experience affective, cognitive, and physiological challenges when faced with trait-incongruent work demands at different stages (anticipatory, in-the-moment, and retrospective misfit), which can affect their job performance (e.g., avoiding trait-incongruent work demands or withdrawing from them early, having jumbled thoughts due to anxiety during the work demand). Although qualitative research cannot confirm causal relationships, participant quotes illustrate specific ways in which their reactions and chosen coping strategies impede job performance. For example, many individuals in our study discussed how they would avoid optional networking, luncheons, or developmental events, even when they knew going could benefit them. Such demands are not required but are implicitly preferred by employers, and the avoidance of such secondary work demands may have indirect or longer-term consequences on job performance.

In addition, trait activation theory is fairly silent on how trait-relevant or trait-incongruent work demands may affect "internal psychological criteria" (Tett et al. 2013, 92). We provide evidence that the theory can be extended to include evolving patterns of affective, physiological, and cognitive reactions, with associated coping mechanisms for addressing negative psychological experiences. Because trait activation theory is appropriately a broad theory, it does not identify, delineate, or organize solutions for managing the experiences of employees in work situations that require traits incongruent with their personality. The theory can guide institutions to match employees with job demands to optimize performance, but it does not inform what factors may challenge or improve the experience or performance of individuals in situations where their traits are incongruent. In our case, this pertains to introverted employees, and our data inform us how highly introverted individuals and employers can proactively take steps to reduce the negative effects of trait incongruence, as we elaborate shortly.

Moreover, Tett et al. (2021) recommended identifying more specific situational features that are relevant to a given personality trait. By probing the trait-relevant-but-incongruent work demands for introverts, we held the trait relevance constant in a sense and identified two dimensions of situational features that may help predict the occurrence of negative experiences. These include the structural features (low predictability, low autonomy, long duration) as well as the characteristics of others present (low familiarity and more people). Although autonomy as a situational feature has been recognized in trait activation theory (Tett et al. 2013), most of the other features especially characteristics of others have not. Such findings provide additional insights into work design, extending beyond previous implications. In trait activation theory, the idea of "trait activation" is dominated by a variable-centered perspective, in which situational features explain why a personality trait would predict performance. By taking a person-centered perspective and the "person-specific approach" (Howard and Hoffman 2018) with the group of introverted individuals, our model depicts how situational features can aggravate or alleviate evolving reactions of introverted individuals across various trait-incongruent work demands. Among other valuable features of doing so, identifying examples of situational strength at a trait level will allow empirical studies to examine how changes in behavior correspond to changes in situational features. Overall, these findings improve the "accuracy of the prediction" (Aguinis and Cronin 2022, 11) for introverts in strong trait-relevant situations and provide actionable insights to manage misfit through work design.

4.2 | Practical Implications

Our findings provide insights for employees high in introversion, suggesting ways in which they can lessen the negative affective, cognitive, and physiological reactions they experience before,

during, immediately after, and hours after a trait-incongruent work demand. First, many individuals mentioned how much preparation helps them feel more at ease in these kinds of situations. Various types of preparation may be helpful, such as going over a list of who will be at a social event, thinking of items to discuss with each person, or conducting research to feel more confident and at ease.

Second, in large-group events or meetings, highly introverted individuals can try to ease their tension by engaging with familiar people or those with similar orientations. This may involve seeking out specific people when arriving or asking one of those individuals to save them a seat or go with them to the event. They can also use positive and encouraging self-talk to ease their anxiety, as demonstrated by some individuals in our sample.

Third, a common experience among the participants in our study on trait-incongruent work demands was "blank mind syndrome." Individuals experiencing this reaction can try to ground themselves in their environment and center their attention externally rather than internally (Evans 2021). When in a meeting, these individuals can bring notepads to jot down their ideas and keep these listed in front of them.

Fourth, many individuals experience repetitive negative thoughts (rumination) hours after certain events. Research on the treatment of rumination suggests that thought replacement (e.g., engaging in a distracting activity or replacing negative thoughts with positive thoughts) is an effective way to reduce or stop rumination (Clark 2020; Watkins 2008).

Fifth, our findings indicate that individuals low in extraversion tend to scale down social activity in their personal life and try to find solitary time for recovery, especially after workdays that involve heavy social interactions (a highly trait-incongruent situation). This is consistent with the work recovery literature, which suggests that taking time off outside work (e.g., breaks, weekends, evenings) for preferred leisure activity can help working individuals unwind from job stress, reduce exhaustion, and recharge their energy for the next working period (Sonnentag, Venz, and Casper 2017).

Sixth, it may be useful for individuals to view trait-incongruent work demands as a learning and growth opportunity. Improving the ability to adapt to trait-incongruent work demands is valuable for one's growth as an individual and leader (e.g., "Leading an internal or external client meeting, [you] can't just be quiet and read off a slide. You have to have a certain degree of charm that an introvert simply cannot pull off!" ID 101, survey). Early-career individuals can take comfort in knowing that over time, job experience should dampen their reactions to trait-incongruent situations to some extent. Rotational assignments, mentoring programs, or cross-functional teams may allow individuals to gain exposure to different work styles, work demands, teams, and social interactions, enabling them to gradually build confidence and reduce negative reactions over time. To the extent that some discomfort can be expected in these types of roles, individuals may work particularly hard on the first set of strategies noted. Finally, we argue it is useful for highly introverted individuals to know they are not alone in their reactions to trait-incongruent work demands.

Our findings also suggest several actionable implications for work design that managers can implement to benefit highly introverted individuals. Although it is important to respect introverted individuals' preferences and need for solitude, it is not advisable for them to completely avoid social and networking events. Instead, organizations and managers should create an inclusive environment that allows employees discretion as to whether they will attend unimportant events. At the same time, it is crucial to provide support and resources to help introverted individuals navigate these situations effectively. Managers can play a vital role by providing structure and information (e.g., meeting agendas and details about attendees) in advance of events, and by ensuring there are familiar others to accompany with for morale when meeting with large group of nascent business partners. This would allow introverted individuals to prepare mentally and emotionally, reducing anxiety and enhancing their comfort level. Additionally, offering mentorship or positive appraisal immediately after work events involving social interactions can provide introverts with the necessary encouragement and recognition for their efforts. Organizations and managers should also help introverted individuals positively reframe social and networking events as opportunities for their work and career development. By highlighting the potential benefits and providing resources for skill-building in areas such as communication and networking, introverts can develop strategies to navigate these situations in a way that aligns with their strengths and preferences. Ultimately, finding a balance between respecting introverted individuals' need for solitude and encouraging their participation in social and networking events is crucial. By creating an inclusive and supportive environment, organizations and managers can help introverts thrive and contribute their unique perspectives and talents to the workplace.

4.3 | Limitations and Future Research Directions

As is typical of any qualitative research, our findings have limits to their internal and external validity but provide valuable theoretical insights and rich fodder for quantitative follow-up. Regarding internal validity, the way our participants interpret trait-incongruent events may be influenced by personality traits or factors other than introversion. We demonstrate that the levels of openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness in this sample of participants are similar to available population-level norms. Levels of neuroticism in our sample are somewhat lower than in available norms, suggesting that our findings are unlikely to be explained by high levels of neuroticism.

Regarding external validity, our sample includes individuals who scored in the bottom 31% of a lengthy extraversion screening instrument. The findings, therefore, should not be generalized to individuals who are only somewhat introverted. Our sample is also focused on participants with undergraduate and graduate degrees in business, and our model is thus best considered as a theoretical representation for individuals with a similar background (Bryant and Charmaz 2019). Future research can examine our model quantitatively in other occupational or job contexts. As an example, researchers might identify additional examples of trait-incongruent work demands for highly introverted individuals in broader samples. Although some of our model may generalize to the experience of trait-incongruent work

demands for other personality types (e.g., agreeable individuals may be more nervous before a work demand in which they have to be disagreeable), it is unclear which aspects of the model generalize to other traits. Thus, further research is needed to assess the generalizability or variability of other trait-incongruent work demands.

Our model emphasizes the temporal aspect of individuals' experiences with trait-incongruent work demands, capturing reactions before, during, and after such events. Although our study relies on retrospective accounts, this approach is common in qualitative research examining time-based phenomena, as real-time data collection often proves logistically challenging (Dahm et al. 2019). Retrospective accounts serve a dual purpose: they not only provide data but also offer insight into how individuals make sense of their experiences over time, integrating personal and environmental changes into their narratives (Chuang et al. 2015; Klag, Jansen, and Lee 2015; Shipp and Jansen 2011). Our approach also allowed us to build more comprehensive insight by being able to ask individuals about when and why their reactions to trait-incongruent work demands were stronger versus weaker. To mitigate recollection bias, we implemented several strategies. We asked participants to focus on recent events, allowed ample time for detailed responses, and used probing follow-up questions to elicit rich descriptions (Flanagan 1954). Additionally, we measured other personality factors and compared our sample characteristics with national norms to ensure that retrospective accounts were not unduly influenced by individual differences. Although our approach yields valuable insights, we acknowledge its limitations. Future research would benefit from longitudinal designs that capture real-time reactions to trait-incongruent work demands at various time points. Such studies could provide a more granular understanding of how individuals' responses evolve before, during, and after these challenging situations, potentially validating and extending our current findings.

Our findings show how interconnected aspects of the process are. For example, hours after the event, exhaustion is common and seems to be influenced by a host of factors, including the amount of work the individuals spent preparing, the extent of time they spent worrying and ruminating, surface and deep acting during the event, the perceived outcome (how the work demand went), and how much recovery time was available right after the event. Although we provide logically plausible explanations for these connections based on our analysis of the qualitative data, these must be tested through more research and quantitative analysis for stronger causal inferences.

These limitations are balanced by the strengths of the study's qualitative methods, which are essential for developing insights into theoretically underdeveloped phenomena, illustrating employee attributions of causality that can be tested in later quantitative research, and for generating new research directions (Bryant and Charmaz 2019; Carton 2018). Future quantitative research can examine the elements and process shown in Figure 1 and the propositions in Table 5.

Finally, our intention is not to describe introversion as a negative characteristic or to suggest that avoiding trait-incongruent demands is valuable. Trait-incongruent work demands can be identified for individuals high in extraversion and for any other personality trait. For example, as we noted in our methods, extraverts in our sample also described trait-incongruent work demands such as having to restrain their thoughts and opinions. Like very highly introverted people, extraverted participants also indicated negative reactions to trait-incongruent job situations. For example, before they entered trait-incongruent job situations, such as meeting with groups of highly introverted people and working alone, they felt anxious (high-arousal negative affect), dreaded coming to work, and worried about possible negative outcomes. During these situations, the most common affective reactions included boredom, sadness, and exhaustion (low-arousal negative affect). Although our manuscript illustrates the challenges posed by trait-incongruent work demands for highly introverted individuals, future research could examine trait-incongruent work demands for individuals with other personality characteristics while controlling for situation strength. Future research could examine the extent to which exposure to such work demands is valuable from a leadership-development perspective.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The qualitative data supporting this study contain sensitive, identifying information, including specific references to supervisors, colleagues, and workplace interactions. The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Endnotes

[1] Introversion and extraversion are two sides of the same construct. In published work, researchers tend to label the introversion/extraversion construct extraversion and study phenomena from the perspective of having higher extraversion. We summarize this work in the same direction as the original research.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section.

Appendix A:

Phase 2 Data Collection: Critical Incidents Narrative Survey

Thank you for your participation! The following survey—best completed on a computer or tablet and not a mobile phone—is part of several studies we are doing to explore the work experiences of individuals higher and lower in extraversion.

The survey you are being asked to complete is qualitative and asks open-ended questions. This is because qualitative data can help build a deeper and richer understanding of any given topic. To get a more complete understanding, we have many other pieces of information we are examining.

The best thing you can do to facilitate our work is to help us understand YOUR experience. We will not use any information that could identify an individual, and your name or email will not be linked to your responses.

Let us begin with the open-ended questions. When you reply to these questions, try to tell us as much as you can think of so we can understand your experience. For each question, we ask that you reply in 1–2 paragraphs. Please try to answer candidly and honestly. More detail is better. If you feel a question does not apply to your experience, help us understand why or how by explaining this in your response.

1. Think about day-to-day or even occasional tasks and responsibilities involved in your work. Are there parts of your current job, or are there specific work situations you need to engage in, that feel at odds with your introverted personality? These might be times that call on you to act more extraverted than you tend to be, or times that you do not have an opportunity to be yourself as an "introvert." What are examples of these work situations? Describe as many as you can think of.
2. Think of a specific example of a time you faced a work situation that felt at odds with your introverted personality, perhaps an example that is particularly memorable. First, tell us about the situation. Be specific. Second, what would we need to know to fully understand the situation and context?
3. Facing situations that are at odds with our personality might provoke thoughts or feelings. Can you tell us about your thoughts (what you were thinking) or feelings (your mood or emotions) in the situation you described above? For example, if we had a transcript of the thoughts going on in your head before or during the situation, what would we "hear" on the transcript?
4. After the situation was over, what were you thinking and/or feeling right after or even later? List as many of the distinct thoughts as you can think of that went through your head.
5. How do you feel (or what are you thinking) after a long day of engaging with other people?
6. Does a day or week with a lot of activity or interactions with people affect your willingness to interact with friends or family? In what ways? How much activity or interaction "gets" to you?
7. Does a day or week with little activity or interactions with people affect your desire to interact with friends or family? At what point do you feel you have too little activity or interactions with others?
8. Do you have any other comments about this topic that you would like to share?