



Transformational leadership and job performance: A social identity perspective[☆]

Herman H.M. Tse^{a,*}, Warren C.K. Chiu^b

^a Griffith University, Australia

^b The Center for Leadership and Innovation, Department of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Business, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Kowloon, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on social identity theory, this study provides a model explaining the underlying process through which transformational leadership influences creative behavior and organizational citizenship behaviors. Individual differentiation and group identification are proposed as social identity mechanisms reflecting the characteristics of personal and collective identity orientations that underpin the differential effects of transformational leadership behaviors on performance outcomes. The model is tested with data from a sample of 250 front-line employees and their immediate managers working in five banks in the People's Republic of China. Results of hierarchical linear modeling provide support for the model whereby group-focused and individual-focused transformational leadership behaviors exert differential impacts on individual differentiation and group identification. Furthermore, individual differentiation mediates the relationship between individual-focused transformational leadership and creative behavior, whereas group identification mediates the relationships between group-focused transformational leadership and OCBs toward individuals and groups. Implications for theory and practice are discussed and future research directions are outlined.

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1. Introduction

Transformational leadership is one of the most prevalent approaches to understanding individual, group and organizational effectiveness (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders display certain types of behaviors that include raising followers to a higher level of achievement, enabling them to transcend their personal interests for collective welfare, focusing on their abilities to facilitate personal growth, and developing their intellectual ability to approach problems in new ways (Bass, 1985). These behaviors imply that the motivational basis of transformational leadership is a process of changing the way followers envision themselves (see Lord & Brown, 2004; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993).

According to social identity theory (SIT), individuals have a range of identities open to them including personal and social identities. Each identity reflects an individual's self-worth and self-esteem that, in turn, serve as foundations for cognitive, emotional and motivational processes

(Tajfel, 1978, 1982). Hence, it is important to motivate individuals to enhance their self-worth and self-esteem by orientating themselves either as a unique person with idiosyncratic needs or as an enthusiastic member of a social group whose obligations align with the obligations of the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This theory suggests that the identity orientations of followers may play a vital role in the motivational process of transformational leadership, influencing how followers define themselves: as unique individuals (personal identity orientation) or as members of a workgroup (collective identity orientation). Unfortunately, few empirical studies adopt the social identity perspective to explore the role of followers' identity orientations in the transformation process in organizations (e.g., Hogg & Terry, 2000; Kark & Shamir, 2002; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005). The current study develops and tests a model (Fig. 1) to explore group-focused and individual-focused transformational leadership behaviors and their underlying processes from the social identity perspective.

The present study aims to advance the research on transformational leadership processes by achieving three objectives. First, the study responds to repeated calls to understand the unique implications of individual components of transformational leadership on different outcomes, such as personal and collective identity orientations (Yammarino, 1990; Yammarino & Bass, 1990). In line with Wu, Tsui, and Kinicki (2010), the study conceptualizes transformational leadership components (e.g., individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation) as individual-focused leadership which aims to influence individual followers within a workgroup. The study also conceptualizes the other two leadership components (e.g., identifying and articulating a vision and fostering the

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* Corresponding author at: Department of Employment Relations and Human Resources, Griffith Business School, Griffith University, Brisbane, Queensland, 4111, Australia. Tel./fax: +61 7 3735 7305/7177.

E-mail addresses: h.tse@griffith.edu.au (H.H.M. Tse), mschiuw@polyu.edu.hk (W.C.K. Chiu).

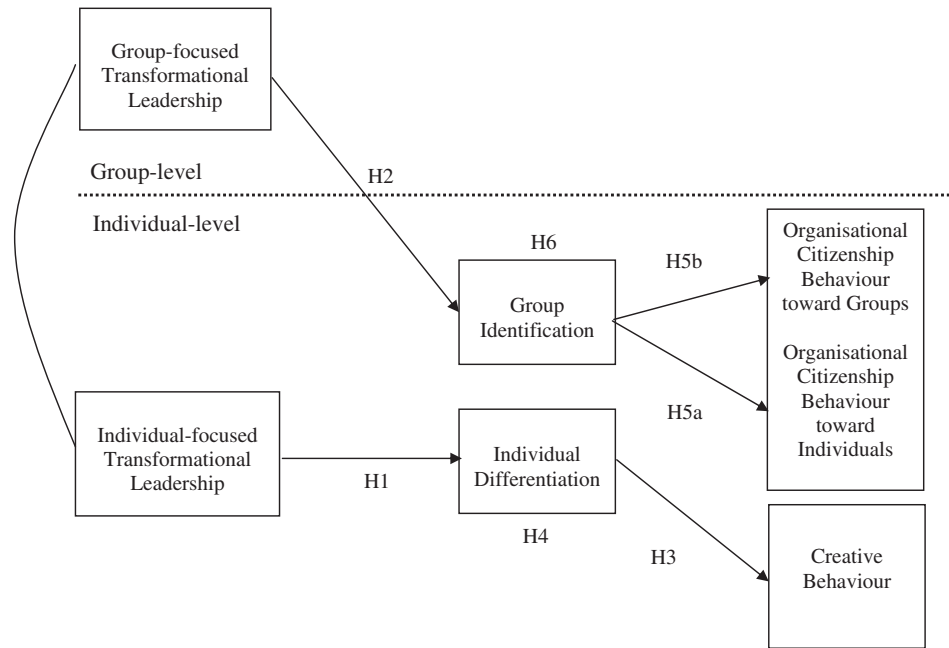


Fig. 1. Hypothesized model of the processes linking transformational leadership and work behaviors.

acceptance of group goals) as group-focused leadership which aims to influence the group as a whole. This conceptualization of transformational leadership behaviors provides new theoretical insights because existing research regards transformational leadership as an overarching construct based on the assumption that all components of transformational leadership exert similar effects on followers' work attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Shin & Zhou, 2007).

Second, individual components of transformational leadership have important implications for followers' social identity orientations. This study seeks to explain how SIT underpins the motivational impact of leadership by proposing and examining the mediating roles of individual differentiation and group identification which epitomize key identity orientations of SIT during the transforming process. Individual differentiation reflects the characteristics of personal identity, focusing on personal traits and self interests instrumental to the enhancement of an individual's self-esteem, whereas group differentiation indicates the characteristics of social identity, emphasizing the group processes and shared values as a means to increase an individual's self-esteem (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Understanding the relationship between transformational leadership and different identity orientations is important because prior research focuses primarily on examining the psychological processes of transformational leadership from the perspectives of intrinsic motivation and job characteristics (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Shin & Zhou, 2003). This new conceptualization of transformational leadership behaviors thus increases our understanding of how individual differentiation and group identification explain the implications of transformational leadership for important work outcomes (Kark & Shamir, 2002; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Lord & Brown, 2004).

Finally, this study extends Kark et al.'s (2003) work on followers' self-reported work attitudes of dependence and empowerment by incorporating supervisor-reported behavioral repertoires of followers' performance outcomes such as creative behavior, organizational citizenship behavior toward individuals (OCBI) and organizational citizenship behavior toward groups (OCBG). This further underscores the implications of how personal and social identity orientations exert differential impacts on the relationships between transformational leadership behaviors and behavioral outcomes beyond followers' self-reported work attitudes.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1. Transformational leadership, social identity theory and work outcomes

Social identity theory (SIT) postulates that individuals seek to see themselves positively, and extend this motivation to include the individual's group memberships or social identities (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). A person's self-concept comprises a personal identity (i.e., idiosyncratic characteristics such as individual attributes, abilities and past experience), and a social identity (i.e., salient group classifications and characteristics such as group attributes, processes and composition; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Research suggests that both personal and social identities are important as they influence the self-esteem and self-worth of individuals. Empirical research examines how group identification and other related constructs such as group cohesiveness and group potency mediate the effect of charismatic leadership or transformational leadership on work outcomes (e.g., Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Cicero & Piero, 2007), yet few studies pay attention to the effect of personal and social identities with respect to specific work outcomes, and to understanding what factors contribute to these two identities (e.g., Doosje & Ellemers, 1997; Janssen & Huang, 2008; Lord & Brown, 2004). In addition, Kark and Shamir (2002) and Yammarino and Bass (1990) call for research to investigate how individual components of transformational leadership relate to work outcomes because examining specific components provides insights on how transformational leadership affects individual and group effectiveness.

To demonstrate the differential effects of transformational leadership behaviors and their theoretical relevance for this study, this study adopts Wu et al.'s (2010) behavioral foci of transformational leadership, that is, individual-focused leadership (e.g., individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation) and group-focused leadership (e.g., idealized influence and inspirational motivation). Individual-focused leadership aims at affecting individual employees by considering the uniqueness of each follower, whereas group-focused leadership deals with influencing the group as a whole by creating shared values and seeking a common ground. These two behavioral foci of transformational leadership are indeed more relevant than the overall transformational leadership construct in theorizing foci specific effects on different work outcomes

because not all the components of transformational leadership are conducive to both identity orientations. In fact, transformational leaders can behave flexibly to match the needs of specific individuals and groups and in different work situations such that individual-focused leadership is more effective for personal identity while group-focused leadership is more effective for social identity.

Brewer and Gardner (1996) distinguish the identity orientations by arguing that personal identity is based on individual differences and personal uniqueness, and collective identity is derived from membership and characteristics in groups. This study proposes that individual differentiation exemplifies personal identity orientation in the sense that group members see themselves as different from other members in terms of their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Such individuals define themselves based on their unique characteristics and focus on individuality (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004). Likewise, group identification represents collective identity orientation illustrating how group members define themselves in terms of values, goals, attitudes and behaviors they share with other group members. These members emphasize common interests, collective welfare and shared objectives in groups (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; van Knippenberg, 2000). By nature of these two identity orientations, we argue that individual differentiation stimulates individuals' creative behavior which is defined as the extent to which individuals are able to generate and communicate new ideas and creative thoughts in groups (George & Zhou, 2001; Shin & Zhou, 2007). This study also posits that group identification influences individuals to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors directed at helping other group members (OCBI), and organizational citizenship behaviors directed at making suggestions to improve their groups (OCBG). OCBI is a helping dimension referring to how an individual directs his/her helping behavior toward other group members whereas OCBG is a voice dimension referring to how an individual makes suggestions for group improvement. The present study hypothesizes that individual differentiation and group identification are distinct psychological mechanisms which mediate the effects of individual-focused and group-focused transformational leadership behaviors on followers' performance outcomes. A detailed discussion of each hypothesis derived from the conceptual model is presented below.

2.2. Individual-focused transformational leadership and individual differentiation

Brewer and Gardner (1996) assert that individuals with a strong personal identity often perceive themselves to be different from others and define themselves based on their own needs, goals, and desires. Such individuals seek to achieve personal distinctiveness by being special in a group, and that will enhance their self-worth and self-esteem (Turner et al., 1987; van Knippenberg, 2000). According to Wu et al. (2010), individual-focused transformational leadership has direct impacts on individual differentiation because leaders adjust their behaviors based on followers' individual differences and personal distinctiveness. Two components of transformational leadership behaviors – *individualized consideration* and *intellectual stimulation* – appear to focus on followers' individuality.

Specifically, leaders who display individualized consideration tend to develop a high quality dyadic relationship with each follower. Such leaders understand their followers individually (Avolio, 1999; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990), pay attention to followers' special needs and wants, provide information and resources needed for successful completion of tasks, and more importantly, give them discretion to act independently (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Through the interaction process, the followers feel encouraged to express their individual feelings and thoughts because they believe that their leaders are genuinely interested in helping and developing them (Yammarino, 1990; Podsakoff et al., 1990). Leaders' acts of individualized consideration are therefore likely to facilitate followers' individual differentiation. In addition, by means of intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders stimulate followers on an

individual basis by encouraging them to rethink the way they do things, to reexamine some of the basic assumptions about their job, and to reconfigure new solutions from old problems (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Intellectually stimulated followers have their awareness raised, imaginations stretched as well as their values and beliefs of creativity elevated (Bass, 1985). The inspired followers are not content to comply with what is considered to be normative. Rather, they adopt unique approaches to work-related issues through expressing their individuality, and thus followers would feel better able to pursue and satisfy their personal identity (Bass, 1985; Randel & Jaussi, 2003). On this basis, followers see their leaders' act of intellectual stimulation as an invitation to the free expression of individuality in solving problems and they seek to develop their particular uniqueness in their groups that in turn increases their self-esteem and self-worth.

Hypothesis 1. Individual-focused transformational leadership is positively related to individual differentiation.

2.3. Group-focused transformational leadership and group identification

To many individuals, characteristics of their work group can serve as a basis for self-definition and they often compare these characteristics to those of other groups for evaluating their self-worth and self-esteem (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Hence, collective identity reflects the extent to which an individual's self is defined in collective terms, leading them to focus more on the interests of the collective and less on their own (Brickson, 2000; Turner et al., 1987). According to Dansereau, Alutto, and Yammarino (1984), group-focused transformational leadership influences followers' group identification because it tends to focus on the whole group rather than individual members within the group. In this respect, Wu et al. (2010) identified two components of transformational leadership, namely, *idealized influence* and *inspirational motivation*, owing to their emphasis on common beliefs, shared values and collective ideologies that would channel followers' concerns to the entire group (Kark & Shamir, 2002; Wu et al., 2010).

Group-focused transformational leadership is effective in enhancing followers' collective identity through painting an interesting picture of the organization's future (Podsakoff et al., 1990). By making the vision apparent and inspiring, they feel proud and develop a sense of belonging to the group. Followers perceive membership in that group as valuable and important, and thus, tend to define themselves based on the group characteristics and the group's shared vision (Kark et al., 2003; Podsakoff et al., 1990). In addition, transformational leaders enhance group identification by promoting value internalization and self-engagement with work (Bono & Judge, 2003; Colbert, Kristof-Brown, Bradley, & Barrick, 2008; Schaubroeck, Lam, & Cha, 2007). This can be achieved by nurturing followers' acceptance of the group's goals, and enabling them to see how they work together to achieve the same goals (Podsakoff et al., 1990; Schaubroeck et al., 2007; Spreitzer, Perttula, & Xin, 2005). Once followers align with the values of the group, they start focusing on collective interests and purposes, and view their individual effort and work roles as contributing to a larger collective effort (Shamir et al., 1993, 1998; Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005), which enhances their emotional attachment to, and identification with their group (Bass, 1985; Kark et al., 2003; Shamir et al., 1993, 1998).

Hypothesis 2. Group-focused transformational leadership is positively related to group identification.

2.4. Individual differentiation and creative behavior

Organizations expect their employees to generate and implement creative ideas because creativity is one of the important factors contributing to individual and group effectiveness (Goncalo & Staw, 2006; Somech, 2006; West, Tjosvold, & Smith, 2003). As defined earlier, creativity refers to the extent to which individuals are able to generate and

communicate new ideas and creative thoughts (George & Zhou, 2001; Shin & Zhou, 2007). In line with this definition, it is conceivable that generating creative thoughts are likely to be facilitated and communicated if individuals' thoughts, feelings and behaviors are distinguishable from that of other members in groups. Recently, there is an emerging consensus of research findings substantiating the relationship between individuality and creativity. Haslam, Powell, and Turner (2000) report that individuals in a group who promote their individual uniqueness are apt to feel idiosyncratic and different from other group members in their cognitive thinking, emotional experience and behavioral reactions. Similarly, Janssen and Huang (2008) explain that individuals who focus on their idiosyncratic and distinctive perspectives tend to challenge the status quo behind the established thoughts shared among group members. Indeed, groups comprising members with strong individualistic orientations produce more new ideas and creative suggestions than groups with conforming members in an experimental study (Goncalo & Staw, 2006). Although the findings of past studies have made important contributions, the theoretical development supporting the relationship between individual differentiation and creative behavior remains underdeveloped (Goncalo & Staw, 2006; Janssen & Huang, 2008).

Hypothesis 3. Individual differentiation is positively related to creative behavior.

2.5. The mediating role of individual differentiation

It is further hypothesized that individual-focused transformational leadership influences individual differentiation which in turn leads to followers' creativity. As discussed earlier, transformational leadership behaviors facilitate followers' sense of personal uniqueness by 1) treating them on an individual basis and paying attention to their individual needs, 2) by encouraging followers to express their individuality through thinking outside the box, and 3) applying new ideas and unconventional practices (Podsakoff et al., 1990; Schaubroeck et al., 2007). The sense of uniqueness derived from their personal identity motivates the extent to which followers will engage in appropriate behaviors in order to enhance their self-esteem and self-worth in a group (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brickson, 2000; Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002). Building upon this, individual-focused transformational leaders are capable of developing and strengthening followers' sense of individual differentiation so that followers will strive to express their individuality by generating and disseminating new ideas and creative thoughts.

Hypothesis 4. Individual-focused transformational leadership is positively related to creative behavior through the mediating effect of individual differentiation.

2.6. Group identification, OCBG and OCBI

Following the classification by Lee and Allen (2002), OCB comprises citizenship behavior directed at helping other group members (OCBI), and citizenship behavior directed at making suggestions to improve their groups (OCBG). According to SIT, when individuals identify with a group, they are likely to base their self-concept and self-esteem on their sense of belonging to the group and to perceive and experience group successes and failures as their own (see Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Pratt, 1998). Because sharing common interests with a group would induce individuals to develop a keen interest to seek group membership with the group, the committed members attach a positive value to the group and emphasize the importance of collective welfare and group values (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Haslam et al., 2000; van Knippenberg, 2000).

This notion suggests that group identification promotes a sense of oneness among members in a group and motivates individuals to think and behave in group prototypical ways in order to enhance their self-worth and self-esteem as group members. Research supports the

notion that individuals perceiving themselves as belonging to the group often emphasize collective interests (Brickson, 2000; Turner et al., 1987). Such individuals are likely to experience a sense of satisfaction and achievement through helping other members and to improve group effectiveness by providing constructive suggestions. In this respect, group identification is important for OCBI and OCBG because group identification represents how individuals perceive a sense of unity with other group members (Restuborg, Bordia, & Tang, 2007; Turnipseed & Rassuli, 2005). Indeed, prior research reports a positive relationship between group identification and OCB (Christ, van Dick, Wagner, & Stellmacher 2003). This study aims to extend this finding by integrating leadership and social identity theories.

Hypothesis 5. Group identification relates positively to a) OCBI and b) OCBG.

2.7. The mediating role of group identification

Although researchers (e.g., Bass, 1985; Shamir et al., 1993) argue that transformational leaders motivate followers' performance beyond their initial performance expectations by enhancing their social identification, this notion receives limited empirical support (e.g., Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Wang et al., 2005). Kark et al. (2003) report that group identification mediates the relationships between transformational leadership and self-reported work attitudes such as collective efficacy and organizational based self-esteem. However, they do not explain how these mediating effects operate on actual behavioral outcomes. Until further evidence is available, the link between group identification and work behaviors remains unclear.

The current model posits that the way followers feel and define themselves within a group (i.e., group identification) will mediate the main effect of transformational leadership on citizenship behaviors. As discussed earlier, group identification becomes salient to followers when transformational leaders encourage them to define their membership based on group or organization values (Bass, 1985; Howell & Shamir, 2005). Transformational leaders achieve this by identifying and articulating a strong vision so that followers' self-interest will align with that of the group. Value congruence enhances self-worth, self-esteem, and job satisfaction (Bono & Judge, 2003; Kark & Shamir, 2002; Shamir et al., 1998). Also, group-oriented followers will focus on the collective interests of their group, helping other members and suggesting ideas for improvement. Thus, group identification serves as a proximal outcome through which group-focused transformational leadership influences the more distal outcomes of OCBI and OCBG.

Hypothesis 6. Group-focused transformational leadership is positively associated with a) OCBI and b) OCBG through the mediating effect of group identification.

3. Methods

3.1. Sample and procedure

The sample for this study comprises 280 employees and 40 managers working in 40 branches of five banks located in a major city of China. The human resource manager of each bank randomly selected eight branches to participate in the study. Each branch has a manager and a number of employees working together as a group to provide retail banking services to customers. Each branch manager is required to oversee five to eight subordinates (Mean = 7) and the subordinates report their job progress directly to the branch manager.

Two sets of questionnaires are used to collect data from managers and subordinates. Forty managers provide ratings on OCBI, OCBG and creative behavior for each of their immediate subordinates, whereas 280 employees provide responses to items pertaining to transformational leadership, individual differentiation and group identification.

With the assistance of the human resource department in each bank, an identification code matches subordinate responses and manager ratings for each set of questionnaires.

Thirty-six supervisors and 260 subordinates completed and returned questionnaires, yielding response rates of 90% and 93%, respectively. After discarding incomplete and unmatched questionnaires, a total of 250 matched supervisor–subordinate dyads (34 supervisors and 250 subordinates) provide useable data for this study. Given that employees working for five different banks provide data for this study, it is important to compare the data of the subsamples, and results indicate no significant differences in respondents' age, gender, or education level across the banks. Of the supervisor sample, 60.8% are female, 71% are aged between 30 and 40, and 97.2% have tertiary education. Their average organizational tenure is 8.62%. Of the subordinate sample, 71.5% are women, 76.4% are aged between 23 and 35, and 62.4% have tertiary education. Their average organizational tenure is 4.34 years.

3.2. Measures

To ensure equivalence of the following measures in the Chinese and English versions of the survey instrument, we utilize a standard translation and back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1980). All of the following measures consist of items with response options ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 7 “strongly agree”, unless otherwise indicated. Table 1 reports the internal consistency scores of these scales.

3.2.1. Transformational leadership

The transformational leadership behavior inventory (TLI) is used to measure individuals' perceptions of leader behaviors (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Several recent empirical studies use the TLI to measure transformational leadership in Chinese samples (e.g., Schaubroeck et al., 2007; Spreitzer et al., 2005). Given the aim of this study is to examine the effects of individual-focused and group-focused transformational leadership behaviors on respective mediators and performance outcomes, we adopt 12 TLI items to measure four components of transformational leadership. The two group-focused leadership components of TLI include 1 – identifying and articulating a vision (e.g., My leader paints an interesting picture of the group's future) and 2 – fostering the acceptance of group (e.g., My leader encourages employees to be group players). The two individual-focused leadership components of TLI consist of 1 – providing individualized support (e.g., My leader shows respect for my personal feelings) and 2 – providing intellectual stimulation (e.g., My leader has ideas that have challenged me to reexamine some of the basic assumptions about my work).

3.2.2. Individual differentiation

The measure of individual differentiation contains seven items developed and validated by Janssen and Huang (2008). The scale assesses the extent to which an individual perceives himself/herself as different from other members in his/her group based on knowledge, skills, abilities, roles, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Respondents indicate the degree to which they generally agree with the items, for example “To what extent you are different from your group members owing to your personal opinions and belief”.

3.2.3. Group identification

The measure of group identification consists of six items adapted from Ellemers et al.'s (1999) social identification scale which measures an individual's identification with his/her group. Respondents indicate the extent to which they generally agree with items, for example, “My group is an important reflection of who I am”.

3.2.4. Creative behavior

Supervisors rate the extent to which individuals performed creatively using an 8-item abbreviated version of George and Zhou's (2001) creativity scale. The items reflect the generation and communication of

Table 1

Comparison of measurement models of group-focused and individual-focused transformational leadership behaviors.

Variables	χ^2/df	CFI	IFI	RMSEA
The hypothesized model – second-factor two-factor model (visionary and foster group acceptance) and (individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation)	130.43/49	.94	.94	.070
<i>Nested measurement models</i>				
4-Factor model (visionary and foster group acceptance) and (individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation)	287.03/60	.85	.85	.123
3-Factor model_1 combining (visionary and foster group acceptance as one factor) and (individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation)	322.26/61	.83	.83	.131
3-Factor model_2 combining (individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation as one factor) and (visionary and foster group acceptance)	322.07/61	.83	.83	.131
<i>Alternate measurement models</i>				
3-Factor model_1 combining (visionary and intellectual stimulations as one factor) and (foster group acceptance and individualized consideration)	350.12/61	.81	.81	.141
3-Factor model_2 combining (visionary and individualized considerations as one factor) and (foster group acceptance and intellectual stimulation)	350.19/61	.81	.81	.141
1-Factor model combining all (visionary, foster group acceptance, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation) as a single factor	395.09/66	.78	.78	.142

creative ideas. Janssen and Huang (2008) used the same items to measure creative behavior as a single construct. A sample item is “This employee comes up with creative solutions to problems”.

3.2.5. Organizational citizenship behaviors

This study uses six items adapted from Lee and Allen's (2002) OCBI scale to measure individuals' citizenship behavior directed toward other coworkers within a group. Managers indicate the extent to which they agree with the items describing the helping behavior displayed by subordinates toward other members within a group. A sample item is “This employee helps others who have been absent”. We use another six items also adapted from Lee and Allen's (2002) OCBO scale to measure individuals' citizenship behavior directed toward their branches (OCBG). Managers evaluate subordinates' citizenship behaviors that are intended to benefit the branch instead of the bank as a whole. A sample item includes “This employee keeps up the development in the branch”.

3.3. Measurement model

We conduct a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) with AMOS 17 to determine the factor structures of the study variables using chi-square statistics and the fit indices of CFI, IFI and RMSEA (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Joreskog, 1993). An examination of the second-order two-factor model of transformational leadership shows that each of the 12 items from the transformational leadership scale load onto its first-order construct (visionary and fosters goal acceptance representing group-focused leadership, and individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation reflecting individual-focused leadership). The first-order constructs in turn load onto their respective second-order construct of transformational leadership. Table 1 reports that chi-square and fit indices of the second-order two-factor model are ($\chi^2 = 130.43$, $df = 49$; $CFI = .94$, $IFI = .94$ and $RMSEA = .07$). These results show that the second-order two-factor model of transformational leadership fits the data significantly better than any other

factor models. The results are consistent with Wu et al.'s (2010) operationalization of group-focused and individual-focused transformational leadership behaviors using the MLQ transformational leadership scale.

In addition, the factor structures of group identification and individual differentiation are confirmed. CFA results indicate that a two-factor model ($\chi^2 = 147.93$, $df = 53$; $CFI = .95$, $IFI = .94$ and $RMSEA = .08$) yields a better fit to the data than the single-factor model ($\chi^2 = 254.94$, $df = 54$; $CFI = .90$, $IFI = .87$ and $RMSEA = .12$). These results provide evidence supporting the notion that group identification is distinct from individual differentiation.

Finally, the factor structures of branch managers' ratings of performance outcomes are examined, that is, OCBI, OCBG, and creative behavior. CFA results of the hypothesized three-factor model of OCBI, OCBG and creative behavior ($\chi^2 = 200.16$, $df = 87$; $CFI = .93$, $IFI = .93$ and $RMSEA = .07$) yield a better fit to the data than both the two-factor model (combined components of OCBI and OCBG), and creative behavior ($\chi^2 = 254.84$, $df = 88$; $CFI = .90$, $IFI = .90$ and $RMSEA = .09$) and the single-factor model ($\chi^2 = 321.79$, $df = 89$; $CFI = .85$, $IFI = .85$ and $RMSEA = .10$). This provides support for the distinctiveness of the performance outcomes in this study.

3.4. Level of analysis

To examine the social identity process of how transformational leadership influences behavioral work outcomes, this study operationalizes and analyzes group-focused and individual-focused transformational leadership differently. We aggregate group-focused leadership as a group-level construct, conceptualizing the responses to this leader behavior as collective perceptions which are shared among subordinates within each branch, as subordinates tend to have a similar perception of group-focused leadership behaviors their managers display for the group as a whole. This study treats individual-focused leadership as an individual-level construct, conceptualizing the responses to this leadership behavior as individual perceptions of subordinates within each branch, because subordinates are likely to have different perceptions of the individual-focused leadership behaviors their managers display for different individuals. Because this study involves group-level and individual-level independent variables, we conduct hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analyses to test the hypotheses in this study. HLM estimates simultaneously the effects of independent variables at different levels on individual-level outcomes, while maintaining the appropriate levels of analysis for the predictors (see Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992).

4. Results

4.1. Justification for aggregation

To examine whether the group-focused leadership was statistically appropriate for aggregation, we conduct intra-class correlation (ICCs) and inter-rater agreement (r_{wg}) tests (Bliese, 2000; James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984). The ICC (1) and ICC (2) for group-focused leadership are .23 and .69, respectively. The average r_{wg} of the group-focused leadership across 34 branches is .90. These results show a strong between-group variation and within-group inter-rater agreement, which supports the appropriateness of aggregating the group-focused component of transformational leadership as group-level variables (see Bliese, 2000; James et al., 1984).

4.2. Descriptive statistics and correlations

Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics, reliabilities and correlations for all study variables. Consistent with our model, key variables are significantly related to one another in the predicted directions. Consistent with hypotheses, group-focused leadership positively relates to group identification ($r = .48$, $p < .01$) and individual-focused leadership is positively related to individual differentiation ($r = .25$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, group identification is positively associated with OCBI ($r = .29$, $p < .01$) and OCBG ($r = .33$, $p < .01$). Individual differentiation also has a positive relationship with creative behavior ($r = .21$, $p < .01$).

4.3. Test of hypotheses

To conduct HLM analyses, a series of null models are run (no individual- or group-level predictors) in order to examine whether or not there is substantial between-group variance in all the outcome variables. HLM results provide support for significant within-group variation in creative behavior ($\tau_{00} = .50$, $\chi^2(33) = 35.23$, $p < .01$), OCBG ($\tau_{00} = .17$, $\chi^2(33) = 70.40$, $p < .01$), and OCBI ($\tau_{00} = .13$, $\chi^2(33) = 70.26$, $p < .01$) and the ICC (1) results were .52, .44 and .32, respectively. These results suggest that there is systematic between-group variance in the outcomes (see Snijders & Bosker, 1999).

Table 3 reports the HLM results pertaining to Hypotheses 1 to 6. Each hypothesis is tested according to Baron and Kenny's (1986) 4-step mediation procedures. Step 1 examines Hypotheses 1 and 2, exploring the effects of the two independent variables – individual-focused and group-focused transformational leadership on the two mediators – individual differentiation and group identification. As predicted, results

Table 2
Individual-level descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlations.^{a,b}

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Individual-focused TL ^c	4.94	.74	(.78)						
2. Group-focused TL ^d	5.58	.74	.46**	(.88)					
3. Group identification	5.26	.71	.14*	.48**	(.80)				
4. Individual differentiation	4.31	.93	.25**	.06	.04	(.92)			
5. Creative behavior	4.51	.90	.21**	.07	.07	.24**	(.91)		
6. OCBI ^e	5.62	.57	.07	.35**	.29**	.13	.03	(.83)	
7. OCBG ^f	5.60	.65	.15*	.41**	.33**	.11	.08	.55**	(.75)

^a N = 250. Internal consistency reliabilities are reported in parentheses along the diagonal.

^b Significant levels and correlations among the study variables at the individual level should be interpreted with caution because correlation tests do not take the effects of data non-independence of group-focused transformational leadership into consideration (i.e., the each group-level mean score of group-focused transformational leadership was assigned down to each group member to form the correlation results).

^c Individual-focused TL = combined components (individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation) of transformational leadership.

^d Group-focused TL = combined components (identifying and articulating a vision and fostering the acceptance of group goals) of transformational leadership.

^e OCBI = organizational citizenship behavior toward individuals.

^f OCBG = organizational citizenship behavior toward groups.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 3

Mediation of the relationships of transformational leadership behaviors with job performance by individual differentiation and group identification.^a

Individual-level mediating variables			
Independent variables	Individual differentiation	Group identification	
<i>Step 1</i>			
Individual-level	.30** (248)		
Individual-focused TL			
Group-level		.69** (32)	
Group-focused TL			
Individual-level dependent variables			
	Creative behavior	OCBG	OCBI
<i>Step 2</i>			
Individual-level	.20** (248)		
Individual-focused TL			
Group-level		.40** (32)	.32* (32)
Group-focused TL			
<i>Step 3</i>			
Individual-level	.14 (246)		
Individual-focused TL			
Group-level		.29 (32)	.22 (32)
Group-focused TL			
<i>Step 4</i>			
Individual-level	.16** (246)		
Individual differentiation			
Individual-level		.16** (246)	.12** (246)
Group identification			

OCBG = organizational citizenship behavior directed toward groups.

OCBI = organizational citizenship behavior directed toward individuals.

All study variables except for group-focused leadership are individual-level constructs for analysis.

^a Note. Results are unstandardized parameter estimates from HLM analyses; numbers in parentheses are correspondingly degrees of freedom.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

in Table 3 show that individual-focused leadership positively relates to individual differentiation ($\gamma_{10} = .30, p < .01$), whereas group-focused transformational leadership is positively associated with group identification ($\gamma_{01} = .69, p < .01$). Hence, *Hypotheses 1 and 2* receive support.

We follow Step 2 of the mediation procedures by testing the differential effects of the two independent variables – first, individual-focused leadership on creative behavior, and second, group-focused leadership on OCBI and OCBG. Findings indicate that individual-focused leadership has a positive impact on creative behavior ($\gamma_{10} = .20, p < .01$), and group-focused leadership has a positive effect on both OCBG ($\gamma_{01} = .40, p < .01$), and OCBI ($\gamma_{01} = .32, p < .05$), respectively. These results provide support for Step 2 of the mediation test.

Consistent with the hypotheses, findings at Step 4 reveal that only individual differentiation, not group identification, positively relates to creative behavior ($\gamma_{20} = .16, p < .01$). This significant relationship becomes non-significant in Step 3 ($\gamma_{10} = .14, n.s.$). Results indicate a similar pattern of results in that only group identification, not individual differentiation, is positively associated with OCBG ($\gamma_{10} = .16, p < .01$) and OCBI ($\gamma_{10} = .12, p < .01$). The relationships between group-focused leadership, OCBG and OCBI also become non-significant in Step 3 ($\gamma_{01} = .29, n.s.$ and $\gamma_{01} = .22, n.s.$, respectively). Pertaining to *Hypotheses 4 and 6*, results of Sobel tests reveal that individual differentiation significantly mediates the relationship between individual-focused leadership and creative behavior ($z = 2.49, p < .01$). Similarly, group identification also significantly mediates the relationships between group-focused leadership and OCBG ($z = 5.14, p < .01$) and OCBI ($z = 3.56, p < .05$). Hence, both *Hypotheses 4 and 6* receive support.

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical implications

The present study contributes to the research on transformational leadership and SIT by achieving three objectives. First, this study responds to the repeated calls by Yammarino (1990) and Yammarino and Bass (1990) to explore how individual components of transformational leadership can influence different work attitudes and behaviors in different ways because the extant research to date has tended to conceptualize transformational leadership as a global construct, presuming that its components are equally important and exert similar effects on work outcomes. Based on Wu et al. (2010), this study conceptualizes transformational leadership components (e.g. individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation) as individual-focused leadership which influences individual followers within a workgroup. This study also conceptualizes the other two leadership components (e.g., identifying and articulating a vision and fostering the acceptance of group goals) as group-focused leadership which serves to influence the group as a whole. The CFA results support the idea that group-focused transformational leadership and individual-focused transformational leadership are distinct from each other and exert differential impacts on work attitudes and behaviors.

Second, this study contributes to our understanding of the motivational basis of transformational leadership from a social identity perspective to explain why and how individual-focused and group-focused transformational leadership behaviors influence followers' dual identity orientations (Tajfel, 1978, 1982). This new perspective supplements transformational leadership research which often builds on the intrinsic motivation and job characteristics theories (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Shin & Zhou, 2003), and also informs the literature about the importance of how followers envision themselves as a unique person with idiosyncratic needs or an enthusiastic group member whose obligations align with the interests of the collective in transformation processes (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This study takes a step forward through examining the mediating roles of individual differentiation and group identification which epitomize key identity orientations of SIT during the transforming process (e.g. Postmes, Spears, Lee, & Novak, 2005). The results show that personal identity and group identity are separate and may co-exist within a person in a group setting, each exerting differential effects on distinct work outcomes. For example, individual differentiation is related to creative behavior, and group identification to both OCBI and OCBG. The results also suggest that individual differentiation is more likely to mediate the relationship between individual-focused transformational leadership and creative behavior, while group identification is more likely to mediate the links between group-focused transformational leadership and citizenship behaviors.

Finally, this study extends Kark et al.'s (2003) study on followers' self-reported work attitudes by incorporating supervisor-reported behavioral repertoires of followers' performance outcomes. Our findings show that group-focused transformational leadership is more effective in facilitating followers' OCBI and OCBG but less effective in facilitating their creative behavior. In contrast, individual-focused transformational leadership is more effective in enhancing followers' creative behavior but less effective in facilitating their citizenship behaviors. The notion of target-specificity of transformational leadership is also consistent with the recent findings by Wu et al. (2010) who report that differentiated leadership diminishes group effectiveness.

5.2. Practical implications

The results of this study suggest that organizations should focus on training managers so that they are capable of recognizing and encouraging both individuality and diversity in a group setting. In other words, managers should take a contingent approach to their own leadership style. When and where group cohesiveness and citizenship behaviors

are needed, they should use their idealized influence and inspirational motivation behaviors to guide their followers (Shamir, 1991; Shamir et al., 1993, 1998). If, however, creative behavior is required, then managers should focus on individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation behaviors to enhance individuality and recognizing individual differences. The current findings suggest that managers should be mindful of the leadership behaviors they display with respect to different followers' identity orientations because these will affect how their followers engage in their tasks to produce different performance outcomes. For example, if managers want to motivate group-based performance, they should use group-focused transformational leadership. Managers who attempt to facilitate individual-based performance should consider using individual-focused transformational leadership. Understanding followers' identity orientations demands the necessary skills and becomes a new challenge for managers seeking to be effective at leading and motivating their subordinates.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

The current study has several limitations. First, the use of cross-sectional data means no causal relationships among the study variables can be inferred from our findings. For example, it is possible that citizenship behaviors and creative behavior influence individual differentiation and group identification. Hence the cross-sectional research design limits our understanding of the implications of the two identity orientations as mechanisms mediating the effects of individual-focused and group-focused transformational leadership behaviors on creative behavior and citizenship behavior over time. Therefore, future research should adopt experimental and longitudinal designs to strengthen the conclusions of this study.

Second, it is arguable that common method variance may have inflated the hypothesized relationships in this study because we measured the independent variable (transformational leadership), and mediating variables (individual differentiation and group identification) as individual perceptions with subordinates' self-report data. To minimize such concerns, data on the outcome variables of creative behavior and citizenship behaviors are collected from supervisors as a separate source (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). The study also followed Kark et al.'s (2003) suggestion to aggregate transformational leadership to the group level, conceptualizing that the responses to group-focused leadership are collective perceptions and subordinates will share their perceptions within each group. However, future research should consider collecting data on the variables from different points in time, following the suggestions outlined by Podsakoff et al. (2003).

Finally, it is important to note that the findings of this study may not be generalizable across other country boundaries because the data comprised samples working in the banking industry only. Data collected from a sample in other industries may yield different results, and future research should therefore be conducted to validate the study findings using different samples in other industries to ensure that the effect of industry does not confound the relationships examined in this study. In addition, given that the PRC is a highly collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 2001), it is unclear whether this has set a ceiling effect on the extent that an employee will report his/her opinion about individual differentiation and group identification. Researchers may also benefit from replicating the present investigation by including cultural values such as power distance or collectivism/individualism as a boundary condition to examine whether or not the relationships will be altered under different cultural contexts such as USA.

6. Conclusion

The present study aims to provide insights into the motivational basis of how transformational leadership influences important work behaviors in organizations. The study integrates theories of social identity and transformational leadership to develop and test a mediating

model examining dual identity orientations and their differential mediated effects on the relationship between behavioral components of transformational leadership and creative behavior and citizenship behaviors. Findings provide evidence to support the hypothesized model. Specifically, results suggest that group-focused transformational leadership affects OCBI and OCBG through the mediating role of group identification rather than through individual differentiation. Furthermore, individual-focused transformational leadership determines followers' creative behavior through the mediating effect of individual differentiation, rather than through group identification. Hopefully the current study will encourage researchers to further explore the potential effects of both identity orientations in leadership research.

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