TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS IN TWO CULTURALLY DISTINCT CONTEXTS OF RUSSIA AND FINLAND

Abstract

In this paper we examine the influences of core transformational leadership and supportive leadership behaviors - the two behavioral dimensions of transformational leadership - on followers' organizational identification in two culturally distinct countries of Russia and Finland. We also test how these relationships are mediated by followers' role ambiguity. We find that whereas in Russia both core transformational and supportive leadership behaviors facilitate followers' organizational identification, in Finland only core transformational leadership behavior does so. Moreover, even though in both contexts role ambiguity appears to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and followers' organizational identification, in Russia it fully mediates only the relationship between supportive leadership behavior and followers' identification and in Finland it partially mediates only the core transformational leadership behavior – followers' identification relationship.

Keywords: leadership, cross-cultural management, MNC, organizational identification, role ambiguity, Russia, Finland

INTRODUCTION

How can leaders be effective in cross-cultural environments continues to puzzle the minds of international business researchers and practitioners alike (House et al., 2004). There is a growing consensus that leadership behaviors effective in one cultural context cannot be easily transferred to other cultures (e.g., Agarwal et al., 1999; Aycan et al., 2013), yet still many more questions remain unanswered. Transformational leadership (TL), which has emerged as one of the most popular constructs in management literature over last 25 years (e.g., Judge & Piccolo, 2004; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013), is a good case in point. Whereas it is generally presumed that TL exerts a number of positive effects on employees, the processes and mechanisms through which it exerts these effects are less known (e.g., Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Cho & Dansereau, 2010). Two developments have recently advanced the field of TL.

First, recently some voices appeared questioning whether the construct of TL needs to be considered from a slightly closer angle than it has been done up to now (Wang & Howell, 2010; Wu et al., 2010; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). These scholars inquire whether by lumping different leadership behaviors under the conceptual umbrella term of 'TL', we discard important nuances pertinent to TL and its effects on employees. Preserving these nuances and paying attention to them may reveal new discoveries and improve our

understanding concerning TL, its constitutive elements and their nature. According to van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013: 46), a part of bringing the concept of TL back to the drawing board can be a disentanglement of the concept into its constitutive dimensions and analyzing their effects separately, "unrestrained by the conceptual baggage and poor measurement associated by [their] inclusion as …element[s] of… transformational leadership".

Second, recognizing that leadership is first of all a social process and like any social process it is framed by social norms, socio-emotional traits and cognitive values pertinent to the cultural context in which it operates (Gelfand et al., 2004), researchers became interested in examining contextual / cultural factors that may impact how TL exerts its influences on followers (e.g., Jung et al., 2009; Jackson, Meyer, & Wang, 2013). Despite of extant claims that TL transcends organizational and national borders (e.g. Bass, 1997), recently researchers started to gather evidence (although mainly in Western contexts) showing that leadership effects and mechanisms are often culture-contingent (see House et al., 2004; Paris et al., 2009). For instance, House and Aditya (1997; cited in Wendt et al., 2009: 360) propose that "the appropriateness, acceptance, and effectiveness of leadership behavior is primarily a function of congruence with the norms of the culture in which the leader functions."

In this paper, we concur with the scholars (e.g., Wu et al., 2010; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013) advocating the need to examine specific behavioral components of TL in order to clarify how it exerts its influences on different outcomes and across different cultural settings. Indeed, up to now our understanding of whether TL and its constitutive behavioral components are equally potent and have similar influences in different cultural contexts remains limited (see also Kirkman et al., 2009). Hence, in this paper we aim to contribute to the literature on TL behaviors in cross-cultural settings by focusing on two specific constitutive behavioral components of TL and testing how their influence varies in different cultural contexts.

More specifically, we examine the influences of core TL and supportive leadership behaviors, the principal dimensions of TL as identified by Podsakoff et al. (1990) and the TL dimensions that have been shown to exert the most salient effects on followers (e.g., Lowe et al., 1996; Judge & Piccolo, 2004), on followers'

organizational identification and how these relationships are mediated by followers' role ambiguity in the two culturally distinct countries of Russia and Finland. The two countries are chosen for their very distinct scores on two cultural dimensions that so far have been explored most extensively in the leadership literature, namely individualism and power distance (see Hofstede, 2001). Empirically, we test our model using data obtained from white-collar employees in four Finland-based multinational corporations (the Finnish sample of 295 employees) and their subsidiaries in Russia (the Russian sample of 104 employees).

We focus on organizational identification because, although the role of TL for followers' organizational identification has been both discussed conceptually (e.g., Shamir et al., 1993; Kark & Shamir, 2002) and verified empirically (e.g., Kark et al., 2003; Epitropaki & Martin, 2005), we lack understanding concerning how this role varies across different cultural contexts. Furthermore, we examine the mediation effects of role ambiguity because, whilst it has been shown to have important organizational implications influencing employees' job satisfaction, turnover intentions and performance (e.g., O'Driscoll & Beehr 1994), it is one of the mechanisms that have not yet been studied in relation to TL effects on followers. In addition to contributing to the literature by shedding additional light on how the two leadership behaviors exert their influences on organizational identification across two culturally distinct contexts, the paper is also one of the first attempts to investigate the effects of TL behaviors more specifically in Russia (for exception see Elenkov, 2002). Overall, it provides important implications for leadership and international HRM in multinational companies operating internationally and in Russia.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The distinct effects of individual transformational leadership dimensions

Recently, van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013: 3) have lamented that the concept of TL needs to be taken "back to the drawing board" to disentangle both conceptual and methodological problems that it has amassed over the years. As one way out, the authors suggest that instead of combining different dimensions of leadership to form the higher-order construct, as has been the dominant practice in prior, research needs to examine how

leadership dimensions affect followers individually and not as part of "the dysfunctional taxonomies and operationalizations of the charismatic-transformational leadership framework" (ibid: p. 48).

In fact, this advice has already been taken up, even if to a limited extent, in the literature as a viable way to advance leadership research (e.g., Cho & Dansereau, 2010; Wang & Howell, 2010; Wu et al., 2010). Cho and Dansereau (2010) showed that in the Korean context individualized consideration and charisma have different effects on followers. Whereas the former enhanced the leader-directed organizational citizenship behaviors via interpersonal justice, the latter affected group-directed organizational citizenship behavior via procedural justice climate. Further, Wu et al. (2010) found that individual-focused leadership comprising the dimensions of individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation facilitated leader identification and self-efficacy and group-focused leadership consisting of idealized influence and inspirational motivation positively influenced group identification and collective efficacy.

Other studies also paid some attention to diverging effects of different dimensions of TL on followers. Lowe et al. (1996) meta-analyzed the studies that used the MLQ measure of TL and found charisma and individualized consideration to have the most valid and generalizable across studies validities among all four dimensions of TL. A similar observation was made by Conger and Kanungo (1998) who suggested that the charisma dimension is the most influential among TL dimensions having the overall strongest relationship with outcome variables. In the most recent and comprehensive meta-analysis of TL research, Judge and Piccolo (2004) found the validity of charisma to be the highest among all TL dimensions and generalizable across studies in terms of its effects on follower job satisfaction, leader satisfaction and motivation, leader job performance, group or organization performance, and rated leader effectiveness.

Thus, supporting the assertion by van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013), prior studies found the effects of the TL constitutive dimensions to be dissimilar from each other. Further, charisma or idealized influence and individualized consideration emerged as the most widely studied but also the most salient dimensions in their effects on followers. In line with this research and the extant research on differences in TL effects across cultures, we focus on these two dimensions to argue for their differential effects on followers' role ambiguity

and organizational identification in multinational corporations operating in two cultural distinct contexts of Russia and Finland.

Hypotheses development

Transformational leadership behaviors and followers' organizational identification

Prior research has highlighted the importance of TL for followers' organizational identification (e.g., Shamir et al., 1993; Kark et al., 2003; Epitropaki & Martin, 2005), which is defined as the process whereby a follower's beliefs and values in relation to an organization become self-referential and self-defining (Pratt, 1998). Identification implies that followers base their self-concept and self-esteem at least partly on their belonging to the organization, so that successes and failures of the organization are experienced as personal successes and failures (e.g., Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Shamir et al., 1993; Kark & Shamir, 2002). In their conceptual article, Kark and Shamir (2002) building on Shamir, Zakay, Breinin and Popper (1998) suggest that transformational leaders prime the collective level of followers' self-identity, leading to social identification with the organization.

The majority of existing studies do not differentiate between dimensions of TL when examining the relationship between TL and followers' organizational identification. Hence, the nature of TL dimensions' effects on followers' organizational identification in general remains poorly understood and empirically verified. Moreover, research showing how these effects differ across different cultural contexts is, to the best of our knowledge, non-existent. Yet, building on above, we foresee that the two TL behaviors are likely to interact differently with followers' organizational identification in Russia and Finland. In the next section we will argue for our hypotheses.

Core transformational and supportive leadership behaviors and organizational identification in Finland

Building on Shamir and colleagues' self-concept theory of leadership (e.g., Shamir et al., 1993; Shamir et al., 1998, 2000; Kark & Shamir, 2002), we expect that in Finland - a Western context with its relatively higher individualistic and lower power distance orientations compared to Russia (see Table 1) - to prime followers'

identification with the organization, leaders will need to put emphasis on core TL behaviors. First, they will be required and expected to provide a generally compelling description and image of their company detailing what are its objectives, goals, values and the overall mission and in this way emphasize the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the organization (e.g., Shamir, 1998). They will also be expected to stimulate and expedite a friendly and collaborative workplace atmosphere which will be conducive to team work and knowledge sharing amongst followers and to provide a personal example for their followers demonstrating commitment to the organization and its mission, values and objectives. By doing so, leaders are expected to be able to map general boundaries within which employees then need to perform their work tasks more or less independently from their immediate leader but in alignment with the organizational goals and values (cf. Kark & Shamir, 2002). In line with the self-concept theory by Shamir et al. (1993), (i) by supplying their followers with clear and compelling organizational values, vision and objectives, (ii) by stimulating efficient teamwork and (iii) by providing an example of organizational commitment and identification, leaders in Finland are likely to motivate their followers to perceive the organizational goals and values as being consistent with the followers' own goals and values and through that increase the followers' organizational identification.

Insert Table 1 about here

Having a lower power distance orientation is likely to enable followers in Finland to freely question their leaders and to perceive their leaders as a constitutive part of their teams. Hence, a leader's opinion concerning an operational or organizational issue would be seen as one of the opinions, although of course of somewhat higher weight, to be considered. It is precisely the knowledge that one can question his / her leader's opinion and the realization that one has certain freedom from the direct leader's supervision to act within the framework of the communicated organizational values and objectives that are likely to increase the follower's sense of empowerment and control over what and how needs to be done (e.g., Randolph & Sashkin, 2002). On the contrary with regards to supportive leadership behavior, personal attention and the interest of leaders in their followers' feelings and personal life can in workplaces with individualistic and low power distance orientations such as Finland be regarded as unnecessary and sometimes as violations of privacy and indirect attempts by leaders to control and monitor the ways their followers work (cf. Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006). Perceiving their working place as being infused with such type of subtle suspicion and control is not likely to motivate Finnish

employees to identify closer with their organizations. Therefore, we anticipate that supportive leadership behavior, unlike core TL behavior, is not likely to be very effective in facilitating followers' organizational identification in Finland. Thus, for Finland we hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis #1***: In Finland core transformational, but not supportive, leadership behaviors will have positive relationship with the follower's organizational identification.*

Supportive and core transformational leadership behaviors and organizational identification in Russia

We foresee that in Russia TL will also have a positive effect on followers' organizational identification but mainly through its supportive leadership behavior. With regards to core TL behaviors in Russia, it can be argued that in today's Russia employees tend to be skeptical towards those aspects of TL that appeal to the follower's group membership by the use of various slogans and symbols (e.g. logos, labels, flags) or rituals and ceremonies (e.g. singing company's songs) that have been proposed as effective core TL behaviors to facilitate followers' organizational identification (e.g. Shamir et al., 1998; Kark & Shamir, 2002). Russian employees are likely to be skeptical about these types of leadership behaviors due to the legacy of the Soviet times when people generally got disenchanted about these sorts of symbolic tools that were widespread and used extensively for propaganda purposes. Interestingly, studying leadership in a peculiar setting of military units, Shamir et al. (2000) provided some evidence showing that in some situations, due to specific attributes of the examined sample and context, followers simply "do not buy into" certain aspects of charismatic leadership. They found that actual soldiers in military units were not at all perceptive in terms of their social identification towards a leadership behavior from the army staff that put emphasis on shared values. Although in a very different context, it shows that sometimes followers can be alienated by a leadership behavior if it is perceived as being instrumental, hypocritical or untrustworthy (see also Greenbaum, Mawritz, & Piccolo, 2012). We think that in Russia followers may have somewhat similar reaction to those core TL behaviors that resemble the Soviet style ideological tools. Therefore, we expect that core TL behaviors will not be very effective in priming followers' identification with their organization in Russia.

In contrast, we foresee that the traditional preference of Russian people for paternalistic leaders (e.g. Kets de Vries, 2001) will facilitate organizational identification among followers in Russia based on supportive leadership behavior. Russia has a long tradition of paternalistic relations between leaders and followers in all possible walks of life (ibid.). As such, a paternalistic relationship presupposes that the leader provides guidance, protection and care to the follower in exchange of the follower's trust and loyalty (Aycan et al., 2013). Until recently Russian management has also been characterized by a high degree of paternalism meaning that in many organizations subordinates treated their superior as being more than just their work-related superior but as someone who knows a lot about them and is actively involved in their private lives also (e.g., Michailova, 2000). Paternalism is further complemented by Russian employees' high degree of power distance (Elenkov, 1997). The combination of these two factors presupposes that supportive leadership behavior from a high standing, supposedly more powerful leader will be treated by Russian employees as a sign of trust and privilege and thus is likely to be more effective in Russia than in less paternalistic and power unequal countries such as e.g. Finland in facilitating the follower's organizational identification.

Therefore, we suggest that in Russia mostly supportive leadership behavior will have a positive relationship with followers' organizational identification. The following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis #2*: In Russia supportive, but not core transformational, leadership behavior will have positive relationship with the followers' organizational identification.*

Mediating effects of role ambiguity in Finland and Russia

We argue that role ambiguity, defined as lack of clarity about tasks and goals and unpredictability about the consequences of role performance (e.g., Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991), is likely to mediate the relationship between TL behaviors and employees' organizational identification. This argument can be justified with the following points.

First, Kahn et al. (1964) has theorized that the experience of role ambiguity arises from the expectations and communications as they are dispatched from a role sender. Although in organizations role goals and

expectations can also emanate from other constituents, co-workers for example, the role of immediate leader in doing so has been suggested to be central (Griffin, 1981; O'Driscoll & Beehr 1994).

Second, prior research suggests that transformational leaders are able to reframe stressful job tasks as opportunities for growth rather than mere sources of stress (e.g. Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). They also enhance their followers' task-related self-efficacy beliefs and social support perceptions (Shamir et al., 1993), create a low stress and emotional exhaustion but high performance workplace environment (Avolio et al., 2004), and generate positive emotions and lower threat appraisals among their followers (e.g. Bono et al., 2007). Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that transformational leaders are likely to decrease their followers' role ambiguity.

Finally, role ambiguity, as an important role characteristic, was found to predict organizational identification in prior research (Wan-Huggins et al., 1998). It is claimed that when an employee cannot perform the required role at the job because information concerning the employer's expectations about this role is lacking or ambiguous, he or she is likely to experience increased tension, anxiety and stress (Rizzo et al., 1970). The high tension and stress emanating from the organizational environment will be perceived by an employee as a negative organizational experience and thus can be expected to have a detrimental effect on his / her identification with this particular organization (see also Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004).

However, whereas role ambiguity is likely to have a negative relationship with followers' organizational identification, there are likely to be differences in what leadership behaviors will be negatively related to role ambiguity in Russia and Finland. With regards to Finland, we argue that role ambiguity will mediate the relationship between core TL, but not supportive leadership, behaviors and followers' organizational identification.

On the one hand, followers in Finnish organizations are likely to be more able to deduce what is expected from them in terms of role expectations from organizational culture, goals, values and objectives, as well as from their teamwork efforts together with their colleagues. Leaders' exemplary behavior can further clarify these expectations. By engaging in the core TL behaviors, leaders in a sense initiate a structure within which then followers perform their tasks and duties. Agarwal et al. (1999) found that such structure initiating

leadership behavior was conducive to decreasing role stress and role ambiguity in a context of high individualism and low power distance such as the US, but not in India with its higher collectivistic and power distance orientations.

On the other hand, supportive leadership is not likely to decrease the followers' role ambiguity in Finland because in the context of low power distance and high individualism a direct leader is likely to be perceived as but one of the constituents of the follower's work and task environment. Moreover, as Peterson et al. (1995) suggest in low power distance and highly individualistic cultures potential problems with role ambiguity can be expected to be perceived by employees as emanating from situations or events that their direct leaders cannot understand adequately themselves. To resolve these problems, employees in such cultures will engage in self-reliant action and turn to other sources (e.g., prior experience, corporate culture, norms and values) and parties (e.g., coworkers, team members or subordinates) for consideration (Peterson et al., 1990; ibid.). Such self-reliant action will provide employees with the possibility to clarify their role expectations by consulting multiple sources of meaning. In turn, it underscores the importance of core TL behaviors for decreasing followers' perceived role ambiguity in Finland.

On the contrary, we foresee that in Russia role ambiguity will mediate the relationship between supportive, but not core TL, behavior and the followers' organizational identification. On the one hand, as we have already indicated core TL behaviors can be expected to be less effective in Russia than in Finland. TL behaviors such as communicating corporate vision, inculcating corporate values, motivating employees towards achieving corporate goals and objectives, are examples of leadership behaviors that have been developed and promoted in the West and the application and transferability of these behaviors (at least 'as it is') into Russian organizations have been questioned in the literature (e.g., Elenkov, 1998; May et al., 2005). Further, Russian organizations on average still seem to be stuck in oscillating between traditional, locally-bred and Western-originated managerial practices, values and approaches (see May et al., 2005; McCarthy et al., 2008). For instance, achieving empowerment among Russian employees based on such Western-originated practices was found to be difficult (Michailova, 2002) and American-based managerial concepts and values' application in the context of Russian organizations proved to be challenging (Elenkov, 1998). These results hint at potential non-

susceptibility of Russian employees to Western-originated managerial ideas that form the backbone of the core TL behaviors. It indicates that it may be challenging for Russian employees to deduce clear demands and expectations for their role in the organization if those are not communicated directly to them by their direct leader but are embedded in the organizational culture, values, objectives, etc. or translated to them via Western originated HRM and managerial practices aimed at boosting the employee's empowerment and self-worth.

On the other hand, to feel less uncertain and more secure within an organization, Russian employees need to feel support, consideration and trust from their direct leaders, which is the essence of supportive leadership behavior. Russian employees have traditionally shown preference for more contact-intensive and controlling type of leadership over a more distanced and delegating one (Kets de Vries, 2001). It concurs with prior studies that found employees with high power distance orientations to prefer direct and close supervision and be less likely to argue against managerial decisions with which they do not agree (e.g., Bochner & Hesketh, 1994). For instance, Peterson et al. (1995) argued that in high power distance cultures to effectively manage their work roles employees need to recourse to an unambiguous source of power. Role ambiguities are better managed in these cultures by clearly specifying authority. In their study across 21 countries, the authors found that power distance is negatively associated with role ambiguity. Another study also showed that when the leader's protection and presence are felt and the leader shows his / her consideration for the follower, in high power distance and low individualism contexts, e.g. Russia, role ambiguity decreases (e.g., Agarwal et al., 1999). Feeling protected and being loyal to the leader decreases the sense of role ambiguity in this type of contexts. Thus, in Russia supportive leadership, but not core TL, behavior is likely to be effective in decreasing followers' role ambiguity so that role ambiguity will mediate the relationship between supportive leadership behavior and followers' organizational identification.

Based on these arguments we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis #3: *In Finland, the followers' role ambiguity will mediate the relationship between core transformational but not supportive leadership behavior and followers' organizational identification.*

Hypothesis #4: *In Russia, the followers' role ambiguity will mediate the relationship between supportive but not core transformational leadership behavior and followers' organizational identification.*

The overall theoretical model tested in this study is shown in Figure 1 below.

Insert Figure 1 about here

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Participants

The data for the study was obtained from a large-scale comparative project on the influence of various leadership styles and HRM practices in Russia and Finland. Four Finland-based multinational corporations participated in the project. We surveyed white-collar employees in (a) corporate headquarters in Finland and (b) Russian subsidiaries of three of these companies. The data was gathered in 2013 using an online questionnaire. Altogether 483 employees were targeted in Finland (in four multinationals) and 185 employees in Russia (in subsidiaries of three of these multinationals). The multinationals were from construction, metal, power engineering, and food producing industries. The Russian subsidiaries represented construction, power engineering, and food producing industries. The obtained responses were as follows: 295 employees in 72 teams in Finland (response rate 61%, the average number of employees per team 4.1) and 104 employees in 28 teams in Russia (response rate 56%, the average number of employees per team 3.7). Thus, the total number of respondents included in this study is 399 employees in 100 teams. The average age of respondents was 44 in Finland (s.d. = 10.2) and 36 in Russia (s.d. = 9.5). 66% of Finnish and 47% of Russian respondents were male.

Measures

Core transformational leadership and *supportive leadership behaviors* were measured based on the TL construct originally developed by Podsakoff and colleagues (Podsakoff et al., 1990). The items to measure the two leadership behaviors were adopted from a shortened version of the Podsakoff's original measure as it was used in previous research (e.g., MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Rich, 2001; Kirkman et al., 2009). The items were chosen based on best factor loadings. Core TL behaviors was measured with three items (Cronbach's alphas:

Finland = 0.85 and Russia = 0.87; sample item: "My supervisor develops a team attitude and spirit among employees") and supportive leadership behavior with two items (Cronbach's alphas: Finland = 0.81 and Russia = 0.79; sample item: "My supervisor shows respect for my personal feelings"). For these measures as well as for all other measures in this study we used a five-point Likert scale ranging from '1' = 'Strongly disagree' to '5' = 'Strongly agree'. All items for these as well as for other measures are listed in Table 1 below.

Role ambiguity was measured using the three best loading items in Rizzo, House and Lirztman (1970). Sample item is "I know exactly what is expected of me in my job". The items were reverse coded in the analyses. Cronbach's alphas were: Russia = 0.84; Finland = 0.87.

Organizational identification was measured using the three best loading items in Reade (2001). Sample item is "My values and the values of this organization are the same". Cronbach's alphas were: Finland = 0.83; and Russia = 0.84.

Controls. Prior research has identified followers' age, gender and tenure as potentially important variables which can influence employees' attitudes and leader effectiveness (e.g. Riordan, Griffith, & Weatherly, 2003). Moreover, it can be argued that role ambiguity and organizational identification can depend on the follower's hierarchical position and his / her average working hours. Therefore, omission of these variables when examining the influence of TL behaviors on followers' organizational identification via role ambiguity could potentially bias regression results. We therefore included followers' age, gender and tenure (in current organization, in current position, and having same supervisor) as controls in all our analyses.

Model tests

To check for multicollinearity we examined VIF values. They ranged from 1.234 to 2.222 in Finland and from 1.087 to 2.066 in Russia thus suggesting no multicollinearity issues. Further, to examine the distinctiveness of our measures for the four constructs (core TL behavior, supportive leadership behavior, role ambiguity, and organizational identification) across the two samples, we conducted a CFA using Mplus 7. Since our data is nested within teams, we used hierarchical CFA with team number as a clustering variable. We tested the fit to the data of the expected four-factor model and compared it with two competing models (a one factor model

where all constructs loaded into one common factor and a three factor model where the two leadership behaviors were combined into one construct). Table 2 shows that the hypothesized four-factor model provided the best fit to the data in both samples.

Insert Table 2 about here

Cross-cultural measurement invariance

The questionnaire was originally developed in English. Later, it was translated and back-translated into Finnish and Russian in line with the established cross-cultural translation procedures (Brislin, 1980). To determine measurement invariance across the two samples we followed several steps as outlined in Liao et al. (2014). Because the power and precision of chi square statistics are sensitive to sample size (see Meade & Bauer, 2007), we adjusted the two samples to be relatively equal in size. To do that, for the analysis with Mplus 7 we randomly selected the same number of teams from the Finnish sample as we had in the Russian sample (i.e. 28 teams from each sample were included in these analyses: 112 employees in Finland and 104 in Russia).

We first tested a *configural invariance model* to verify that the same factor structure is applicable in both samples and that the used items are adequate measures of each latent variable in both samples. The model fitted the data well (see Williams, Vandenberg, & Edwards, 2009): ($\chi^2(98) = 142.204$, p = 0.002; CFI = 0.967; TLI = 0.955; RMSEA = 0.065; SRMR = 0.070). Next, we tested a *metric invariance model* where the factor loadings were constrained to be equal in both samples. The model yielded an acceptable model fit: ($\chi^2(90) = 149.824$, p = 0.000; CFI = 0.955; TLI = 0.945; RMSEA = 0.078; SRMR = 0.102). The χ^2 difference test, comparing the *metric invariance model* with the *configural invariance model*, was insignificant (p = 0.471). This provides good evidence of cross-cultural validity of our constructs (Liao et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2009).

Common method variance bias

Because our data was collected from a single-source, we used several measures to ensure that common method variance (CMV) bias is not a serious concern for our analysis. First, several measures were undertaken *ex ante*. To begin with, we assured all our respondents of the anonymity and confidentiality of the survey and

that all the collected information will be processed and then reported at a general level. Further, we piloted all three versions of the instrument, i.e. the original one in English and the two translated ones in Finnish and Russian, on at least five respondents each to check for the presence of any ambiguous or unfamiliar expressions and ensure that the items are formulated concisely and understandably (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We also randomized the order of items in each construct to make it difficult for the respondents to cognitively create the correlation needed to produce a CMV-biased pattern of responses.

Second, we used several *ex post* statistical analyses. First, the one-factor models in Table 2 are equivalent to Harman's single-factor tests. As shown in Table 2 the models yielded bad fits to the data. Moreover, we also followed the single-method-factor procedure (see Podsakoff et al., 2003) suitable for situations when the precise source of CMV bias cannot be identified. Thus, for each sample separately we examined and compared two models: (1) the measurement model (Model 1) and (2) the measurement model with an additional common method factor (Model 2). The χ^2 difference test between the two was insignificant in both samples: p=0.459 in the Finnish sample and p=0.345 in the Russian sample. These results indicate that although in both samples Model 2 had a slightly better fit than Model 1, the differences were not significant. Hence, we conclude that common method variance is not a serious problem in our analyses.

FINDINGS

Table 3 below presents the correlation matrix and Cronbach's alphas of the constructs included in the study. It shows that all Cronbach's alphas exceed the commonly used threshold of 0.7. To ensure convergent validity we also examined an item-to-item correlation table which indicated that in both samples the items correlated highest with other items from the same construct.

Insert Table 3 about here

To test our hypotheses we used linear mixed modeling (LMM) in SPSS. The choice was determined by the nature of our data which is nested in teams. Hence, we used team number as a blocking variable in our analyses. Using LMM we were able to account for the dependence of our observations due to team membership and in this way improve the precision of our estimates ensuring that our results of the fixed effects of the variables in focus

can be generalized across all teams both in the Russian and Finnish samples (see LeBreton & Senter, 2008). We examined the intra-class correlations (ICC) for the four constructs. In the Finnish sample the ICC1 values were between 0.33 and 0.42 and the ICC2 values between 0.67 and 0.75. In the Russian sample the ICC1 values were between 0.37 and 0.47 and the ICC2 values between 0.68 and 0.77. These values indicate a significant effect of group membership in the case of teams and a high reliability of the within-team ratings (ibid.).

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using hierarchical LMM. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 4 below. The control variables were entered in Step 1. Then, in Step 2, the two leadership behaviors, that is core transformational and supportive leadership behaviors, were added into the analysis. Overall, the results support Hypothesis 1, which stated that in Finland only core transformational, but not supportive, leadership behavior will have positive relationship with followers' organizational identification (core TL: $t = 3.70$, $p<0.001$; supportive: $t = 0.44$, n.s.). The two leadership behaviors explained 5% of the variance in followers' organizational identification. Hypothesis 2, which posited that in Russia only supportive, but not core transformational, leadership behavior will be positively related to followers' organizational identification, was only partially supported because both leadership behaviors turned out to be significantly related to the dependent variable (core TL: $t = 3.52$, $p<0.01$; supportive: $t = 2.55$, $p<0.05$). The two explained 13% of the variance in followers' organizational identification.

Insert Table 4 about here

To test Hypotheses 3 and 4 we followed the procedure recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986), which posits that three regressions are needed to test for a mediating effect. First, the dependent variable should be regressed on the independent variable. Second, the potential mediator should be regressed on the independent variable. And third, the dependent variable should be regressed on both the independent variables and the potential mediator. The mediation effect exists if the first two regressions are significant and in the third regression the path between the mediator and the dependent variable is significant and the path between the independent and dependent variables is not significant (the case of full mediation) or is weaker than in the first regression (the case of partial mediation).

Table 4 shows that in Finland only core TL, but not supportive leadership, behavior is significantly related to followers' organizational identification (TL: $t = 3.70$, $p<0.001$; supportive: $t = 0.44$; n.s.). It also shows that it is significantly related to role ambiguity ($t = -4.15$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, although supportive leadership behavior in Finland is also significantly related to role ambiguity ($t = -2.12$, $p < 0.05$), it does not fulfill the first condition as stipulated by Baron and Kenny (1986). Therefore, we tested the Finnish sample only for a mediation effect of role ambiguity on the relationship between core TL behaviors and followers' organizational identification. Substituting unstandardized beta coefficients into the Sobel test calculator available at http://quantpsy.org/sobel/sobel.htm, we found the mediation effect of role ambiguity to be significant ($z = 3.37$, $p < 0.001$). Because the relationship between core TL behavior and followers' organizational identification remained significant after role ambiguity has been introduced as a mediator ($t = 2.43$, $p < 0.05$), we conclude that role ambiguity partially mediates the relationship.

In Russia although both leadership behaviors were significantly related to followers' organizational identification (see Table 4; TL: $t = 3.52$, $p < 0.01$; supportive: $t = 2.55$, $p < 0.05$), only supportive leadership behavior was significantly related to role ambiguity (see Table 4; $t = -2.39$, $p < 0.05$). Hence, in the Russian sample we tested for a possible mediation only the effect of role ambiguity on the relationship between supportive leadership behavior and followers' organizational identification. Again, using the same online calculator we found the mediation effect of role ambiguity to be significant ($z = 2.10$, $p < 0.05$). Because following the inclusion of role ambiguity the relationship between supportive leadership behavior and followers' organizational identification changes into an insignificant one (see Table 4; $t = 1.70$, n.s), we conclude that this is the case of full mediation. Therefore, both Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4 were supported by our results.

DISCUSSION

Our analysis testifies to the claim that different leadership behaviors act differently in different cultural contexts (e.g., House et al., 2004; Paris et al., 2009). Our findings show that whereas in Russia both core transformational and supportive leadership behaviors facilitate followers' organizational identification, in Finland only core TL behavior does so. Thus, our analysis provides a more nuanced understanding of TL

behaviors, such as core TL and supportive leadership, in two distinct cultural contexts, that of Russia and Finland, allowing us to zoom into this phenomenon and add to our understanding concerning how leadership operates. Arguably, that's something that is difficult or almost impossible to do when employing a total construct of TL, like most of the prior research has done (cf. van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Wang & Howell, 2010; Wu et al., 2010). As such, aggregating all leadership behaviors into a total construct of TL leaves few possibilities to pinpoint what leadership behaviors are more effective in what cultural contexts and in what ways.

Moreover, our analysis sheds light on how organizational identification is achieved through TL behaviors in different cultures. We find that, although in both contexts role ambiguity appears to mediate the relationship between TL and followers' organizational identification, the mechanisms through which this mediation occurs differ across the two contexts. In Russia role ambiguity fully mediates only the relationship between supportive leadership behavior and followers' organizational identification and in Finland it partially mediates only the core TL behavior – followers' identification relationship. Our analysis thus indicates that in cultures, such as Russia, identification of followers with the organization seems to be centered on the figure of their direct leader. It suggests that in some cultures, such as e.g. Russia, the widely propagated in the West means of facilitating employees' organizational identification, such as communicating an exciting vision of the future, inculcating corporate values in employees' psyche, and offering inspiring goals and objectives, may not be the most effective ones. But other, more person-oriented behaviors, such as supportive leadership, if they come from a respected and hierarchy-based powerful figure of a leader, can be efficient and effective. In this case the employees' organizational identification seems to be primed precisely through the leader's personality and personal attributes.

Furthermore, our findings seem to provide some counterintuitive evidence (at least in relation to prior research) to the claim that to be effective leaders need to match values and identities they stress and promote with the cultural-cognitive structures held by their followers (e.g. Shamir et al., 1993; Lord et al., 1999). Based on this claim prior research has consistently purported the idea that followers with more collectivistic orientations are more likely than their counterparts with more individualistic orientations to respond to group-oriented leadership behaviors that are assumed to prime social (organizational) identification (e.g., Bass, 1997;

Pillai & Meindl, 1998; Jung et al., 2009). Our evidence indicates that followers from a cultural group with more collectivistic orientation, i.e. Russia, can develop their organizational identification based on person-oriented leadership behavior, i.e. supportive leadership behavior, too. Whereas the other group of followers, that of Finnish employees, who according to Hofstede (2001) are less collectivistic-oriented than their Russian colleagues, proved to be more susceptible to group-oriented leadership behaviors, i.e. core TL behaviors. All in all, it seems plausible that there are other factors that future research needs to consider when evaluating the susceptibility of different cultural groups of followers to TL behaviors, such as for example paternalism and egalitarianism.

Moreover, when addressing the question why do employees identify with their organizations, it seems that there are different motives as well as means for doing so in different cultures. Whereas generally employees tend to identify because they strive to satisfy a number of individual needs, such as safety, affiliation and uncertainty reduction, and to create a sense of order and meaning in the world around them (see Pratt, 1998), these actively sought after elements seem to have different referents in different cultures. In more egalitarian cultures, these elements tend to be associated more with group-level organizational structures, meanings, values, missions, etc. In more paternalistic and less egalitarian cultures, safety, uncertainty reduction, sense of meaning and order, etc. for employees are embedded more in good relationships with their direct leaders, which are then translated into organizational identification. In short, our analysis shows that the widely circulating adage that "people quit or stay loyal to bosses, not organizations" appears to be more applicable for Russia than for Finland.

Furthermore, our analysis also provides some evidence for such an important, but previously unexamined in relation to TL, construct as role ambiguity and how it is associated with TL and organizational identification. It is an important construct as it was found to determine important organizational and individual outcomes, such as job satisfaction, burnout and stress levels, turnover, efficiency, performance. We showed that in different cultures different leadership approaches to reduce role ambiguity work for employees and therefore need to be chosen carefully to be effective. Our analysis shows that in Finland employees tend to rely on organizational structures, processes, systems, goals and objectives to decipher their role expectations. Whereas in Russia employees' perceived role ambiguity tends to decrease when these employees feel secure, supported

and cared for by their direct leaders. Considering the importance of role ambiguity for vital organizational outcomes, these findings have valuable practical relevance for leadership and HRM in MNCs operating across different cultural contexts.

Finally, our analysis offers still rare evidence on how TL works in Russia. To the best of our knowledge, the effects of TL on followers in Russia remained almost unexplored up to now. The only exception was provided by Elenkov (2002) who has shown that all dimensions of TL are effective when applied to senior managers in Russian organizations. In contrast, we focus on ordinary specialists and office employees, arguably a more diverse and representative group of Russian employees as compared to senior managers, and find somewhat different results. Our analysis indicates that Russian employees still seem to be caught in the legacy of strong, authoritative and to some extent paternalistic leadership. Leaders in Russia still seem to possess strong symbolic capital and can act as gatekeepers and key mediums for employees' organizational identification. However, contrary to our expectations, our analysis seems to suggest that the effectiveness of traditionally-Western leadership behaviors, as they are captured by core TL dimension, is also high in Russia. It appears that the skepticism towards leadership based on strong values, symbols and rituals seems to be not as common among Russian employees as we have suggested.

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Table 1: Comparison of Russia and Finland on Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001)

Dimension	Russia	Finland
Power distance	88	24
Individualism	39	67
Masculinity	34	23
Uncertainty avoidance	84	49

Figure 1: Theoretical model

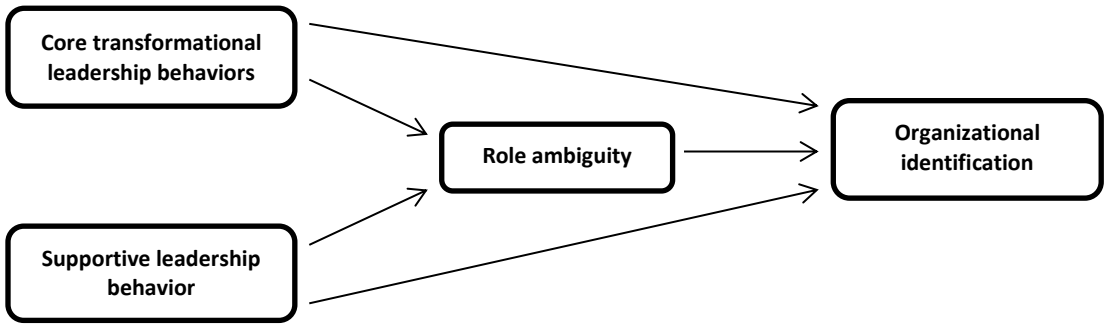

Table 2: CFA results (with team number as a clustering variable)

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	P	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
FINLAND								
One factor model	795.658	44	18.083	0.000	0.443	0.304	0.241	0.158
Three factor model	127.868	41	3.119	0.000	0.936	0.914	0.085	0.050
Four factor model	59.154	38	1.557	0.016	0.984	0.977	0.043	0.039
RUSSIA								
One factor model	247.371	44	5.622	0.000	0.615	0.518	0.211	0.111
Three factor model	60.798	41	1.483	0.024	0.962	0.950	0.068	0.048
Four factor model	48.076	38	1.265	0.127	0.981	0.972	0.042	0.050

Table 3: Correlation table

Country		Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
FINLAND	1	Gender	1.3	0.5	1										
	2	Age	43.9	10.2	-,09	1									
	3	Average working hours	41.9	6.0	-,23**	,12*	1								
	4	Job role/function	1.6	0.5	,34**	-,15**	-,47**	1							
	5	Tenure in company	12.8	11.0	-,07	,68**	,09	,02	1						
	6	Tenure in current position	5.7	7.0	-,02	,48**	-,02	,06	,53**	1					
	7	Tenure having same leader	2.8	3.0	,01	,15**	-,08	,07	,25**	,41**	1				
	8	Core transformational leadership behavior	3.40	0.95	-,13*	-,06	,06	-,15*	,01	-,04	-,05	**(.85)**			
	9	Supportive leadership behavior	3.46	0.87	,00	-,17**	-,03	,05	,00	-,03	,06	,61**	**(.81)**		
	10	Role ambiguity	4.08	0.79	,03	-,23**	-,14*	,20**	-,16**	-,18**	-,05	-,36**	-,26**	**(.87)**	
	11	Organizational identification	3.76	0.77	,04	,04	,14*	-,17**	,01	,03	-,05	,29**	,17**	-,41**	**(.83)**
RUSSIA	1	Gender	1.6	0.5	1										
	2	Age	35.7	9.5	-,15	1									
	3	Average working hours	41.5	8.7	-,15	-,08	1								
	4	Job role/function	1.8	0.4	,40**	-,24*	,03	1							
	5	Tenure in company	4.0	3.9	-,19	,53**	,05	-,22*	1						
	6	Tenure in current position	3.3	4.1	,05	,31**	-,04	,03	,20*	1					
	7	Tenure having same leader	2.1	2.1	-,10	,35**	,12	-,12	,45**	,11	1				
	8	Core transformational leadership behavior	3.79	1.04	,00	-,14	-,07	,14	-,22*	,05	-,08	**(.87)**			
	9	Supportive leadership behavior	3.77	0.99	,07	-,07	-,15	,04	-,16	,02	-,13	,68**	**(.79)**		
	10	Role ambiguity	4.42	0.74	,13	-,08	,06	-,03	-,11	-,15	-,03	-,38**	-,40**	**(.84)**	
	11	Organizational identification	4.37	0.61	-,06	,06	-,09	-,03	-,00	-,03	,03	,54**	,52**	-,54**	**(.84)**

Note: Russia N=104, Finland N=295; Gender: male = 1, female = 2; Job role / function: supervisor = 1, non-supervisor = 2

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4: Results of LMM analyses (fixed effects; team number is used as a blocking variable)

	Country									
	Finland					Russia				
	Dependent variables					Dependent variables				
	Role ambiguity		Organizational identification			Role ambiguity		Organizational identification		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Control variables										
Gender	-1,04	-1,62	1,93	2,42*	2,00*	1,65	1,63	-0,71	-0,43	0,23
Age	-1,87	-3,19**	-0,17	0,50	-0,54	0,20	0,06	0,66	1,11	1,24
Average working hours per week	-0,97	-1,24	1,35	1,54	1,21	0,87	0,36	-0,93	-0,31	-0,18
Job role / function	2,61**	2,09*	-2,51*	-1,96*	-1,36	-1,03	-0,87	0,14	-0,37	-0,78
Tenure in company	0,04	0,94	-0,13	-0,68	-0,39	-0,86	-1,69	-0,50	0,58	-0,10
Tenure in current position	-1,82	-2,06*	1,16	1,26	0,63	-1,41	-1,19	-0,43	-1,17	-1,77
Tenure having same supervisor	0,15	0,10	-0,92	-0,79	-0,80	0,18	0,15	0,35	0,40	0,50
Independent variables										
Core transformational leadership behaviors		-4,15***		3,70***	2,43*		-1,73		3,52**	3,04**
Supportive leadership behavior		-2,12*		0,44	-0,24		-2,39*		2,55*	1,70
Mediating variable										
Role ambiguity					-5,78***					-4,39***
ΔR2		**0,08**		**0,05**	**0,05**		**0,10**		**0,13**	**0,03**
AIC	684,71	639,65	683,39	662,49	632,82	243,57	224,06	207,48	165,89	150,21
ΔAIC		**45,06**		**20,90**	**29,68**		**19,51**		**41,59**	**15,68**

Note: t values are reported; Russia N=104, Finland N=295.
***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05