Perceptions of leader emotion regulation and LMX as predictors of followers' job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors

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ABSTRACT

To align personal feelings with socially defined display rules, individuals often turn to one of two self-presentation strategies: surface or deep acting. Leaders could be expected to rely on these regulatory techniques, as their work roles demand an ability to convey meaning through emotions that may or may not be authentically felt. In this study, we examined how different forms of emotion regulation, as engaged in by those in leadership roles, influence follower job attitudes and behaviors. We predicted that follower perceptions of the leader–member exchange relationship would moderate main effect relationships. Survey results collected from 126 employed individuals indicated that LMX quality influenced follower reactions to the form of emotion regulation engaged in by supervisors. Specifically, deep acting was positively associated with job satisfaction for members in low-quality exchanges, while surface acting negatively affected participation in prosocial acts for individuals in high-quality exchanges. Implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

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Keywords: Emotion Regulation, Leader Emotion, Leader Authenticity, Leader-Member Exchange

1. Introduction

Emotions have been acknowledged as comprising an integral component of leadership-related processes and outcomes. Indeed, emotion is implicitly – if not explicitly – embedded within various contemporary theories of leadership, including transformational leadership (e.g., Barbuto & Burbach, 2006; Brown, Bryant, & Reilly, 2006; Brown & Moshavi, 2005; Küppers & Weibler, 2006; Rubin, Munz, & Bommer, 2005), charismatic leadership (e.g., Bono & Ilies, 2006), and leader–member exchange (e.g., Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002). It is perhaps not surprising then, that emotions felt and displayed as part of the leadership role have been studied as predictors of numerous organizationally-relevant outcomes. At the individual level, for example, leader emotionality has been linked to follower creativity (e.g., Zhou & George, 2003), follower performance (e.g., McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002), follower mood (e.g., Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005), and evaluations of leader effectiveness (e.g., Kerr, Garvin, Heaton, & Boyle, 2006; Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005); while at the higher level of analysis, leader emotionality has been tied
to team performance (e.g., Van Kleef et al., 2009), emotional climate (e.g., Özçelik et al., 2008), and organizational change (e.g., Groves, 2006).

Despite the inextricability of emotion and leadership, little research has examined how leader emotion regulation influences employee work attitudes and behaviors. Instead, extant empirical and popular press literature has focused almost exclusively on leader Emotional Intelligence (EI; George, 2000; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Mandell & Pherwani, 2003; Wong & Law, 2002) or displays of discrete emotions and their blends (e.g., Bono & Ilies, 2006; Lewis, 2000; McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002). This is a notable omission as emotions, and therefore the way in which they are managed and conveyed, speak to the nature of the leader–follower relationship (Lawler & Thyre, 1999). Evidence exists to suggest that leaders and followers mutually construct their relationship and come to expect certain behaviors – including emotional displays – in light of that relationship (Martinko & Gardner, 1987). Consistent with the tenets of social exchange theory, if expectations for the emotional content of a relationship are not met, individuals could be expected to become dissatisfied and be less likely to ‘give back’ (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997). The current study builds upon and extends previous work by examining how perceptions of leaders’ emotion regulation strategies, along with reports of leader–member exchange (LMX) quality, impact followers’ attitudes toward their work role and their willingness to engage in extra-role, discretionary acts. In the following pages, we review research pertaining to the role emotion plays in effective leadership. Specific focus is given to defining different forms of emotion regulation, as well as to reviewing LMX theory. Building on work relevant to authenticity in interpersonal relationships, we conclude by suggesting these variables will interact to predict followers’ job satisfaction and organizational citizenship.

2. Leadership and emotion regulation

Emotions have the ability to influence behavior in both positive and negative ways and therefore, good leaders manage their own emotions as well as influence (e.g., elicit, quell) the emotional states of others (Humphrey, Pollack, & Hawwer, 2008; McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002). In fact, existing research suggests managers regulate their feelings as frequently as those who work in what have traditionally been defined as emotionally laborious, people–work jobs (e.g., sales and service workers; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Nevertheless, unlike many service or caring occupations where the nature of emotions to be expressed is often quite restricted (e.g., front-line service employees are expected to display only positive emotions), the emotional requirements of those working in leadership roles are more complex; leaders must experience and show a variety of emotions—the frequency, intensity, variety and duration of which may vary considerably (Humphrey et al., 2008). To complicate matters further, these emotional requirements are often compounded by the stressful working conditions (e.g., budgetary constraints, performance targets, and competition) leaders face (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Humphrey, 2008). Overall, individuals who can manage their own and others’ emotions despite such conditions are more likely to emerge as leaders (e.g., Côté, Lopes, Salovey, & Miners, 2010; Pescosolido, 2002; Wolff, Pescosolido, & Druskat, 2002) and be perceived as authentic – even transformational – in their leadership style (e.g., Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000; Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005).

As noted previously, much of the existing research pertaining to emotions and leadership focuses on a leader’s emotional intelligence (EI; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008). Leaders high in EI excel at establishing high quality, functional relationships with others, thereby influencing emotions at the individual and collective level (Ashkanasy & Jordan, 2008; George, 2000). Despite a burgeoning stream of research linking EI to leadership processes and outcomes, the implications of a related – yet largely independent – literature on emotion regulation for leadership research is less understood. Generally speaking, emotion regulation is the process by which “individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express [those] emotions” (Gross, 1998, p. 275). In the workplace, emotion regulation is often likened to a form of labor (e.g., Hochschild, 1983), particularly when undertaken to comply with job-related display rules (i.e., demands to express emotions that comply with social, occupational or organizational expectations; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

2.1. Emotion regulation strategies

To meet display rule requirements, individuals may regulate their emotions using one of three strategies. First, individuals may engage in deep acting, a process by which an actor regulates the interpretation of emotional cues in order to modify his or her emotional reaction. Deep acting involves changing internal feelings to match external expressions and is often achieved through attention deployment (i.e., focusing on the desirable aspects of a situation and disregarding the undesirable aspects) and/or cognitive change (i.e., changing how one defines a situation and the possible meanings attached to it; Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998). Although emotions conveyed through deep acting can appear quite genuine to observers, actors will nevertheless feel less authentic as compared to when displaying genuinely experienced emotions (Hunt, Gardner, & Fischer, 2008). In this sense, deep acting suggests well-intentioned faking and is an “imperfect but nonetheless potentially effective solution for [those] confronted with display rules that do not match their felt emotions” (Hunt et al., 2008, p. 51).

In contrast to deep acting, surface acting refers to an emotion regulation strategy in which only the “physiological or observable signs of emotion” are modified (Grandey, 2000, p. 98). Surface acting, also referred to as “acting in bad faith,” occurs when one displays emotions that are incongruent with what one is actually feeling (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987, p. 32). The essence of surface acting involves “disguising what we feel” and/or “pretending to feel what we do not” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 33) and is achieved through “careful presentation of verbal and nonverbal cues” including “facial expression, gestures, and voice tone” (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993, p. 92). Due to the incongruence between internal feelings and external expressions, surface acting not only
Hypothesis 2. Leader surface acting will negatively predict follower levels of (a) job satisfaction and (b) participation in organizational citizenship behaviors.

Finally, whereas surface and deep acting may be used to help individuals express emotions that are not truly felt, the possibility remains that naturally occurring emotions can meet display expectations (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). In the leadership role, for example, a manager may feel genuinely proud of the accomplishments of a direct report and express those feelings to the employee. Although spontaneous and automatic, such genuine emotional experience demands that individuals monitor the appropriateness of displays vis-à-vis social (e.g., professional, organizational or departmental) norms and in this sense, can require regulatory effort (Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand, 2005; Glomb & Tews, 2004). While followers could be expected to respond most positively to genuine displays of emotion (Humphrey, 2008), we contend that leaders will frequently need to express emotions that do not emerge spontaneously and that they will, on occasion, script and perform their emotional displays (Gardner & Avolio, 1998; p. 43). Indeed, effective leaders recognize the importance of nonverbal behaviors to their image and have been known to act in order to “orchestrate nonverbal and expressive behaviors that followers see as highly fluid, outwardly directed, and animated” (Gardner & Avolio, 1998; p. 43). We therefore focus on leader surface and deep acting and explore the effect these two forms of emotion regulation have on followers in more detail, below.

2.2. Impact of leader surface and deep acting on follower job attitudes and behaviors

As noted previously, deep acting is the process by which an individual tries to actually experience the emotions he or she wishes to display (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Consequently, deep acting has been noted to result in a higher level of display authenticity than surface acting, with evidence suggesting that individuals can in fact distinguish between these different forms of regulation (e.g., Ekman & Friesen, 1982; Ekman, Friesen, & Ancoli, 1980; Ekman, Friesen, & O’Sullivan, 1988). The relatively high levels of emotional authenticity that are associated with deep, but not surface acting, have been found to yield positive observer reactions—including direct relationships with global attitudinal constructs (e.g., satisfaction; Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005).

In the leadership role, deep acting is more likely to be associated with a transformational or charismatic style than surface acting. Transformational leaders have been described as trying to foster emotional connections with others and as being more adept at reading, interpreting and expressing emotions—abilities that engender follower trust, respect, and positive emotions (Barling et al., 2000; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996). Indeed, leaders who deep act are likely to be seen as socially competent and interpersonally sensitive—characteristics that trigger liking and in turn, prosocial attitudes and behaviors (Hunt et al., 2008). The inauthenticity associated with surface acting, in contrast, connotes a lack of personal regard for the target of one’s displays and therefore, leaders who surface act may be perceived as pseudo-transformational—as being too self-consumed and manipulative to consider the emotional interests of anyone but themselves (e.g., Bass, 1998; Conger, 1990). Surface acting may suggest that a leader is callous, insincere and manipulative—all of which could be expected to create follower distrust and withdrawal from organizational life (Gardner & Martin, 1988; Hunt et al., 2008). To the extent different forms of emotion regulation imply certain characteristics about the actor and the level of regard held for the target of his or her displays, the perception that one’s leader engages in surface or deep acting is predicted to differentially influence followers’ job attitudes and behaviors.

Hypothesis 1. Leader deep acting will positively predict follower levels of (a) job satisfaction and (b) participation in organizational citizenship behaviors.

Hypothesis 2. Leader surface acting will negatively predict follower levels of (a) job satisfaction and (b) participation in organizational citizenship behaviors.

3. Leader–member exchange quality

Leader–member exchange (LMX) theory describes leadership as a process, focusing on the relationship between a leader and follower (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Liden et al., 1997). The theory is targeted at the dyadic level and, therefore, has traditionally focused on explaining the relationship a leader has with one follower and differentiating it from the relationships that leader has with others (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997). In its infancy, LMX research categorized the relationship leaders could have with their followers into two groups: the in-group and out-group, more recently referred to as high-quality and low-quality exchanges, respectively (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997). Whether or not a relationship may be classified as high- or low-quality depends upon the level of confidence each party has in the other, their level of shared respect, and their perceptions of mutual obligation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). A high-quality exchange relationship requires both parties accept their mutual-interests and agree to pursue shared subordinate goals. High-quality relationships have been described as a partnering of colleagues, where individuals step beyond formal organizational roles to achieve desired goals (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In contrast, leaders and followers in low-quality relationships closely adhere to their respective organizational roles and do not step beyond those bounds. Self-interest dictates individual behavior in these types of relationships and the follower is motivated to comply not out of trust, respect, or a sense of devotion, but rather by the formally vested economic control and position power the leader wields (Duchon, Green, & Taber, 1986; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Compared to those who have poor relationships with their leaders, followers in high quality exchanges tend to receive extensive social, political and economic supports, suggesting these individuals will not only be satisfied in their work roles, but will also go beyond their formal job requirements to justify and return such treatment (e.g., Liden & Graen, 1980; Wayne & Green, 1993).
Indeed, the quality of the leader–follower relationship has been found to predict various positive work-related outcomes, including follower job satisfaction (e.g., Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982; Green, Anderson, & Shivers, 1996) and participation in organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g., Gerstner & Day, 1997; Liden et al., 1997). In keeping with existing research and the notion that individuals tend to reciprocate favors and kind treatment from others, leader–member exchange quality was predicted to impact followers’ levels of job satisfaction and participation in organizational citizenship.

**Hypothesis 3.** LMX will positively predict follower reports of (a) job satisfaction and (b) participation in organizational citizenship behavior.

### 3.1. LMX as a moderator of the emotion regulation-outcome relationship

Emotion regulation is particularly important in leadership roles as this ability serves “communicative and social functions, [conveys] information about people’s thoughts and intentions, and [co-ordinates] social encounters”—tasks that are central to leadership effectiveness (Lopes, Salovey, Coté, & Beers, 2005, p. 113). Since much of a leader’s role involves evoking desired emotions and related behaviors from followers, how a leader expresses his or her emotions becomes an important consideration (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). What must be kept in mind however, is that a follower’s attitudinal and behavioral reactions are not influenced solely by the content or valence of a leader’s emotional displays (i.e., positive or negative), but also by the follower’s own perceptions and understanding of the motives underlying those displays (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Martinko & Gardner, 1987).

Emotions have been likened to a form of social currency such that when they are expressed within the boundaries of some social interaction, individuals use them to make inferences about their relationship with the other person (Lawler, 2001; Lawler & Thye, 1999; Liden & Graen, 1980). If individual behaviors—including displayed emotions—are inconsistent with what is expected on the basis of relationship quality, an individual may view the psychological contract underlying the relationship as having been violated, thereby eliciting a negative attitudinal and behavioral response (Liden et al., 1997).

LMX theory describes leaders and followers in high-quality exchange relationships as being psychologically close, suggesting that a leader will be less likely to fake or suppress emotions when interacting with individuals he or she shares a positive connection with (Glass & Einarsen, 2008). Indeed, theory and research suggests the ability to display true emotion and be oneself are hallmarks of close, intimate relationships (DePaulo & Kashy, 1998; DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996), with emotional experience and display being normative in communal (i.e., high-quality) relationships (see Clark & Brisette, 2000; Clark & Finkel, 2004). Inauthenticity, in contrast, is more common in interactions with strangers or those with whom one shares weak relational ties (Clark & Brisette, 2000). As such, high-status individuals could be expected to react more negatively to poor interpersonal treatment (e.g., inauthentic leader emotions) as they are less likely than individuals from low status groups to be accustomed to such treatment (Thau, Aquino, & Bommer, 2008). Thus, we suggest that to the extent closeness is traditionally associated with truth and honesty, surface acting and its associated inauthenticity will be inconsistent with the kind of expressions employees in high-quality relationships might expect to receive from their leader, thereby exerting negative effects on in-group members’ work-related attitudes and behaviors (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan, 2000). Leader authenticity, in contrast, could be anticipated to exceed the expectations of followers in low- but not high-quality exchanges, thereby mitigating the negative instrumental and relational consequences typically associated with out-group status. Consistent with the notion that relationship quality may influence how leader behaviors are perceived by followers, LMX was situated as a moderator of the leader emotion regulation–follower outcome relationship (see Fig. 1).

**Hypothesis 4.** The positive relationship between perceived frequency of leader deep acting and followers’ (a) job satisfaction and (b) organizational citizenship behaviors will be stronger for followers who report low-quality exchange relationships.

**Hypothesis 5.** The negative relationship between perceived frequency of leader surface acting and followers’ (a) job satisfaction and (b) organizational citizenship behaviors will be stronger for followers who report high-quality exchange relationships.

![Fig. 1. Model of proposed relationships.](image-url)
4. Method

4.1. Participants and procedure

An on-line survey was created and distributed to respondents via one of two recruitment strategies. First, using a snowball sampling procedure, personal (i.e., family, friends) and professional (i.e., coworkers) contacts of the researchers were emailed and asked to complete – and subsequently forward – the survey and related materials. Second, the investigators sought permission to post study-related information on organization web sites, personal forums and/or blogs. Recruitment emails and website postings provided general information about the purpose of the study (i.e., a study of how the leader–follower relationship, along with leader emotional style, impacts employee attitudes and behaviors) and criteria for inclusion. For instance, participants were told that in order to be considered eligible for participation, they had to be 18 years of age or older, be employed at least part-time, and regularly interact with a supervisor responsible for evaluating their performance. In exchange for participating, individuals were invited to enter a draw to win a gift card to an on-line merchant.

One-hundred and ninety-eight individuals opened the survey link. Of that group, individuals who did not meet study criteria were removed from further analysis. Removal of ineligible participants yielded 126 usable surveys (64% of opened survey links). Overall, the final sample was 66% female (n = 83) with participants ranging from 22 to 63 years of age (M = 39.13, s.d. = 11.45). A significant proportion of respondents (48%) held a bachelor’s degree while 21% reported having earned a post-secondary certificate or diploma. Although participants were employed in a variety of different jobs, the majority (54%) indicated working in professional or white-collar occupations. Finally, the average participant had worked at their current organization for approximately 9 years (s.d. = 8.29, Range: 2 months to 38 years). The length of the average supervisory relationship was 3.52 years (s.d. = 3.25, Range: 2 months to 20 years) with a majority of individuals (63%) reporting to a male supervisor (see Table 1).

4.2. Measures

In addition to demographic information, participants were asked to report upon their leader’s use of surface and deep acting as well as the quality of the relationship shared with their supervisor—as perceived by them. Participants were also

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<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>s.d.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
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<td>Age</td>
<td>39.13 years</td>
<td>11.45</td>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>63 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational tenure</td>
<td>8.85 years</td>
<td>8.29</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>38 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisor–subordinate tenure</td>
<td>3.52 years</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>20 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant sex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisor sex</td>
<td>63% male</td>
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<td><strong>Average hours worked/week</strong></td>
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<td>20–34 h</td>
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<td>35–59 h</td>
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<td>60 h or above</td>
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<td>Blue collar employee</td>
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<td>White collar employee</td>
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<td>Supervisor</td>
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<td>Middle manager</td>
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<td>Senior manager</td>
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asked to report upon their work attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction) and behaviors (i.e., participation in OCBs) using the scales described below.

**Emotion regulation: Perceptions of leader surface and deep acting.** A modified version of Grandey’s (2003) 8-item emotion regulation scale (5 items tapping surface acting, 3 items tapping deep acting) was employed in the current study (also, Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). The scale was adapted such that responses reflected the extent to which followers perceived their leader as either faking (i.e., surface acting) or as making an effort to actually feel (i.e., deep acting) displayed emotions. For instance, followers reported how frequently they believed their leader “just pretends to have the emotions he/she needs to display for his/her job” (surface acting) versus “tries to actually experience the emotions he/she must show” (deep acting). Consistent with original scale instructions, responses to the eight emotion regulation items were provided on a 5-point frequency scale where 1 = Never to 5 = Always.1 Cronbach’s alpha for the surface and deep acting scales in this study were .92 and .89, respectively.

**Leader–member exchange.** The LMX-7 (see Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) was included in the current survey administration (α = .92). Sample items include: “Do you know where you stand with your leader...do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?” and “I have enough confidence in my leader that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so.” Responses were anchored on a 5-point scale and varied across the seven items (e.g., “Rarely” (1) to “Very often” (5) and “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (5)).

**Work attitudes and behaviors.** The Job in General scale (Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989; with permission JDI Research Group) was used to assess respondents’ global levels of job satisfaction. Participants were asked to indicate whether or not each of 18 adjectives (e.g., “Pleasant,” “Bad”) could be used to categorize their current job and together, the items demonstrated high levels of internal consistency (α = .91). JDI scoring values were used to code participant responses (0 = No, 1 = ?, 3 = Yes; see Balzer et al., 1997).

Lastly, the 24-item Organizational Citizenship Behavior scale developed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) was used to provide a global indicator of individuals’ participation in extra-role, discretionary work behaviors (α = .83). Sample items include: “I help others who have heavy workloads” and “I consume a lot of time complaining about trivial matters” (reversed). Participants recorded their responses to these items on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 = “Strongly disagree” and 7 = “Strongly agree.”

### 5. Results

5.1. Construct independence and CMB: confirmatory factor analyses

The data reported here was collected from a single-source and therefore, we tested for the presence of common method/source bias using confirmatory factor analysis (Amos; Arbuckle, 2008). Because the exact source of any potential bias could not be identified with our data, we employed the single-common-factor approach as recommended by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) and compared the fit of that model against three alternatives (i.e., null, trait, single factor; see Williams, Cote, & Buckley, 1989).

In light of our relatively small sample size (N = 126) and large number of scale items (total = 57), composite indicators were created for scales with more than 7 items (i.e. the JIG and OCB measure). Similar to the procedure discussed by Conger, Kanungo and Menon (2000; also Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), the 18-items from the JIG were randomly assigned to three, 6-item groups and the 24-items from the OCB measure were randomly assigned to create four, 6-item groups. Composite indicators were computed by calculating the average score across items in each group. As reported in Table 2, data suggests that although the trait model fit our data well, the addition of a single methods factor did significantly improve model fit, \( \Delta \chi^2 = 41.73, df = 21, p < .01 \). While we cannot rule out the possibility that a common unmeasured latent factor may have contributed to observed relationships, our CFA analyses support the discriminant validity of our constructs.

[1] Frequency of emotional displays is one of the most studied dimensions of emotional labor (Morris & Feldman, 1996) and has been described as an important factor in determining the attributions individuals make for others’ behaviors and psychological states (Diener & Lucas, 2000).
high-quality exchange relationships. In contrast, the frequency of surface acting exhibited little effect on participation in OCBs. More frequently a leader was perceived as engaging in surface acting, the more negatively it influenced OCBs for individuals in strong leader–member exchange. Deep acting, however, exerted the only significant effects. Examination of the main effect variables as entered in the second step (\( \Delta R^2 = .05 \); \( p < .10 \)) revealed that deep acting, surface acting, and LMX did not predict OCB (\( p > .05 \); Hypothesis 1a not supported). Finally, addition of the two, 2-way interaction terms in step 3 accounted for a nontrivial 4% of the variance in OCB (\( p < .05 \); Hypothesis 5b supported). A graph of the interaction (Fig. 3) reveals that the more frequently a leader was perceived as engaging in surface acting, the more negatively it influenced OCBs for individuals in high-quality exchange relationships. In contrast, the frequency of surface acting exhibited little effect on participation in OCBs for those in low-quality exchange relationships.

Table 3
Variable means, standard deviations and study correlations.

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<td>1. Participant sex</td>
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<td>2. Age</td>
<td>39.13</td>
<td>11.45</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td>3. Job type</td>
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<td>4. Organizational tenure</td>
<td>8.85</td>
<td>8.29</td>
<td>.19</td>
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<td>5. Employee–supervisor tenure</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
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<td>6. Leader–member exchange</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<td>7. Surface acting</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>-.04</td>
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<td>8. Deep acting</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Org. citizenship behavior</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.08</td>
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<td>10. Job satisfaction</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.05</td>
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Note. ± p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01.
Participant sex: 0 = male, 1 = female.
Job type: 1 = blue collar employee, 2 = white collar employee, 3 = supervisor, 4 = middle manager, 5 = senior manager.

5.2. Regression analyses

Correlations and study descriptives are reported in Table 3. Previous research has given much attention to age, tenure and job type as predictors of our outcomes (e.g., Bedeian, Ferris, & Kacmar, 1992; Organ & Ryan, 1995) and therefore, we controlled for these factors in our analyses.² Control variables were entered in the first step of our regression equation, followed by our independent variables (Step 2) and finally, our two, 2-way interaction terms (Step 3). In an effort to reduce multicollinearity and aid in our ability to interpret significant interaction effects, we centered each of our predictors prior to computing the interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). Results for each of the moderated regression analyses reported in this study are presented in Table 4.³

5.3. Effect of emotion regulation and LMX on job satisfaction

The control variables accounted for 23% of the variance in job satisfaction (\( p < .001 \)), with blue collar (\( p < .001 \)) and middle manager (\( p < .10 \)) status being the only significant predictors from this group. Entry of the main effect variables in step two of the regression equation accounted for an additional 26% of the variance in job satisfaction (\( p < .001 \)). Examination of the main effects indicated that while surface acting (\( b = -.19, SE = .06, p < .01 \)) and leader–member exchange quality (\( b = .21, SE = .07, p < .01 \)) were both significant predictors of participants’ self-reported job satisfaction (Hypothesis 2a and 3a supported), deep acting was not (\( p > .05 \); Hypothesis 1a not supported). Finally, a significant change in the variance explained by the addition of our two interaction terms was observed (\( \Delta R^2 = .03, p = .05 \)). Leader–member exchange quality did not interact with leader surface acting to predict respondents’ job satisfaction (\( p > .05 \); contrary to Hypothesis 5a) but a significant interaction between perceptions of leader deep acting and LMX was observed (\( b = -.13, SE = .06, p < .05 \); supporting Hypothesis 4a). The relationship between emotion regulation and job satisfaction was graphed for participants’ one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean on LMX (Aiken & West, 1991). Fig. 2 shows that the frequency with which a supervisor deep acted did not influence job satisfaction levels for followers in high-quality exchange relationships. Nevertheless, deep acting did mitigate out-group status such that followers in low-quality relationships with ‘deep actors’ for supervisors reported job satisfaction levels approaching those of individuals in high-quality exchanges.

5.4. Effect of emotion regulation and LMX on organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs)

Together, the control variables accounted for 12% of the variance in OCB (\( p < .05 \)), with age and middle manager status (\( p < .10 \)) exerting the only significant effects. Examination of the main effect variables as entered in the second step (\( \Delta R^2 = .05, p = .10 \)) revealed that deep acting, surface acting, and LMX did not predict OCB (\( p > .10 \); contrary to Hypotheses 1b, 2b, 3b). Finally, addition of the two, 2-way interaction terms in step 3 accounted for a nontrivial 4% of the variance in OCB (\( p = .07 \)). Although perceptions of leader deep acting did not interact with LMX to predict organizational citizenship (Hypothesis 4b not supported; \( p > .10 \)), leader surface acting did (\( b = -.15, SE = .07, p < .05 \); Hypothesis 5b supported). A graph of the interaction (Fig. 3) reveals that the more frequently a leader was perceived as engaging in surface acting, the more negatively it influenced OCBs for individuals in high-quality exchange relationships. In contrast, the frequency of surface acting exhibited little effect on participation in OCBs for those in low-quality exchange relationships.

² Prior to inclusion in the regression analysis, job type was recoded into 4 dummy variables (G−1), using the most frequently occurring case (white collar employee) as the reference group (Allison, 1999).
³ Although some of our variables were highly correlated, statistical checks suggest multicollinearity is not a significant concern (VIF < 2.5; Tolerance > .40; c.f., Allison, 1999).
6. Discussion

Our society implicitly, if not explicitly, acknowledges the role of emotions in the workplace, particularly as they are embedded within the leader–follower relationship. Researchers have called for more studies on emotion regulation in jobs other than frontline service work (e.g., Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987) and, more specifically, within the leadership role. This paper answers these calls and explores how perceptions of leader surface and deep acting, in conjunction with follower evaluations of the leader–follower relationship, impact employees’ levels of job satisfaction and their participation in organizational citizenship behaviors.

In this study, leader–member exchange (LMX) quality was found to have a direct positive impact on respondents’ levels of job satisfaction. These findings corroborate previous research in this area (e.g., Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997). In addition to the effects associated with LMX, theoretical extensions were made from existing emotion regulation research in an effort to link perceptions of leader emotion regulation with follower work attitudes and behaviors. Since people are able to differentiate between surface and deep acting, it is not unreasonable to conclude that employees will react differently to distinct forms of emotion regulation when exhibited by their supervisors. In this paper, it was predicted that surface acting—to the extent that it results in perceived inauthenticity—would generate negative observer reactions. In contrast, to the degree that deep acting results in seemingly genuine emotional displays, positive observer reactions were predicted (see Grandey et al., 2005; Gross, 2002). Although perceptions of leader deep acting did not predict followers’ job satisfaction beyond controls, predictions regarding leader surface acting were supported.

Contrary to expectations, neither LMX nor perceptions of leader emotion regulation predicted followers’ participation in organizational citizenship behaviors. It may be that factors other than those examined here are more proximal determinants of individuals’ willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty at work. For instance, the nature of the work one is employed in (i.e., is it intrinsically satisfying?) along with the relationships shared with colleagues (e.g., team cohesion) may be more

![Fig. 2. LMX as a moderator of the deep acting–job satisfaction relationship.](image)
important in terms of understanding individuals’ proclivity to engage in contextual work behaviors. Evidence exists to support this claim. In their examination of the effects of transformational leader behaviors and substitutes for leadership on employee attitudes and performance, Podsakoff et al. (1996) found that leadership substitutes accounted for significantly more variance in two dimensions of OCB (i.e., civic virtue and sportsmanship) than transformational leader behaviors. Moreover, while some have found support for a direct relationship between LMX and OCBs (e.g., Wayne & Green, 1993), others have suggested this path is more complex and requires that one account for various explanatory mechanisms—most notably, follower trust (e.g., Podsakoff et al., 1990). Future research should explore mediators of the relationship between leader emotion regulation and followers’ job-related behaviors and attitudes.

With regard to LMX quality, leaders’ emotion regulation strategies were predicted to influence employee-related outcomes differently, depending upon employee membership in a leader’s in-versus out-group. Our hypotheses were based, in part, on existing work demonstrating that emotions have the ability to magnify or mitigate status differences in groups (Lovaglia & Houser, 1996). The valence of expressed emotion has been found to alter the psychological distance between individuals (e.g., Moore & Isen, 1990) as well as communicate status gain or loss and we contend similar effects may be at play for display authenticity. Results indicated that regardless of the perceived frequency of a leader’s deep acting, job satisfaction was significantly higher for those individuals in high-quality exchanges than for those in low-quality exchanges. Nevertheless, leader deep acting had a positive impact on job satisfaction for those in low-quality exchange relationships. In this sense, the perception that one’s leader was working hard and trying to show authentic emotions seemed to mitigate the otherwise negative connotations typically associated with poor quality leader–follower relationships. Although perceptions of a leader’s emotional authenticity may be considered part and parcel of the relational experience for those in high-quality exchange relationships, perceived authenticity in the context of what might otherwise be characterized as a low-quality exchange relationship may suggest to a follower that his or her leader is, at the very least, making a genuine effort to engage all followers equitably and respectfully. Stated differently, whereas perceived authenticity on behalf of one’s supervisor may meet in-group members’ expectations for interpersonal treatment (and therefore, have no significant effect on work attitudes unless the authenticity is removed; see Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977), it is possible that emotional authenticity exceeds expectations for those in the out-group, exerting a positive, status-enhancing effect.

The second interaction of note was the effect of surface acting on OCBs for the two follower groups. The prediction that surface acting would negatively affect the behaviors of individuals in high-quality exchange relationships to a greater degree than those in low-quality exchange relationships was supported. As members in higher-quality exchanges reported more frequent surface acting on the part of their supervisors, their participation in pro-social, extra-role behaviors declined. In contrast, the perceived frequency of surface acting was observed to have minimal impact on out-group members’ engagement in organizational citizenship. For those individuals in high-quality relationships, we reason that inauthenticity violated expectations for leader behavior as it is inconsistent with the principles of trust, respect, and mutual obligation that high-quality exchanges are built on (Berger et al., 1977; Duchon et al., 1986; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Gross, 2002; Lawler & Thye, 1999; Liden et al., 1997). The current results suggest that in response to inauthentic displays of emotion, those in high quality exchange relationships may be especially prone to withdrawing behaviors that go beyond their formal organizational roles. Thus, for some individuals, surface acting (i.e., inauthenticity) appears to have a status-reducing effect.

6.1. Limitations and directions for future research

The current research sought to address how perceptions of leader emotion regulation influence direct reports’ job attitudes and behaviors and therefore, we feel the self-report strategy employed here is appropriate (also, Chan, 2009; Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Martinko & Gardner, 1987) and in line with calls for research examining followers’ experience of leadership (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Nevertheless, because followers self-reported each of the variables of interest, observed relationships are potentially susceptible to common-method bias. As noted by Podsakoff et al. (2003), there

![Fig. 3. LMX as a moderator of the surface acting–citizenship behavior relationship.](image-url)
are a variety of strategies that can be used to control method biases. Although we avoided the use of leading and double-barreled items as well as varied and labeled response scales for each of our measures (i.e., procedural safeguards against CMB; Podsakoff et al., 2003), tests of a series of factor models suggest the effect of a common underlying factor cannot be entirely ruled out (e.g., Williams et al., 1989). Nevertheless, the presence of interaction effects in both of our regression analyses temper concerns regarding the effect of CMB on our results. Shared variance across constructs has been described as attenuating the ability to uncover more complex (i.e., interactive) relationships among variables (Wall, Jackson, Mullarkey, & Parker, 1996). Despite these claims, future research should separate the collection of predictor and criterion data across time and/or raters, as well as control for a variety of variables not measured here (e.g., positive and negative affectivity, social desirability).

From a theoretical perspective, future research should examine the mechanisms through which leader emotion regulation and LMX influence employee outcomes. The influence of emotions and emotion regulation on trust-building within the leader–follower relationship may help to explain some of the (non)effects observed here and should be tested empirically. Models of emotional contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994) and social interaction (e.g., Côté, 2005) could also be applied to examine the creation and transmission of emotion between leaders and followers. Furthermore, consistent with the notion that authenticity is one characteristic of intimate relationships, it seems reasonable to suggest that followers' perceptions of leader authenticity will increase as the LMX relationship develops over time. Perhaps more interesting, however, would be those situations in which followers perceive their leader as less authentic over time. The literature on toxic mentor–protégé relationships provides some potential avenues for future theorizing in this area (e.g., Feldman, 1999; Scandura, 1998).

Finally, we feel it is important to highlight the issue of leader sincerity versus authenticity. Authentic leaders have been noted to possess a variety of desirable personal characteristics, including high levels of self-awareness, helpfulness, optimism, resiliency and ethicality—all of which could be expected to predict follower positive affectivity (e.g., job satisfaction) and discretionary behaviors (e.g., OCBs; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). We acknowledge that as measured here, deep acting is perhaps not a truly authentic leader behavior. Although it may be seen as well-intentioned (i.e., sincere), the fact that deep acting referred to the frequency with which a leader was perceived as making an effort to feel emotions implies some degree of alienation from the actor's true self (Trilling, 1972). Future research should explore more specifically the role of leader emotion regulation and authenticity, as well as the ability of different emotion regulation strategies to influence followers beyond other authentic leadership behaviors (e.g., articulating goals, providing social support).

6.2. Conclusion

The results of this study suggest followers react uniquely to different forms of leader emotion regulation, with such reactions depending – at least in part – on the nature of the leader–follower relationship. Whereas perceptions of leader deep acting appear to mitigate some of the negative effects associated with low-quality exchange relationships, perceived surface acting has potentially undesirable repercussions for those in high-quality relationships. Although it may be more advisable for organizational leaders to surface act than reveal authentic negative emotions to their followers (an empirical question for future research), the results of this study suggest that leaders who fake emotions risk undermining the foundations high-quality leader–follower relationships are built on. Thus, to reap the benefits of high-quality exchange relationships and mitigate the negative effects of low-quality exchange relationships, leaders must understand how their emotions affect followers and adjust their regulatory strategies accordingly.

References


