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Emotional labor and family quality: The role of work-family positive spillover

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ABSTRACT There are increasing research interests on both types of emotional labor at work (i.e., surface acting and deep acting), but the effects of emotional labor at work on employees’ emotional labor at home and their family members’ family quality have not yet been explored. Drawing on work-family enrichment theory, this study investigated the mechanism underlying the relationship between employees’ emotional labor at work and their spouses’ perceived family quality by focusing on the mediating role of employees’ emotional labor at home and the moderating role of work-to-family positive spillover. Results from a time-lagged three-wave survey of 193 Chinese employee-spouse dyads indicate that, surface acting at home mediates the relationship between surface acting at work and spousal ratings of family quality. Although deep acting at work is positively related to deep acting at home, deep acting at home is not significantly related to family quality. Work-to-family positive spillover strengthens the relationship between surface acting at work and surface acting at home. The implications for theory and management practice are discussed.

Keywords: emotional labor; surface acting; deep acting; family quality; work-family positive spillover
Emotional labor and family quality: The role of work-family positive spillover

Introduction

The past two decades have witnessed quick development of service industries. The service industry provides most of the employment, exceeding 80% of the total employment population in advanced countries (Nixon 2005). In addition, the number of employees working in service industries has also increased sharply in China and has exceeded one third of the total employment population (Editorial Board of the China Commerce Yearbook 2010). Frontline service employees are usually expected to display positive affect to customers or clients such as smiling and conveying friendliness, no matter how they actually feel. Indeed, emotional labor is usually needed at work, which “requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild 1983, pp. 7). Thus, this marked change in the landscape of the working pattern raises an important question regarding the impact of emotional labor on frontline employees.

Emotional labor is defined as the process of regulating both feelings and expressions for the organizational goals (Grandey 2000). Researchers have identified surface acting and deep acting as two commonly used emotional labor strategies for coping with display rule requirements (Hochschild 1983; Grandey 2000; Kruml and Geddes 2000; Zapf, 2002). According to the stress perspective, growing evidence suggests that surface acting, in which employees modify their displays without shaping inner feelings (Grandey 2000, 2003), is positively related to work-family interference or conflict (e.g., Montgomery, Panagopolou and Benos 2005; Noor and Zainuddin 2011), while deep acting, which is modifying inner feelings to match expressions (Grandey 2000, 2003), is not significantly related to work-family conflict (e.g., Noor and Zainuddin 2011).

In fact, employees are expected not only to regulate their emotions and maintain display rules at work, but also to regulate their feelings and expressions at home (Devault...
1999). For example, employees may need to display positive emotions at family gatherings even when feeling tired and upset after a full day’s work, to express empathy and concern when family members are frustrated, and to offer encouragement and show appreciation to their partners. Erickson (1993) suggested that the provision of emotion work¹ is a facet of family work, just like housework and child care. Although the analysis of emotional labor by Hochschild (1983) focused on the workplace, she acknowledged that emotional labor exists at family. However, the scholarship on emotional labor at family is less well developed than its labor force counterpart and there is little research on emotional labor in the family domain (Seery and Corrigall 2009). According to work-family enrichment theory that suggests that skills and perspectives generated at work can be spilled over to family (Greenhaus and Powell 2006), we maintain that surface acting at work is positively related to surface acting at home and that deep acting at work is positively related to deep acting at home. Thus, the first purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of emotional labor at work on emotional labor at home.

Meanwhile, surprisingly, we know little about how and why employees’ emotional labor at work influences their spouses’ perceptions of family quality. It is important to understand whether work experiences affect not only employees but also their spouses’ perceptions regarding family quality because the spouse is usually the most important partner for the employee in the family. Family is an essential domain for employees outside the workplace (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux and Brinley 2005), and favorable family environments are predictive of individual well-being (Diener and Seligman 2004). Family quality is reflected in the exchange between family members of mutual support, open communication, problem-solving, and caring, which is an important indicator of family life (Summers et al. 2005). Work-family enrichment theory suggests that skills and perspectives applied at home could provide great influences on the quality of life in the family domain.
Thus, the second purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of employees’ emotional labor at work on their spouses’ perceptions of family quality and the mediating role of emotional labor at home in the relationship between emotional labor at work and family quality.

In addition, we know little about the boundary condition of the effects of emotional labor in the workplace. The relationship between emotional labor at work and emotional labor at home may depend on employees’ work-to-family positive spillover (WFPS), which refers to the extent to which the gains—including positive affect, values, skills and behavior-acquired at work are transferred to the family domain (Hanson, Hammer and Colton 2006). WFPS represents the speed of skill transference, which potentially moderates the work effects on family behaviors. In particular, this study suggests that WFPS may facilitate the relationship between emotional labor at work and emotional labor at home.

The present study offers three central implications for theory and practices. First, we provide insights into the mechanisms through which emotional labor at work relates to the family domain and advances our understanding of how emotional labor at work influences family members in the family domain. Specifically, we examine the mediating role of emotional labor at home and the moderating role of WFPS in the relationship between emotional labor at work and family quality. The investigation of the mediating mechanisms can generate knowledge about why emotional labor at work has an effect on family members. Also, we shed light on the moderating effects of WFPS on the emotional labor at work–emotional labor at home relationship in order to provide a boundary condition that addresses the impact of emotional labor at work on emotional labor at home. Second, our study provides more understanding of emotional labor at home. Previous work-family studies usually only focus on surface acting in a family setting (e.g., Montgomery, Panagopolou and Benos 2005; Sanz-Vergel, Rodriguez-Muñoz, Bakker and Demerouti 2012), we investigate
both surface acting and deep acting at home in this study. Third, our work responds to the recent calls for more work-family interface research in non-U.S. cultures (see Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood and Lambert 2007). Addressing this call can help generalize Western theories into Eastern settings. To achieve these three major contributions, and in response to a recent call to overcome a number of the limitations of the cross-sectional designs that dominate the work-family literature (Casper et al. 2007), we use a three-wave research design to test the hypothesized relationships. The conceptual model of the study is illustrated in Figure 1.

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**Theoretical background and hypotheses**

Spillover, which refers to a within-person across-domains transmission from one area of life to another, occurs frequently (Bakker, Westman and van Emmerik 2009). According to work-family enrichment theory (Greenhaus and Powell 2006), resources such as skills and perspectives could be transferred directly from the work role to the family role, thereby potentially enhancing performance in family role. Skills refer to a broad set of task-related cognitive and inter-personal skills, coping skills, multitasking skills, and knowledge and wisdom derived from role experiences (Greenhaus and Powell 2006). Perspectives involve ways of perceiving or handling situations, such as respecting individual differences, being understanding of other people’s problems, and learning the value of trust (Greenhaus and Powell 2006). Especially, the perceived relevance of a particular skill or perspective is likely to be stronger when there is a small contrast between work and family role identities (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate 2000).

Similar to the service context, individuals are also expected to display positive emotions such as warmth and kindness in the family domain (Seery and Corrigall 2009).
Emotion work is defined in the family literature as work that entails the creation of positive emotional responses in others and is often synonymous with nurturance, emotional support, and care (Erickson 1993, 2005; Seery and Corrigall 2009). Discussions of family-related emotion work generally focus on displaying and engendering positive emotions by, for example, providing others with pleasure, showing an interest in their lives, making them feel good about themselves, and comforting them (DeVault 1991; Delphy and Leonard 1992; Seery and Crowley 2000). Thus, the work and family role requirements are similar for service employees and they can express themselves in similar ways across roles and can see the connection between the skills or perspectives acquired in one role and the requirements of the other role (Greenhaus and Powell 2006). When employees return home, they can apply the skills and perspectives what they have learned at work (e.g., surface acting, deep acting) to meet the requirements of the family (Greenhaus and Powell 2006).

Whereas employees are expected to perform emotional labor at home (Erickson 1993, 2005; DeVault 1999; Seery and Corrigall, 2009), emotional labor at home can be both genuine emotional expression and fostered expressions due to perceived family role obligations. Thus, although there is an expectation for individuals to perform emotional labor at home, they can use different emotional strategies, such as deep acting and surface acting. The two emotional labour strategies involve different skills and perspective taking (Grandey 2000, 2003). Surface acting involves engaging in a superficial display of the normative emotion without making any effort to change what one is actually feeling. For example, a service employee may put on a happy face, but actually feel irritated. Deep acting, on the other hand, involves trying to modify felt emotions in order to bring internal experience and outward emotional expressions into alignment with expected displays. For example, a service employee may put him/herself in customer’s shoes to try to feel happy and display positive authentic emotions. According to work-family enrichment theory (Greenhaus and Powell
2006), skills and perspectives could be transferred directly from the work role to the family role. Employees who learned surface acting at work are more likely to apply surface acting strategy to meet the emotional work requirements of the family; on the other hand, employees who learned deep acting at work are more likely to apply deep acting strategy to meet the emotional work requirements in the family domain.

In addition, employees have to engage in role transitions between the work and home domain every day (Ashforth et al. 2000). Because physically and psychologically disengaging from one role and re-engaging in another role needs effort (Burr, 1972), employees generally prefer an easy transition between life domains and tend to use the same emotional labor strategies to deal with job and family demands (Sanz-Vergel et al. 2012). Muraven and Baumeister (2000)’s self-control strength model shows the long-term improvement effect of self-control just as a muscle gets stronger through exercise. Thus, emotional labor strategies as one kind of self-control may also be improved by regular exercise. Given that on that day individuals have already used the strategy of surface acting or deep acting at work, they have it more “accessible” and use it more skillful in another role, facilitating the micro-transition (Sanz-Vergel et al. 2012). For example, an employee who usually performs surface acting at work will find it is easy to just paste a smile on her/his face to her/his spouse though she/he is actually feeling frustrated; and an employee who usually performs deep acting at work will be more likely to change their inner feelings and endeavor to express authentic positive emotions to his/her spouse. Sanz-Vergel et al. (2012) found that daily surface acting at work was positively related to daily surface acting at home. Based on these arguments, we hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 1.* Employee surface acting at work will be positively related to their surface acting at home.
Hypothesis 2. Employee deep acting at work will be positively related to their deep acting at home.

Emotional work at home is very important for family life. Theories (Spanier and Lewis 1980; Wills 1985) and research (Noller and Fitzpatrick 1990; Kitson and Holmes 1992; Erickson 1993) indicate that husbands’ performance of emotion work, as compared to the performance of both housework and child-care tasks, has the strongest positive effect on wives’ marital well-being, and that emotion work is negatively related to feelings of marital burnout.

Surface acting involves engaging in a superficial display of normative emotions without making any effort to change what one is actually feeling. Individuals are consciously inauthentic during surface acting (Rafaeli and Sutton 1987). Thus, surface acting is an indicator of inauthenticity and a lack of emotional engagement. Emotion research indicates that noticeable differences exist between authentic and inauthentic emotional displays, because their expressions involve different patterns of muscle movements, durations, and levels of consistency (Ekman, Davidson, and Friesen 1990; Frank, Ekman and Friesen 1993). Thus, it is unsurprising that people seem to be able to distinguish authentic from inauthentic or deceptive emotional displays (e.g., Gross and John 2003; Groth, Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2009). Such a perceived lack of authenticity may lead the spouse to question the sincerity of an employee’s love for the family, and whether the employee is truly interested in his or her needs. The falseness of surface acting denies the sincerity and individual attention that is important for rewarding interactions and support within the family, which form the basis of high family quality (Summers et al. 2005; Roeters, Van der Lippe and Kluwer 2009).

Experimental studies also suggest that surface acting may produce less positive reactions in the audience (Frank et al. 1993) and disrupt communication and raise blood pressure in the partners (Butler et al. 2003). Thus, surface acting may impede relationship quality, such as
family quality.

In addition, when exhibiting surface acting, employees also experience emotional dissonance due to the discrepancy between their external expressions and inner feelings (Grandey 2003). Studies have found that emotional dissonance is positively associated with emotional exhaustion (e.g., Abraham 1998; Grandey 2003). Thus, employees who surface act at home will not have sufficient emotional resources due to emotional exhaustion. Meanwhile, surface acting requires more cognitive resources (Gross 1998). Therefore, employees who surface act devote more cognitive resources in managing their emotions and lower the cognitive and emotional resources available for handling housework and family tasks, which may also hamper family quality among family members. Thus, we expect that employee surface acting at home will damage family quality as perceived by the spouse and that employee surface acting at work will be negatively related to spouse-reported family quality through the mediation of surface acting at home.

On the other hand, employees make great efforts to engage in authentic positive displays through deep acting. Authenticity signals that the employees’ displayed interest in the customers is sincere and genuine (Hennig-Thurau, Groth, Paul and Gremler 2006). Thus, employee deep acting at home should also signal to spouses that employees truly care about them and are interested in their needs. Prior research has also shown positive outcomes of deep acting for customers (e.g., Groth et al. 2009). In addition, when employees deep act, they should also experience a sense of emotional harmony instead of emotional dissonance (Hochschild 1983), which likely enables them to perform better housework and family tasks, which may enhance family quality among family members. Thus, we expect that employee deep acting at home will enhance family quality as perceived by the spouse and that employee deep acting at work will be positively related to spouse-reported family quality through the mediation of deep acting at home. We propose:
Hypothesis 3. Employee surface acting at work will be negatively related to spouse-reported family quality through the mediation of surface acting at home.

Hypothesis 4. Employee deep acting at work will be positively related to spouse-reported family quality through the mediation of deep acting at home.

Further, we argue that WFPS moderates the relationship between emotional labor at work and emotional labor at home. Skills and behaviors are two key types of positive spillover (Edwards and Rothbard 2000). Employees with high levels of WFPS can integrate work and family domains more effectively by developing and maintaining skill and behavioral connection across the two domains. Hence, those employees are more likely to be influenced by their work experiences and apply similar strategies across work and family domains than employees with low levels of WFPS. Applying this logic to emotion labor at work and at home, we argue that employees with high levels of WFPS are likely to be influenced by emotional labor at work and apply the same emotion labor strategies from work to family, consequently facilitating the relationship between emotional labor at work and emotional labor at home. Therefore, we propose the following.

Hypothesis 5. Work-to-family positive spillover will strengthen the relationship between employee surface acting at work and surface acting at home.

Hypothesis 6. Work-to-family positive spillover will strengthen the relationship between employee deep acting at work and deep acting at home.

Method

Samples and procedure

The participants in this study were service employees working in a bank in Southwest China. Three waves of data collection with two-week intervals were conducted to reduce the potential common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff 2003). In the first-wave survey (T1), employees reported their surface acting and deep acting at work and
demographic variables. We targeted at 300 married employees and obtained 250 usable responses. In the second-wave survey (T2), employees who had completed first-wave questionnaires were surveyed again and asked to rate their surface acting and deep acting at home and WFPS in the past two weeks. We obtained 200 usable responses in this round. In the third-wave survey (T3), employees’ spouses (from among only those employees who had completed first- and second-wave questionnaires) were surveyed. They were asked to evaluate their family quality in the past two weeks and report their demographic variables. We received 193 spouse responses. Hence, the final sample was 193 employee-spouse dyads with a response rate of 64.33%.

Of the 193 employees, 56% were male and their average age was 30.23 years (SD = 6.50). The average job tenure was 7.62 years (SD = 6.99) and the average number of work hours per week was 39.02 (SD = 15.32). As for education, 1.04% had finished high school education or below, 17.10% had a community college degree, 64.77% had a bachelor degree, and 17.10% had a master degree or above. The average age of the spouses was 30.65 years (SD = 6.59) and 86.53% had a full-time job. As for education, 1.04% had finished a middle school education or below, 2.59% had finished high school education, 18.65% had a community college degree, 60.62% had a bachelor degree, and 17.10% had a master degree or above.

Measures

The surveys were conducted in China. Because the measurement scales we used were originally developed in English, we followed the commonly used back-translation procedure to translate them into Chinese (Brislin 1980). A response scale ranging from 1, “strongly disagree,” to 7, “strongly agree,” was used for all of the measures below unless specified otherwise.
Surface acting at work and at home. We used a three-item scale from Grandey (2003), originally developed by Brotheridge and Lee (2003). A sample item for surface acting at work is, “I just pretended to have the emotions I needed to display in the workplace.” In addition, we slightly modified the items to also measure surface acting at home by changing the context from the workplace to home. This procedure has been used in previous studies in the field of emotional labor (e.g., Yanchus et al. 2010; Sanz-Vergel et al. 2012). A sample item for surface acting at home is, “I just pretended to have the emotions I needed to display at home.” The internal consistency reliabilities of the scales of employee surface acting at work and at home were 0.86 and 0.95, respectively.

Deep acting at work and at home. We used a three-item scale from Grandey (2003), originally developed by Brotheridge and Lee (2003). A sample item for deep acting at work is, “I tried to actually experience the emotions I had to show in the workplace.” In addition, we slightly modified the items to also measure deep acting at home by changing the context from workplace to home. A sample item for deep acting at home is, “I tried to actually experience the emotions I had to show at home.” The internal consistency reliabilities of the scales of employee deep acting at work and at home were 0.89 and 0.95, respectively.

Work-to-family positive spillover. WFPS was measured using 11 items developed by Hanson et al. (2006). A sample item is, “Skills developed at work help me in my family life”. Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was 0.93.

Family quality. Family quality was measured by six items from the “family interaction” component of the Beach Center Family Quality of Life scale originally developed by Summers et al. (2005). A sample item is, “My family enjoys spending time together.” Cronbach’s alpha of this scale was 0.94.

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analyses
We performed confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to test the construct validity with AMOS 16.0 before testing our hypotheses. We first examined the baseline model that included all six variables of employee surface acting at work, deep acting at work, WFPS, surface acting at home, deep acting at home, and family quality. To reduce the number of parameters in the structural equation modeling analysis and to keep a reasonable degree of freedom in the model (Mathieu and Farr 1991; Bandalos 2002), the item parceling method recommended by Bagozzi and Edwards (1998) was used. Specifically, for the three-dimension construct (i.e., WFPS), we followed previous research (Wu, Kwan, Wei and Liu 2013) and reduced the number of items by creating three indicators, with each indicator represented by the dimension score (mean of all of the dimensional items).

As shown in Table 1, the hypothesized six-factor model provided a good fit to the data: \( \chi^2 (174) = 273.81, \text{CFI} = 0.97, \text{TLI} = 0.96, \text{RMSEA} = 0.06 \). All of the factor loadings were significant, which indicated convergent validity. The discriminant validity of the hypothesized six-factor model was tested by contrasting with alternative CFA models. The fit indexes of Table 1 revealed that the hypothesized six-factor model fitted the data considerably better than any of the alternative models did (Bentler and Bonnet 1980; Cheung and Rensvold 2002). Hence, the discriminant validity of the six variables was confirmed.

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**Descriptive Statistics**

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and zero-order Pearson correlations of all key variables. As shown in Table 2, surface acting at work was positively correlated with surface acting at home (\( r = 0.29, p < 0.01 \)), and deep acting at work was positively correlated with deep acting at home (\( r = 0.17, p < 0.05 \)). Moreover, surface acting at home was negatively correlated with family quality (\( r = -0.27, p < 0.01 \)). These results are consistent with and provide initial support for some of our hypotheses.
Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesized model. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test on the entire system of variables in the hypothesized model simultaneously. For two interaction terms (the interaction between surface acting at work and WFPS and the interaction between deep acting at work and WFPS), we followed previous research and centered the variables used in the interaction terms to prevent multicollinearity. Following the approach by Cortina, Chen, and Dunlap (2001), we set the error and measurement path of the interaction terms. Results illustrated in Table 3 show that the hypothesized model fitted the data very well: $\chi^2 (214) = 343.76$, CFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.95; and RMSEA = 0.06.

Model comparisons. Utilizing the change in chi-square test (Bentler and Bonnett 1980), we compared our hypothesized model (full-mediation model) with a number of nested models that were less likely, though theoretically plausible. Two partially mediated models were included: the first partially mediated model estimated the same paths in the hypothesized model as well as the direct path from surface acting at work to family quality. The second partially mediated model estimated the same paths in the hypothesized model as well as the direct path from deep acting at work to family quality. The change in chi-square tests (Table 3) revealed that the first partially mediated model ($\Delta \chi^2 = 0.37; \Delta df = 1; p > 0.05$), and the second partially mediated model ($\Delta \chi^2 = 3.62; \Delta df = 1; p > 0.05$) were not significantly better than the hypothesized model and were less parsimonious. Hence, the hypothesized model (full-mediation model) is a good-fitting and the most parsimonious model.
Hypotheses testing. Figure 2 presents the results of structural equation modeling. As shown in Figure 2, surface acting at work was positively related to surface acting at home ($\beta = 0.32, p < 0.01$), and deep acting at work was positively related to deep acting at home ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.01$). Hence, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported. Moreover, surface acting at home was negatively related to family quality ($\beta = -0.29, p < 0.01$), while deep acting at home was not significantly related to family quality ($\beta = 0.02, n.s.$). Hence, Hypothesis 3 was supported but Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Furthermore, the interaction between surfacing acting at work and WFPS was positively related to surfacing acting at home ($\beta = 0.20, p < 0.05$). We plotted the interaction using Aiken and West’s (1991) procedure for computing slopes one standard deviation above and below the mean of the moderating variable. Figure 3 presents the interaction pattern. As shown in Figure 3, the relationship between surfacing acting at work and surfacing acting at home was stronger when WFPS was high ($\beta = 0.52, p < 0.01$), but was not significant when WFPS was low ($\beta = 0.12, n.s.$). Hence, Hypothesis 5 was supported. In addition, the interaction between deep acting at work and WFPS was not significantly related to deep acting at home ($\beta = 0.00, n.s.$). Hence, Hypothesis 6 did not receive support.

Discussion

This study provided primary support for a theoretical model of the effects of employees’ emotional labor at work on their spouses’ perceptions of family quality. As we predicted, employee surface acting at work was positively related to surface acting at home, which was further negatively related to spousal ratings of family quality. Surface acting at
home mediated the relationship between surface acting at work and spousal ratings of family quality. While deep acting at work was positively related to deep acting at home, the latter was not significantly related to spouses’ perceived family quality. WFPS strengthens the relationship between surface acting at work and surface acting at home, but not the relationship between deep acting at work and deep acting at home.

**Theoretical Contributions**

This study offers several theoretical contributions. First, drawing on work-family enrichment theory (Greenhaus and Powell 2006), we provide insights into the mediating mechanisms through which emotional labor at work relates to spouses’ perceptions of family quality. Our findings reveal that surface acting at home is a mediator between surface acting at work and family quality. Although previous studies have indicated that surface acting at work is relevant to work-family interference (e.g., Montgomery et al. 2005; Noor and Zainuddin 2011) and surface acting at home is negatively related to employee’s own well-being (Sanz-Vergel et al. 2012), the mechanism by which surface acting influences family members has remained unknown. Our study provides preliminary support for the argument that employee work experiences affect employees’ family members and reveals the processes by which emotional labor at work influences the quality of family life.

Second, our study provides more understanding of emotional work at home. We extend emotional labor theories to the family domain by developing and testing a theoretical model of the effects of employee emotional labor at work on emotional labor at home and family outcomes. Emotional labor has mostly been examined in service occupations (Hochschild 1983; Grandey 2000, 2003). Yet family roles also require emotional work (Erickson 1993, 2005; Wharton and Erickson 1993; DeVault 1999). Our findings provide evidence that surface acting and deep acting are performed at home as well. Our study found that surface acting at home was negatively related to family quality, which is in line with prior
research that shows negative effects of surface acting at work (e.g., Grandey 2003; Yanchus, et al. 2010) and at home (Yanchus et al. 2010; Sanz-Vergel et al. 2012). Our study found that deep acting at home was not significantly related with family quality, which also in line with prior research that shows deep acting at home was not significantly related to positive/negative affective responses in the family domain (Yanchus et al. 2010). There might be some other moderators, such as employees’ and their family members’ emotional intelligence (Yanchus et al. 2010), for the relationship between deep acting at home and family quality. Future research is needed to figure out the moderating effect of individual differences. Our study also found that deep acting at work was positively related to family quality, which implies that deep acting at work not only has positive outcome at workplace (e.g., Grandey 2003; Groth et al. 2009), but also benefits their family members at home.

Third, the examination of moderating effects suggests a complex picture of the ways in which individual WFPS influences the relationship between emotional labor at work and emotional labor at home. Our findings provide evidence that WFPS should be considered as a boundary condition of the effects of surface acting at work. This moderating effect may be generalized to other skills and perspectives. However, the moderating effect of WFPS was not significant on the relationship between deep acting at work and deep acting at home. It is possible that there is another potential variable that moderate the two-way interaction related to WFPS, such that job social support may make employees’ WFPS to be more effective to link skills and perspectives generated in the workplace and skills and perspectives applied in the family domain.

Fourth, this study advances our understanding of not only how emotional labor at work influences the work domain and job-related outcomes, but also its spillover effect on the family domain in China. We selected China because of the country’s rapid service economy growth, and more importantly, because of the dual importance of work and family in Chinese
culture (Wu, Kwan, Liu and Resick 2012). As collectivists are group-oriented, Chinese people are likely to put a high value on their family roles (Shaffer, Francesco, Joplin and Lau 2005). Moreover, work and family roles are highly blurred in Chinese societies, and people feel a great obligation to fulfill both work and family responsibilities (Au and Kwan 2009). Thus, our work responds to the recent calls for more work-family interface research in non-U.S. cultures (Casper et al. 2007).

A strength of this study is that we used a three-wave research design to test the hypothesized relationships, thus overcoming a number of the limitations of the cross-sectional designs that dominate the work-family literature (Casper et al. 2007). We provide insights into the theoretical mechanisms through which antecedents in the work environment affect outcomes in relation to family members. Experience-sampling methodology (Alliger and Williams 1993) could be used in the future to study the work-to-family processes on a daily basis to provide a more fine-grained analysis of the effects of emotional labor on family members in daily life.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations of our study should be noted. First, as a spouse is usually the most important partner for the employee at home, we chose to ask the employee’s spouse to rate the family outcome. However, as other family members such as parents, children, and other relatives often live together in China, we could study other family members’ perceptions of family quality in the future. Second, although the study relied on a three-wave research design, it was not a longitudinal study, which limited our ability to draw conclusions about causal relationships. For example, low family quality may also lead employees to perform surface acting at home. Hence, a longitudinal research design should be applied to reduce such potential bias. Third, emotional labor at work and emotional labor at home may also have common antecedents, such as the habitual tendency toward certain kind of emotional labor.
strategy or affect-based personality traits, but we did not control for these factors, which needs to be investigated in future research by collecting such individual difference variables.

We offer a number of suggestions for future research. First, we investigated surface acting and deep acting as two kinds of emotional labor strategies in this study. Other emotional management and display strategies, such as emotional enhancement (Seery and Corrigall 2009), connecting, confronting and concealing (Liu, Liu and Wu 2012), emotional sharing and emotional masking (Liu, Xu and Weitz 2011), could be investigated in the future.

Second, beyond WFPS, a number of situational factors may influence the relationship between emotional labor at work and emotional labor at home. Although employees perform emotional labor at home, they may display their real emotions for it is safe and warm; hence, the venting emotions might also happen at home. The relationship between employee emotional labor at work and emotional labor at home might depend on the family emotional display rules or family support, which needs to be investigated in the future. Meanwhile, organizational practices that give rise to emotional resource need to be examined in the future. Liu and Härtel (2013) found that a positive team emotional climate is a source of group efficacy with positive consequences for workgroup performance. Given this resource-building role of a positive team emotional climate, it is likely that a positive team emotional climate will provide employees with emotional resources and will moderate the relationship between emotional labor at work and emotional labor at home, which further buffers/strengthens the effects of surface acting/deep acting at work.

Third, future research could investigate emotional work at home systematically and explore the antecedents and consequences of emotional work at home. Emotional labor in work roles differs from emotional work in family roles (Strazdins 2000). Hochschild (1983) argued that in the workplace, emotional work has “exchange” value, whereas in the family it has “use value,” suggesting the presence of different norms and different expectations. Thus,
besides the implicit emotional display rules at home, other factors might influence emotional work at home, such as relative power in the family and attachment styles, which should be studied in the future. Also, emotional work at home might influence not only family outcomes, but also influence work domain, such as family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enrichment, which need to be further examined in the future.

**Practical Implications**

Our findings have several practical implications. As the quick development of service industries and increase of service employees in China, it is critical to improve their family quality because Chinese people focus on family. International firms located in China should realize the importance of family quality and adjust their human resource management practice accordingly, such as facilitate family supportive supervision or family supportive organizational culture in the organization. As we can know from our study, emotional labor is popular in our work and life. Previous research has indicated that emotional labor is not only performed with clients but also with colleagues (Tschan, Semmer and Inversin 2004). Employees should be aware that their surface acting at work is not only related to poor performance (Grandey 2003), but also has a negative effect on their spouses’ views of family quality. Employees should be prepared to manage the spillover process and be mindful about their emotional labor strategies to prevent the negative spillover effects of surface acting. It is advisable that organizations provide training to employees to help them understand the detrimental effects of surface acting both in the workplace and the family. Deep acting instead of surface acting should be encouraged at workplace. Training could provide employee with various ways to engage effectively in deep acting, such as perspective taking (Parker & Axtell, 2001). Employees could also be trained to develop effective emotional labor strategies both at work and at home. Selection processes may want to recruit and hire employees who are more effective at, and more likely to engage in, deep acting (Groth et al. 2009). Research has shown
that affect-based personality traits are related to reported emotion regulation strategy use (e.g., Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2006). For example, positive affectivity was negatively related to surface acting and positively related to deep acting (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2006). Thus, organizations may consider positive affectivity as part of a broader set of criteria for selecting and promoting employees. Moreover, organizations could also induce more positive emotions to provide employees with a positive team emotional climate, which will equip employee with positive emotional resources and make them more easily to express genuinely felt positive emotions to customers or their family members.

**Conclusion**

This study demonstrates the influence mechanism of how emotional labor at work can affect the spouse’s perceptions of family quality. The effects of the two emotional labor strategies are different. Surface acting at home mediates the relationship between surface acting at work and spousal ratings of family quality and WFPS strengthens the relationship between surface acting at work and surface acting at home. Deep acting at work is positively related to deep acting at home, but deep acting at home is not significantly related to family quality. Employees should consider the emotional labor strategy they use both in the workplace and at home to improve the quality of their family life. Our findings suggest that surface acting should be discouraged at work and at home for the betterment of employees and their families.

**NOTES**

1. We use the phrases “emotional work” and “emotional labor” interchangeably in this paper. The concepts of emotional labor and emotional work are often used interchangeably (Zapf 2002; Bolton 2003), although the family literature often prefers to use the term emotional work (Erickson 1993, 2005; DeVault 1999; Seery and Corrigall 2009), whereas emotional labor is often used in organizational settings (Hochschild 1983; Morris and Feldman 1997; Grandey 2000).
2. \( \lambda = \sqrt{\alpha} \); \( \sigma^2 = 1 \times (1 - \alpha) \); \( \alpha = (\alpha_1 \times \alpha_2 + r^2)/(1 + r^2) \)
References


Editorial Board of the China Commerce Yearbook (2010), *Yearbook of China’s foreign economic relations and trade*, Beijing: China Commerce and Trade Press.


Roeters, A., Van der Lippe, T., and Kluwer, E.S. (2009), ‘Parental work demands and the frequency of child-related routine and interactive activities’, *Journal of Marriage and*


Table 1 Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for the Measures of the Variables Studied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Six-factor model</td>
<td>273.81</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-factor model-1: Surface acting at work and surface acting at home combined</td>
<td>545.50</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-factor model-2: Deep acting at work and deep acting at home combined</td>
<td>879.86</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-factor model-3: Surface acting at work and family quality combined</td>
<td>846.01</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-factor model-4: Deep acting at work and family quality combined</td>
<td>899.00</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: $N = 193$. TLI is the Tucker-Lewis index; CFI the comparative fit index; and RMSEA the root-mean-square error of approximation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Surface acting at work</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Deep acting at work</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Surface acting at home</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>(0.95)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Deep acting at home</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>(0.95)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Work-to-family positive spillover</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>(0.93)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Family quality</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-0.27**</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>(0.94)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** N = 193; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01 (two-tailed).
Values in the brackets on the diagonal are the Cronbach’s alpha value of each scale.
Table 3 Comparisons of Structural Equation Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model and Structure</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>$\Delta \chi^2$ ($\Delta df$)†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesized model</td>
<td>343.76</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially mediated model 1</td>
<td>343.39</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.37(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Adding one path from surface acting at work to family quality)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially mediated model 2</td>
<td>340.14</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>3.62(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Adding one path from deep acting at work to family quality)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: $N = 193. \ ^{**} p < 0.01; \ ^{*} p < 0.05$ (two-tailed).

† Compared to the hypothesized model.
Figure 1

The Conceptual Model

Surface Acting at Work (T1) \( + \) \( + \) \( + \) \( + \) Deep acting at Work (T1)

Surface Acting at Home (T2)

Work-to-family positive spillover (T2)

Deep Acting at Home (T2)

Family quality (T3)

Deep Acting at Work (T1) \( + \) \( - \)
Figure 2 Results of Path Analysis

Note. \( N = 193 \). This is a simplified version of the actual model. It does not show indicators, error terms, exogenous factor variances, and correlations between exogenous factors. WFPS is Work-to-family positive spillover.
Figure 3 Moderating Role of Work-to-Family Positive Spillover in the Relationship between Surface Acting at Work and Surface Acting at Home

High work-to-family positive spillover

Low work-to-family positive spillover

Surface acting at work

Surface acting at home

(\( \beta = 0.52, p < 0.01 \))

(\( \beta = 0.12, n.s. \))