Does Value Congruence Lead to Voice? Cooperative Voice and Cooperative Silence under Team and Differentiated Transformational Leadership

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ABSTRACT This study seeks to resolve a puzzle of the coexistence of follower cooperative voice and cooperative silence (expressing/withholding work-related ideas, information, and opinions based on collective, cooperative motives) in the presence of transformational leadership. A sample of 193 bank employees under 52 managers revealed that in the presence of group-focused transformational leadership, both voice and silence based on cooperative motives increased through the mediation of value congruence between leaders and followers. However, cooperative voice was more likely to be the main response to a high level of value congruence when followers under the same leader perceived individual-focused transformational leadership uniformly. Under a high level of differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership, value congruence was likely to result in more cooperative silence. We discuss implications for future research on both leadership and employee voice.

KEYWORDS differentiated leadership, silence, transformational leadership, value congruence, voice

Although I think we have to change our strategies to survive the crisis, it is unlikely that I will speak up. I know Mr C very well. His beliefs are so strong that they are just like an unchangeable constitution. When we faced a similar crisis before, it was his persistence in the same beliefs that made us eventually successful. I know he attempts to reproduce the same success again, so I won’t suggest ideas that make my point clear.
(A division manager of Mr C’s company, excerpted from the authors’ interview)
INTRODUCTION

In the greater China region, Mr C is famous for his leadership. His words and behaviours clearly reflect his values, beliefs, and moral orientation. He insists that a good company should merge doing well with doing good. Before it makes a reasonable profit, it has to make a significant contribution to society. On the basis of this idea, he asks employees to meet standards higher than legal requirements and emphasizes corporate social responsibility (CSR). Also, Mr C knows well how to articulate a compelling vision that motivates employees to achieve ambitious goals. He gives lectures in many new employee orientations, using organizational symbols to build morale and instil pride in employees. Under Mr C’s leadership, his company has won numerous CSR awards, and its stock price has increased more than 10 times over the last 10 years (Li, 2009).

According to Wu, Tsui, and Kinicki’s (2010) definition, Mr C possesses high levels of group-focused transformational leadership, which refers to leaders’ idealized influence and inspirational motivation as a shared property in that ‘leaders are assumed to behave similarly toward different members and members agree on their perception of leadership behavior’ (91). As a change-oriented leadership style, transformational leadership is an enhancer of cooperative voice, a voice intended to help the organization (Detert & Burris, 2007). In contrast, the current literature also points out the ‘dark side’ of transformational leadership, such as closing down dissent among followers in order to achieve the collective goal (e.g., Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The quote above is an example of this effect: The division manager decided to withhold his true opinion on the strategy setting in China to ensure that cooperation was maintained. He was practicing cooperative silence.

Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) assumed that unfavourable effects of transformational leadership mainly result from ‘pseudo’ transformational leaders, who are motivated by selfishness or who use power inappropriately. However, as noted above, Mr C is publicly considered a leader with genuine moral character. Why does the same vision of a transformational leader make some followers silent while it evokes another follower’s voice? In what situation does cooperative voice rather than cooperative silence become the primary response? The current study is to resolve the puzzle of the coexistence of cooperative voice and cooperative silence even under transformational leaders with good moral character.

The leadership literature has suggested that transformational leadership is a powerful predictor of follower organizational citizenship behaviour, including making constructive suggestions, offering ideas to improve the functioning of the organization, and keeping abreast of changes in organizations (e.g., Kirkman, Chen, Farh, Chen, & Lowe, 2009; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993; Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005). However, contrary to this prediction, in a two-phase field study, Detert and Burris (2007) did not find a positive association between transformational leadership and employee cooperative voice. Regarding
this, they concluded that transformational leadership ‘may not present a clear signal that voice is desired’ (881). Clearly, more effort is needed to resolve the puzzle of cooperative silence in the presence of transformational leadership.

Two recent developments of organizational behaviour theories may help researchers resolve this puzzle. First, Van Dyne, Ang, and Botero (2003) proposed that silence is not necessarily the opposite or absence of voice; employees may withhold/express work-related ideas, information, and opinions based on the same motive. This multidimensional view suggests that one specific leadership style is likely to simultaneously promote voice and silence based on the same motives. Accordingly, while transformational leadership may predict employee voice out of intentions to benefit the collective, it is likely that it is also related to employee silence based on the same motive. Second, Wu et al. (2010) argued that the original transformational leadership concept can be divided into two sub-constructs according to the focus of leadership behaviour: Some components of transformational leadership are group-focused, and others are individual-focused. Thus, it is likely that prior research failed to observe a clear relationship between transformational leadership and employee voice because it treated transformational leadership as an overarching construct. Group-focused and individual-focused transformational leadership may have distinct effects on the employee voice phenomenon.

Therefore, based on Van Dyne et al.’s (2003) work, we treat cooperative voice and cooperative silence as distinct constructs and examine whether the same leadership style can predict both of them. Also, on the basis of Wu et al.’s (2010) differentiation, we try to clarify how transformational leadership is related to voice and silence behaviour. Taken together, we attempt to offer a better and more sophisticated understanding of the cooperative voice and cooperative silence phenomenon in the presence of transformational leadership. We posit that group-focused transformational leadership is positively related to both cooperative voice and cooperative silence through the mediation of followers’ perceptions of value congruence between leaders and followers. Moreover, differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership refers to variation of leader’s individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation among his or her followers (Wu et al., 2010). We hypothesize that it moderates the relationship between value congruence and cooperative voice/silence such that followers whose values are congruent with the leader tend to demonstrate more cooperative voice when differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership is low and more cooperative silence when differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership is high.

Our study contributes to the existing literature in the following ways. Our use of Wu et al.’s (2010) differentiation of transformational leadership components responds to Detert and Burris’ (2007) suspicion that the overall transformational leadership construct may not present a clear welcome for employee voice. By employing both cooperative voice and silence constructs in a single framework, we also heed Van Dyne et al.’s (2003) call for more precise research on voice and

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silence in the workplace. Additionally, our mediating analysis responds to Yukl’s (2002) comment that the current theory of transformational leadership lacks sufficient specification of underlying mechanisms. Finally, we extend Wu et al.’s (2010) finding: While they conducted their study mainly at the group level, we probe cross-level effects of their group-level transformational leadership on critical individual-level outcomes.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Group-focused Transformational Leadership and Cooperative Voice/Silence

Transformational leadership is defined as a leader’s behaviour that transforms followers’ values into alignment with organizational collective interests (Shamir et al., 1993). Recent research found that the transformational leadership construct is flexible as to level of analysis (Kark & Shamir, 2002; Kirkman et al., 2009; Yammarino & Bass, 1990). Wu et al. (2010) argued that while several components of transformational leadership are aimed at influencing individual followers and valuing the uniqueness of each follower, others target an entire group of followers rather than individual followers within the group.

Two transformational leadership components are group-focused: idealized influence and inspirational motivation. Idealized influence refers to behaviours that develop a shared, energizing vision; such leaders take advantage of various verbal and nonverbal cues that reveal leaders’ values, beliefs, sense of mission and purpose, and moral orientation (Antonakis & House, 2002; Bass, 1985). Inspirational motivation refers to behaviours that facilitate the vision implementation process; such leaders serve as role models for perseverance and self-sacrifice to build morale, instil pride in followers, and communicate confidence that followers can achieve goals beyond expectations (Antonakis & House, 2002; Bass, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Because both components focus on building a collective vision, leaders who utilize these behaviours tend to emphasize their influence on their follower group as a whole. Thus, in this study, we define group-focused transformational leadership as leaders’ idealized influence and inspirational motivation.

Both voice and silence are purposeful forms of face-to-face communication; the absence of voice does not necessarily imply the presence of intentional silence (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Thus, when motives of external behaviour are taken into consideration, voice and silence that involve conscious or intentional decision-making represent distinct constructs rather than two opposite poles of the same concept. In Van Dyne et al.’s (2003) analysis, employees express or withhold their work-related ideas, information, and opinions based on various motives. Acquiescent voice/silence is displayed when employees are primarily disengaged in and not
willing to exert the effort to change a given situation. *Defensive* voice/silence is demonstrated when employees intend to protect themselves from external threats. *Cooperative* voice/silence is presented when employees are motivated by concern for others rather than themselves.

In this study, we focus on cooperative voice and cooperative silence, which are more consistent with transformational leaders’ emphasis on cooperation and cohesiveness (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002; Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, & Popper, 1998) than other forms of voice/silence. Cooperative voice/silence refers to expressing/withholding work-related ideas, information, and opinions based on collective, cooperative motives. Although Van Dyne et al. (2003) considered both cooperative voice and silence intentional and discretionary organizational citizenship behaviour, the majority of the prior literature tends to hold the view that only cooperative voice is favourable for organizations (Edmondson, 2003; Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). There is considerable overlap between cooperative silence and groupthink (Janis, 1982) when members of a cohesive in-group seek unanimity. Although cooperative silence is based on unselfish concern for others, withholding ideas, opinions, and important information can still preclude a high quality decision-making process and organizational effectiveness (Park, 1990). While cooperative voice is considered a kind of citizenship behaviour, cooperative silence is likely to result in groupthink symptoms such as positive distortions and conformity pressures.

Representing a shift away from immediate personal benefits, both cooperative voice and cooperative silence are reasonable outcomes of group-focused transformational leadership. Under a group-focused transformational leader who emphasizes a shared vision, followers are more likely to define themselves in terms of their relationship with the collective (Jung & Avolio, 2000; Wu et al., 2010). As a result, the collective nature triggers them to express solutions to problems that prevent collective interests from coming true, suggest ideas to achieve the mission/vision, and submit improvement-oriented comments based on constructive concern for the group. Alternatively, high levels of shared values are positively related to conformity to collective norms (Terry & Hogg, 1996). Thus, followers under strong group-focused transformational leadership are likely to hold back work-related ideas that may be inconsistent with the shared vision, withhold information and knowledge that may hurt the prestigious image of the group, and reserve opinions and criticisms that may hamper the cohesive climate of the collective. Therefore, we hypothesize as follows:

**Hypothesis 1a:** Group-focused transformational leadership will relate positively to cooperative voice.

**Hypothesis 1b:** Group-focused transformational leadership will relate positively to cooperative silence.
The Mediating Role of Value Congruence

Group-focused transformational leadership encourages followers to pursue collective goals above and beyond their self-interest (Avolio & Bass, 1995). When followers shift motivation from self-interest to the more collective interests of a group, group attributes such as shared values and common goals become more salient to followers. As values conveyed by the leader resonate with those of the followers, they are more likely to perceive that they highly share the leader’s values (Burns, 1978). Previous studies have supported the positive association between transformational leadership and value congruence at the individual level (Jung & Avolio, 2000) and between group-focused transformational leadership and value congruence as a within-group consensus measure (Brown & Treviño, 2006, 2009). In this study, we define value congruence as a follower’s perception of value congruence between him or her and the leader. We hypothesize a cross-level effect: group-focused transformational leadership (a group-level construct) should be related to value congruence (an individual-level construct).

**Hypothesis 2:** Group-focused transformational leadership will relate positively to follower perception of value congruence with leader.

We further argue that value congruence plays a mediating role in the relationship between group-focused transformational leadership and cooperative voice and silence. When leaders communicate and articulate their strong emphasis on a shared vision, sense of mission, and moral orientation, they expect their followers to accept and internalize their personal values and beliefs (Avolio & Bass, 1988). As a result, higher value congruence leads to followers’ responses based on cooperative and collective motives. Prior research has reported that value congruence is an important factor that mediates effects of value-based leadership styles, such as transformational leadership and socialized charismatic leadership (Bono & Judge, 2003; Brown & Treviño, 2006, 2009; Jung & Avolio, 2000).

When followers greatly internalize their leader’s values, the act of accepting the leader’s influence helps followers fulfil the need for self-verification (Kelman, 1958); followers are eager to verify that their values and beliefs are similar, if not identical, to those of the leader (Kark & Shamir, 2002). A good way to attain this verification is to speak up based on cooperative motives because doing so reveals that follower and leader share similar behavioural patterns: As the leader enthusiastically articulates a collective identity that encourages the pursuit of ambitious goals, followers proactively suggest constructive ideas to benefit the collective. Another way to obtain self-verification is to withhold ideas, information, and knowledge that may become a threat to the collective. When followers dissent about collective problems, the inconsistency between the leader’s and their personal values is likely to generate inner pressure and anxiety. Holding back ideas and opinions out of
concern for the collective should greatly ease the pressure and maintain high levels of self-consistency. Therefore, we propose that value congruence between leaders and followers should mediate the relationship between group-focused transformational leadership and both cooperative voice and cooperative silence.

**Hypothesis 3a:** Value congruence will mediate the relationship between group-focused transformational leadership and cooperative voice.

**Hypothesis 3b:** Value congruence will mediate the relationship between group-focused transformational leadership and cooperative silence.

The Moderating Role of Differentiated Individual-focused Transformational Leadership

Although we argue that both cooperative voice and silence are reasonable outcomes of value congruence, one question is how these two distinct outcomes can result from the same antecedent. Is there any potential moderator interacting with value congruence such that one of the outcomes is more likely under certain conditions while the other tends to take place under different conditions? We posit that differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership may play such a moderating role in the relationship between value congruence and cooperative voice and silence.

In contrast to idealized influence and inspirational motivation, the other two components of transformational leadership – individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation – appear to focus more on individual needs, potentials, and emotional states (Kark & Shamir, 2002). Individualized consideration refers to behaviours that value the uniqueness and distinctiveness of each follower by providing socio-emotional support, necessary assistance, and empowerment (Antonakis & House, 2002; Bass, 1985; Kark & Shamir, 2002). Intellectual stimulation refers to behaviours that highlight problem awareness, encourage challenges to underlying assumptions, and appeal to innovative and creative solutions (Antonakis & House, 2002; Bass, 1985). Both transformational leadership components above require leaders to understand followers’ special needs and characteristics because personal needs and capabilities vary among followers. These two components’ effectiveness is dependent on a close, personalized relationship between leaders and followers, and leaders tend to focus on each follower as a unique individual rather than the follower group as a whole. Accordingly, we define individual-focused transformational leadership as individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation.

Differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership is a group-level construct and refers to the variation of individual-focused transformational leadership among followers under the same leader (Wu et al., 2010). A high level of
differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership suggests that a leader treats his or her followers differently. As some followers receive more support and development opportunities than others, they are more likely to enjoy a better, closer relationship with the leader than others (Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). In contrast, a low level of differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership indicates that a leader does not behave differently toward his or her followers. All followers tend to develop a similar relationship with their leader.

A high level of differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership leads to the coexistence of in- and out-group members (Wu et al., 2010). In this condition, followers tend to anticipate dissent from peers of different subgroups when speaking up. Such anticipation inflates the potential cost of cooperative voice, such as public humiliation, decreases interpersonal harmony, and leads to a loss of social standing (Detert & Burris, 2007). As a result, cooperative voice becomes a less feasible way to achieve self-verification for followers whose values are congruent with the shared values proposed by the leader. The responses of peers of different subgroups make the voice behaviour not as beneficial as expected for the collective. Alternatively, anticipating that others may hold different views on their ideas, opinions, and comments, followers tend to ‘play it safe’ by remaining silent out of a concern for the collective. In contrast to obtaining self-verification by cooperative voice, verifying the congruency between their and the leader’s values by cooperative silence is free from exposure to possible dissent from peers of different groups. Under this condition, we expect a positive relationship between value congruence and cooperative silence.

When differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership is low, followers are less likely to be divided into subgroups. In this case, the potential cost of cooperative voice did not expand to include a decrease in interpersonal harmony and loss of social standing among peers. Accordingly, achieving self-verification by speaking up to make the collective better is particularly effective. As followers expect further confirmation of value congruence from peers, there should be a positive relationship between value congruence and cooperative voice. On the other hand, withholding ideas, information, and knowledge that may be against the collective becomes a less likable choice. Self-verification by cooperative silence cannot receive a further enhancement of self-concept from peers. Thus, the positive association between value congruence and cooperative silence should be weakened.

In sum, we predict that differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership moderates the relationship between value congruence and cooperative voice as well as that between value congruence and cooperative silence. When leaders behave differently toward different followers, cooperative silence is more likely to be the outcome of value congruence than cooperative voice. When leaders treat all followers uniformly, value congruence is more likely to lead to cooperative voice than cooperative silence.
Hypothesis 4a: Differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership will moderate the positive relationship between value congruence and cooperative voice such that this relationship is weakened when differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership is high.

Hypothesis 4b: Differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership will moderate the positive relationship between value congruence and cooperative silence such that this relationship is strengthened when differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership is high.

Figure 1 summarizes the research design of this study. We propose this model to resolve the puzzle of the coexistence of cooperative voice and silence under group-focused transformational leaders.

METHOD

Sample

Respondents for this study were employees of independent units in a large Taiwanese banking organization. A human resource officer in the headquarters of the banking organization helped us identify 55 bank branch managers or department managers with similar levels of responsibility and a similar number of direct reports. To ensure sufficient acquaintance for the development of the leader-follower relationship, managers who had been in their roles for less than three months were not included. This selection excluded three managers. Among the remaining 52, 26 (50 percent) were male and 39 (75 percent) had a bachelor’s or
higher degree. The mean age was 46.49 years. The mean company tenure was 20.29 years.

The human resource officer then randomly selected four direct reports of each sampled manager (208 subordinates in total) as followers in this study. We sent paper-based surveys to the sampled subordinates; completed surveys were directly returned to us by mail. We received 193 useful subordinate surveys, representing a response rate of 93 percent (an average of 3.71 respondents rated a bank branch manager or department manager). Among sampled subordinates, 64 percent were females, and 59 percent had a bachelor’s or higher degree. The mean age was 36.11 years, and the mean company tenure was 10.96 years. The average length of leader–follower relationship was 2.95 years.

Measures

Group-focused transformational leadership. Following Wu et al. (2010), we used items of behavioural idealized influence, attributive idealized influence, and inspirational stimulation from the Chinese version of MLQ Form 5X-Short (Bass & Avolio, 1995) to measure group-focused transformational leadership ($\alpha = 0.94$). Because Chinese respondents tend to choose the mid-point on a Likert scale (Yang & Chiu, 1987), we converted the original five-point scale into a six-point scale. As a shared group property, group-focused transformational leadership was operationalized as the mean score of followers under the same leader. Thus, several tests recommended by Bliese (2000) were performed to justify the aggregation of individual perceptions of transformational leadership to the unit level of analysis. We first assessed within-group agreement using the $r_{wg}$ statistic. The range of each group’s was from 0.76 to 0.93, and the mean $r_{wg}$, 0.86, was higher than the lowest acceptable, 0.70 (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000), suggesting sufficient within-group agreement. In addition, satisfying between-group variance, ICC1 = 0.28, and reliability, ICC2 = 0.76, were also obtained. Finally, a one-way ANOVA indicated that individual perceptions of transformational leadership clustered by group were significant ($F = 2.97, p < 0.01$). Therefore, the results above provided statistical justification for our aggregation of group-focused transformational leadership to the unit level.

Value congruence. The Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang, and Farh (2004) scale ($\alpha = 0.93$) was used to measure value congruence. Original items that were not consistent with our definition of value congruence were dropped or revised. On a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1, ‘strongly disagree’, to 6, ‘strongly agree’, subordinates rated the extent to which they and their supervisor (i.e., the branch or department manager) have similar values. The items included the following statements: ‘We share similar values and beliefs’; ‘My values are becoming more similar to his/her values since starting to work with him/her’; ‘I identify with him/her in philosophy and methods for work’; and ‘His/her values and beliefs have become mine’.

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Differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership. Following Wu et al. (2010) again, we used items of individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation from the Chinese version of MLQ Form 5X-Short (Bass & Avolio, 1995) to form a dispersion measure of this construct. Respondents rated the items on the same six-point response scale described above for group-focused transformational leadership. These items were averaged to form a personal mean score (α = 0.92). We then calculated a scale-invariant measure of dispersion by dividing the within-group standard deviation of personal mean scores by the within-group mean score. The larger value of this coefficient represents more dispersion among group members’ perceptions of their leader’s individual-focused transformational leadership. As Wu et al. (2010) suggested, the discriminant validity of the two leadership scales used in this study is provided if group-focused transformational leadership obtained a higher level of within-group agreement than individual-focused transformational leadership. As mentioned earlier, the mean $r_{wg}$ for group-focused transformational leadership was 0.86. In contrast, the mean $r_{wg}$ for individual-focused transformational leadership was 0.73. This evidenced the discriminant validity of the two transformational leadership scales.

Cooperative voice and silence. Although Van Dyne et al. (2003) provided preliminary items for an initial operationalization of cooperative voice and silence, these items have never been used in prior studies. In addition, the exact behavioural pattern of voice or silence behaviour may vary across industries/companies. We thus consulted the human resource officer who assisted us to collect data to verify the validity of Van Dyne et al.’s (2003) items. Several interviews with first-line employees in the organization were also conducted to check the appropriateness of these items. Results from the interviews showed that while Van Dyne et al.’s (2003) items for voice precisely capture cooperative voice behaviour in this organization, the cooperative silence items need to be substantially revised. Thus, five new items for cooperative silence were created based on a content analysis of the interviews. Table 1 gives the texts of the items in our cooperative voice and silence scales. On a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1, ‘not at all’, to 6, ‘always’, subordinates rated how often they demonstrate cooperative voice/silence toward the branch or department manager.

Scale development study for our new cooperative voice/silence measures. To check the validity of our new cooperative voice/silence measures, we did a scale development study in which respondents were employees of the same bank who did not participate in the main study. Paper-based surveys were distributed to 176 employees, and 160 returned useable questionnaires (a response rate of 91 percent). This study sample was quite similar to the main study sample: 57 percent were females, and 63 percent had bachelor’s or higher degree. The mean age was 35.51 years, and the mean company tenure was 10.15 years. The average length of leader-follower relationship was 2.47 years.
We conducted an exploratory factor analysis with principal axis factoring and VARIMAX rotation to uncover the underlying factor structure of our cooperative voice and silence items. As shown in Table 1, the rotated factor matrix produced a two-factor solution: Factor 1 comprised the five cooperative silence items while factor 2 comprised the five cooperative voice items. All items were clearly loaded on a single factor, and each factor obtained an eigenvalue greater than 1. The two factors together explained 72.8 percent of the variance and the reliability was $\alpha = 0.88$ and 0.89, respectively. These results suggest that there was satisfactory construct distinctiveness between cooperative voice and silence.

To gather more evidence for the validity of the two measures, respondents and their supervisors were asked to rate extra items that measure several important criterion variables. Respondents evaluated the emotional exhaustion scale in the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), which depicts negative, unpleasant, and dysfunctional emotions in the workplace (e.g., ‘I feel frustrated by my job’). The employee voice literature has suggested that employees’ negative emotions are relevant to their decision to speak up (Milliken et al., 2003; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). We thus predicted that our voice measure relates negatively to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Cooperative Silence 1) Hold back work-related opinions that may harm the cohesiveness of my unit</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cooperative Silence 2) Hold back ideas different from others based on cooperation</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cooperative Silence 3) Withhold suggestions that might change the status quo to ensure smooth cooperation</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cooperative Silence 4) Withhold ideas for change when they are likely to hurt cooperation</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cooperative Silence 5) Withhold personal opinions based on cooperation</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cooperative Voice 1) Express solutions to problems with the cooperative motive of benefiting the organization</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cooperative Voice 2) Develop and make recommendations concerning issues that affect the organization</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cooperative Voice 3) Communicate my opinions about work issues even if others disagree</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cooperative Voice 4) Suggest ideas for change based on constructive concern for the organization</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cooperative Voice 5) Speak up with ideas for new projects that might benefit the organization</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eigenvalue  3.86  3.42  
% of variance explained  38.6%  34.2%
Alpha coefficient  0.89  0.88

Notes:
n = 160. Variances were extracted by principal axis factoring with VARIMAX rotation. See the Appendix for a Chinese version of the items.
the negative emotions scale whereas our silence measure relates positively to the negative emotions scale. Also, employees in higher positions or with longer tenures are more likely to speak up because of position power or high levels of familiarity with the context (Detert & Burris, 2007; Stamper & Van Dyne, 2001). Accordingly, we predicted that in contrast to employees with lower position rank or shorter tenure, those with higher position rank or longer tenure tend to demonstrate more cooperative voice and less cooperative silence. Finally, we asked the respondents’ direct supervisors to rate them using the Farh, Hackett, and Liang (2007) voice scale, which measures supervisors’ perceptions of followers’ voice behaviour. We hypothesized that cooperative silence was unrelated to supervisor-rated voice. Because voice and silence can be two distinct constructs (Van Dyne et al., 2003), we hypothesized that cooperative silence was unrelated to supervisor-rated voice.

Table 2 provides correlations among cooperative voice/silence and their criteria. Consistent with our predictions, cooperative voice related positively to supervisor-rated voice, position rank, and tenure, but related negatively to negative emotions at work. On the other hand, relationships between cooperative silence and other variables demonstrated quite a different pattern. As predicted, cooperative silence was unrelated to supervisor-rated voice. Moreover, there was a positive association between cooperative silence and negative emotions while cooperative silence related negatively to position rank. Although the relationship between cooperative silence and tenure was not significant at the 0.05 level ($r = -0.15$, $p = 0.06$), the direction of this link was consistent with our prediction. Taken together, the results of our correlation analyses provided sufficient evidence for the validity of our newly developed measures.

**Controls.** We used several controls to account for alternative explanations of voice and silence. First, we controlled for follower gender because of the unequal gender ratio of our sampled followers. Also, as stated above, position rank and tenure indicate larger position power and higher levels of familiarity with the context, both

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**Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables in the scale development study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>s.d.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cooperative voice</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cooperative silence</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.91)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Supervisor-rated voice</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>(0.92)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Negative emotions</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>0.38**</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>(0.96)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Position rank</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
<td>-0.21**</td>
<td>0.31**</td>
<td>-0.22**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tenure</td>
<td>10.13</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>-0.15†</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
<td>-0.26**</td>
<td>0.56**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

$n = 151–160$. Internal consistency reliabilities are in parentheses. Position rank: 1 = employee, 2 = senior employee, 3 = junior manager, 4 = assistant manager, 5 = manager, and 6 = senior manager.

† $p < 0.10$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. 

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of which may make employees feel more comfortable speaking up (Detert & Burris, 2007; Stamper & Van Dyne, 2001). Thus, company tenure (in years) and position rank (1, ‘employee’, 2, ‘senior employee’, 3, ‘junior manager’, 4, ‘assistant manager’, 5, ‘manager’, and 6, ‘senior manager’) were entered into our models as a control. In addition, negative emotional states relate highly to employee silence (e.g., Milliken et al., 2003). This negative state also produces artificial covariance in self-report measures (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). To control for this potential confounding variable, we assessed the same negative emotions scale (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), which we used in the pilot study as a control in the main study.

Level Issues and Analytic Strategy

In this study, although value congruence, cooperative voice, and cooperative silence were examined at the individual level, group-focused and differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership were conceptualized and measured at the unit level. Regarding the cross-level nature of our study, we employed hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) to test our hypothesized relationships. Two transformational leadership measures were analyzed at the unit level of analysis (i.e., level 2), and value congruence, cooperative voice, and cooperative silence were analyzed at the individual level (i.e., level 1). The nested structure of data also made our mediating hypotheses (Hypotheses 3a and 3b) a meso-mediation model. We followed Mathieu and Taylor’s (2007) recommendation to test our mediating hypotheses. We also used Sobel’s (1982) test and Preacher and Hayes’ (2008) bootstrapping technique to determine whether there was a significant decrease on the direct effect coefficient in the third step.

RESULTS

Construct Validity Evidence

We conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to verify the construct validity of our variables at the individual level (i.e., cooperative voice and silence, individual-focused transformational leadership, and value congruence). We followed Little, Cunningham, Shahar, and Widaman’s (2002) recommendation to create three manifest indicators for each studied variable by assigning items to composites. Thus, 12 indicators in total were entered into CFA models. Table 3 shows excellent fit indices ($\chi^2 = 67.21$, d.f. = 48, RMSEA = 0.046, CFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99) for our four-factor baseline model. These fit indices were compared with those of four alternative models: Model 1, in which cooperative voice and silence were combined into a single factor; Model 2, in which individual-focused transformational leadership and value congruence were combined into one factor;
Table 3. Comparison of measurement models for individual-level variables in the main study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\Delta\chi^2$</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>IFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Null model</td>
<td>All the indicators are independent</td>
<td>1326.79</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline model</td>
<td>Four factors</td>
<td>67.21</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Three factors; cooperative voice and silence were combined into one factor</td>
<td>355.77</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>288.56**</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Three factors; individual-focused transformational leadership and value congruence were combined into one factor</td>
<td>196.12</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>128.91**</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>Two factors; cooperative voice and silence were combined into one factor and individual-focused transformational leadership and value congruence were combined into one factor</td>
<td>475.24</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>408.03**</td>
<td>0.206</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4</td>
<td>One factor; all factors were combined into one factor</td>
<td>707.18</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>639.97**</td>
<td>0.254</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
We created three manifest indicators for each studied variable by assigning items to composites. There were 12 indicators in each CFA model.

** p < 0.01.
Model 3, in which two outcomes were combined into one factor and the other two were combined into another factor; and Model 4, in which all five factors were combined into one overall factor. As shown in Table 3, all alternative models obtained poorer fit than the proposed baseline model. The results above provide clear evidence of construct distinctiveness.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for all variables appear in Table 4. Correlations were computed by assigning the unit scores of two transformational leadership measures back to individuals. Group-focused transformational leadership related positively to both cooperative voice and silence. The mediator, value congruence, also related positively to the two outcomes. In addition, differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership related negatively to cooperative voice, suggesting that followers are less likely to speak up with new ideas and suggest solutions to problems based on cooperative motives when the leader differentially demonstrates individual-focused transformational leadership. Supporting the above mentioned CFA tests, all measures appeared conceptually and empirically distinguishable.

**Hypotheses Testing**

Table 5 presents results for HLM analyses following the three steps suggested by Mathieu and Taylor (2007). In Models 2 and 5, after gender, tenure, position rank, and negative emotions were entered into HLM models, group-focused transformational leadership significantly and positively predicted individual-level cooperative voice and silence. These results provided support for Hypotheses 1a and 1b, which depicted positive links between group-focused transformational leadership and cooperative voice/silence. As shown in Model 1, after controls were entered to predict the mediator, group-focused transformational leadership had significant, positive relationships with value congruence. Supporting Hypothesis 2, this result suggests that group-focused transformational leadership relates positively to value congruence between leaders and followers.

To support our mediation hypotheses (Hypotheses 3a and 3b), the relationships between group-focused transformational leadership and cooperative voice, and between group-focused transformational leadership and cooperative silence must disappear when the mediators are included (see Table 5, Model 3 and Model 6). Model 3 showed that when value congruence was entered, the coefficient for group-focused transformational leadership became insignificant. In contrast, the coefficient for value congruence was significantly positive. A Sobel (1982) test showed that the direct effect of group-focused transformational leadership on cooperative voice decreased significantly ($t = 3.06, p < 0.01$). Consistently, the bias
Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables in the main study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>s.d.</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperative Voice</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>(0.88)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperative Silence</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group-focused Transformational Leadership</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>(0.94)</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value Congruence</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>0.41**</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.58**</td>
<td>(0.93)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differentiated Individual-focused Transformational Leadership</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>-0.18*</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.39**</td>
<td>-0.27**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender (0 = female, 1 = male)</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenure (in years)</td>
<td>10.96</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
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<td>8.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position Rank</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>0.23**</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.31**</td>
<td>0.65**</td>
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<td>9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>-0.24**</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>(0.93)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
Internal consistency reliabilities are in the diagonal. No statistic methods are currently available to test the reliability of dispersion measures.
The unit score of transformational leadership was assigned back to individuals to compute individual-level correlations and thus might be affected by the non-independent nature of the data.
Position rank: 1 = employee, 2 = senior employee, 3 = junior manager, 4 = assistant manager, 5 = manager, and 6 = senior manager.
* p < 0.05. ** p < 0.01.
Table 5. Results for hierarchical linear modelling analyses for cooperative voice

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\gamma$</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>$\gamma$</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>$\gamma$</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>$\gamma$</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>$\gamma$</td>
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<td>$\gamma$</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>$\gamma$</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.94**</td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
<td>3.83**</td>
<td>(0.34)</td>
<td>3.83**</td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
<td>3.83**</td>
<td>(0.53)</td>
<td>3.42**</td>
<td>(0.37)</td>
<td>3.43**</td>
<td>(0.51)</td>
<td>3.45**</td>
<td>(0.51)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender (0 = female, 1 = male)</td>
<td>0.32*</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenure (in years)</td>
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<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position rank</td>
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<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative emotions</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>-0.21**</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>-0.19**</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
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<td>Independent variable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group-focused transformational leadership</td>
<td>1.01**</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>0.22*</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mediator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value congruence (VC)</td>
<td>0.20**</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>0.15**</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
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<td>Moderator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership (DITL)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>(0.68)</td>
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<td>0.68</td>
<td>(0.61)</td>
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<td>Interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>VC x DITL</td>
<td>-0.91*</td>
<td>(0.42)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.24*</td>
<td>(0.49)</td>
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<tr>
<td>$\sigma^2$</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>$\tau_{00}$</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
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Notes:
Position rank: 1 = employee, 2 = senior employee, 3 = junior manager, 4 = assistant manager, 5 = manager, and 6 = senior manager.

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.
corrected and accelerated a 95 percent confidence interval for the indirect effect through the mediation of value congruence (calculated from 5,000 bootstrapping samples; see Preacher & Hayes, 2008) did not include 0—it ranged from between 0.05 and 0.36. These results fully supported Hypothesis 3a, suggesting that value congruence mediates the relationship between group-focused transformational leadership and cooperative voice.

Model 6 indicated that when control variables, group-focused transformational leadership, and value congruence were all used to predict cooperative silence, the coefficient for group-focused transformational leadership again became insignificant. In contrast, the coefficient for value congruence was positive and significant. Again, a Sobel (1982) test showed that the direct effect of group-focused transformational leadership on cooperative silence significantly decreased ($t = 2.93$, $p < 0.01$). Consistently, the bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval for the indirect effect through the mediation of value congruence (calculated from 5,000 bootstrapping samples, $z = .05$; see Preacher & Hayes, 2008) did not include 0—it ranged between 0.05 and 0.36. Hypothesis 3b was completely supported, suggesting that value congruence mediates the relationship between group-focused transformational leadership and cooperative silence.

Finally, Models 4 and 7 were used to examine our moderating hypotheses (Hypotheses 4a and 4b). In Model 4, the main effect of the moderator (differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership) and its interaction with value congruence were entered after controlling for control variables, group-focused transformational leadership, and value congruence. Consistent with our prediction, the interaction term was significantly negative. Figure 2 is a graphic representation of this interaction. In Figure 2, the relationship between value congruence and cooperative voice was plotted at different levels of differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership (i.e., one standard deviation above/below the mean, see Aiken & West, 1991). As shown, when differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership was low, there was a strong, positive relationship between value congruence and cooperative voice (simple slope estimate = 0.33, $p < 0.01$). When differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership was high, this relationship weakened (simple slope estimate = 0.16, $p < 0.05$). Thus, our results supported Hypothesis 4a, which depicts that high levels of differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership weaken the positive relationship between value congruence and cooperative voice.

In Model 7, we tested the interacting effect of value congruence and differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership on cooperative silence. As predicted, there was a significant interaction term. Figure 3 plots this interaction. As shown, when differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership was low, value congruence and cooperative silence were not significantly related (simple slope estimate = 0.03, n.s.). When differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership was high, the relationship between value congruence and
cooperative silence became stronger (simple slope estimate = 0.26, p < 0.01). Thus, our results supported Hypothesis 4b, which proposes that high levels of differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership strengthen the positive link between value congruence and cooperative silence.

**DISCUSSION**

This study attempts to resolve the puzzle of the coexistence of cooperative voice and silence in the presence of transformational leadership. Consistent with the hypotheses, results show that group-focused transformational leadership related positively to both cooperative voice and silence through the full mediation of value congruence. Also supporting our hypotheses, differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership moderated the relationship between value congruence and cooperative voice and silence. When differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership was low, the association between value congruence and cooperative voice was strong, but the association between value congruence and
The theoretical contributions and implications for future research

Our results suggest that contrary to the common unidimensional view in the literature (e.g., Milliken et al., 2003), cooperative voice and cooperative silence do not appear to be polar opposites. Rather, our findings indicate that cooperative voice and cooperative silence are independent and relate differently to many criteria. Moreover, as both cooperative voice and cooperative silence were found to be positively related to group-focused transformational leadership, our results suggest that in contrast to the previous assumption that transformational leadership mainly encourages cooperative voice and thereby inhibits various types of silence in the workplace (Detert & Burris, 2007), group-focused transformational leadership may be associated simultaneously with both cooperative voice and cooperative silence.
silence. Our findings reveal the importance of treating cooperative voice and cooperative silence as multidimensional constructs (Van Dyne et al., 2003): When cooperative voice and cooperative silence are considered distinct constructs, group-focused transformational leadership promotes both voice and silence. Future research should consider this distinction between cooperative voice and cooperative silence when examining employee voice and silence under a variety of leadership styles, such as benevolent leadership (Wang & Cheng, 2010).

It is particularly noteworthy that group-focused transformational leadership relates positively to cooperative silence. Contemporary management research tends to highlight either acquiescent (i.e., disengaged due to resignation) or defensive (i.e., self-protective due to fear) silence (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Focusing on these two forms of silence, transformational leadership is expected to eliminate both acquiescent and defensive silence because it strongly engages followers in a passionate vision that provides meaning for work (Shamir et al., 1993) and increases followers’ psychological safety, which plays a crucial role in followers’ decisions to speak up (Ashforth, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Detert & Burris, 2007; Milliken et al., 2003). Extending the conceptualization of silence to include cooperative motives, our results suggest that followers of a transformational leader are likely to withhold work-related ideas, information, and opinions based on cooperative motives, particularly when the leader treats followers differently.

Despite the lack of empirical evidence, the positive association between cooperative silence and negative emotions found in both our scale development and main study sample (r = 0.38 and 0.29, respectively, see Tables 2 and 4) indicates that cooperative silence may not be a favourable follower outcome. As mentioned above, it can be considered a type of groupthink symptom (Park, 1990) because cooperative silence suggests that followers tend to put group cohesion ahead of group effectiveness. Also, cooperative silence may predict a decline in employee creativity given that the production of creativity requires multiple perspectives (Ford, 1996). Future studies should investigate whether cooperative silence leads to dysfunctional effects. While prior research has documented that the downside of transformational leadership results from the inconsistency between leaders’ actions and intentions (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Fu, Tsui, Liu, & Li, 2010), our study provides an alternative way to interpret this phenomenon: Group-focused transformational leadership may elicit follower silence based on cooperative motives.

In contrast to Detert and Burris’s (2007) study that failed to find mediating mechanisms between transformational leadership and supervisor-perceived employee voice, our results suggest that it is insufficient to understand the effects of leadership on employee voice by using simple, overarching employee voice measures. Future research should develop scales for voice/silence out of motives other than cooperation and test a variety of voice/silence behaviours simultaneously, probing whether different mediators explain the effects of leadership on voice/silence.
silence behaviours based on different motives. For example, in addition to value congruence between leaders and followers as the predictor of cooperative voice/silence, job involvement (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965) may better predict acquiescent voice/silence while psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) may explain the association between leadership and defensive voice/silence.

The relationship between value congruence and cooperative silence deserves more attention in future research. Although prior research mainly reported the favourable effects of value congruence between leaders and followers (Bono & Judge, 2003; Brown & Treviño, 2006, 2009; Jung & Avolio, 2000), we found that it positively relates to followers’ cooperative silence, which may impede group effectiveness. This finding suggests that smooth leader-follower relationships and favourable follower outcomes are more than a simple function of value congruence. For example, Ashkanasy and O’Connor (1997) found that shared values between leaders and followers cannot properly explain leader-member exchange quality; a more complex model (based on compatibility of leaders’ recognition of members’ independence and members’ acceptance of leaders’ authority) offers a more complete representation. Taken together, our results, as well as those of Ashkanasy and O’Connor, suggest that future research should further investigate the role of value congruence.

In addition to examining both cooperative voice and cooperative silence, incorporating Wu et al.’s (2010) differentiation between group-focused and individual-focused transformational leadership into our research framework also helps us better capture the sophisticated nature of the voice/silence phenomenon in the presence of transformational leadership. According to our results, followers of a ‘pure’ transformational leader who demonstrates high levels of all transformational leadership components uniformly toward every follower tend to perform high levels of cooperative voice. As Wu et al. (2010) concluded that ‘applying situational leadership to different individuals within a group may have unintended consequences for group effectiveness’ (101), we extend this finding by showing that displaying varying levels of individual-focused transformational leadership to different followers within a group has a cross-level interacting effect on individual-level outcomes such as cooperative voice and cooperative silence.

Mainly at the dyadic or individual level, prior research noted that high levels of change-oriented leadership should predict employee voice (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 2003). However, examining a cross-level model, we suggest that the variation of leadership within a group is also important to followers’ responses. Speaking up is risky because pointing out the need for change and improvement in a program or policy is likely to alter the status quo to which others in the same group may be responsible or personally attached (Hirschman, 1970). Unlike a behaviour such as helping others, voice can be treated as a counter-role rather than an extra-role behaviour (Staw & Boettger, 1990). Our results indicate that a high level of differentiated individual-focused transformational leadership is
likely to increase the heterogeneity of a group and thereby weaken the self-verification link between value congruence and cooperative voice. Future research is recommended to explore if a differentiated demonstration of other leadership behaviours (e.g., leader-member exchange differentiation, see Henderson, 2009) has similar effects.

Recent research has found the existence of both a cooperative and a competitive orientation among Chinese people (Chen, Xie & Chang, 2011). How does differentiated leadership influence voice or silence for employees with a dispositional tendency to be either cooperative or competitive? Future research should examine the influence of personality or other individual difference factors that may interact with differentiated leadership to influence individual or team outcomes.

Limitations
Our results are limited to data collected from a single source at a single point in time. However, we made every attempt to minimize concerns of common method variance. We aggregated transformational leadership ratings to the unit level to decrease the risk of same source bias, followed Podsakoff et al. (2003) to control for negative emotions that might affect our self-report measures, and conducted CFAs to verify the construct distinctiveness of our studied variables. Although we believe that our results are not overly susceptible to method variance, future research should employ research designs that avoid this limitation. For example, predictors and outcome variables should be collected at different points in time. Also, the cross-sectional design of this study does not compromise our examination of moderating effects, but reverse causality might be possible, such as when high levels of cooperative voice/silence lead to more value congruence among leaders and followers. A longitudinal design should be used by future research to control for reciprocal causality. Finally, the generalizability of our results across cultures should be examined further. For example, while Eastern societies tend to value interpersonal harmony, most Western societies prefer more individualistic cultural values (Chai & Rhee, 2010; Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006). To make a contribution by building context-sensitive theories (Whetten, 2009), future research should further clarify whether the relationship between value congruence and cooperative silence can also be found in non-Chinese settings.

Practical Implications
Current management literature often recommends practitioners identify, develop, measure, and reward managerial behaviour that promotes cooperative voice in order to improve organizational functioning in a competitive business environment (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 2003). However, such an effort may at the same time increase employee silence based on cooperative motives. Organizations
eager to get more employee ideas and opinions ‘on the table’ should be cautious to
count on only training leaders to exhibit more idealized influence and inspirational
motivation. As leadership behaviour is not the only factor that affects voice/silence
behaviour (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Stamper & Van Dyne, 2001), multiple
strategies should be employed to create a clear welcome for cooperative voice.

In addition, our results suggest that leaders demonstrating high group-focused
transformational leadership should be aware that treating followers as separate
individuals and applying a high level of differentiated individual-focused transfor-
mational leadership may lead to some loss of receiving necessary voice from
followers. In addition, followers may tend to remain silent even though they do
have something to say. This may be particularly important in the Chinese context
because traditional Chinese culture encourages rulers to behave differently toward
subordinates (Fei, Hamilton, & Wang, 1992). As employee comments and sugges-
tions intended to improve organizational functioning become increasingly impor-
tant in today’s competitive business environment (Morrison & Miliiken, 2000),
leaders should reconsider the role of differentiated individual-focused transforma-
tional leadership. When the practice of differentiated leadership is necessary,
organizations should find alternative ways to elicit cooperative voice and prevent
cooperative silence, such as increasing group heterogeneity (Janis, 1982).

CONCLUSION

The coexistence of employee voice and cooperative silence in the presence of
group-focused transformational leadership would be a puzzle based on common
sense and prior research on transformational leadership and employee voice. This
study provides a model that better illustrates the non-intuitive relationship between
transformational leadership constructs and cooperative voice/silence. To better
understand the phenomenon, future research should not use a single, overarching
scale to operationalize either transformational leadership or employee voice/
silence. Our study also underscores the importance of testing cross-level effects of
both the convergence and divergence in individual perceptions of leadership at the
group level on individual voice/silence behaviours. This approach has great poten-
tial to advance our knowledge of employee voice and silence as well as their
possible outcomes, such as creativity and turnover.

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APPENDIX 1

An English/Chinese Version of the Cooperative Voice and Silence Items

Cooperative Silence

1. Hold back work-related opinions that may harm the cohesiveness of my unit.
2. Hold back ideas different from others based on cooperation.
3. Withhold suggestions that might change the status quo to ensure smooth cooperation.
4. Withhold ideas for change when they are likely to hurt cooperation.
5. Withhold personal opinions based on cooperation.

Cooperative Voice

6. Express solutions to problems with the cooperative motive of benefiting the organization.
7. Develop and make recommendations concerning issues that affect the organization.
8. Communicate my opinions about work issues even if others disagree.
9. Suggest ideas for change based on constructive concern for the organization.
10. Speak up with ideas for new projects that might benefit the organization.

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