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Foundation of leadership in Asia: Leader characteristics and leadership styles review and research agenda

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Abstract Leader characteristics influence leadership styles, which cascade down through the management to the entire firm, affecting organizational and strategic outcomes. Asia's unique socio-cultural contexts and philosophies breed indigenous leadership styles in the region, yet context-specific research on leader characteristics and leadership styles in Asia has been sparse. Our review answers the call to identify the distinct Asian context that has distinguished the leadership research in Asia from that of other regions. We identify power distance orientation and collectivist culture as the two of the most prominent contextual factors to consider in examining the role of leadership in Asia. Through this review, we aim to further our understanding of the current state of extant literature on leader characteristics and leadership styles and to suggest new avenues for scholars in Asia to advance existing theories of leadership research in the arena of organizational behavior and strategy.

Keywords Leadership · Transformational leadership · Ethical leadership · CEO hubris · CEO humility · Asia

Leadership is one of the most critical factors in shaping firm performance and strategic outcomes (Hambrick & Quigley, 2014). Leaders' values and characteristics, in particular, can be a critical element in predicting leadership behaviors (Fu, Tsui, Liu, & Li, 2010; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Lam, Huang, & Lau, 2012). CEO personalities and behaviors create a cascading effect, influencing top management teams, middle managers, and employees of the entire firm (Ou, Tsui, Kinicki, Waldman, Xiao & Song,

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2014). In the introduction to the *Leadership in Asia* Special Issue of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, Lam et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of leadership research in the context of Asia. The article noted that, while many established leadership constructs apply to Asia, indigenous leadership styles specific to this region may exist. What, then, are the unique contextual factors that make certain leader characteristics and leadership styles more salient in Asia?

Asia embodies a unique culture that emphasizes a hierarchy based on paternalism (Ahlstrom, Chen, & Yeh, 2010; Lam et al., 2012; Liden, 2012). Leaders are expected to play an authoritarian role, and followers are supposed to respect their decisions. The greater power distance between leaders and followers (Liden, 2012) often endows leaders with more control, yet the expectations for leaders may also be distinct in Asia. The same paternalistic culture often instills a "parent-like" nature in the leadership approach, and it is not uncommon to witness benevolent paternalistic behaviors in Asian leaders who view their employees as "family" members (Farh, Earley, & Lin, 1997; Liden, 2012). In addition, Confucian values still permeate through Asian culture (Ou et al., 2014); collectivism is emphasized and leaders are expected to be humble and self-deprecating (Fu et al., 2010). The combination of these traditional contexts with Western influence may create significant variance in the leadership styles of Asian CEOs.

It is important to note that literature on leadership is divided into two main streams, organizational behavior and strategy. Scholars of organizational behavior examine the effects of different leadership styles on organizational outcomes at multiple levels. Employing upper echelon theory, strategy scholars have observed that CEO characteristics—psychological cognitive base and values—influence strategic outcomes of firms significantly (Hambrick, 2007; Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Extant literature on both leadership research streams has primarily considered leader characteristics and leadership styles as universal constructs (Li & Tang, 2010; Ou et al., 2014). However, given the different cultures, traditional philosophies, and governance structures in Asia, certain leadership styles and characteristics may be more salient in the region. Hence, it is timely to examine how leader characteristics and leadership styles affect multiple levels of outcomes in Asia and to discuss the unique context of Asian leadership.

We have organized our paper into four main parts. First, we describe the systemic approach to our review, outlining the steps we took to arrive at our scope. Second, we describe key outcomes of leadership characteristics and styles at multiple levels—individual, team, and firm—reviewing the literature across multiple disciplines, including organizational behavior, strategy, and psychology, in the Asian context. Third, we highlight unique considerations for Asia, discussing how specific contextual issues contribute to the unique nature of leadership in Asia and reviewing some of the key empirical papers that have made significant contributions in this field. Fourth, we propose a future research agenda, discuss our limitations, and offer conclusions from our review.

The review method

We took the following steps to define the scope of our review. To identify the journals to review, our first step was to identify major representative journals in management by following prior reviews of organizational-behavior-related (Tsui, Nifadkar, & Ou,

Table 1 List of studies on leader characteristics, leadership styles, and outcome

Paper	Outcome level	Outcome type	Field	Journal	Leader characteristics	Leadership style
Spreitzer, Perttula, and Xin (2005)	Individual	Leader outcome	Organizational behavior	Journal of Organizational Behavior	N/A	Transformational leadership
Chng, Rodgers, Shih, and Song (2012)	Individual	Leader outcome	Organizational behavior	Strategic Management Journal	Core self-evaluation	N/A
Hu, Wang, Liden, and Sun (2012)	Individual	Leader outcome	Organizational behavior	Leadership Quarterly	Core self-evaluation	Transformational leadership
Ahn, Lee, and Yun (2016)	Individual	Leader outcome	Organizational behavior	Journal of Business Ethics	Core self-evaluation	Ethical leadership
Kirkman, Chen, Farh, Chen, and Lowe (2009)	Individual	Follower perceptions	Organizational behavior	Academy of Management Journal	N/A	Transformational leadership
Loi, Lai, and Lam (2012)	Individual	Follower perceptions	Organizational behavior	Asia Pacific Journal of Management	N/A	Ethical leadership
Fu et al. (2010)	Individual	Follower attitudes	Organizational behavior	Administrative Science Quarterly	N/A	Transformational leadership
Zhang and Bartol (2010)	Individual	Follower attitudes	Organizational behavior	Academy of Management Journal	N/A	Empowering leadership
Kim, Liden, Kim, and Lee (2015)	Individual	Follower attitudes	Organizational behavior	Journal of Business and Psychology	Core Self-Evaluation	Transformational leadership
Cheong, Spain, Yammarino, and Yun (2016)	Individual	Follower attitudes	Organizational behavior	Leadership Quarterly	N/A	Empowering leadership
Shin and Zhou (2003)	Individual	Follower behavior	Organizational behavior	Academy of Management Journal	N/A	Transformational leadership
Chan and Mak (2012)	Individual	Follower behavior	Organizational behavior	Asia Pacific Journal of Management	N/A	Benevolent leadership
Gu, Tang, and Jiang (2015)	Individual	Follower behavior	Organizational behavior	Journal of Business Ethics	N/A	Moral leadership
Li, He, Yam, and Long (2015)	Individual	Follower behavior	Organizational behavior		N/A	Empowering leadership
Chen and Hou (2016)	Individual	Follower behavior	Organizational behavior	Leadership Quarterly	N/A	Ethical leadership
Lam, Loi, and Chan (2016)	Individual	Follower behavior	Organizational behavior	Business Ethics Quarterly	N/A	Ethical leadership
Zhang, Huai, and Xie (2015)	Individual	Follower behavior	Organizational behavior	Leadership Quarterly	N/A	Paternalistic leadership
Bavik, Tang, Shao, and Lam (2017)	Individual	Follower behavior	Organizational behavior	Leadership Quarterly	N/A	Ethical leadership
Ou et al. (2014)	Team	Team attitude	Organizational behavior	Administrative Science Quarterly	Humility	Empowering leadership
Ou, Seo, Choi, and Hom (2017)	Team	Team attitude	Organizational behavior	Academy of Management Journal	Humility	N/A
Schaubroeck, Lam, and Cha (2007)	Team	Team performance	Organizational behavior	Journal of Applied Psychology	N/A	Transformational leadership

Table 1 (continued)

Paper	Outcome level	Outcome type	Field	Journal	Leader characteristics	Leadership style
Sun, Xu, and Shang (2014)	Team	Team performance	Organizational behavior	Asia Pacific Journal of Management	N/A	Transformational leadership
Chun, Cho, and Sosik (2016)	Team	Team performance	Organizational behavior	Journal of Organizational Behavior	N/A	Transformational leadership
Li and Tang (2010)	Firm	Firm behavior	Strategy	Academy of Management Journal	Hubris	N/A
Tang, Li, and Yang (2015a)	Firm	Firm behavior	Strategy	Journal of Management	Hubris	N/A
Nadkarni and Herrmann (2010)	Firm	Firm performance	Strategy	Academy of Management Journal	Five-factor personality	N/A
Park, Kim, Chang, Lee, and Sung (2015)	Firm	Firm performance	Strategy	Journal of Business Ethics	Hubris	N/A

Paper	Country	Sample	Dependent variable	Core findings
Spreitzer, Perttula, and Xin (2005)	US & Taiwan	115 leaders in a leading global IT company based in Taiwan and 150 leaders in a leading global automobile company in US	Leadership effectiveness	Transformational leadership is positively related to leadership effectiveness, and traditional values moderate the relationship between four dimensions of transformational leadership (appropriate role model, intellectual stimulation, high performance expectations, and articulating a vision) on leadership effectiveness.
Chng, Rodgers, Shih, and Song (2012)	China	216 MBA students in China	Leader behavior	CEOs with higher CSE respond to incentive compensation with greater perseverance, higher competitive strategy focus and risk-taking, and more ethical behavior during a period of organizational decline.
Hu, Wang, Liden, and Sun (2012)	China	150 leaders and 464 employees in 3 firms in China	Transformational leadership	Leader CSE serves as an antecedent of transformational leadership: leader CSE has a significant positive relationship with follower perception of leaders' transformational leadership.
Ahn, Lee, and Yun (2016)	Korea	225 leader-employee dyadic relationships in Korea	Ethical leadership; Employee job performance	Leader CSE is positively related to ethical leadership, which mediates the relationship between leader CSE and employees' job performance.
Kirkman, Chen, Farh, Chen, and Lowe (2009)	China and US	560 followers and 174 leaders in China and US	Follower procedural justice; OCB	Individual follower's power distance orientation and shared perceptions of transformational leadership are positively related to follower's procedural justice perceptions.

Table 1 (continued)

Paper	Country	Sample	Dependent variable	Core findings
Loi, Lai, and Lam (2012)	China	381 workers in Macau and Southern China	Employee job insecurity	Ethical leadership moderates the negative relationship between procedural justice and employee job insecurity. The moderating role of ethical leadership is amplified for employees with a low power distance orientation.
Fu et al. (2010)	China	45 managers in two companies in China	Follower commitment	Transformational leadership motivates followers to do more than expected and act for the good of the collective, influence followers' commitment.
Zhang and Bartol (2010)	China	Survey data from professional employees and their supervisors in a large IT company in China	Follower motivation; Creativity process engagement; Employee creativity	Empowering leadership positively affects psychological empowerment, which in turn influences both intrinsic motivation and creative process engagement.
Kim, Liden, Kim, and Lee (2015)	Korea	546 matched supervisor- subordinate dyads representing six South Korean organizations	Employee job satisfaction; Affective organizational commitment	The relationship between CSE and job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment is positively moderated by transformational leadership.
Cheong, Spain, Yammarino, and Yun (2016)	Korea	226 leader-follower dyads of 11 firms and 6 research centers in Korea	Follower self-efficacy; Follower job-induced tension; Follower performance	Followers' self-efficacy mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and followers' work role performance. Followers' job-induced tension mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and followers' work role performance.
Shin and Zhou (2003)	Korea	290 employees and supervisors from 46 Korean companies	Follower creativity	Transformational leadership is positively related to follower creativity, and followers' conservation moderates the relationship.
Chan and Mak (2012)	China	223 leader-member dyads in a non-profit organization in China	Follower task performance; OCB	Benevolent leadership and LMX are positively related to follower task performance and OCB. LMX partially mediates the relationship between benevolent leadership and follower task performance and fully mediates the relationship between benevolent leadership and OCB.
Gu, Tang, and Jiang (2015)	China	160 supervisor-subordinate dyads in China	Employee creativity	Moral leadership is positively related to both employee identification with leader and LMX. Employee identification with leader partially mediates the relationship between moral leadership and LMX, which leads to high creativity.

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Core findings: Power distance orientation negatively moderates the positive relationship between transformational leadership and procedural justice. Procedural justice moderates the reltionship between transformational leadership and power distance orientation with followers' OCB.

Table 1 (continued)

Paper	Country	Sample	Dependent variable	Core findings
Li, He, Yam, and Long (2015)	China	310 full-time employees in 81 work groups in China	Followers' taking-charge behavior	Empowering leadership is positively related to followers' taking-charge behaviors, and the RBSE mediates the relationship.
Chen and Hou (2016)	Taiwan	Three-phase multilevel data from 291 employees and 58 workgroups from R&D institutions in Taiwan	Employee voice	Ethical leadership is positively related to employees' voice behavior, which in turn influences individual creativity. The indirect effect of ethical leadership on individual creativity (via voice behavior) is stronger when the employee works in a more innovative climate.
Lam, Loi, and Chan (2016)	China	Two-phase survey data from two garment manufacturing companies located in Macau and Zhuhai (381 and 306 surveys for each phase, respectively)	Employee voice; Exit intentions	Supervisory ethical leadership is positively related to cognitive engagement, which mediates the effect of ethical leadership on employee voice. Employee voice is negatively related to employee exit intentions.
Zhang, Huai, and Xie (2015)	China	402 leader-subordinate data from 4 companies in China	Employee voice	Authoritarian paternalistic leaders reduce employee voice by reducing their status judgment. Benevolent paternalistic leaders encourage employee voice by enhancing both LMX and status judgment. Moral paternalistic leaders positively influence employee voice through LMX processes.
Bavik, Tang, Shao, and Lam (2017)	China	338 employees at multinational retail companies in Hong Kong	Employee knowledge sharing	Ethical leadership is positively associated with employee knowledge sharing. Employee motivation for knowledge sharing and employee moral identity mediate the positive relationship between ethical leadership and employee knowledge sharing.
Ou et al. (2014)	China	328 TMT members and 645 middle managers in 63 private companies in China	TMT integration; Middle manager engagement; Job performance	CEO humility is positively associated with empowering leadership behaviors, which lead to TMT integration, engagement of middle managers, and ultimately job performance.
Ou, Seo, Choi, and Hom (2017)	China	43 top management teams in China including 313 top executives and 502 middle managers	Middle manager job satisfaction; Voluntary turnover	TMT faultlines positively moderate the relationship between leader humility and job satisfaction of middle managers.
Schaubroeck, Lam, and Cha (2007)	Hong Kong & US	218 financial services teams in Hong Kong and US branches of a bank	Team performance; Team potency	Transformational leadership positively influences team performance, and the relationship is mediated by team potency. The effect of transformational leadership on team potency is moderated by team power distance and team collectivism, such that higher power distance teams and more collectivistic teams exhibit stronger positive effects of transformational leadership on team potency.

Table 1 (continued)

Paper	Country	Sample	Dependent variable	Core findings
Sun, Xu, and Shang (2014)	China	Leaders of 184 high-tech firms in China	Team performance	Transformational leadership is positively related to team performance in new product development teams, and team climate mediates the relationship between multiple dimensions of transformational leadership and team performance.
Chun, Cho, and Sosik (2016)	Korea	73 team leaders and 359 members of 23 companies in Korea	Team performance	Group-focused transformational leadership was positively related to team performance through TMX, and individual-focused transformational leadership was positively related to team members' in-role and extra-role performance through LMX. TMX positively mediates the relationships between group-focused transformational leadership and member performance and also positively moderates LMX-performance relationships.
Li and Tang (2010)	China	2790 CEOs of manufacturing firms in China	Firm risk-taking	CEO hubris is positively related to firm risk-taking. This relationship is positively moderated by CEO managerial discretion: when a firm faced munificent but complex markets; had less inertia and more intangible resources; had a CEO who also chaired its board; and had a CEO who was not politically appointed.
Tang, Li, and Yang (2015a)	China and US	Study 1: CEOs of 2820 firms in manufacturing industries in China Study 2: US public firms in high-tech industries	Innovation	CEOs with hubris indeed produce better innovation-related outputs. CEO hubris is moderated by environmental factors such as environmental munificence, environmental complexity, and environmental dynamism.
Nadkarni and Herrmann (2010)	India	Indian firms	Firm performance	CEOs' emotional stability, extraversion, and openness to experience are positively related to strategic flexibility, CEO conscientiousness is negatively related to strategic flexibility, and CEO agreeableness has an inverted-U relationship with strategic flexibility. Strategic flexibility mediates the relationship between CEO personality and firm performance.
Park, Kim, Chang, Lee, and Sung (2015)	Korea	164 firms from KOSPI-200 index	Firm performance	CEO hubris is negatively related to firm performance. CEO power exacerbates the negative effect of CEO hubris on performance, while board vigilance mitigates the effect.

OCB Organizational citizenship behavior; *CSE* Core self-evaluation; *LMX* Leader-member exchange; *RBSE* Role breadth self-efficacy; *TMT* Top management team; *TMX* Team-member exchange

2007) and management-related (Haleblian, Devers, McNamara, Carpenter, & Davison, 2009; Piazza & Castellucci, 2014) constructs. The leading journals in the fields of management and organizational behavior are *Academy of Management Journal*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Leadership Quarterly*, *Management Science*, *Organization Science*, and *Strategic Management Journal*. To triangulate our review efforts on Asia, we also searched for articles in major peer-reviewed Asian management journals; these are *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* and *Management and Organization Review*. We broadened the search to include articles published in the journals of other disciplines that examine CEO characteristics and leadership, such as finance, accounting, and psychology; we explored publications such as *Journal of Finance*, *Journal of Financial Economics*, *Contemporary Accounting Research*, *Journal of Accounting Research*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, and *Personnel Psychology*.

The second step was to identify the articles for inclusion; we adopted an emic approach (Tsui, 2006) to identify the key constructs important for Asian leadership research. Given that the Asian context is the core focus in our review, we chose only those studies on leader characteristics or leadership styles that used Asian samples. We searched on the EBSCOhost for articles in the list of identified journals whose titles, abstracts, and/or keywords contained both (1) key terms on leadership: "leadership," "leadership styles," "CEO personality," "CEO characteristics," or "CEO traits" *and* (2) terms related to Asia: "Asia," "China," "Korea," "Taiwan," or "India."
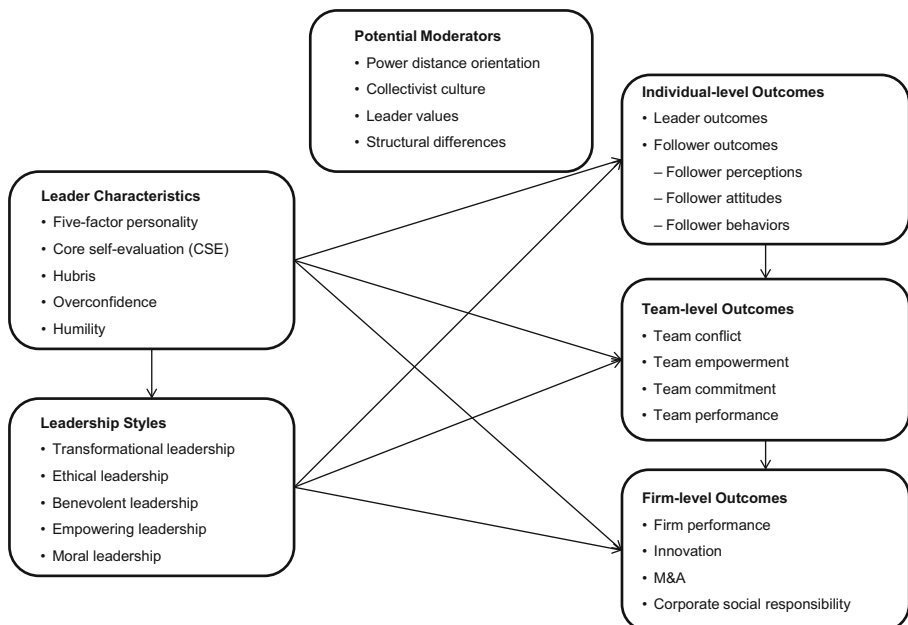

Fig. 1 Leadership characteristics and styles review framework

Third, we reviewed the title and abstract of each article to determine whether it concerned CEOs or organization leaders in an Asian context, supplementing our search by using the keywords "power distance" and "collectivism" in the abstracts of the articles. We eliminated those papers that explored the personality traits of employees or followers without a linkage to leaders; this enabled us to keep the scope of our review confined to leadership styles and leader characteristics of the firm.

We then read each article to determine its suitability for inclusion in our review. Our final sample consists of 37 articles published in 18 key journals in multiple disciplines from 1997 to 2016, including 27 empirical and 10 conceptual papers on leadership research in Asia. To ensure proper categorization of articles, we implemented a coding process where we assessed each of the empirical articles based on the journal outlet, field of research (strategy or organizational behavior), level of outcome (individual, team, or firm), country of the sample (China, Korea, India, Taiwan, or multi), construct being tested (type of leader characteristics or leadership style), and the effect of leadership style or leader characteristics (positive or negative).

Finally, we also noted whether each article focused on Asia-specific issues or contexts (collectivism, power distance). While we also discuss key conceptual papers on leadership in Asia below, we tabulate only the empirical studies on Table 1.

Leader characteristics, leadership styles, and outcomes

Researchers have explored many facets of leader characteristics and leadership styles in the field of organizational behavior, strategy, finance, accounting, and psychology. They have shown that leader characteristics and leadership styles, in various forms, permeate through the individual behaviors and decision-making of leaders, team dynamics, and organizational and strategic outcomes. We take a three-pronged approach to review the effects of leader characteristics and leadership styles at (1) individual, (2) team, and (3) firm levels. Figure 1 outlines our review framework investigating the leadership literature, summarized below.

Individual-level outcomes

Leader outcomes

Prior literature on organizational behavior has shown that leader characteristics and leadership styles serve as antecedents of leader behaviors and effectiveness. Spreitzer et al. (2005) study of transformational leadership uses data from Asia and North America to examine how the value of traditionality (emphasizing respect for hierarchy in relationships) influences the effectiveness of transformational leadership in different cultural contexts. They found that traditionality moderates the relationship between multiple dimensions of transformational leadership and leadership effectiveness, including appropriate role models, intellectual stimulation, expectations of high performance, and articulation of vision. Chng et al. (2012) conducted a management

simulation study to examine the core self-evaluation (CSE) of CEOs and its impact on managerial behaviors. Using a sample of 216 part-time MBA students in China, they found that CEO CSE influences the ability of executive compensation to motivate managerial behaviors. The results also show that, during a period of organizational decline, executives with higher CSEs respond to incentive compensation with greater perseverance, higher competitive strategy focus and risk-taking, and more ethical behavior.

Leadership styles mediate the relationship between leader characteristics and follower outcomes. For instance, through a study of 225 leader-employee dyadic relationships in Korea, Ahn et al. (2016) reported that leader CSE is positively related to ethical leadership, which mediates the relationship between leader CSE and employees' task performance and their organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Hu et al. (2012) explored the role of leader CSE on the follower perception of transformational leadership using a sample of 150 leaders and 464 employees at Chinese firms. Their results suggested that leader CSE is a significant predictor of transformational leadership.

Follower outcomes

Leadership styles have been found to affect a variety of follower outcomes including follower perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Research has shown that distinct leadership styles influence follower perceptions of the organization such as procedural justice and job security. Kirkman et al. (2009) assessed the effect of transformational leadership on followers' procedural perceptions using a sample comprising 560 followers and 174 leaders in China and the United States. Results suggested that followers' power distance orientation and their perceptions of transformational leadership were positively related to procedural justice. In addition, followers' perceptions of procedural justice mediated the relationships of transformational leadership and power distance orientation with followers' OCB. Loi et al. (2012) studied the moderating role of ethical leadership on the relationship between procedural justice and employee job insecurity. Using a sample of 381 workers in Macau and Southern China, they showed that the negative effect of procedural justice on job insecurity is stronger under a high level of ethical leadership. Further, they found that the moderating effect of ethical leadership is stronger for employees with a low power distance orientation.

Follower attitudes have also been examined as outcome variables of leader characteristics and leadership styles. For instance, Kim et al. (2015) examined the role of CSE on employee attitudes to find that transformational leadership moderates the relationship between employee CSE and job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. Fu et al. (2010) explored the effect of CEOs' transformational leadership on followers' affective commitment and leave intention. They reported that the effect of the CEOs' values on the role of transformational leadership depends on the congruence of each CEO's internal values with his or her leadership display. Zhang and Bartol (2010) examined how empowering leadership affects the intrinsic motivation of employees and their creative process engagement via psychological empowerment of employees, which in turn affects

employee creativity. The relationship between empowering leadership and psychological empowerment is moderated by empowerment role identity, while leader encouragement of creativity moderates the influence of psychological empowerment on creative process engagement. Data were collected from a survey of employees and their supervisors in a technology firm in China.

Moreover, follower behaviors have been extensively studied in relation to leadership styles. Li et al. (2015) explored the role of empowering leadership on follower behavior in the Chinese context. They reported that empowering leadership is positively related to followers' proactive behavior of taking charge, and this relationship is mediated by the role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) of followers. Bavik et al. (2017) found the positive relationship between ethical leadership and employee knowledge sharing through a study of employees at multinational retail companies in Hong Kong. Employee voice is a follower behavior influenced by leadership styles. Using a three-phase survey of 58 workgroups from R&D institutions in Taiwan, Chen and Hou (2016) showed that a positive relationship exists between employee perception of ethical leadership and employees' voice behavior. In addition, they reported that voice behavior is positively related to individual creativity, and the indirect effect of ethical leadership on individual creativity is stronger when the employee works in a more innovative climate. The work of Lam et al. (2016) further investigated the relationship between ethical leadership on employee voice. In a two-stage survey of workers in garment manufacturing companies located in Macau and Zhuhai in China, they assessed that employees' cognitive engagement mediates the effect of ethical leadership on employee voice. Furthermore, they also found that ethical leadership is negatively related to employee exit intentions, mediated by the role of employee voice. Follower creativity is another variable that has been researched as a potential outcome of leadership styles. Shin and Zhou (2003) explored the effect of transformational leadership on follower creativity, using a Korean sample of 290 employees and their supervisors from 46 firms. Results showed that transformational leadership positively influences follower creativity, a relationship moderated by followers' conservation.

In addition, leader-member exchange (LMX) has been found to be an important mediator for the effect of leadership styles on follower outcomes. For example, Chan and Mak (2012) showed that LMX mediates the relationship between benevolent leadership and employee outcomes including follower task performance and OCB. In studying 160 supervisor-subordinate dyads in China, Gu et al. (2015) reported that moral leadership positively influences employee creativity, and this relationship is mediated by employee identification with leaders and LMX. Zhang et al. (2015) explored the relationship of paternalistic leadership and employee voice through the LMX process. Results showed that benevolent paternalistic leaders encourage employee voice by enhancing LMX and status judgment, while moral paternalistic leaders positively influence employee voice through LMX processes.

Team-level outcomes

At the team level, leader characteristics have been found to affect motivation, behavior, and performance of teams at all levels of the organization, including the top

management team (TMT), middle managers, and employees. This can be explained by the assertion that CEO characteristics permeate through the organizational culture (Giberson et al., 2009) and have a cascading effect throughout the firm. Research has shown that the team-level effect of leadership acts as a bridge between leadership and employee outcomes. For example, Chun et al. (2016) assessed the impact of transformational leadership on team and member performance. They found that group-focused transformational leadership positively influences team performance through team-member exchange (TMX), while individual-focused transformational leadership positively influences team member performance through LMX. In addition, TMX positively mediates the relationship between group-focused transformational leadership and member performance and positively moderates the LMX-performance relationships. Sun et al. (2014) explored the influence of team transformational leadership on team performance of high-tech firms in China using a sample of 184 firms involved in new product development. Results indicated that the transformational leadership of team leaders is positively related to team performance, and that multiple dimensions of transformational leadership are mediated by team climate.

Moreover, scholars have suggested that the team-level outcomes of CEO characteristics influence organizational outcomes. CEO characteristics shape the dynamic of the TMT; this trickles down to employees and in turn affects the firm's performance. Ou et al. (2014) showed that CEO humility is positively associated with empowering leadership behaviors, thus leading to TMT integration, increased engagement of middle managers, and ultimately improved job performance.

Firm-level outcomes

In strategy literature, implications of leader characteristics have primarily been assessed at the CEO level, examining the effects of CEO characteristics on firm-level outcomes. Studies on CEO characteristics, using samples from the United States, have explored a wide variety of firm-level strategy and outcomes, including mergers and acquisitions (Hayward & Hambrick, 1997; Malmendier & Tate, 2008), finance (Malmendier & Tate, 2005), corporate governance (Zhu & Chen, 2015a; Zhu & Chen, 2015b), earnings forecasts (Chen, Crossland, & Luo, 2015; Hribar & Yang, 2015), and corporate social responsibility (Petrenko, Aime, Ridge, & Hill, 2016; Tang, Qian, Chen, & Shen, 2015b). Research on firm-level effects of CEO characteristics in Asia, however, is still in its infancy, with only a few notable articles available for review.

Nadkarni and Herrmann (2010) analyzed the relationships among CEOs' five-factor personality, strategic flexibility, and firm performance, using a sample of Indian firms in the business process outsourcing industry. The five-factor model is a widely-used construct in organizational behavior and management worldwide, with five dimensions of personality: *conscientiousness*, *extraversion*, *openness to experience*, *agreeableness*, and *neuroticism* (McCrae & Costa, 1987). They found that each of the five personality dimensions influences strategic flexibility (a firm's ability to respond to variability in the environment). While CEOs' emotional stability, openness to experience, and extraversion all affect strategic flexibility positively, CEO conscientiousness affects it negatively, and CEO agreeableness has an inverted-U relationship with strategic flexibility. Further, they showed that strategic flexibility mediates the relationship between CEO personality and firm performance. Park et al. (2015) examined the effect

of CEO hubris on the performance of firms in Korea under a variety of corporate governance contexts. Observing 164 Korean firms from 2001 to 2008, they found a significant negative relationship between CEO hubris and firm performance. They also showed that CEO power amplifies the negative impact of CEO hubris on corporate financial performance, while board vigilance mitigates the relationship. Using two separate studies conducted in China and in the US, Tang et al. (2015a) explored the relationship between CEO hubris and firm innovation. They posited that hubristic CEOs are more focused on firm innovation, as they tend to overestimate the returns from innovative projects and the success of such projects may be perceived by others as an indication of their strong abilities. From the study using the data from the government-funded Entrepreneurs Survey System in China, they found that CEOs with hubris indeed produce better innovation-related outputs. In addition, they also showed using a sample of US public firms in high-tech industries that the effect of CEO hubris is moderated by environmental factors such as environmental munificence, environmental complexity, and environmental dynamism.

Contextual issues in Asia

We present a synthesized model of the existing leadership literature (see Fig. 1) and develop an integrative review framework to stimulate investigations into leadership research in Asia. The literature review in the previous section demonstrates that research on leadership traits in Asia is at a nascent stage, with a limited number of articles to cover all leadership constructs reviewed in this paper. In addition, a large body of existing literature has considered leadership characteristics and styles as universal constructs, even those using data from Asian regions. Hence, the factors that may distinguish leadership in Asia from that of other regions remain largely unexplored and are in need of a systemic explanation. We now turn our attention to specific contexts of Asia that may distinguish the effect of leadership on multi-level outcomes.

Tsui et al. (2007) emphasized that the consideration of socio-cultural contexts in different regions is critical to meaningful theoretical advancement in the global context. Several contextual attributes distinguish Asia from the rest of the world. Confucianism has been at the cultural root of traditional Asian societies and many of its values remain engrained in today's organizations (Farh et al., 1997; Fu & Tsui, 2003; Fu et al., 2010; Zhang, Chen, & Ang, 2014). The four major Confucian virtues are the *class system*, *obedience*, *doctrine of the mean*, and *renqing*, each intricately linked with other values (Fu & Tsui, 2003). *Class system* refers to social order, maintained by *obedience*. *Doctrine of the mean* refers to avoiding extremes and maintaining harmony, while *renqing* refers to benevolence, allowing the acceptance of social order and making obedience possible. These traditional values make *power distance* and *collectivist culture* the two primary contexts that define Asian culture and have differentiated leadership research in the region.

Power distance

Power distance refers to an extent to which the society and individuals accept the uneven distribution of power in institutions and organizations (Farh, Hackett, & Liang,

2007; Hofstede, 1980). Asia is characterized by greater power distance between leaders and followers (Liden, 2012) and has embodied a culture where hierarchy has been accepted as a norm (Ahlstrom et al., 2010; Lam et al., 2012; Liden, 2012). Leaders are endowed with greater discretion and control, and followers generally obey their decisions. Hence, the inherent power distance between leaders and followers may influence the leadership effect on organizational and strategic outcomes.

First, the individual power distance orientation of employees may diminish the strength of leadership influence on employee outcomes. For example, Kirkman et al. (2009) analyzed the effects of power distance orientation of employees on their reactions to transformational leadership. Since individuals with high power distance orientation tend to expect their leaders to give explicit directions, trans-formational leaders who call for employee engagement may be met with skepticism and less enthusiasm. Results indicate that power distance orientation negatively moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and procedural justice. Power distance orientation has also been shown to affect the role of ethical leadership on employees. Using samples from Macau and Southern China, Loi et al. (2012) examined the effect of ethical leadership on the relation-ship between procedural justice and employee job insecurity. They showed that the moderating effect of ethical leadership is stronger for employees with a low power distance orientation. Li et al. (2015) found that the role of empowering leadership on employees taking charge behaviors is mediated by employees' RBSE and that this mediation is moderated by their power distance orientation. The authors argued that "submission to authority" (Li et al., 2015: 652) is one of the key traditional values in China, and followers with high power distance orientation thus amplify the effect of the mediating role of RBSE on followers' taking charge.

Second, the high power distance orientation in Asia may amplify the role of CEO core self-evaluation (CSE). CSE is "a basic, fundamental appraisal of one's worthiness, effectiveness, and capability as a person" (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003: 304); it influences other assessments of the self, others, and the world (Johnson, Rosen, & Levy, 2008; Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998). It is a second-order personality trait, introduced by Judge et al. (1998, 2003), that captures the commonality of four core traits well-established in psychology: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, neu-roticism, and locus of control. High-CSE individuals tend to have a positive self-image and display high confidence, and the role of CSE has been found to have a positive effect on firms in Asia. For example, Hu et al. (2012) demonstrated that leader CSE is a significant predictor of transformational leadership in Chinese firms and that it also positively relates to all four dimensions of transformational leadership—intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and individual consideration.

An excess of leader CSE, however, may bring mixed results to the organization. In a conceptual review, Hiller and Hambrick (2005) proposed "hyper-CSE" as a term to define a CEO's CSE that lies on the extreme end of the scale. This concept of CEO's self-aggrandizement, often described as the dark side of leadership (Haynes, Hitt, & Campbell, 2015; Resick, Whitman, Weingarden, & Hiller, 2009), has been given the term *CEO hubris*. Individuals with hubristic qualities often exhibit exaggerated beliefs in their own judgment that may exceed objective predictions (Hayward & Hambrick, 1997; Hiller & Hambrick, 2005; Roll, 1986), and prior literature has mostly found both

positive and negative effects of CEO hubris. Given the high power distance present in Asia, CEO hubris is a cognitive bias that may be inherent in many executives in the region. Hence, Asian context may amplify the effect of hubristic leaders on organizational outcomes. As hierarchical culture is often the accepted norm, leaders are often endowed with more managerial discretion and are less questioned by their employees. For example, Li and Tang (2010) investigated the influence of CEO hubris on firms' risk-taking in the context of China, using data from a survey of 2790 CEOs of manufacturing firms. Drawing on the behavioral decision theory, they found that hubristic CEOs take more risks in decision-making. They tested the moderating role of managerial discretion embedded in the Chinese context and found that the role of CEO hubris in firm risk-taking is strengthened when the CEOs are endowed with more managerial discretion, such as when CEOs are also serving as Chair of the board and are not politically appointed by the government.

Collectivist culture

Asia has long been characterized by collectivist culture, with emphasis on group considerations and on collective rather than individual goals (Hofstede, 1980, 2007). Communist ideologies in China have also emphasized collectivist culture (Fu & Tsui, 2003); leaders are expected to put the interest of the group before their own. This expectation of leadership embedded in collectivism may render certain styles or characteristics of leadership more salient in the region. Transformational leadership, for example, is a widely studied leadership style in the Chinese context (Zhang et al., 2014) and perhaps the most actively researched construct in Asian leadership research evidenced by this review (please refer to Table 1). Transformational leadership style emphasizes value congruence and collective interest of groups (Ishikawa, 2012) and has been shown to affect organizational outcomes at all levels, as highlighted in the previous section (Chun et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2014).

Scholars have shown that certain values engrained in collectivism amplify the role of transformational leadership in Asia. Self-transcendent values, for example, emphasize "the enhancement of others' happiness, the transcendence of selfish interests, and the acceptance of others as equals" (Fu et al., 2010: 226). Fu et al. (2010) found that self-transcendent values of CEOs amplify the effect of their transformational leadership on followers' commitment, while self-enhancement values diminish the effect. Similarly, *conservation*, a value focused on tradition, conformity, and security, favors interpersonal and within-group harmony (Schwartz, 1992; Shin & Zhou, 2003). In their research exploring leader-follower relationships in Korean firms, Shin and Zhou (2003) found that conservation positively moderated the effect of transformational leadership on follower creativity. This value is closely linked to collectivist culture based on Confucian virtues of conformity and of not deviating from the norm; and conservation may be a salient virtue in the Asian context, increasing the influence of leadership styles.

Humility, while perhaps universal to all regions, is a leader characteristic that may be especially salient in Asia. Self-transcendent values based on Confucian virtues are at the root of humility, which emphasize benevolence, kindness, respect for others (Fu & Tsui, 2003) and "lead[ing] without overtly appearing to lead" (Ou et al., 2014: 2). Humble CEOs are fully aware of both their abilities and imperfections (Owens &

Hekman, 2016, 2012; Tangney, 2002), are less self-focused (Morris, Brotheridge, & Urbanski, 2005), and recognize that they are not the center of the universe (Templeton, 1997). Ou et al. (2014) explored the effect of CEO humility on organizations, using data from a survey of 328 TMT members and 645 middle managers in 63 private companies in China. They showed that CEO humility is positively associated with empowering leadership behaviors; these lead to TMT integration, increase middle managers' engagement, and ultimately affect job performance. In later research, Ou et al. (2017) found that the impact of leader humility on voluntary turnover of middle managers is moderated by alignments within the top management team.

In today's Asian firms, the introduction of Western culture has induced individualism and autonomy as well. This shift has created "a beauty of cultural collisions" (Fang, 2010: 165), where traditional collectivist and modern individualistic values coexist in the region (Fang, 2010; Fu & Tsui, 2003). This unique mix of socio-cultural contexts has produced interesting outcomes in Asia leadership research. For example, in their study of the relationship between CEOs' five-factor personalities and strategic flexibility, Nadkarni and Herrmann (2010) noted that the relationship between CEO *agreeableness* and strategic flexibility may be impacted by the cultural context of India. The authors noted that while India is rooted in collectivist culture, young, highly-educated CEOs may show a more individualistic orientation than the general population in India; this may play a role in the strategic decision-making process.

Future research directions

We present a synthesized review framework of the existing leadership literature to date (see Fig. 1) and present future avenues for further investigations into Asia leadership. As the review shows, organizational behavior researchers in Asia have played a critical role in integrating unique socio-cultural context into leadership research. They have emphasized that leadership styles are not universal (Lam et al., 2012; Liden, 2012) and that contextual differences affect the way in which leadership is manifested at different levels (Ahn et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2015; Loi et al., 2012). Specifically, scholars have highlighted contextual differences in the Asian region by examining how constructs such as traditionality, collectivism, and power distance affect the role of leadership on various outcomes.

It is important to note that research examining the effect of CEO characteristics on strategic firm-level outcomes in Asia is in its infancy. Although the number of articles using Asian samples to explore CEO characteristics has been growing in top journals of management, the existing literature considers the characteristics as universal. In addition, no articles were published on the firm-level effects of CEO characteristics in major Asia-focused outlets such as the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* or *Management and Organization Review*. We therefore argue that there is a vital call for strategic management scholars in Asia to turn their attention to the role of CEO characteristics in organizational and strategic outcomes.

In addition, we believe that the ideal next step for Asian leadership research would be to explore the linkage between leader characteristics and leadership styles. Giberson et al. (2009) stressed the importance of "fit" between the CEO personality and the organizational culture, as CEO personality permeates

throughout the firm by affecting behavior and decision-making at all levels. Although a few Asian studies link leader characteristics to leadership styles (Ahn et al., 2016; Hu et al., 2012), certain leader characteristics, such as humility, may serve as unique antecedents to leadership styles that are particularly salient in Asia. While humility is a universal characteristic (Owens & Hekman, 2016), Confucian values embedded in the culture may amplify its effect on certain leadership styles such as benevolent leadership (Chan & Mak, 2012). Humanistic leadership may also be a consideration. Most research on humanistic leadership and management to date has been conceptual (Spitzeck, 2011), discussing how humanistic leadership influences organizational culture and satisfaction of external stakeholders (Arnaud & Wasieleski, 2014). As Asia embodies a culture that emphasizes collectivism (Farh et al., 1997) and harmony (Lam et al., 2012; Leung, Brew, Zhang, & Zhang, 2011), humility may serve as an antecedent of humanistic leadership and calls for further examination.

Moreover, unique governance structures in the region may add to the leadership variance. Asia is characterized by a significant share of family businesses and business groups (Luo & Chung, 2005). Family business is "an example of disequilibrium between two systems of activity" (Miller & Rice, 1967), and family CEOs may take on characteristics different from those of professional CEOs because of their increased control of, and emotional attachment to, the firm. Family CEOs possess greater socio-emotional wealth of firms (Gomez-Mejia, Larraza-Kintana, & Makri, 2003) than do professional CEOs, as they place more value on emotional aspects of firm ownership beyond financial success (Zellweger & Astrachan, 2008). Hence, family CEOs may focus more on organizational culture of the firm and display greater humility characteristics and paternalistic leadership styles. On the other hand, greater ownership and dual positions on the board may give family CEOs greater control of the firm than professional CEOs would have. CEO duality endows greater power to CEOs (Singla, Veliyath, & George, 2014; Zajac & Westphal, 1996) and may increase the power distance between the family CEO and the rest of the organization. Increased power of family CEOs may exacerbate the power distance between leaders and followers that is already inherent in Asian culture (Lam et al., 2012; Liden, 2012). As a result, increased power distance may lead to higher levels of family CEOs' CSE. In Korea, for example, a significant number of firms are affiliated with family business groups (Chang, 2003). The pyramidal structure of business groups may increase the power distance orientation between business-group CEOs and the employees, and business-group CEOs may display higher levels of CSE characteristics.

Research limitations

This study has several limitations. We have attempted to analyze and review the extant literature on leadership in Asia with a specific focus on how unique socio-cultural contexts such as power distance and collectivist culture in the region influence the role of leadership. In an attempt to triangulate our efforts on Asian samples, we do not offer a detailed review of articles that use non-Asian samples. Therefore, our review may not

offer comprehensive coverage of all constructs of leader characteristics and leadership traits, as certain constructs may not yet have been examined in the Asian context. A thorough review of all constructs in leadership research outside of Asia may bring additional insights into why specific characteristics and styles may be more salient in the region.

In addition, we do not examine cultural and structural variances among different countries within the region. Chia et al. (2007) drew attention to the cultural divergence of countries in Asia, asserting that there are distinct value differences across countries such as China, Korea, and Taiwan. China is characterized by unique traditional values such as *guanxi*, *wulun* (five cardinal relations), and face that have brought different implications for leadership (Chen, Friedman, Yu, Fang, & Lu, 2009; Farh et al., 1997; Jia, You, & Du, 2012). Korean and Taiwanese managers are more open to change and value-independent actions (Chia et al., 2007). Ownership structures also differ across countries: China is characterized by state ownership, whereas Korea and Taiwan have a significant number of firms affiliated with family business groups (Chang, 2003; Luo & Chung, 2005). Such variations in the value system and organizational structure may alter the influence of leadership on organizational outcomes. Future research addressing these unique variations would provide novel insights into existing leadership literature in management.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this review shows that leadership research is an intriguing and complex field of management research in Asia. As highlighted above, Asia presents a multitude of unique contexts that offer tremendous opportunities for future empirical research on leader characteristics and leadership styles. Therefore, we attempt to contribute to the scholarly debate on the role of leadership in organizational and strategic outcomes by undertaking a comprehensive review of the literature to date with a specific focus on Asia across multiple disciplines, including organizational behavior, strategy, and psychology. Our comprehensive review aims to enrich and advance our current understanding of existing research on leadership in Asia, providing actionable insights for Asian management scholars into "taking the road less traveled" (Lam et al., 2012), and to offer suggestions for leadership research in contexts specific to Asia in the hope of shedding new light on leadership mechanisms at work in the region.

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