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Life enrichment for workers in contemporary China

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to identify key antecedents of work-family enrichment (WFE) for Chinese workers in China. The paper adopts the Chinese cultural perspectives (i.e. philosophy of Confucian: Chinese family orientation and collectivism) as well as traditional Chinese philosophies of life as a whole.
Design/methodology/approach – This is a conceptual paper. Therefore, this section does not apply.
Findings – The key antecedents of Chinese WFE have been identified and presented in the conceptual framework. Testable propositions have also been developed and presented in this paper.
Practical implications – The conceptual framework showing the identified key antecedents of Chinese WFE highlights the necessity for the corporate leaders to rethink the ways to promote well-being and productivity of Chinese workforce in China. Meanwhile, managers should rethink about WFE among Chinese employees and regard employees as a whole person rather than just a worker with certain skills or abilities.
Originality/value – This is the first paper to propose the concept of life enrichment by examining the antecedents of WFE particularly from the Chinese philosophical and cultural perspective.
Keywords China, Work-family enrichment, Chinese workers, Life enrichment
Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction to work-family enrichment (WFE)

By exploring the Chinese cultural perspectives and philosophies, this conceptual paper proposes the key antecedents of WFE for Chinese workers in the largest emerging market – China. This paper contends that business organizations within China need to see their workers' lives from a holistic perspective by simultaneously considering every aspect of their lives (rather than just looking at the work and family roles) to help them achieve their sense of WFE. China represents one of the fastest growing emerging markets where local and foreign companies have been operating to exploit its market opportunities. Although the growth rate of foreign direct investment in China has slowed down due to government regulations, rising labor cost, restructuring of economy and local competition (State statistical Bureau, PRC, 2016), newly approved foreign invested enterprises amounted to 22,580, up by 7.4 percent from January to October in the year 2016 (Ministry of Commerce, People's Republic of China, 2017). Despite such impressive growth, the excessively long working hours, heavy workload and lack of worker-friendly human resource (HR) policies and practices that can also accommodate the needs of workers' families are well documented in the literature related to Chinese workforce (Xiao, 2012). A shared belief on work and family balance is often absent among government, business managers and employees to the extent that work-life conflicts have been accepted as a fact of life in China (Xiao and Cooke, 2012) by both organizational leaders as well as workers. Therefore, antecedents of WFE for Chinese labor force are an important area of exploration to benefit both foreign and local companies operating in China.

Besides the WFE theory (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006), there are two other theories which explain the positive side of work and family interface, i.e. the work-family facilitation theory and work-family positive spillover. Based on the positive organizational scholarship (Cameron *et al.*, 2003), the ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001; Hobfoll and Wells, 1998), work-family facilitation is defined as "the extent to which an individual's engagement in one social system, such as work or family, contributes to growth in another social system" (Grzywacz *et al.*, 2007, p. 559).

Unlike WFE which focuses on how the individual's participating in one domain benefit another domain, work-family facilitation goes beyond the individual level to the system level by explaining how the individual's engagement in one domain benefits the family/work system. More specifically, work-family facilitation is conceptualized as a multi-level process, which means the theory can explain the facilitation from individual level to system level (Wayne *et al.*, 2007). When individuals engage in one life domain, for example, family, it will create catalysts for change in another life domain, i.e. work. The catalysts stimulate the growth which shows at the system level, such as organizational performance and employees retention (Wayne *et al.*, 2007). Collectively, work-family facilitation is a process representing the synergies between the domains of work and family, which is more applicable to the system-level research.

Originating from role theories (Kahn *et al.*, 1964; Katz and Kahn, 1978), work-family positive spillover is defined as the transfer of positively valences in specific resources, namely, mood, value, behaviors and skills "from originating domain to the receiving domain to benefit the receiving domain" (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). Collectively, work-family positive spillover emphasizes on the transfer of specific resources from one domain to another domain, representing individual-level gain through occupying multiple roles and structures), but it is more likely to happen indirectly between work domain and family domain.

Although all three concepts work-family positive spillover, WFE and work-family facilitation explain the positive mechanism linkage between work and family; they are conceptually distinctive from each other. Work-family positive spillover focuses on the specific transfer of affect, value, skills and behaviors (Hanson and Hammer, 2006). WFE emphasizes on transfer a wide range of resources containing psychological, social and material resources, and the transfer needs to be successfully applied to improve the performance of another role (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). In contrast, work-family facilitation focuses on the system-level enhancement. It cares more about how individuals' engagement in one domain, such as family, benefits the other social system such as organisational performance (Wayne *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, work-family facilitation aims for improving the entire system's functioning to benefit individuals (Wayne *et al.*, 2007). Although the work-family facilitation can explain more complicated enhancement process between the social systems, the work-family enrichment concept has been best captured as the mechanism of the enrichment process at the individual level, which will help researchers get a better picture of the individuals' experiences and resources transfer across domains, leading to a better quality of life. This conceptual article mainly focuses on the individual-level impact on the positive interface between work and family.

Unlike in the Western countries, the private and working lives in China are more interwoven in the lives of Chinese workers (Yew, 2015). As such, the issue of work-life balance has been neglected in the China. Government, managers and parents often encourage workers to sacrifice their personal lives for their career (De Cieri and Bardoel, 2009). In this context, Chinese family members tend to endure conflicts between work and family demands (Chandra, 2012). Nevertheless, work intensity and family commitment are reported as a major source of work-life conflicts in China (Xiao, 2012). Further, women in China are often under more serious pressure of work and family (Tong and Zhaou, 2014). To some extent, a few foreign and local companies have taken advantage of this trend by having minimum work-life balance policies (Xiao, 2012). For example, many Chinese workers in China receive only five vacation days (leaves) a year (*Today Online*, 2013). Some companies in China are trying to introduce HR initiatives to mitigate the negative effect of long working hours on their key employees and their family. However, corporate leaders have shown little empathy toward employees' childcare needs and have not introduced any policy to accommodate family commitments (Cooke and Jing, 2009) in workers' life.

This unique cultural context of China presents a unique challenge for local and foreign companies to enact HRM policies and practices for employee well-being. Unlike the Western workforce, work and family domains are less separated in China and therefore,

conventional work-family balance policies and practices of the West may not work to reduce workers' work and family tensions.

In the above backdrop, this conceptual paper explores WFE from a lens of Chinese cultural perspective and philosophies. The paper proposes the key antecedents of Chinese WFE and also considers currently recognized antecedents in the extant literature which is predominantly developed in the Western context. Figure 1 provides the framework showing key antecedents of WFE in the context of China.

By proposing the key antecedents of WFE in the context of China, we extend the theories pertaining to perceived organizational support (POS). According to Shenkar and Von Glinow (1994), differences in national culture, political and economic systems offer a
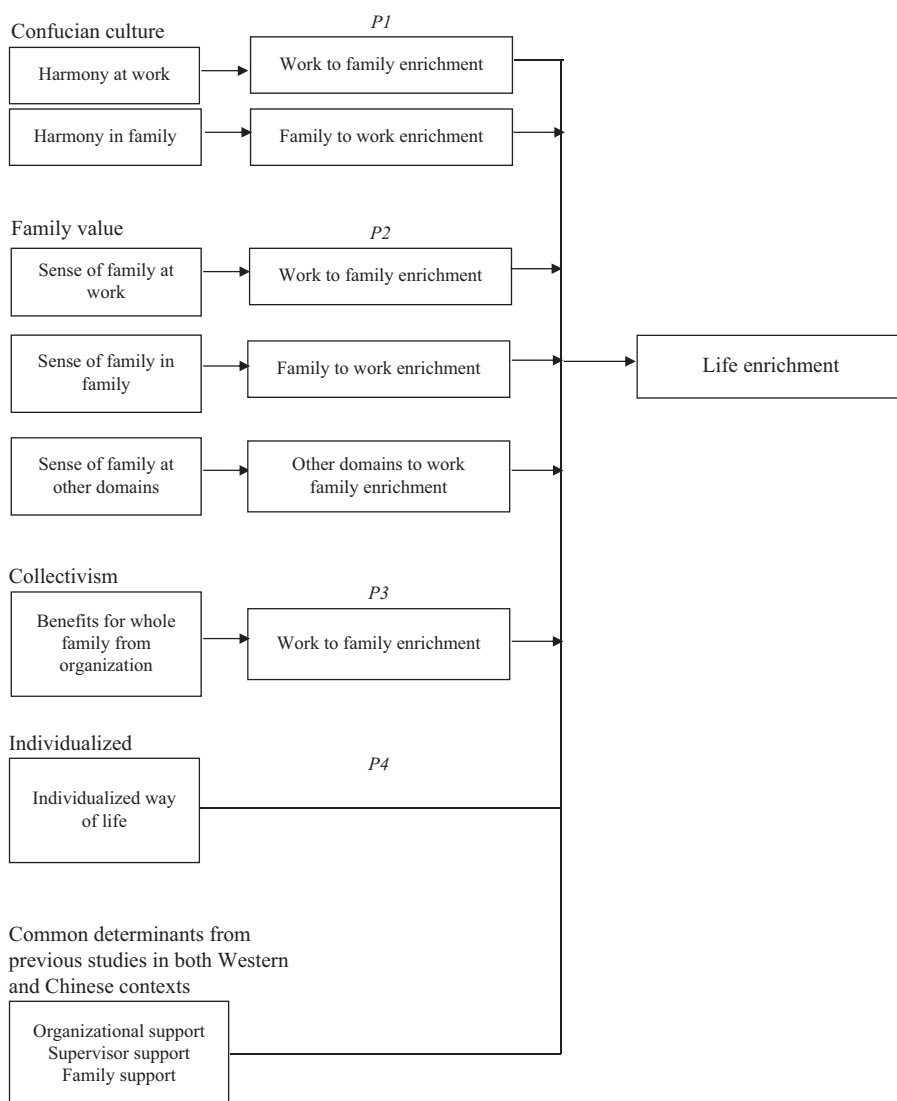
Figure 1.
Antecedents of life
enrichment for
Chinese workers
in China

dramatically distinct context for POS research. The POS research has been conducted extensively in the Western context (Allen *et al.*, 2003; Ambrose and Schminke 2003; Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986; Johlke *et al.*, 2002; Wayne *et al.*, 2002). However, it is very nascent in the Eastern context such as China (Ding and Han, 2010; Sun and Lv, 2012; Tian and Xie, 2010; Xu and Jin, 2011; Zhang, Jiing-lih and Wang, 2012).

To better understand POS within the Chinese cultural context, Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian (2012) developed the Chinese POS (CPOS) scale and found a unique dimension, which was not identified in the previous Western POS studies. Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian (2012) found that CPOS includes "care for disadvantaged employees" and "care for employees' families." In relation to care for employees' families, Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian (2012) identified the following five items: provision of financial aid for the medical care of employees' families; not only care for employees, but also care for their family; provision of aid for the employees' children's schooling; assistance for employees with family difficulties; and visiting and greeting employees' families. From their findings, it is clear that this new dimension is central to forming Chinese employees' POS in China (Huang and Gove, 2012). This unique dimension – to some extent – emphasizes the importance of organizational investment and care for employees' families to maintain harmonious relationships between employers and employees in the Chinese context (Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian, 2012).

By proposing the key antecedents of WFE for Chinese workers in China, this paper expands Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian's (2012) study of CPOS. POS research is based on the social exchange theory, which takes a socio-psychological perspective to explain the nature of relationships between employers and employees. Therefore, our attention to dominant socio-psychological context for employer and employee relationships is deemed as important to understand the kind of organizational (or employer) support that is required to generate employees' POS (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Notably, some scholars contend that cultural factors or societal norms should be considered in POS research so as to develop its concept within its cultural context (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1997; Haar and Brougham, 2013). Against this backdrop, we review the literature regarding WFE and integrate Chinese cultural perspective to inform the possible nature of CPOS to achieve WFE for Chinese workers in China.

Rethinking WFE in China
Different to those work-family literates who emphasize on the conflict perspective (Barnett, 1999; Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1999; Haas, 1999), in this paper, WFE focuses on the positive influences from both work and family domains. The WFE theory reveals enrichment processes and deeply explains how these processes happen. Marks (1977) and Sieber (1974) were not in agreement with the conflict perspective and suggested that pursuing multiple roles by employees would be much more beneficial. Based on the role accumulation theory (Sieber, 1974), Greenhaus and Powell (2006) have proposed the WFE theory which comprehensively explains the enrichment process between work and family domains.

Greenhaus and Powell (2006, p. 73) defined WFE as "the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role." Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) theory of WFE explains how experiences in a particular role (work or family) can improve/enrich the quality of life in other roles (family or work). For the enrichment process, resources are the key enabling factors (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000; Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1999; Grzywacz, 2002). The ability to transfer the generated resources from one role to another role makes the enrichment happen. Therefore, the theoretical model of the WFE presents two paths to explain the process of the enrichment. The two paths specifically illustrate that resources generated in role A can promote high performance and positive

effect in role B and vice-versa. Based on these two paths, the study of WFE focuses on its antecedents and outcomes across various geographical contexts.

A number of empirical studies have found that organizational family support and supervisors' family support can predict work-to-family enrichment within both Western context and Eastern context. Specifically, Wayne *et al.* (2006) demonstrated that work-family benefits and work-family culture are the antecedents of WFE. The supervisory support can induce work-to-family enrichment (Bhargava and Baral, 2009; Siu *et al.*, 2010) and so does organizational support (Rantanen *et al.*, 2013). A three-wave empirical study (Siu *et al.*, 2013) conducted in China showed that supervisory support and family support can improve individuals' job satisfaction and, in turn, their efficiency at work. In China, perceived organizational family support was also found to promote WFE (Wayne *et al.*, 2013). A study conducted in Malaysia also proved that social support was positively related to WFE (Rashid *et al.*, 2011).

Although general findings were similar in China in relations to WFE, the lack of international sampling in work-family studies (Kossek *et al.*, 2011) signals the need for further cross-cultural research on the antecedents and process of WFE. Cultural characteristics and the macro-environment in Chinese society may elicit different opportunities for individuals to achieve work-family enrichment than in Western societies. The study of Siu *et al.* (2013) proved that the WFE theory is generalizable for Chinese samples. Similar to the Western research findings, social support such as supervisory support, co-worker support, family support and organizational support are found to be important factors to predict WFE in China (Lu *et al.*, 2011; Tang *et al.*, 2014). Notably, Siu *et al.* (2013) found that family support, as a collectivistic coping, is a role resource among Chinese employees. Because of the highly collectivistic culture, employees in China tend to go back to the basic unit in society – "family" – to seek resources to manage pressure and challenges from work. This finding is unique in China in comparison to the Western findings. Furthermore, Chinese scholars conducted some interesting studies which are not conducted in the Western countries. For example, Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian (2012) found out that servant leadership has a positive relationship with WFE through organizational identification. Perceived role modeling can enhance work-to-family enrichment through personal skill development (Kwan *et al.*, 2010). These findings also imply the importance of collectivistic/relational antecedents for achieving WFE of workers in the Chinese workforce. Table I summarizes the WFE studies in china.

Authors	Key antecedents	Mediators	Outcomes
Siu *et al.* (2013)	Family support Supervisor support Job characteristics	Job satisfaction Family satisfaction	Work-family enrichment
Kwan *et al.* (2010)	Perceived role modeling	Personal skills development	Work-family enrichment
Lu *et al.* (2011)	Family mastery	Work engagement	Family-work enrichment
Tang *et al.* (2014)	Supervisor support Co-worker support Organizational support	Work-family enrichment	Job satisfaction
Tang and Hornung (2015)	Ideals	Motivation status	Work-family enrichment Family-work enrichment
Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian (2012)	Servant leadership	Work identification	Work-to-family enrichment
Hakanen *et al.* (2011)	Domain-specific resources	Gain spiral	Work-to-family enrichment Family-to-work enrichment

Table I.
Key studies on work-family enrichment in Chinese context

Reinforcing the possibility of boundaryless antecedents (rather than organizational, supervisory and family support, *per se*) for WFE, Tang and Hornung (2015) used the WFE theory to explain the I-deals in China. They found out that both development I-deals (employees negotiate their demand beyond work boundaries) and flexibility I-deals (employees negotiate their working times and schedules beyond required and expected work time policy and norms) are the antecedents of the WFE in Chinese context. Another study conducted by Hakanen *et al.* (2011) further proved the boundaryless domains during the WFE process. They found that the WFE process is reciprocal association due to gain spirals. Gain spiral suggests that improving any link in the enrichment process can enhance other parts of the process as well as the process as a whole.

Although the previous research findings are informative, no research to the best of our knowledge has examined the antecedents of WFE from the Chinese philosophical perspective. Without integrating the Chinese cultural perspectives and philosophies into WFE research, the enrichment process cannot be captured comprehensively. Therefore, this paper aims to identify the antecedents of WFE from Chinese cultural perspectives (i.e. philosophy of Confucian: Chinese family orientation and collectivism) and traditional Chinese philosophies of life as a whole.

Limitations of the extant WFE theory for Chinese workers in China
From the definition of the WFE theory, it can be concluded that the role theory plays an important role, especially the role accumulation theory. Voydanoff (2001) suggested that role accumulation requires individuals to participate in multiple roles. Role accumulation creates positive outcomes for individuals in several ways as follows: positive experiences of an individual and resulting outcomes in one role will lead to positive experiences and outcomes for that individual in the other role; positive work experiences and family experiences result into additive effects on their well-being; and participation in multiple roles will protect individuals from distress caused by some of the roles. However, the role theory, on which WFE is based, considers most of everyday activities to be acting out of socially defined categories (Hindin, 2007). The role theory has a hard time explaining social deviance when life does not correspond to a set of pre-specified roles. Additionally, the role theory does not explain when and how role expectations change (Hastings and Shaffer, 2008). Therefore, the WFE theory can only explain the enrichment based on the role experiences and limited to explain the life enrichment process as a whole.

As being implied from findings of previous studies on WFE in China, the meaning of "work-family enrichment" may be interpreted differently by different groups due to their contextually different experiences. Therefore, WFE needs to be conceptually created based upon the human experiences, norms, values and expectations rather than assumptions of what it means. There are potential oversights of the notion of enrichment process itself, which has not integrated individual and socio-cultural influence in the WFE process (Carlson *et al.*, 2006). Our conceptual exploration of antecedents of WFE in China is also motivated by a recent exploration conducted in China by Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian (2012), which has found that most of the WFE items did not make sense to Chinese employees and appeared that the items did not reflect a typical behavior of Chinese workers. For example, the item "My involvement in my work helps me to understand different viewpoint and this helps me be a better family member" from Carlson *et al.* (2014)'s study cannot be accepted by female employees in China. In dealing with family issues (especial children issues), Chinese females prefer their partners to accept their ideas than consult their partners for ideas. The statement showed that the understanding of enrichment among Chinese employees is beyond the WFE concept which is proposed by Greenhaus and Powell (2006). When the Chinese employees responded to the WFE items, they provided an ideal response not necessarily based on their own experience. The outcome of this

preliminary exploration has led us to look into the Chinese cultural perspectives and traditional philosophies of life as a whole to propose key antecedents to WFE which are unique to Chinese workers in China.

Chinese cultural perspective of life

Traditional culture helps human beings to better understand themselves (Jensen, 2000). It is culture that provides a sense of belongingness and spiritual comfort – perhaps a sense of enrichment in life covering both work and family domains (Jensen, 2000). To some extent, traditional culture – in which individuals are brought up with – shapes part of individuals' values and attitude toward life. In the following section, we present four dominant aspects of Chinese culture: confucianism; family value; collectivism; and individualized culture along with propositions.

The philosophy of Confucian

"Harmony, 和谐" is the core value of Confucian and precondition for social integration and stability in contemporary China (Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian, 2005). Confucian's concept of harmony is built and flourished on an interactive network through mutual support and dependence and is sustained by conscious and persisted efforts to interact with different elements from nature (Li, 2008). It guides Chinese individuals' daily behaviors, influences Chinese attitude toward life and serves as principles and rules for social interaction (Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian, 2005). It is undeniable that Confucian harmony has created constraints in Chinese' behavior during interaction. For example, in order to achieve harmony, Chinese should obey and respect social hierarchy (Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian, 2005). But at the same time, harmony also allows Chinese to flourish through dependent environment. In other words, Chinese individuals are constrained by harmony but also gain benefit from it. Additionally, Confucian concept of harmony is comprehensive and emphasizes on human relations. Under the influence of Confucianism in China, harmonious relationships are important for Chinese people. Therefore, this conceptual paper presents the following proposition:

> *P1.* A sense of harmony within workplace among Chinese workers increases work-to-family enrichment and a sense of harmony within family increases their family-to-work enrichment. Together, they strengthen the WFE of Chinese workers.

Chinese family orientation

One and the most important value of Chinese employees is family orientation. Family orientation advocates that one should strive to expand the prosperity and vitality of his or her family functions, regardless of given social contexts (Lu and Shih, 1997; Miller and Yang, 1997). In the traditional Chinese society, the families rather than individuals have constituted the base of the society. From this perspective, family is the core of the economic and social life. Thus, Chinese employees tend to centralize the value of family orientation both beyond and within their workplaces. Under the family orientation, Chinese view the family as the most important unit, and it is given higher priority by placing family matters before personal matters. When Chinese people participate in groups outside the family, this pattern of behavior reflects a notion of "Family Collectivism" (Yang and Yu, 1992). Family collectivism tends to be embodied in three ways: application of the family structure and values to groups or organizations outside the family; application of family learning, attitudes and behavior from non-family groups including their organizations; and personification of the non-family members as family members. In other words, life experience and behavior formulated within the family are often adopted unchanged or

slightly modified in work organizations. Combined with the value of family collectivism, the notion of "big family" within the organization is also important for Chinese.

Viewing company as a "big family," Chinese employees prefer to receive those benefits which directly support their family issues (Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian, 2012). Moreover, Chinese employees expect to obtain support from their supervisors, organizations and family (Spector *et al.*, 2007). For example, Tang *et al.* (2014) found that supervisory support and organizational support are important antecedent of work-to-family enrichment. Siu *et al.* (2013) found that family support is an important role resource for family-to-work enrichment. Therefore, this conceptual paper presents the following proposition:

> *P2.* Chinese workers' sense of family obtained from their groups such as work organizations, family, siblings and community clubs enrich their life as a whole crossing the boundary of work and family domains.

Collectivism
Chinese culture is also well known for having high power distance, paternalistic and collectivistic culture in addition to its strong Confucian culture (Aycan *et al.*, 2000; Stone-Romero and Stone, 2007). Collectivist society in China means that the group goals are more important than the individual goals (Warner, 2008). Within this context, Chinese employees feel that their whole family benefits precede individual benefits and that they are likely to believe that family benefits should be allocated on the basis of equality rather than equity (Wetherell, 1982). By organizations in China offering an equal distribution of direct family benefits to employees, managers may also reduce the perceived high power distance among employees and employers.

In terms of the work-family benefits from organizations, Chinese employees prefer to receive the benefits which are meant for their family members, such as medical care for children, elder and sponsors (Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett and Jian, 2012). The study of I-deals under Chinese context proved that Chinese employees prefer to negotiate demand beyond work boundaries to perceive more enrichment (Tang and Hornung, 2015). Compared with their individualistic counterparts in Western countries, Chinese have less concern for work intruding their non-work life and see work as contributing to the family rather than competing with it (Lewis and Dyer, 2002).

In the Chinese society, work life and family life are interdependent (Huang and Gove 2012). Thus, Chinese are more likely to integrate these role domains (Lee *et al.*, 2011). Such a collectivistic perspective helps alleviate work-family pressure, and thus, Chinese workers seem to experience less work-family conflict than workers from Western societies (e.g. Spector *et al.*, 2007; Yang, 2005). Additionally, Chinese employees prefer to enrich their family life from gaining support and benefits from organization (Tang *et al.*, 2014). Thus, the following proposition is proposed:

> *P3.* Organizations offering a whole family benefit for workers rather than individual benefits (e.g. flexible work arrangement) increases employees' work-to-family enrichment

Chinese traditional philosophy of life
The ultimate purpose of ancient Chinese philosophies is to achieve "Harmony, 和谐" which is the Chinese way of understanding happiness. However, the process of obtaining harmony is different and varies from individuals to individuals. This means that Chinese people have many choices to enrich their life and Chinese philosophies provide different guidance to individuals based on their different requirements. For example, Yi Jing suggests that peoples should face the life positively because life changes all the time. Temporary

drawbacks and struggles in life are normal. Instead of being frustrated by disadvantages from life, individuals should utilize the bad time to accumulate energy and prepare for the future. Thus, Yi Jing advocates that as heaven maintains vigor through movements, people should constantly strive for self-perfection; as earth's condition is receptive devotion, people should hold the outer world with a broad mind. Taoism proposes "Wu Wei, 无为," which means following the law of human beings and nature (Pan *et al.*, 2012). The concept of "Wu Wei, 无为" encourages Chinese to respect life itself, cherishing and being satisfied with what they have in life (Little and Eichman, 2000). Chuang Zi advocates freedom to live one's life to the fullest. Instead of rigidly following the social norms or seeking wealth or power, Chuang Zi advises everyone to let go of their inner struggles tied to the material world and simply follow one's heart (Tsai *et al.*, 2006). To live one's own desires, create a boundaryless world for enrichment and happiness that would otherwise be unattainable. Therefore, it is proposed that:

P4. Chinese workers are influenced by individualized Chinese philosophies of life. Therefore, the way of Chinese employees pursuing WFE may differ from the way adopted by Western workers.

Discussion

This conceptual paper identifies key antecedents of WFE for Chinese workers in China from the Chinese cultural perspectives (i.e. philosophy of Confucian: Chinese family orientation and collectivism) and traditional Chinese philosophies of life as a whole. The proposed framework implies that the antecedents of WFE in China are influenced by four aspects which are Confucianism, family value, collectivism and individualized culture. Specifically, harmony is highly valued by Confucianism. Therefore, harmonious relationships within every aspect of life are key factors for Chinese employees to experience WFE. The family orientation value allows Chinese employees to extend their family belongings. WFE happens when Chinese employees experience the sense of family in different domains. Chinese employees rarely separate their work from their family because of the collectivism. Therefore, benefits for whole family from employees' organization are important to induce WFE. Individualized culture allows Chinese employees to have different attitudes toward life, which means that Chinese employees have rich and varied interpretations of enrichment. Additionally, the framework proposed in this paper also acknowledges previous studies on WFE both in Asian as well as Western contexts, which mostly focus on organizational support and managerial support (Wayne *et al.*, 2006; Bhargava and Baral, 2009; Rantanen *et al.*, 2013; Siu *et al.*, 2013).

This paper argues that regardless of national contexts, some employees will not segregate work and non-work aspects of their life. Particularly considering high social mobility across nations, the key principle of individualized and culture-based concepts on life enrichment (beyond WFE) may be necessary for diverse employees to thrive in workplaces. Based upon the propositions presented in this paper, a quantitative study should be conducted to further develop the conceptual model for confirming Chinese life enrichment process.

Practical implications

China is one of the fastest growing economies where numerous local and foreign companies operate to exploit its market opportunities. However, the working condition of Chinese labor force has been known for excessively long working hours, heavy workload and lack of HR policies and practices to protect well-being of employees and their families. This conceptual paper proposed key antecedents of WFE by considering Chinese cultural characteristics and traditional Chinese philosophies. It highlights the necessity for the corporate leaders

(both local and international leaders) to rethink about their approaches to promote well-being and productivity of Chinese workforce in China. Being influenced by different perspectives of Chinese philosophy of Harmony and other priorities, Chinese employees may not agree with a work-family/life enrichment theory of managing, accumulating or balancing different roles in life. Additionally, foreign companies should carefully adopt employees' benefits and well-being practices which are well accepted and followed in Western countries. Due to culturally different characteristics and the macro-environmental issues, the Chinese society expects different opportunities for individuals to achieve WFE than their counterparts in Western societies.

Theoretical implications
This paper makes the following three contributions. First, this paper contributes to the area of organizational support (POS) research by developing a conceptual framework of Chinese employees' life enrichment. POS research is based on the social exchange theory, which takes a socio-psychological perspective to explain the nature of relationships between employers and employees. Therefore, our research on the key antecedents of WFE in China explains the potential socio-psychological mechanism of how individuals perceive organizational support in the Chinese workforce to generate life enrichment of Chinese workers (cf. Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

Second, it expands the WFE theory by understanding and exploring its processes under the Chinese culture. Both Chinese culture and associated traditional philosophy suggest unique patterns of the WFE process from perspectives of Chinese employees.

Third, it responds to a call for more cross-culture studies regarding a process of WFE. This paper has, in part, achieved this call by incorporating Chinese employees' perspectives on how they enrich their life, inclusive of life at work. Powell *et al.* (2009) stated that societal or national culture plays an important role in shaping the work-family interface. Chinese norms and values related to the meaning and enactment of work and family may influence the nature and strength of the relationship between individuals' experiences in these two domains (cf. Ashforth *et al.*, 2000).

Limitations and future study
We acknowledge that this is a concept paper therefore it is limited in our conceptual justification based upon an empirical study. Nevertheless, the conceptual framework presented in this article suggests researchers in the field of WFE to give more attention to a contextual consideration in understanding the process of WFE and life enrichment. Since work and family are part of life, exploration of life enrichment processes of employees will also reveal the processes for WFE. This paper proposed the life enrichment concept by recognizing individualized and culturally informed life enrichment process and provided propositions. These propositions will need to be tested by an empirical study. More empirical validations of these propositions across various contexts should also be conducted to generate a more comprehensive theory of life enrichment.

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