Leader Fairness and Employees' Trust in Coworkers: The Moderating Role of Leader Group
Prototypicality

Abstract

In this article, the association between perceived supervisor fairness and trust in coworkers as a collective entity is studied. Based on identity-related theories on fairness, trust and leader effectiveness it was hypothesized that perceived supervisor distributive, procedural and interactional fairness are positively and more strongly related to employee trust in their coworkers if the supervisor is highly group prototypical rather than less group prototypical. An empirical study, conducted with 176 employees within 30 work groups, supported this hypothesis. Fairness of a less group prototypical supervisor was not associated with trust in coworkers, whereas especially unfairness of the group prototypical supervisor was detrimental for trust in coworkers. The study concludes that leader's prototypicality might not work as a substitute for fairness, as some recent studies have suggested, when the outcome is not directly related to the assessment of the leader. Thus, leaders should not count on the trust they earn by being group prototypical but they should also aim at fairness. Implications for collective distrust theory (Kramer, 1994; 1998) are also discussed.

Keywords: trust in coworkers; fairness, group prototypicality

Work is conducted to an increasing extent in diverse groups within organizations, and thus one important task of group leaders is to ensure that employees are willing to cooperate with each other to attain the shared goals of work groups (e.g., Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam, 2010). Cooperation is hard or even impossible if employees are unable to trust each other (e.g., Tyler, 2003). In addition to cooperation, trust in coworkers is found to predict other positive attitudes and behaviors within groups, such as commitment, proactivity and performance (Costa, 2003; Ferres, Connell, & Travaglione, 2004; Mach, Dolan, & Tzafir, 2010; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006; Tan & Lim, 2009). Thus, trust in coworkers is a valuable property for organizations, but we know much less about its predictors than for instance about antecedents of trust in leadership. Moreover, a lack of theoretical reasoning has characterized the previous empirical studies on coworker trust.

In this paper, we focus on the role of supervisor fairness in encouraging trust among coworkers, as fairness has been shown to be one of the most important predictors of trust (see e.g., Lewicki, Wiethoff, & Tomlinson, 2005). The majority of previous studies have explored associations between perceived fairness and employees' trust in leadership, but there is also some evidence for the positive relationship between a leader's fairness and trust and other positive sentiments toward coworkers (Chattopadhyay & George, 2001; Cornelis, van Hiel, & De Cremer, 2006; Forret & Love, 2008; Korsgaard, Schweiger, & Sapienza, 1995). In this article, we combine identity-related theories on fairness, collective trust and leadership to argue why and how perceived supervisor fairness should be related to trust in coworkers and test these arguments with data collected from organizational settings. Thus, this study contributes to research on the effects of fairness on other group members rather than the source of fairness (see e.g., Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002). This study is also a response to the

call for studies on contingencies of fairness and leadership effectiveness (e.g., van

Knippenberg & De Cremer, 2008).

Trust in Coworkers

Trust is frequently defined as "a willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another

party" (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p. 712). Mayer et al. (1995) state that this

definition applies to the relationships with an identifiable other party who acts and reacts

volitionally toward the trustor. In this study, we focus on employees' trust in their coworkers

as a collective entity. This means that trust is directed towards a group of people instead of a

particular individual, even though trust in a collective entity might be partly based on

experiences with individuals of those collective entities (McEvily, Weber, Bicchieri, & Ho,

2006; Naquin & Kurtzberg, 2009).

Previous studies have shown that especially the group leader plays an important role in

influencing employees' trust towards their coworkers (e.g., den Hartog, 2003; Lau & Liden,

2008). Although leaders are generally thought to represent management or organizational

authority, leaders and supervisors are also members of the groups they lead or supervise, and

thus they might influence relationships within groups (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). For

example, Lau and Liden (2008) found that employees trusted in coworkers who were trusted

by the leader, and the influence of the leader's trust was heightened in uncertain situations.

Based on social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), they reasoned that

social information matters more in uncertain situations than in secure situations because

social information reduces informational overload and simplifies the interpretation of the

situation. A somewhat unexpected finding of their study was that the leader's trust in a

coworker predicted the employee's trust in that coworker irrespective of the employee's trust

in the leader. Thus, the social information of the less trusted leader was considered as

relevant as the more trusted leader's. One reason for this finding might be that Lau and Liden (2008) studied trust in a particular coworker instead of trust in a group of coworkers, in which case, previous experiences with this particular coworker might have overriden the effects of trust in the leader.

According to Mayer et al.'s (1995) widely used integrative model of organizational trust, trust is based on the perceived trustworthiness of another party. Trustworthiness is suggested to be based on the cognitive evaluation of the other party's ability, benevolence and integrity. Empirical evidence suggests that these trustworthiness components also predict trust in a particular coworker (e.g., Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007). However, trust in groups is not solely based on knowledge-based evaluation of others' trustworthiness, for trust is also a matter of shared group membership (e.g., Williams, 2001). Individuals are found to be willing to trust other group members to show that the group is important to them and a meaningful part of their identity (e.g., Kramer, 2001). This kind of depersonalized trust in a group is called a category- or identity-based trust (Brewer, 1981; Kramer, 1999, 2001), and it is produced by various cognitive, affective and motivational mechanisms. For example, one's own group members are perceived in positive terms and attribution processes favor in-groupers. Shared group membership also reduces the psychological distance between group members and group interests are experienced as self-interests by individual members. In addition, shared group membership protects individual members from exploitation of other members as normative pressure and social control are present in groups (Brewer, 1981; Kramer, Brewer, & Hanna, 1996). Although trust- and identity-related concepts, such as identification, are related (e.g., De Cremer, van Dijke, & Bos, 2006; Voci, 2006), trust in a group and identification with a group should be considered separate concepts. Identification refers to a person's readiness to use a particular group to define him- or herself (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Thus, identification reflects self-conception, while trust in a group refers to

a group-directed intention to accept vulnerability in the relationship with the group (Mayer et al., 1995).

However, all the group members are not equally able or willing to have this depersonalized trust in their group. It has been suggested that the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of others is dependent on a member's standing in a group (Kramer, 2001). Standing refers to a person's inclusion or membership in a group (e.g., Lind, 2001).[1] Group members who have a secure standing in a group are better able to trust the group than those members who are insecure of their inclusion in a group. The inner logic of this statement is defined by theories on paranoid cognition and attribution errors (e.g., Kramer, 1994; 1998). According to paranoid cognition theory, standing-related insecurity increases a group member's level of self-consciousness (e.g., Kramer, 1994). This heightened self-consciousness, in turn, increases an individual's tendency to overestimate the amount of attention others pay to them because this inference helps them to explain why their self-consciousness is heightened. Heightened self-consciousness also increases the tendency to make overly personalistic attributions of others' behavior. This means that self-conscious individuals attribute greater intentionality and meaning to others' thoughts and actions, which makes them suspicious and prone to perceive collective distrust (Kramer, 1994; 2001).

For example, Kramer (1994) found in his experiments that newcomers, who were supposed to lack information about their standing in the group, were more self-conscious, made more personalistic attributions and perceived the group as less trustworthy than more tenured members. Also Chattopadhyay and George's (2001) group-level study showed that identity-related insecurity has negative influences on trust in coworkers. They found that higher status employees (internal versus temporary employees) trusted their coworkers less

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than lower status employees in a situation in which they worked as a minority among lower status employees. Based on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1987), they suggested that this situation threatened the positive social identity and self-esteem of the higher status employees because they lost the ability to differentiate between higher status in-group and lower status out-group members and to take advantage of this differentiation. Thus, this minority position influenced negatively on their group-based identity and decreased their attraction towards coworkers, making coworkers appear less trustworthy.

One's standing in a group is a product of social construction, and perception is produced within interactions with other group members (Kramer et al., 1996). Especially the way in which group authorities treat group members informs members of their standing in the group: fair treatment implies inclusion, whereas unfairness gives a message of exclusion (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Next, we explore more closely how fairness is related to collective trust in coworkers by utilizing group-oriented conceptualizations of fairness.

Fairness as a Source of Standing-Related Information

Fairness-related concerns are frequently differentiated as distributive, procedural and interactional fairness (e.g., Colquitt, Greenberg, & Zapata-Phelan, 2005). Distribution-related fairness refers to the perceived fairness of the outcomes, such as rewards and work duties, in proportion to performance inputs (Adams, 1965; Greenberg, 1996; Leventhal, 1976). Procedural fairness focuses on the perceived fairness of the procedures followed (e.g., consistency, voice) in the decision-making process regarding the outcomes (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Interaction-related fairness captures the dignity and respect with which a person is treated in the decision-making process (Bies & Moag, 1986).

According to the group-value model (Lind & Tyler, 1988), people care about fairness of group authorities and other group members because fairness implies their standing or inclusion within the group. The model presumes that people are predisposed to establish strong social connections to other group members in a long-term perspective, to participate in group activities, and they value their membership in the group because it fulfills their need to belong and supports their self-identity (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). For example, when a person feels that a group authority treats him or her with dignity and respect, or a person perceives that the same procedures are applied with him or her as they are with others, or that his or her outcomes are not less favorable than others' outcomes, the person might feel that he or she is a worthy member of the group (e.g., Tyler, Degoey, & Smith, 1996). These perceptions create a sense of security concerning one's membership in the group (Tyler & Blader, 2000; 2003), and a person is able to trust that a group will not exploit his or her trust and the group will reciprocate for evinced trust (Tyler & Lind, 1992).

Although leaders' and supervisors' fairness communicates our standing in a group, not all leaders are equally influential in defining group-related reality for us (see e.g., Cornelis et al., 2006; Pierro, Cicero, Bonaiuto, van Knippenberg, & Kruglanski, 2005; Smith, Tyler, Huo, Ortiz, & Lind, 1998). For example, Platow, Brewer and Eggins (2007) found in their experimental study that the group leader was perceived as a legitimate information source in respect of a member's standing in the group only if the leader was perceived to know that the member and the leader share a group membership. Self-categorization theory suggests that the leader's ability to influence others is dependent on his or her group prototypicality (e.g., Hogg, 2001; Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003). Group prototypicality refers to the extent that the group member is perceived to represent the essential characteristics of the group (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). The group prototypical leader is suggested to represent beliefs, attitudes, values and norms which characterize the shared identity of the

group (Hogg, 2001). Thus, the fairness of the group prototypical leader is perceived to inform a group member of the value the group places on fairness, and more importantly, inform of his or her standing in the group in the eyes of the whole group. Conversely, a low group prototypical leader is not perceived to represent the opinions or values of the group. Thus, a group member is unable to make inclusion-related inferences concerning fairness of the low group prototypical leader. A group member might build a positive personal relationship with a fair but low group prototypical supervisor, but the supervisor's fairness contributes less to a person's relationship with the rest of the group than to this personal relationship with the supervisor.

A handful of previous studies have explored the moderating role of the leader's group prototypicality in fairness effects (e.g., Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001). Studies on leader-directed attitudes and behaviors suggest that the leader's prototypicality can even work as a substitute for fairness, and employees tolerate more from group prototypical than from less prototypical leaders (e.g., Giessner, & van Knippenberg, 2008; Janson, Levy, Sitkin, & Lind, 2008; Ullrich, Christ, & van Dick, 2009; van Knippenberg, & van Knippenberg, 2005). For example, Ullrich et al. (2009) found that group prototypical leaders were endorsed whether they were procedurally fair or not, but endorsement of the less group prototypical leaders was dependent on their procedural fairness. However, this substitution effect might not appear if the outcomes are related to other group members rather than to the leader or to one's own standing in the group (see De Cremer, van Dijke, Brebels, & Hoogervorst, 2008). In line with this, Lipponen, Koivisto and Olkkonen (2005) found in a field study that perceived supervisor justice predicted group-related pride and respect more strongly when the source of informal justice was a more group prototypical than a less group prototypical leader. In a series of experimental studies, De Cremer, van Dijke and Mayer (2010) found that procedural fairness interacted with leader group prototypicality in predicting cooperation (group-directed

OCB) such that group members' cooperation was enhanced if the leader treated all the group members procedurally fairly and if the leader was group prototypical.

To sum up, perceived fairness of the group prototypical leader is found to enhance employees' security over their inclusion in the work group. This standing-related security, in turn, is found to enhance employees' willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of other group members. On the other hand, perceived fairness of the low group prototypical leader is not related to trust in coworkers because a low group prototypical leader is not considered a legitimate information source with respect to standing judgments. Thus, in the present study we hypothesize that:

The leader's group prototypicality moderates the positive relationship between three forms of fairness and trust in coworkers such that perceived fairness is more strongly related to trust in coworkers when the leader is more group prototypical than less group prototypical.

Method

Sample and Procedures

A total of 285 employees, comprising forty work groups in two organizations, were asked to participate in a survey study on supervisory practices and subordinate behaviors. One of the organizations was a restaurant chain and the other was a social service provider. The survey forms were delivered to the participants through their human resource managers, and respondents were asked to send the completed forms directly to the research team in the pre-paid envelope provided.

After one reminder had been sent, 189 (66%) of the employees returned the form. Forms with missing data and employees who worked in groups that were smaller than four members were excluded, and the final sample consisted of 176 employees (the final response rate was

62%). The majority of respondents (102 in 17 work groups) represented the social service

organization and the rest (74 in 13 groups) were from the restaurant organization (work group

size M = 12.43, SD = 5.86). On average, the employees were 38.47 (SD = 10.83) years old

and had worked in their present work group for 4.85 (SD = 5.80) years, and 75% of them

were female. The average age of the supervisors was 43.71 (SD = 10.76) years, and 74%

were female. Non respondents did not differ from respondents with respect to age, tenure or

gender.

Measures

   Trust in coworkers. Employees assessed their level of trust in coworkers as a group

with four items. Two of them were taken from Mayer and Davis (1999) and the other two

were formulated for this study. Items included, for example: "If I had my way, I would not

let my coworkers have any influence over issues that are important to me" (reversed) and "I

can rely on my coworkers." Items were rated on a five-point scale (ranging from 1 = strongly

disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The scale showed acceptable internal consistency (α = .71; M

= 3.89, SD = 0.73).

   Group prototypicality of the supervisor. Employees rated their immediate supervisor

on group prototypicality with four items taken from Platow and van Knippenberg (2001).

Two example items are: "My immediate supervisor represents what is characteristic about

people who work in our work group" and "My immediate supervisor is a good example of the

kind of people who work in our work group." The scale, rated on a five-point scale, showed

good internal consistency (α = .88; M = 3.28, SD = 0.97).

   Distributive, procedural and interactional fairness. Employees assessed their

immediate supervisor on fairness. All the items were rated on a five-point scale (1 = strongly

disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Distributive fairness was rated with seven items indicating

perceived fairness of the work-load distribution. The scale was a Finnish version (Lipponen & Wisse, 2010) of Moorman's (1991) scale with two items added. The items included, for example: "As far as I am concerned, the decisions my immediate supervisor makes concerning the distribution of work are in accordance with the amount of experience I have," and "The decisions my immediate supervisor makes concerning the distribution of work are fair in relation to others doing a similar job." The scale showed good internal consistency (α = .94; M = 3.93, SD = 0.86). Procedural fairness was rated on a seven-item scale indicating perceived quality of the decision-making procedures followed by the supervisor (e.g., "All those affected by the decision are represented," "Everyone who is affected by the decision has a chance to voice his or her opinion"). The items were taken from Moorman (1991), and the scale showed high internal consistency (α = .90; M = 3.62, SD = 0.81). Interactional fairness was measured on a six-item scale tapping on the perceived quality of the treatment given by the supervisor. The items were taken from Moorman's (1991) scale (e.g., "My supervisor shows concern for our rights as employees," "My supervisor treats employees with kindness and consideration"), and the scale showed high internal consistency (α = .94; M = 4.06, SD = 0.84).

Covariates. Work group size, tenure in the work group and work group identification of employees were used as covariates in the analyses. Work group size was used as a covariate because people might find it harder to trust larger and more diverse entities than smaller entities. Trust is also shown to be related to relationship length (e.g., Levin, Whitener, & Cross, 2006), so we controlled for tenure in the work group. Studies have shown that people are prone to trust parties they identify with (e.g., Voci, 2006), so we controlled for identification. Workgroup identification was measured with Mael and Ashforth's (1992) Organizational Identification Questionnaire. The scale consisted of six items indicating the perception and sense of oneness with, or belongingness to, the work group. Items were rated

on a five-point scale and included, for example: "When someone criticizes my work group, it feels like a personal insult," and "When I talk about this unit, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'." The scale showed acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.70$; $M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.55$).

Results

First we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the empirical distinctiveness of the three fairness components. Analysis showed that the three-factor model fitted the data significantly better than the one-factor model or any of the two-factor models ($\chi^2 = 376.25$, $df = 157$, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.079). Basic statistics and correlations of study variables are presented in Table 1. As the table shows, trust in coworkers correlated positively with all the three fairness components and with identification, although correlation with interactional fairness was not statistically significant.

Table 1 about here

To test the hypothesis, we conducted random coefficient modeling (RCM) (Snijders & Bosker, 1999). Random coefficient modeling was used because data was nested within 30 units. All predictors were standardized, and to specify the model we followed a data-driven approach to select the variables for the random part. We first calculated a null model, including only random intercepts (i.e. work group) and no explanatory variables. Then we gradually built our models by adding blocks of predictors. Each variable in the block was first estimated as a fixed coefficient. After that, each variable was also estimated as a random coefficient. The random error terms were retained in the model if the chi-square difference test showed that the model was significantly improved when the random term was included.

The results of these random coefficient models are presented in Table 2. None of the fairness components had a statistically significant main effect on coworker trust. However, as hypothesized, all the fairness components interacted with supervisor group prototypicality in predicting trust in coworkers.

Table 2 about here

All the three two-way interactions were graphed using Dawson and Richter's (2006) macro. Interactions are presented in Figures 1-3. With respect to distributive fairness, the graph and simple slope analyses (Aiken & West, 1991) showed that the distributive fairness of the low group prototypical supervisor was not related to trust in coworkers ($\beta = 0.03$, ns). Instead, the perceived distributive fairness of the high group prototypical supervisor was positively related to trust in coworkers ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < .05$). As Figures 2 and 3 show, results are comparable with respect to procedural and interactional fairness. In line with this, simple slopes analyses revealed that the procedural fairness of the low group prototypical supervisor was not related to trust in coworkers ($\beta = 0.05$, ns), whereas the procedural fairness of the high group prototypical supervisor was positively related to trust in coworkers ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < .01$). The interactional fairness of the low group prototypical supervisor was not related to trust in coworkers ($\beta = -0.09$, ns), but the interactional fairness of the high group prototypical supervisor was ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < .05$). Thus, our hypothesis was supported.[2]

Figures1-3 about here

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[2]

Altogether, the studied variables explained 21.6% of individual level variance.

Interaction of interactional fairness and prototypicality captured the largest proportion of the

explained variance (7.3%). The proportion explained by the interaction of procedural fairness

and prototypicality (2.8%) and the interaction of distributive fairness and prototypicality

(1.8%) remained lower. Figures also showed that the level of trust in coworkers was lower

for the high group prototypical supervisors with low distributive, procedural, and

interactional fairness in comparison with the low group prototypical supervisors. This

suggests that with respect to trust in coworkers, low perceived fairness is especially harmful

for the group prototypical supervisors.

Discussion

One of the most important tasks of work group leaders and supervisors is to ensure

positive relationships between group members (e.g., Morgeson et al., 2010). Fairness is found

to be an efficient tool for this task (e.g., De Cremer et al., 2010; De Cremer & van

Knippenberg, 2002; Tyler & Blader, 2003). However, the fairness of all leaders is not equally

influential (e.g., Platow et al., 2007), or conversely, the unfairness of some leaders is more

detrimental than the unfairness of other leaders. As our study showed, the association

between perceived supervisor fairness and employee trust in coworkers was dependent on the

supervisor's group prototypicality. This finding suggests that to be a relevant information

source with respect to the work group, the leader has to share the essential characteristics of

the group. If the leader does not represent the shared identity of the group, it seems to make

no difference with respect to trust in coworkers whether the leader is fair or unfair. Rather,

the especially perceived unfairness of the high group prototypical leader seems to have

negative consequences, as it was associated with lower levels of trust in coworkers.

We found no significant main effect of the leader's fairness on collective trust in peers. Forret and Love (2008) have recently reported that all the three forms of fairness are positively associated with trust in coworkers. On the other hand, den Hartog (2003) found no associations between these variables. Neither study reports characteristics of the group leader, so we are unable to assess whether these differences are related to prototypicality. However, we believe that employees are able to trust or distrust their peers regardless of the leader's fairness. An employee might build a trusting relationship with the fair leader, but at the same time, he or she might distrust co-workers because they are possessive of his or her special relationship with the leader. On the other hand, employees might trust the co-workers when the leader is unfair because they all agree that the leader behaves unfairly. However, as our results suggest, the influence of leader fairness on trust in coworkers is dependent on his or her perceived group prototypicality. A group prototypical leader is suggested to be more influential because his or her behavior represents values, norms and attitudes of the whole group, and not just his or her personal ones (e.g., Hogg, 2001). The group prototypical leader is thus better able to offer standing-related information in comparison with the less prototypical (Pierro et al., 2005). Moreover, as a prototypical group member, the leader is perceived to have the group's best interests at heart and consequently, he or she is trusted to work for the best of the group (e.g., Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Thus, our results are also in line with previous studies on the effects of leader fairness, which suggest that the effects of fairness on employees' relations with other group members are contingent on the leader's group prototypicality or the representativeness of the group (Cornelis et al., 2006; De Cremer et al., 2010; Lipponen et al., 2005).

On the other hand, our finding seems to be inconsistent with some other studies on the effects of leader fairness, which suggest that the leader's group prototypicality works as a substitute for fairness (Giessner, & van Knippenberg, 2008; Ullrich et al., 2009; Janson et al.,

2008; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). We suggest, as De Cremer et al. (2008) have suggested, that these different findings relate to the specific dependent variable used in each study. It seems that if the dependent variable is associated with the source of the fairness (i.e. the leader), prototypicality works as a substitute for fairness. Instead, if the dependent variable is associated with other group members or the self, the influence of fairness is dependent on perceived group prototypicality. However, there are no prior studies which have studied different outcomes in the same study, so this is something that could be done in the future.

According to Kramer's (1994; 1998) theory on collective distrust in groups, standing-related insecurity enhances a group member's self-consciousness and leads to judgmental biases and collective distrust. Although standing, self-consciousness or judgmental biases, which are essential in Kramer's theory, were not measured in this study, it is worth briefly reflecting on that theory in the light of our results. Kramer's theory would appear to be too imprecise with respect to standing-related uncertainty, and our findings can to some extent clarify the obscurity. Kramer's theory seems to suggest that it is standing-related uncertainty (i.e. unawareness of whether one fits into a group and whether one is accepted by the other members) rather than the standing (i.e. inclusion or exclusion; high, medium or low status) itself that causes heightened self-consciousness, leading to judgmental biases and collective distrust. If this is the case, we suggest, the likelihood would have been that different results would have been found.

We hypothesized that when the leader is group prototypical, the leader's fairness is positively related to trust in a group because the leader represents the values and opinions of the whole group. Thus, the group prototypical leader communicates to the person what the person's standing in the group is; is the person included or excluded (or what the person's status in the group is). On the other hand, when the leader is not group prototypical, the

leader's fairness is unrelated to trust in a group because the leader is unable to communicate to a person whether the person is included or excluded (or has high, medium or low status in the group). According to collective distrust theory, the person should remain uncertain about his or her standing in the group if the leader is not group prototypical. This should further lead to heightened self-consciousness, judgmental biases and greater distrust. On the other hand, when the leader is group prototypical, the person should receive a sense of certainty about his or her standing in the group, leading to lower self-consciousness and higher trust. Moreover, the level of fairness should not make any difference if information about standing is more essential than the standing itself. However, we found that trust in a group decreased as the group prototypical leader's perceived fairness decreased, but we found no association between the leader's fairness and trust in a group when the leader was not group prototypical. Moreover, the level of trust was not lower in comparison with the levels found with a group prototypical leader.

Thus, we suggest that it is not necessarily uncertainty about standing but standing itself which causes security or insecurity in the relationship with the group; psychological inclusion in the group is associated with a sense of security and trust, whereas psychological exclusion from a group is associated with insecurity and distrust. Kramer (1994) suggested in his study on the role of standing on collective distrust that first-year students were more self-conscious and less trusting than second-year students because first-year students did not yet have knowledge about their standing in a student community. However, the alternative interpretation of his findings is that, at the group level, first-year students actually had a lower status than second-year students, or first-year students were not yet fully included in the student community and this made them more self-conscious and distrustful. Moreover, in line with our arguments, van Prooijen, van den Bos, and Wilke (2004) found in experimental

studies that procedural fairness mattered more to those who were included in the group than to participants who were uncertain about their inclusion.

To further reflect our findings on the theory of collective distrust, we suggest that a group prototypical leader might enhance the salience of group-related identity and make group members more self-conscious of their group membership because a group prototypical leader is able to communicate standing-related information. Thus, the members are more concerned about the fairness of the group prototypical leader than they are about the less prototypical leader. The fairness of the group prototypical leader decreases self-consciousness and enhances collective trust. On the other hand, the unfairness of the group prototypical leader leads to heightened self-conscientiousness and rumination on the reasons for unfairness, which will make the person more suspicious and distrustful. On the other hand, a less group prototypical leader does not make the group-related identity salient and group members' group-related self-consciousness is not enhanced. Thus, the members are less concerned about the fairness of the leader. In line with this, van Prooijen, van den Bos, and Wilke (2005) have reported that the salience of status information enhanced reactions to procedural fairness, whereas non-salience did not. Moreover, uncertainty about status was related to lower level status salience (van Prooijen et al., 2005).

To take a critical perspective on the present study, the received results of this study are based on cross-sectional survey data collected from a single source. Although common method biases are likely if this kind of data is used (e.g., Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), the direction of the error in moderation type of analysis is an underestimation of interaction effects (e.g., Aquinis, Beaty, Boik, & Pierce, 2005). However, in terms of causality, the cross-sectional data can be considered to limit the value of this research, and alternative models are conceivable. For example, it is possible that the group members who do not trust their coworkers also perceive the group prototypical leader as less

fair because the group prototypical leader is perceived to represent the shared values, norms and goals of the distrusted group. Because the group leader is also a member of a group he or she leads (e.g., van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), it is possible that group-related attitudes, feelings and thoughts reflect the member's attitudes towards the group leader as well. However, a leader has a special position in a group and employees are dependent on the leader's decisions and actions. Thus, the leader is frequently under more intense scrutiny than coworkers (e.g., Kramer, 1996) and the inferences of the whole group might not as easily have an influence on judgments of this particular group member as the other way around. Based on this argument and presented theoretical reasoning, we believe that the suggested causal direction is more salient than the alternative one.

In practical terms, our study suggests that group leaders should seek to treat all group members fairly both in distribution of varied outcomes and in interactions, as well as follow the rules of procedural fairness. The perceived fairness of the leader not only influences attitudes, feelings and behaviors toward the leader, but fairness perceptions also reflect relationships between employees. Even though the group prototypical leader might be excused for his or her unfairness because he or she is trusted (e.g., Ullrich et al., 2009), our study suggests that unfairness may still have negative consequences on how employees perceive their relationships with coworkers.

To conclude, this study shows that the leader's fairness has an influence beyond the immediate relationship between the source of fairness and the perceiver, to the relationships between the group members. Moreover, the effectiveness of the leader's fairness, in respect of employee relationships, is contingent on the leader's representativeness of the shared group identity. This suggests that fairness is related to employee relationships not only because it ensures employees self-interested outcomes in interactions within a group, but also because fairness implies identity-related information. Leaders should not count on the trust

they earn by being a representative of the group identity, they should be fair as well. Finally,

despite of the criticisms raised about certain aspects of Kramer's theory on collective distrust,

we consider that the theory offers a valuable perspective on the development of collective

trust and distrust as it combines cognitive processes with group-level contextual phenomena.

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Footnotes

[1] In the previous literature, standing has been used refer to both inclusion and status (see Lind, 2001; van Prooijen, van den Bos, & Wilke, 2004). We define standing as inclusion because we see inclusion in a group as more critical than status with respect to the category- or identification-based trust in a group. A place in a social order within a group (i.e. status) is of low relevance to a person's sense of him- or herself, if the person feels excluded from that group (see Ellemers, Doosje, & Spears, 2004).

[2] The leader's group prototypicality is found to substitute the influence of fairness especially for highly identified employees (Ullrich et al., 2009). Thus, we also checked data for the possible three-way interactions of prototypicality, fairness and identification, but we found none.

Table 1

The Means, Standard Deviations and Inter-Correlations

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Trust in coworkers	3.89	0.73	(.71)						
2. Distributive justice	3.93	0.86	.22**	(.94)					
3. Procedural justice	3.62	0.81	.20**	.53***	(.90)				
4. Interactional justice	4.06	0.84	.12	.47***	.75***	(.94)			
5. Prototypicality	3.28	0.97	-.03	.33***	.47***	.49***	(.88)		
6. Work group size	12.43	5.86	-.10	-.08	-.07	.03	-.01		
7. Tenure in the work group	58.14	69.62	.01	.09	.06	.02	-.13	-.02	
8. Identification	3.80	0.55	.20**	.13	.24**	.22**	.13	-.10	.08 (.70)

$N = 176$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 2

Random Coefficient Models Predicting Employees' Trust in Coworkers

Variables	Null model	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Intercept	3.91*** (.08)	3.89*** (.08)	3.87*** (.08)	3.88*** (.08)	3.85*** (.08)	3.81*** (.08)	3.79*** (.08)
Work group size		-0.05 (.08)	-0.03 (.08)	-0.03 (.08)	-0.02 (.08)	0.00 (.08)	0.01 (.08)
Tenure in the work group		-0.05 (.06)	-0.06 (.06)	-0.08 (.06)	-0.07 (.06)	-0.07 (.06)	-0.06 (.05)
Identification		0.12* (.05)	0.09 (.05)	0.09 (.05)	0.10 (.05)	0.08 (.05)	0.08 (.05)
Distributive justice			0.09 (.07)	0.10 (.07)	0.14* (.07)	0.08 (.06)	0.06 (.06)
Procedural justice			0.14 (.09)	0.17 (.09)	0.15 (.09)	0.18*(.09)	0.12 (.09)
Interactional justice			-0.04 (.09)	-0.03 (.09)	-0.03 (.09)	-0.01 (.08)	0.10 (.09)
Prototypicality				-0.10 (.06)	-0.10 (.06)	-0.09 (.06)	-0.08 (.06)
Distributive X Prototypicality					0.11* (.05)		

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Procedural X Prototypicality							0.13* (.05)
Interactional X Prototypicality							0.19*** (.05)
Individual-level variance	0.4691	0.4585	0.4271	0.4237	0.4154	0.4105	0.3895
Change in variance		0.0106	0.0314	0.0034	0.0083	0.0132	0.0342
Proportion of explained variance		2.3%	6.7%	0.7%	1.8%	2.8%	7.3%
Group-level variance	0.0854	0.0731	0.0969	0.0895	0.0805	0.0788	0.0737
-2log likelihood (df)	369.609 (3)	361.730 (6)	348.707 (9)	346.284 (10)	341.772 (11)	339.710 (11)	330.893 (11)

N =176, * p < .05; ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Figure captions

Figure 1. Two-Way Interaction of the Supervisor's Perceived Distributive Fairness and

Group Prototypicality in Predicting Trust in Coworkers.

Figure 2. Two-Way Interaction of the Supervisor's Perceived Procedural Fairness and Group

Prototypicality in Predicting Trust in Coworkers.

Figure 3. Two-Way Interaction of the Supervisor's Perceived Interactional Fairness and

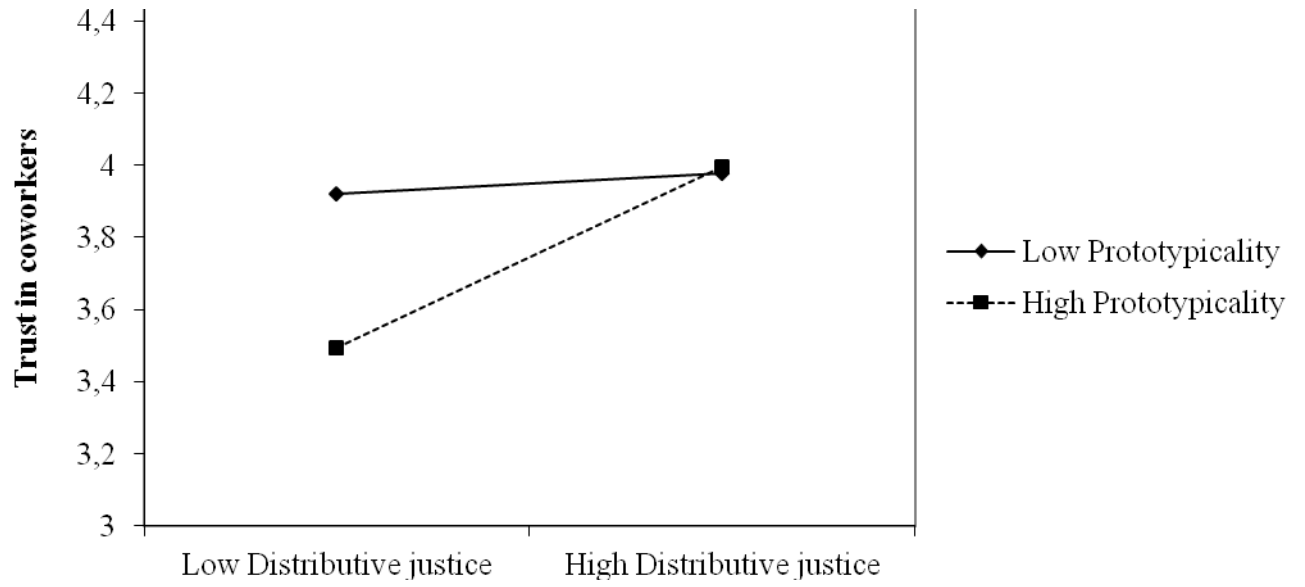Group Prototypicality in Predicting Trust in Coworkers.
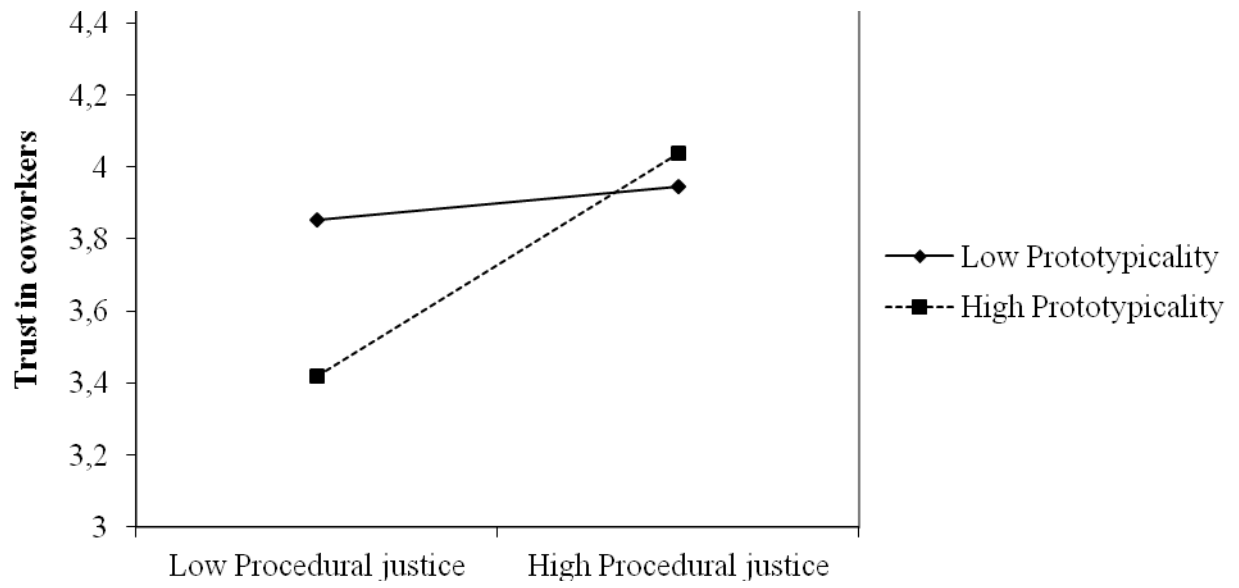
Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3