© Academy of Management Journal
2017, Vol. 60, No. 5, 1915–1931.
https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2015.1072

WHEN CAN HUMBLE TOP EXECUTIVES RETAIN MIDDLE MANAGERS? THE MODERATING ROLE OF TOP MANAGEMENT TEAM FAULTLINES

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Top management in organizations must effectively retain middle managers (MMs)—who are central linking pins in strategy processes—as loss of their human and social capital can threaten strategy implementation. While long envisioning how leaders motivate subordinates to stay, management scholars have largely neglected how teams in which leaders belong (e.g., top management teams [TMT]) constitute an organizational context that moderates their ability to retain subordinates. Building on recent theory and research that a leader's humility discourages subordinates from voluntarily departing by increasing their job satisfaction, we propose that faultlines in TMTs can exert cross-level effects attenuating how humble executives sustain MMs' job satisfaction, and how MMs' job dissatisfaction drives their voluntary turnover. We verify these effects with a multisource, multiphase dataset of 43 TMTs, 313 top executives, and 502 MMs. Our study thus bridges the macro and micro divide to offer a multilevel inquiry into contextual influences on voluntary turnover, identifies a boundary condition for leader humility effects, and clarifies how TMT faultlines represent a contextual constraint on how top executives induce MM subordinates to stay.

As central linking pins in strategy processes, middle managers (MMs) initiate, champion, and execute firm strategies (Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008). Their voluntary turnover can thus hinder—if not undermine—strategy implementation because loss of MMs' social and human capital disrupts operational efficiency, induces proprietary technological knowledge spillovers, and shrinks the talent pool for executive succession (for a review, see Mawdsley & Somaya, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative that top management sustains their firms' competitive advantage in MM talent (Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011).

Prevailing turnover studies have nonetheless yielded an incomplete picture of how top executives retain MM subordinates because they have primarily scrutinized how personal interactions between leaders (often outside the C-suite) and subordinates can induce the latter to stay, thereby overlooking the "person–context interface"—i.e., contextual moderators affecting how leaders sustain subordinate loyalty (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008). This limitation is problematic for understanding voluntary quitting among MMs because their superiors (i.e., top executives) play dual roles as their immediate leaders and as members of top management teams (TMTs) who collectively govern MMs (and the entire workforce). Indeed, ample studies have attested to how MMs track TMT qualities to ascertain contextual favorability for actions and deduce what

We appreciate Dong Liu, Jennifer Nahrgang, Arnold Bakker, and Steve Kozlowski's comments on the earlier versions of this paper; Anne Tsui, Angelo Kinicki, David Waldman, and Zhixing Xiao's advice on the research design; and Yanling Lian's help in data collection. This work was supported by Singapore Ministry of Education Tier 1 Academic Research Fund [Grant #: R-317-000-114-112].

behaviors are expected and rewarded in organizational climates TMTs cultivate (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997; Ou, Tsui, Kinicki, Waldman, Xiao, & Song, 2014). Extending prior research findings that leaders' relationships with peers or superiors affect proximal antecedents of subordinates' voluntary turnover (Sparrow & Liden, 2005; Venkataramani, Green, & Schleicher, 2010), we investigate whether top executives as a TMT collective constitute a salient organizational context that embeds their own relationships with their direct reports (Denis, Langley, & Sergi, 2012; Johns, 2006), and thus moderates their capability to retain MMs.

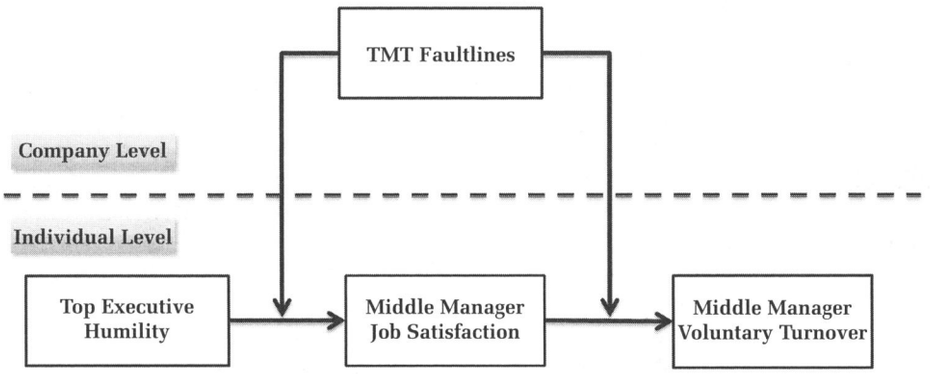
In particular, we scrutinize whether TMTs (and the context they invoke) moderate how top executives' humility affects MM retention. Moving beyond traditional scholarly focus on followers' affect toward or relationship with leaders, recent turnover scholars have explored how leadership styles (e.g., transformational leadership), leader embeddedness, or leader actions (e.g., employee guarding) strengthen followers' loyalty (Hom, Lee, Shaw & Hausknecht, 2017). Continuing with the prevailing trend identifying new leadership influences, Owens, Johnson, and Mitchell (2013) recently investigated leader humility, a leader's orientation grounded in a transcendent self-concept, desiring accurate self-knowledge, appreciating others, and keeping an open mind (Ou et al., 2014). They found that humble leaders reduced subordinates' voluntary departures by increasing their job satisfaction. Nevertheless, Owens et al. (2013) did not consider how this micro-level process may unfold differently across other contexts or situations, such that their model risks becoming an "acontextual packaging" devoid of practical relevance (Johns, 2006). To identify a boundary condition for Owen et al.'s (2013) model, we thus pioneer an inquiry into how the TMT context can act as a cross-level moderator limiting humble top executives' effectiveness in curbing voluntary MM resignations.

Addressing a longstanding oversight in the upper echelon literature (Li & Hambrick, 2005), our investigation especially focuses on TMT faultlines because this research stream implies that how TMTs manage subordinate MMs (including fortifying their loyalty) may mediate (in part) faultlines' well-established impact on TMT functioning and performance. Specifically, TMT faultlines, representing hypothetical dividing lines that split a TMT into homogeneous subgroups based on members' alignment along one or more attributes (Lau & Murnighan, 1998), may weaken TMT members' influence on MM retention. After all, research has reported that faultlines engender team conflict, disunity, and performance losses (Thatcher & Patel, 2012) and can threaten strategic choices and organizational effectiveness when they afflict TMTs (Cooper, Patel, & Thatcher, 2014; Li & Hambrick, 2005). Yet extant uni-level TMT theory and research have failed to recognize *how* TMT faultlines may influence TMT performance by undermining MM functioning via cross-level mechanisms. This neglect of (perverse) contextual TMT effects on MM loyalty is surprising, given that "context creation" (i.e., cultivating a context conducive to effective workforce functioning) is a central TMT function, along with strategy formation and implementation (Finkelstein, Hambrick, & Cannella, 2009), and that TMTs themselves depend on coordinated actions of *all* organizational constituents to achieve strategic objectives (March & Simon, 1958). Conceivably, a "dominant analytical mindset" (Allen, Hancock, Vardaman, & McKee, 2014) historically constrained TMT scholars from scrutinizing direct *cascading* TMT effects on subordinates (e.g., Colbert, Barrick, & Bradley, 2014; Ou et al., 2014). All told, we know little about how TMT faultlines might engender a detrimental context that suppresses or counteracts the loyalty-sustaining effects of TMT members' humility.

To elucidate how TMTs affect MM functioning, our study introduces a multilevel formulation (Gardner & Cogliser, 2009; House, Rousseau, & Thomas-Hunt, 1995) of MM voluntary turnover by integrating a micro-level leadership process (i.e., top executive humility → MM job satisfaction → MM voluntary turnover) with a macro-level TMT context (i.e., TMT faultline). We propose that TMT faultlines impose a demanding context for MMs (who directly report to TMT members) that depletes their cognitive resources and jeopardizes their goal attainment, hampering the otherwise loyalty-sustaining influence of leader humility (Owens et al., 2013). Figure 1 illustrates our research model.

By integrating scholarly literature on leader humility, voluntary turnover, and TMT faultlines, our research contributes to management scholarship in three ways. First and foremost, we establish a multilevel theory of MM voluntary turnover, answering rising calls for more inquiries bridging the macro–micro divide to deepen insight into organizational phenomena (Hitt, Beamish, Jackson, & Mathieu, 2007). We advance understanding of oft-neglected contextual influences on turnover (Holtom et al., 2008) by probing how TMT faultlines manifest cross-level moderation of the MM turnover process. At the

FIGURE 1
The Moderating Role of Top Management Team Faultlines on How Top Executive Humility Reduces Middle Managers' Voluntary Turnover



same time, we pioneer an inquiry into contextual boundaries that limit the generalizability of leader humility effects. Lastly, our study enriches comprehension of TMT faultline effects by going beyond the predominant focus on team-level effects to their spillover effects on key organizational constituents outside the team (for an exception, see Bezrukova, Spell, Caldwell, & Burger, 2016).

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Executive Humility and Middle Manager Voluntary Turnover

Although not strictly focused on executive leadership, a century of turnover research has articulated the varied ways leaders can discourage followers from voluntarily exiting (Hom et al., 2017). All the same, prevailing theory and research on turnover and job embeddedness—including comprehensive taxonomies of causal antecedents—has downplayed (if not ignored) leadership as a prime determinant of why people stay or leave, while primarily scrutinizing supervisory satisfaction or leader–member exchange (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Yet fertile and creative scholarship in the leadership field has inspired a plethora of recent studies identifying new leadership causes of turnover (Holtom et al., 2008). Owens et al. (2013) contributed to this emerging trend by revealing how humble leaders can fortify followers' loyalty to organizations by satisfying their needs.

Although humility seems discordant with agentic portrayals of effective leaders (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011), studies have shown that leader humility can sustain individual, team, and organizational performance (Ou, Waldman, & Peterson, 2015; Owens et al., 2013; Owens & Hekman, 2016). In particular, humble leaders increase subordinates' job satisfaction by fulfilling their innate needs for competency, autonomy, and relatedness. That is, they validate subordinates' competency needs by valuing their abilities and acknowledging their accomplishments (Owens et al., 2013), while soliciting their opinions and ideas (Tangney, 2002). Such leaders also meet subordinates' autonomy needs by involving them in decision making and encouraging their suggestions on how to attain unit goals (Owens & Hekman, 2016). Further, humble leaders satisfy subordinates' relatedness need by respecting them as equals and avoiding manipulation (Ou et al., 2015). Fulfillment of such innate needs has been found to promote job satisfaction and job loyalty (Kovjanic, Schuh, Jonas, van Quaquebeke, & van Dick, 2012). Relatedly, classic and modern perspectives on turnover have long envisioned job satisfaction as a fundamental mechanism linking distal work environmental factors, such as leadership to turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000; Liu, Mitchell, Lee, Holtom, & Hinkin, 2012). When workplace conditions are satisfying (e.g., humble leaders create pleasing environs), employees feel lower movement desirability (March & Simon, 1958) and less often seek jobs or eventually leave (Holtom et al., 2008).

Although leader humility has been demonstrated to deter subordinate leaving (Owens et al., 2013), its efficacy may nonetheless hinge on "the contextual circumstance[s] leaders face" (Owens & Hekman, 2012: 799). Specifically, scholars have claimed that humble leaders may not fare well in dynamic environments (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007) or public or large companies (Ou et al., 2014). Other authors have

noted that humble leaders may flounder when they are incompetent or insincere (or regarded as such), encounter threatening contexts, or amass centralized power (Owens & Hekman, 2012). Despite such speculations, leadership research has yet to establish whether certain contexts can influence humble leaders' efficacy, leaving unspecified boundary conditions that can enrich Owens et al.'s (2013) leader humility model and strengthen its predictive validity (Hitt et al., 2007).

Toward this end, we recognize TMT contexts as a vital boundary condition for Owens et al.'s (2013) model when extending this model to top executives belonging to TMTs. As noted earlier, top executives are not merely MMs' immediate superiors, but also collectively form the TMT, the most powerful team in corporations. TMTs are entrusted with formulating and implementing strategies, allocating resources, and motivating and coordinating employees (Finkelstein et al., 2009). Given such executive functions, TMTs influence the entire organizational environment for all employees (not just their direct MM reports) and can shape how employees respond to their immediate superiors (Gardner & Cogliser, 2009). Consequently, we investigate whether certain TMT characteristics—and TMT faultlines in particular—can represent contextual factors that moderate how humble top executives retain MMs.

Top Management Team Faultlines as a Central Contextual Moderator

TMT composition research has historically defined TMT demographic diversity according to TMT members' age, sex, race, tenure, education, and functional background (Finkelstein et al., 2009). Yet this early line of inquiry primarily scrutinized diversity attributes' additive effects, neglecting how their effects can hinge on other diversity attributes (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). To capture the latter compound effects, our study investigates TMT faultlines that capture the joint effects of multiple diversity attributes in defining subgroups. TMT faultlines have been shown to exacerbate harmful diversity effects by impeding team functioning, strategic actions, and firm performance (Li & Hambrick, 2005; Ndofor, Sirmon, & He, 2015). Prevailing uni-level TMT investigations, however, have neglected to consider how TMT faultlines may affect strategy implementation through cross-level effects on MM functioning. Some management scholars have nonetheless maintained that TMTs' influence on subordinate managers is responsible (in part) for strategy implementation and firm performance (Hitt et al., 2007). For example, Li and Hambrick (2005: 800) argued that faultlines cause *subunits* to be "behaviorally fragmented, ...undermanaging or mismanaging their interdependence, which in turn would cause poor performance." To address this oversight in research on cross-level mechanisms translating how TMT composition affects strategy implementation, we thus examine how TMT faultlines moderate top executives' ability to retain MMs, who play crucial roles in carrying out strategic plans put forth by TMTs.

Moderation on the leader humility–job satisfaction relationship. We propose that the TMT faultlines pose a stressful and demanding context that reduces humble top executives' ability to sustain MM job satisfaction. Both TMT and small group studies have concluded that faultlines impair within-team coordination (Thatcher & Patel, 2012). Coordination requires integrating and aligning actions of team members to achieve shared goals (Rico, Sanchez-Manzanares, Gil, & Gibson, 2008), and is abetted by accountability, predictability, and mutual understanding (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009). Both social categorization and diverse cognitive resources arising from team faultlines, however, can weaken team coordination. Social categorization among members invokes team disunity and thereby erodes members' mutual accountability (van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004). Disunity-driven communication breakdowns can in turn diminish the predictability of other team members' actions, while intergroup hostility hampers the formation of shared task understanding across members (Ndofor et al., 2015). While providing diverse cognitive resources for teams, subgroups also hold dissimilar mental models that can decrease team members' consensus on what tasks should be done, and when and how to conduct them (Rico et al., 2008), thereby compounding coordination problems.

Quite likely, TMT coordination deficiencies activated or exacerbated by faultlines engender isomorphic challenges for MM subunits reporting to different TMT subgroups (House et al., 1995). That is, MM subordinates of antagonistic TMT subgroups may similarly withhold useful information from one another, compete for resources due to conflicting subunit goals, and fail to develop trust with MMs in other units, thereby impeding collaboration among MM subunits (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Reflecting TMT–subunit disharmony, MMs may also have more difficulty holding outside units accountable, accurately predicting their actions, and

forming shared understandings with them (Davison, Hollenbeck, Barnes, Sleesman, & Ilgen, 2012). Acer's challenge in launching Aspire (a new personal computer model) in America illustrates how deficient coordination within TMTs create similar difficulties among their subunits and MMs (Bartlett & St. George, 1998). TMT members held different opinions about Aspire; as a result, even though the marketing department predicted a huge demand for Aspire, the product development department did not offer sufficient support to integrate the design with existing Acer components, the sourcing department was slow to supply cost-efficient components, and the customer service department was overwhelmed by requests from first-time computer users.

Such interdepartmental coordination failures affect MMs' work environment. They must expend more time and effort to monitor MMs in other subunits to ensure they follow through on their commitments, reserve extra resources as buffers should other subunits fail to deliver as promised, and protect themselves from blame when coordinated tasks across subunits fail (McEvily, Perrone, & Zaheer, 2003). MMs also less ably meet their work responsibilities and thus risk losing contingent rewards and recognition. All told, TMT faultlines pose a challenging context for MMs that can deplete their cognitive resources and jeopardize their goal attainment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

By so doing, TMT faultlines diminish humble top executives' influence because this demanding context diverts MMs' attention from leaders' benevolent qualities, reduces their preference for such leadership, and stigmatizes such leaders. As cognitive resources are directed to other, nonproductive activities, MMs have fewer cognitive resources for attending to—and thus appreciating—the virtuous acts of humble leaders (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). The uncertainty arising from faultline-induced goal frustration or failure may also predispose MMs to favor directive (or narcissistic) leaders who issue clear directions and inspire confidence for the future (House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991). Moreover, MMs may regard TMTs plagued by disunity and discord as collectively inept, and generalize from this attribution that their own leaders—TMT constituents—are likewise incompetent ("stigma by association" [Hernandez, Avery, Tonidandel, Hebl, Smith, & McKay, 2016]). When leaders are deemed incompetent, their followers may interpret leader humility as signaling indecisiveness and timidity, ruining the basis for forming trusting relationships (Owens & Hekman, 2012). In sum, when TMT faultlines are high, MMs derive less job satisfaction from leaders whose humility will be underappreciated, if not devalued.

Hypothesis 1. TMT faultlines moderate the relationship between executive humility and MM job satisfaction, such that its positive relationship diminishes as TMT faultlines change from low to high.

Moderation on the job satisfaction–voluntary turnover relationship. In addition, TMT faultlines attenuate loyalty-enhancing effects of job satisfaction because the demanding context imposed by TMT faultlines shifts MMs' attention away from current job satisfaction and downgrades expectations for future job satisfaction. As previously noted, TMT faultlines deplete MMs' finite cognitive resources by concentrating their attention and thoughts on the conflicts among their leaders (Li & Hambrick, 2005), or their leaders' complaints about the TMT or other TMT members (Raes et al., 2011). Therefore, they pay less attention to their current job (and the positive affect it engenders) (Oldham, Hackman, & Pearce, 1976). Moreover, MMs may observe their (dissatisfied) leaders withdrawing, such as by seeking other employment or disengaging from work (Ng & Feldman, 2013). Such social cues can prompt MMs to anticipate future declines in job satisfaction because leader exits will take away social capital and produce uncertain—if not grimmer—prospects about their organizational career (Liu et al., 2012; Shapiro, Hom, Shen, & Agarwal, 2016). Expectations for future job satisfaction are further diminished because MMs (direct TMT reports) are candidates for future top executive posts and may regard promotions to strife-ridden and "incompetent" TMTs to represent an unattractive career path. MMs' job satisfaction thus less effectively discourages them from leaving when faultlines afflict TMTs. We thus propose:

Hypothesis 2. TMT faultlines moderate the relationship between MM job satisfaction and voluntary turnover, such that this negative relationship diminishes as TMT faultlines change from low to high.

METHOD

Participants and Procedures

Our sample consisted of 43 TMTs in private companies in the People's Republic of China with 313 top executives (including CEOs) and 502 MMs.

According to human resource (HR) managers, these companies employed a total of 324 top executives (i.e., TMT members) and 535 direct TMT reports (i.e., MMs). Our response rates were thus 96.60% and 93.83%, respectively. Among companies, 39.5% belonged to the manufacturing sector, 32.6% belonged to the service sector, and the rest belonged to the trading sector. Workforce size for companies ranged from fewer than 100 to 12,000 employees (M = 1,065, SD = 2,287). Average TMT size was 7.28 (SD = 3.25). On average, top executives were 39.36 years old (SD = 8.10), were male (73%), had completed college or graduate school (86.20%), and had worked in the company for 5.80 years (SD = 5.16). MM averaged 34.76 years old (SD = 8.03), with 60.9% male and 84.06% having bachelor's degrees or higher; had stayed in the company for 6.49 years (SD = 6.60); and had worked for their TMT superiors for 3.67 years (SD = 3.36).

The dataset was part of a larger study on executive leadership, and Ou et al. (2014) and Zhang, Ou, Tsui and Wang (2017) have published other findings based on the same dataset.[1] We included only companies that furnished turnover data. Companies in the current dataset did not differ in company age or workforce size from omitted companies. With CEOs' permission, HR managers reported company information such as age, size, and industry, and provided a list of participants. At Time 1, the first author administered surveys and guaranteed confidentiality to participants. Top managers and MMs described their demographic background, while MMs rated top executives' humility. At Time 2 (roughly two weeks later), managers received surveys with return envelopes. MMs reported their own job satisfaction and organizational commitment (as a control variable) and also rated top executives' charismatic leadership (another control variable), while top executives provided MMs' job performance, pay, and financial performance ratings (more control variables). At Time 3 (one year after Time 2), HR managers supplied information about top executives' and MMs' voluntary turnover. As a result, common method variance constitutes a lesser concern because (1) none of the variables in the research model shared a common method, (2) control variables sharing a common method with variables in the research model (e.g., control variables of organizational commitment and charismatic leadership, and the key variable of job satisfaction, were all collected from MMs at Time 2) could not have inflated relationships in the research model that did not share common methods (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), and (3) common method variance (if any) cannot bias moderation effects (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010).

[1] Ou et al. (2014) used the full sample of 63 companies with data collected at Time 1 and Time 2, and examined the effect of CEO humility on TMT behavioral dynamics, organizational climate, and middle manager work engagement, commitment, and performance. Zhang et al. (2017) used the same sample as that in Ou et al. (2014), but examined the interaction effects of CEO humility and narcissism on firm innovation. The current study used a subsample of 43 companies that furnished turnover data at Time 3 (a year after Time 2) and addressed a different research question, examining top executive humility, middle manager job satisfaction, and voluntary turnover, with TMT faultlines as a moderator. The published studies and the current study reported different sets of variables, except for the following three: company age, MM job satisfaction, and MM company tenure. The complete data transparency table is available upon request.

Measures

For most measures (except objective measures of TMT faultlines and voluntary turnover, MM job performance, and firm financial performance), we asked participants to rate their extent of agreement with statements about their companies, leaders, or themselves with Likert-type scales ranging from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (6). In survey packages, all items were written in Chinese. For measures without preexisting Chinese versions (e.g., job satisfaction, job performance, perceived pay, and financial performance), we adopted back-translation to insure that items accurately captured their original English meaning and were understood in Chinese (Brislin, 1970). In addition, a bilingual professor and two senior Chinese managers reviewed the questionnaire items to ensure semantic clarity.

TMT faultlines. We operationalized TMT faultlines with six commonly used demographic attributes in the faultline literature (Thatcher & Patel, 2012) that are salient in our context; namely, age, gender, education level, education specialization, company tenure, and team tenure. Age and gender were included because they are universally visible demographic characteristics that form the basis for social categorization (Bezrukova, Jehn, Zanutto, & Thatcher, 2009). Education level and specialization were considered as they shape top executives' "professional knowledge, skills, and abilities" (Hutzschenreuter & Horstkotte, 2013: 709). Company

tenure and team tenure were included because they gauge top executives' firm-specific and team-specific knowledge (Cooper et al., 2014; Ndofor et al., 2015). We omitted functional background, ethnicity, and nationality because the majority of sampled companies were functionally structured and located in China, and with Chinese nationals, thereby eliminating variance on those attributes.

We computed TMT faultlines as a multiplicative product of faultline strength and distance. This measure more fully models faultline effects by expanding Lau and Murnighan's (1998) original notion of faultline strength—or member attribute *alignments within* subgroups—to incorporate "faultline distance"—attribute *differences between* subgroups, because subgrouping mostly occurs when members are similar within subgroups, but subgroups also vary considerably in attribute amounts. Like other researchers (e.g., Bezrukova et al., 2009), we measured faultline strength using Thatcher, Jehn, and Zanutto's (2003) popular algorithm. The measure is based on multivariate clustering analysis and calculates "the percentage of total variation in overall group characteristics accounted for by the strongest group split" (Thatcher et al., 2003: 225). Faultline distance was calculated as the Euclidean distance between vectors of attribute means for two subgroups (Bezrukova et al., 2009). This multiplicative measure has shown good convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity in prior research (e.g., Bezrukova et al., 2016).

Top executive humility. We used Ou et al.'s (2014) 19-item humility measure for top executives (α = .93). Sample items are "My leader acknowledges when others have more knowledge and skills than him- or herself" and "My leader is willing to learn from others." As self-serving bias can distort humility self-ratings, we followed previous studies (e.g., Ou et al., 2014; Owens et al., 2013) and asked MMs to assess their immediate superior's (i.e., a top executive's) humility. As noted below, we did not aggregate MM perceptions by top executives as there were insufficient MMs sampled per top executive.

Middle manager job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was evaluated with three items (α = .89) from Bono and Judge (2003). Sample items are "I feel satisfied with my present job" and "I consider my job rather unpleasant (reverse coded)."

Middle manager voluntary turnover. To measure voluntary turnover, we asked HR managers to report each incidence of turnover, whether it was voluntary or not, and provide specific turnover reasons. We verified HR managers' designation of turnover voluntariness with our own coding based on turnover reasons, following Campion's (1991) classification system. Our turnover index coded voluntary turnover as 1 if employees quit due to dissatisfaction with the company, pay, or supervisors; better career opportunities elsewhere; further education; health issues or pregnancy; or family migration. We coded turnover as 0 when employees left due to retirement or layoffs, or when employees remained employed. The overall voluntary turnover rate was 11%.

Control variables. We considered MM-, top executive-, and company-related control variables based on their potential correlations with study variables. For MMs, we considered age, education level (1 = junior high school or below, 2 = high school diploma, 3 = associate's college degree, 4 = bachelor's degree, 5 = master's degree, 6 = doctoral degree), company tenure, organizational commitment, and job performance, which have been associated with turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000). We also considered MMs' tenure with the top executive, which can affect follower's perception of leadership (Nahrgang & Seo, 2015). Organizational commitment (α = .90) was measured with a six-item Chinese version (Chen & Francesco, 2003) of Meyer, Allen, and Smith's (1993) affective commitment scale. Job performance (α = .89) was measured with six items adapted from Tsui, Pearce, Porter, and Tripoli (1997) using a five-point scale with 1 = below average to 5 = above average.

For top executives, we considered their charismatic leadership as an important leadership style that can affect employee job satisfaction and turnover (DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011; Waldman, Carter, & Hom, 2015), pay perceptions that may correlate with top executive humility (Ou et al., 2015), and top executive turnover (both voluntary and involuntary turnover) that can induce subordinate turnover (Shapiro et al., 2016). Following Brown and Trevino (2006), charismatic leadership (α = .94) was measured with the 12-item measure of attributed charisma, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation subscales from Bass and Aviolio's (1995) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. TMT-level charismatic leadership is the company-average of charismatic leadership based on satisfactory aggregation statistics: Median $r_{wg(j)}$ = .97; ICC(1) = .11; ANOVA $F = 2.50$, $p < .01$; and ICC(2) = .60 (Bliese, 2000; James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984). Top executive charismatic leadership is the individual follower rating minus the company average. We adapted six items (two items per dimension) from

Collins and Clark (2003) and Chatterjee and Hambrick (2007) to measure top executives' perception about group-based pay ($\alpha = .93$), pay satisfaction ($\alpha = .84$), and vertical pay disparity ($\alpha = .90$). Based on the HR archival record, we created a dummy variable for top executive turnover (both voluntary and involuntary turnover) occurring before MM voluntary turnover.

At the company level, we considered TMT size, company age, and company performance because small teams facilitate TMT communication and coordination (Smith et al., 1994), and thus ultimately promote MMs' attitudes and retention, while company age and performance have been known to negatively relate to turnover (Park & Shaw, 2013). Due to the difficulty of obtaining objective financial performance data from private companies, we followed Sully de Luque, Washburn, Waldman, and House (2008) and aggregated top executives' subjective evaluation of company's sales and return on assets in relation to their competitors using a seven-point scale with 1 = 30% or more below major competitors and 7 = 30% or more above major competitors ($\alpha = .77$; Median $r_{wg(j)} = .75$; ICC(1) = .45; ANOVA $F = 5.84$, $p < .01$; ICC[2] = .83). In addition, we considered industry because different industries reflect different macro-environmental changes that affect overall turnover (Park & Shaw, 2013), and thus coded industry as 1 for manufacturing and 0 for service or trading.

Methodologists have cautioned against illusory statistical control, as including control variables that weakly relate to focal variables rarely influences resulting interpretations, while reducing statistical power (Spector & Brannick, 2011). Therefore, our final analyses omitted nonsignificant controls and retained those that significantly predicted job satisfaction or voluntary turnover—namely, MM company tenure and organizational commitment, TMT-level and top executive-level charismatic leadership, and company age.

Data Analyses

Our data comprised a three-level nested structure with MMs (individual MM level) embedded within their respective top executive leaders (top executive level), who in turn were embedded within companies (company- or TMT level). We followed Raudenbush and Bryk (2002) to determine how to model our data structure. We estimated three-level null models for individual-level variables (i.e., MM perceptions of top executive humility, MM job satisfaction, and MM turnover) and examined the significance of variable variances at each level. All three variables had large percentages of individual-level variance (86.06%, 86.88%, and 89.03%, respectively; $p < .01$). MM job satisfaction and turnover also had significant company-level variances (10.36% and 10.97%, respectively; $p < .01$), but no significant top executive-level variances (2.76% and 0.00%, respectively, n.s.), suggesting that modeling top executive-level variances is unnecessary. Although MM perceptions on their top executive's humility significantly varied across top executives (13.50%, $p < .05$), its top executive-level design effect (1.21) was smaller than 2 (Muthén & Satorra, 1995), indicating that a small ratio of MM to top executives (i.e., 502:313) hampers reliable estimations of top executive-level parameters (Mathieu, Aguinis, Culpepper, & Chen, 2012). These findings prescribe two-level rather than three-level modeling. For two-level modeling, we thus treated a top executive's humility at the same level as (Level-1) MM attributes, while designating TMT faultlines and other TMT and firm characteristics at the company-level (Level-2).

We used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) for Hypothesis 1 involving job satisfaction, and used hierarchical generalized linear modeling (HGLM) for Hypothesis 2 involving voluntary turnover, because HGLM processes binary dependent variables (i.e., voluntary turnover) based on the Bernoulli distribution (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). To test cross-level moderating effects of TMT faultlines, we group-mean centered individual-level MM rating of top executive humility and MM job satisfaction, and grand-mean centered TMT faultlines (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998). We also aggregated individual-level MM perceptions of top executive humility and MM job satisfaction to the company level as controls to more accurately assess cross-level moderation (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998).

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among study variables, while Table 2 summarizes results for hypothesis testing. Hypothesis 1 proposed that TMT faultlines moderate the relationship between top executive humility and MM job satisfaction. While Model 1 shows a significant effect of top executive humility on job satisfaction ($\gamma = .14$, $SE = .06$, $p < .01$), Model 2 shows a negative and significant interaction effect of TMT faultlines on the relationship between top executive

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations among Study Variables

	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Level 1: Middle Manager										
1 Company tenure	6.49	6.60								
2 Organizational commitment	4.65	0.81	0.11*							
3 Top executive charismatic leadership	0.00	0.49	−0.05	0.29**						
4 Top executive humility	4.46	0.75	−0.04	0.31**	0.28**					
5 Middle manager job satisfaction	4.31	0.86	0.07	0.64**	0.33**	0.34**				
6 Middle manager voluntary turnover	0.11	0.31	−0.15**	−0.05	−0.09	−0.01	−0.09			
Level 2: Company										
7 Company age	14.84	10.33	0.45**	0.09	0.00	0.04	0.05	−0.14**		
8 TMT charismatic leadership	4.66	0.33	−0.01	0.34**	0.00	0.22**	0.33**	0.01	0.02	
9 TMT faultlines	1.24	0.83	0.52**	0.01	0.00	−0.01	−0.05	−0.05	0.53**	−0.19

Notes: All variables were presented at their appropriate levels. That is, for correlations at Level 1, $n = 502$ MMs; for correlations at Level 2, $n = 43$ companies; for cross-level correlations, Level 2 data were disaggregated to Level 1 and $n = 502$.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$, two-tailed tests.

humility and job satisfaction ($\gamma = -.10$, $SE = .04$, $p < .01$). In Figure 2, we plot these interactions by conducting simple slope tests (Aguinis, Gottfredson, & Culpepper, 2013). Figure 2 shows that a top executive's humility is positively related to a middle manager's job satisfaction when TMT faultlines are low (–1 standard deviation, $\gamma = .24$, $SE = .07$, $p < .01$) but the relationship becomes nonsignificant when faultlines are high (+1 standard deviation, $\gamma = .07$, $SE = .06$, *ns*). Hypothesis 1 was thus supported.

Hypothesis 2 concerned how TMT faultlines moderate the relationship between MM job satisfaction and MM voluntary turnover. As indicated in Model 3, job satisfaction was negatively related to voluntary turnover ($\gamma = -.48$, $SE = .27$, $p < .05$). In Model 4, the interactive effect of TMT faultlines on this relationship was significant ($\gamma = .71$, $SE = .22$, $p < .01$). Figure 3 shows that the relationship between MMs' job satisfaction and voluntary turnover is negative when TMT faultlines are low (–1 standard deviation, $\gamma = -.99$, $SE = .30$, $p < .01$), but the relationship becomes nonsignificant when TMT faultlines are high (+1 standard deviation, $\gamma = .19$, $SE = .35$, *ns*). Following Hayes' (2015) conditional process analysis, we tested the conditional indirect effects of top executive humility on MM turnover via MM job satisfaction using Selig and Preacher's (2008) Monte Carlo Method with 10,000 bootstrapping samples. The Stage 1 conditional indirect effect of top executive humility on MM turnover via job satisfaction (i.e., TMT faultlines moderating the relationship between top executive humility and MM job satisfaction) is significant ($ab = .05$, 95% CI [.002, .10]) as the confidence interval excludes zero. The Stage 2 conditional indirect effect of top executive humility on turnover (i.e., TMT faultlines moderating the relationship between MM job satisfaction and voluntary turnover) is also significant ($ab = .10$, 95% CI [.03, .19]), excluding zero in the bootstrapped confidence interval. We conducted a post-hoc power analysis following Mathieu and colleagues' (2012) procedures of estimating power to detect cross-level interaction effects. Our power for hypothesis testing is low, with 0.16 for Hypothesis 1 (TMT faultlines moderating top executive humility–job satisfaction relationship), and 0.08 for Hypothesis 2 (TMT faultlines moderating job satisfaction–voluntary turnover relationship). The significant moderating effects by TMT faultlines thus confirm that we did not commit the Type II error of failing to detect an effect that exists (Hoenig & Heisey, 2001). All told, our results provide robust evidence supporting the moderating effects of TMT faultlines.

In addition, we rechecked our findings by replacing overall faultlines in Models 2 and 4 in Table 2 with social-categorical faultlines, task-related faultlines, faultline strength, faultline distance, and overall heterogeneity (results are summarized in Table 3). Firstly, we calculated social-categorical faultlines based on age and gender (Bezrukova et al., 2009) and task-related faultlines based on education level and specification (Hutzschenreuter &

TABLE 2
Hypothesis Testing Results for Job Satisfaction and Voluntary Turnover

	Middle manager job satisfaction		Middle manager voluntary turnover	
	Model 1	Model 2[b]	Model 3	Model 4[b]
Intercept	4.30***	4.30***	−2.60***	−2.63***
Level-1				
Company tenure	0.01†	0.01	−0.19**	−0.19**
Organizational commitment	0.57***	0.57***	0.35*	0.33†
Top executive charismatic leadership	0.26***	0.26***	−0.64**	−0.54**
Top executive humility (HU)	0.14**	0.15**	−0.02	0.00
Middle manager job satisfaction (JS)			−0.48*	−0.40†
HU × TMT faultlines		−0.10**	−0.10	−0.13
JS × TMT faultlines				0.71**
Level-2				
Company age	0.01*	0.01*	−0.13†	−0.13†
TMT charismatic leadership	0.85***	0.85***	0.75	0.84
TMT faultlines	−0.02	−0.02	−0.31	−0.40
Company Mean HU	0.13	0.13	0.27	0.08
Company Mean JS			−1.47†	−1.45†
Deviance[a]	713.91	710.30	907.49	903.33
ΔDeviance		3.61†		4.16*

Notes: We used HLM for job satisfaction and reported unstandardized coefficient estimates with robust standard errors, used HGLM for turnover, and reported the coefficients based on population average with robust standard errors.

[a] Deviance of Models 3–4 (two-level Bernoulli model with a binomial variable as a dependent variable) was calculated using the adaptive Gauss–Hermite quadrature (AGQ) technique (Pinheiro & Bates, 1995).

[b] To test cross-level interaction effects, we group mean centered Level 1 variables and grand mean centered Level 2 variables (Enders & Tofighi, 2007; Hofmann & Gavin, 1998).

† $p < .10$

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

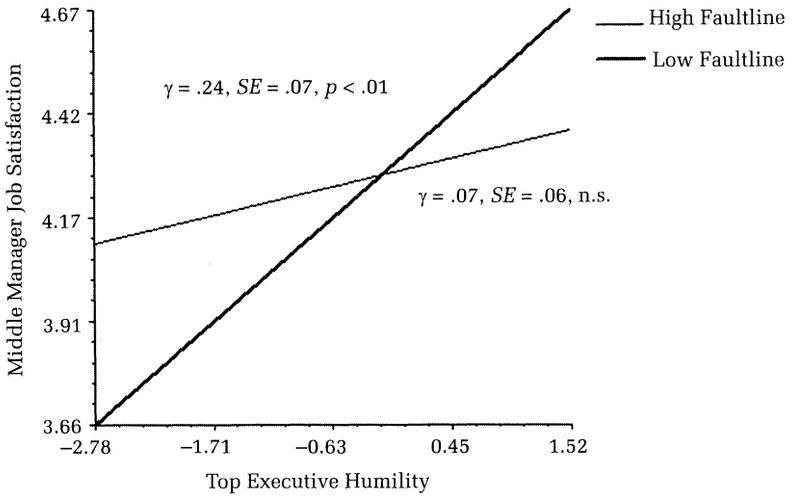
*** $p < .001$, one-tailed tests.

Horstkotte, 2013), company tenure, and team tenure (Ndofor et al., 2015). Results showed that both subtypes had similar moderating effects—i.e., negative moderation ($\gamma = -.15$, $SE = .09$, $p < .10$ and $\gamma = -.09$, $SE = .04$, $p < .05$ respectively) of the Stage 1 relationship between the top executive humility and MM job satisfaction relationship, and positive moderation ($\gamma = .78$, SE = .34, $p < .05$ and $\gamma = .59$, $SE = .24$, $p < .05$, respectively) for the Stage 2 relationships between MMs' job satisfaction and voluntary turnover. These results support our decision to focus on overall faultlines without differentiating subtypes. Second, faultline strength and faultline distance generated similar but overall weaker moderating effects when compared with their multiplicative product (i.e., our faultlines index). Specifically, strength and distance exhibited nonsignificant or negative Stage 1 moderation ($\gamma = -.23$, $SE = .44$, n.s. and $\gamma = -.08$, $SE = .03$, $p < .01$, respectively) and positive Stage 2 moderation ($\gamma = 2.61$, $SE = 1.68$, $p < .10$ and $\gamma = .46$, $SE = .14$, $p < .001$, respectively), indicating that the multiplicative faultline index yields stronger faultline effects as compared to strength and distance measures alone. Third, we followed Li and Hambrick (2005) and Bezrukova et al. (2009) to create a composite diversity index using the same set of six attributes in the faultline measure and averaging the standardized diversity scores of each attribute. TMT diversity has a stronger negative moderating effect ($\gamma = -.25$, $SE = .11$, $p < .05$) in Stage 1 but a nonsignificant Stage 2 moderating effect ($\gamma = .11$, $SE = .43$, n.s.). Compared to TMT diversity, TMT faultlines are thus a distinct moderator that conditions both Stage 1 (top executive humility → MM job satisfaction) and Stage 2 (MM job satisfaction → MM voluntary turnover) paths in Owens et al.'s (2013) mediation model.

DISCUSSION

Our investigation advanced a multilevel understanding of MM voluntary turnover by introducing TMT faultlines as a cross-level moderator that affects

FIGURE 2
The Moderating Effect of TMT Faultlines on Top Executive Humility–Middle Manager Job Satisfaction Relationship



how humble top executives retain MMs. We found that when TMT faultlines are high, a TMT member's humility no longer sustains MMs' job satisfaction, and MMs' job satisfaction no longer prevents their voluntary resignation. In the following, we elaborate on the theoretical implications of our findings for the turnover, leader humility, and faultline literatures.

Theoretical Implications

Our inquiry contributes to the paucity of studies on multilevel leadership effects on employee turnover (Mitchell, Burch, & Lee, 2014). The few available multilevel tests thus far have extended traditional explorations into how leaders sustain direct reports' job loyalty (Holtom et al., 2008) to how leaders' relationships with peers or superiors affect subordinates' propensity to quit (Sparrowe & Liden, 2005; Venkataramani et al., 2010). Continuing this trend, the present research examined a unique scenario whereby leaders play dual roles, individually as immediate superiors and collectively as a leadership team that set overarching goals and coordinate actions for the entire organization (including direct

FIGURE 3
The Moderating Effect of TMT Faultlines on Middle Manager Job Satisfaction–Voluntary Turnover Relationship

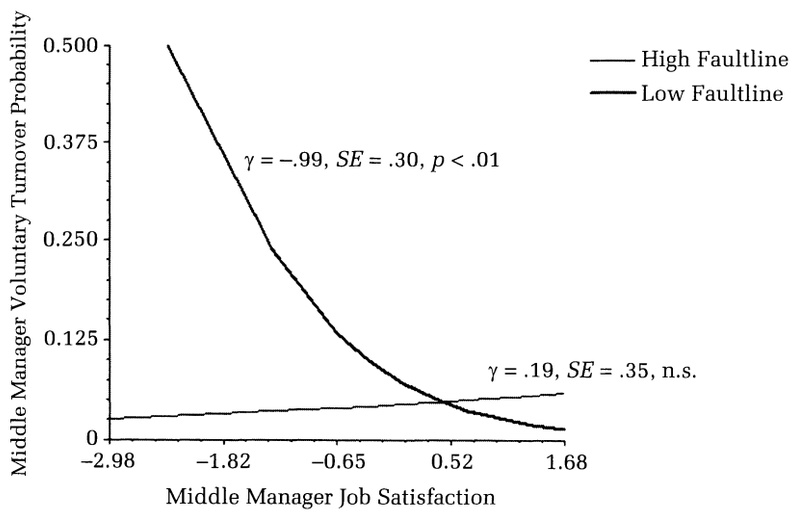


TABLE 3
Comparison of Cross-level Moderation Effects

	Stage 1 Moderation	Stage 2 Moderation
	DV: Job satisfaction	DV: Voluntary turnover
	IV: Top executive humility	IV: Job satisfaction
Moderation Effect		
1. TMT overall faultlines	−0.10**	0.71**
2. TMT social-categorical faultlines	−0.15†	0.78*
3. TMT task-related faultlines	−0.09*	0.59*
4. TMT faultline strength	−0.23	20.61†
5. TMT faultline distance	−0.08**	0.46***
6. TMT overall heterogeneity	−0.25*	0.11

Notes: All cross-level moderation tests used the same set of control variables and independent variables as in Models 2 and 4 in Table 2 and only TMT overall faultlines are replaced with the comparison variables to test their main and moderation effects.

† $p < .10$

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$, one-tailed tests.

reports). Our investigation thus depicts a nuanced picture that individual leaders' ability to retain subordinates can be undermined by faultlines within the leadership team to which they belong. Despite recent evidence regarding a potent loyalty-sustaining influence of job satisfaction (notably, its change trajectory and that of the work unit [Liu et al., 2012]), our study reveals that TMT faultlines may represent a context that vitiates its efficacy for deterring employee turnover.

Our undertaking additionally corroborates the benefits of leader humility and uses constructive replication to clarify the contextual boundary of leader-humility theory. A recent meta-analysis on leadership (DeRue et al., 2011) concluded that leader behaviors generally manifest stronger effects on subordinate outcomes than do leader traits. Yet our test discloses that leader humility still increases subordinates' job satisfaction and reduces their voluntary turnover even after controlling well-documented leadership behaviors (i.e., charismatic leadership), suggesting that humility is a leader attribute that may have independent effects beyond (commonly studied) leader behaviors. While leadership scholars have speculated that leader humility may not be universally effective (Owens & Hekman, 2012), our study is among the first (cf. Owens, Walker, & Waldman, 2015) to verify its boundary conditions. In particular, we observed that humble leaders fail to retain MMs in contexts created by TMT faultlines, implying that humble leaders may need supportive or resourceful environments to flourish (Owens & Hekman, 2012). In addition, as humility enables leaders to see their own weakness (Owens & Hekman, 2012), it remains an open question as to whether humble leaders can proactively adapt their behaviors to meet subordinates' needs for certainty when they face demanding contexts such as those posed by TMT faultlines.

Apart from leadership research, we advance the team faultline literature in two ways. First, we demonstrate that TMT faultlines at the firm level can influence how MMs at a lower level respond to their executive leader and their own job, thereby extending previous faultline research on same team-level processes and outcomes (Thatcher & Patel, 2012). Our research concurs with Bezrukova et al.'s (2016) recent finding that organizational-level and group-level faultlines create *isomorphic* and interactive effects on organizational and group performance. Extending their work, our results suggest that TMT faultlines initiating dysfunctional TMT teamwork can induce corresponding damage on interunit cooperation and collaboration among subordinate MMs reporting to different TMT members. Team faultlines are not only detrimental to teams themselves, but also to relationships among team members' direct reports.

Second, we address the ongoing debate over the necessity to differentiate between social-categorical and task-related faultlines (van Knippenberg et al., 2004) by establishing that both subtypes similarly affect the process by which humble leaders retain subordinates. Future researchers should thus be wary of differentiating subtypes of faultlines for three reasons. Most findings on task-related faultlines

have been marginally significant or nonsignificant, and have thereby failed to substantiate oft-claimed advantages of task-related faultlines (Bezrukova et al., 2009; Cooper et al., 2014; Hutzschenreuter & Horstkotte, 2013). In addition, when viewing age, gender, and race as merely social categorical attributes, we risk discounting their value for informing teams about diverse life experiences when companies increasingly promote workforce diversity based on such salient demographic traits (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Lastly, separating attributes into two subtypes neglects interdependence or alignment of attributes in these subtypes, and thus underestimates overall faultlines in teams.

Practical Implications

Our findings also suggest that employee retention is a collective responsibility for leaders regardless of their hierarchical levels (i.e., for top executives and first-line supervisors alike), and that HR managers should not overlook spillover effects by faultlines in TMTs and lower-level leadership teams. While exit interviews and surveys are invaluable ways to learn about why employees quit (Griffeth et al., 2000), they may overlook less salient causes of voluntary turnover, such as leadership team faultlines jeopardizing retention efforts of immediate leaders (i.e., team members). Just as they track unemployment rates or competitors' pay rates (i.e., external forces inducing turnover), HR managers might also monitor leadership team characteristics such as faultlines that can spawn loyalty-dampening contexts for followers.

Our study also implies that TMT investigators possibly underestimate the detrimental effects of TMT faultlines on organizational effectiveness. Besides the well-documented impact of TMT faultlines on TMT processes and performance, we observed that TMT faultlines indirectly produced dissatisfied and resignation-prone MMs by nullifying the retention-sustaining influence of proximal (humble) leaders (and satisfying job features). Accordingly, we recommend that TMTs afflicted by faultlines pay extra attention to the coordination process within the team and across subordinate MM subunits. Throughout the company, the TMT should promote a shared organizational identity to build trust and mutual accountability (Edwards & Cable, 2009), ensure communication accuracy and timeliness to increase action predictability, and strive for consensus on strategic goals and implementation procedures (Dooley, Fryxell, & Judge, 2000).

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

Our inquiry has several strengths—notably, high response rates from top managers and MMs in multiple companies, data collection from survey and archival sources, and a longitudinal research design with objective turnover data. Nevertheless, we acknowledge several limitations. First, our findings are based on a dataset of mainly functionally structured companies in China, and thus may not generalize to divisionally structured companies or culturally different societies. The harmful effects of faultlines in our dataset may have emerged (or been exacerbated) because TMTs are highly interdependent (Hambrick, Humphrey, & Gupta, 2015), while Chinese MMs are possibly more attuned to—and dependent on—TMTs due to their high power distance and collectivism (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). Even so, research using larger a sample of U.S. firms has uncovered detrimental effects of TMT faultlines (Ndofor et al., 2015), and MMs in general are attentive to signals or messages emanating from TMTs (Dutton et al., 1997). Second, our sample size of 43 TMTs may have limited statistical power to detect other, more complex, relationships—such as whether TMT faultlines can also moderate curvilinear effects of leader humility. The cross-level Stage 1 and Stage 2 moderating effects by TMT faultlines, however, remained robust when we retested the model with and without different control variables. Third, our test only gauged the cross-level moderating effects of TMT faultlines on how one leader characteristic (top executive humility) affects two subordinate outcomes (job satisfaction and voluntary turnover). We encourage future studies to explore whether TMT faultlines can also moderate the effects of other leader characteristics (e.g., servant leadership) on other subordinate responses or outcomes (e.g., job performance). Subsequent research might also generalize our cross-level faultline effects to other interdependent leadership teams at lower hierarchical levels, such as leadership teams in plants or multiteam systems (Davison et al., 2012; Denis et al., 2012). Finally, further extensions of our research on surface-level demographic traits might explore faultlines formed by deep-level member differences in personality traits and values (Thatcher & Patel, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Management scholars have long prescribed that organizational phenomena are too complex to be

explained in solely micro or macro terms, and have urged studies to bridge the micro and macro divide (Hitt et al., 2007). Our theoretical model and empirical findings offer one such attempt by integrating the micro-level leader humility and turnover research with the macro-level TMT faultline research. We demonstrated that the loyalty-enhancing influence of leader humility and job satisfaction do not always hold when TMT faultlines exist. We hope that our study spurs additional scholarly efforts to establish multilevel theories of organizational phenomena, and thus advance the Academy of Management's mission of promulgating more robust theories with greater predictive power and real-world relevance.

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Zhang, H. Y., Ou, A. Y., Tsui, A. S., & Wang, H. 2017. CEO humility, narcissism and firm innovation: A paradox perspective on CEO traits. ***The Leadership Quarterly***. Published online ahead of print.

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