

## Leadership and Fairness: The State of the Art

Daan van Knippenberg, David De Cremer and Barbara van Knippenberg

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Address	Erasmus Research Institute of Management (ERIM) RSM Erasmus University / Erasmus School of Economics Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam P.O.Box 1738 3000 DR Rotterdam, The Netherlands Phone: + 31 10 408 1182 Fax: + 31 10 408 9640 Email: <a href="mailto:info@erim.eur.nl">info@erim.eur.nl</a> Internet: <a href="http://www.erim.eur.nl">www.erim.eur.nl</a>

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RUNNING HEAD: LEADERSHIP AND FAIRNESS

Leadership and Fairness: The State of the Art

Daan van Knippenberg  
Erasmus University Rotterdam

David De Cremer  
Tilburg University

Barbara van Knippenberg  
Free University, Amsterdam

Daan van Knippenberg, RSM Erasmus University, Erasmus University Rotterdam;  
David De Cremer, Department of Psychology, Tilburg University; Barbara van Knippenberg,  
Department of Work and Organizational Psychology, Free University, Amsterdam.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Daan van Knippenberg,  
RSM Erasmus University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, PO Box 1738, 3000 DR,  
Rotterdam, The Netherlands. FAX: +31.10.408.9015; e-mail: [dvanknippenberg@rsm.nl](mailto:dvanknippenberg@rsm.nl).

### Abstract

Research in leadership effectiveness has paid less to the role of leader fairness than probably it should have. More recently, this has started to change. To capture this development, we review the empirical literature in leadership and fairness to define the field of leadership and fairness, to assess the state of the art, and to identify a research agenda for future efforts in the field. The review shows that leader distributive, procedural, and especially interactional fairness are positively associated with criteria of leadership effectiveness. More scarce and scattered evidence also suggests that fairness considerations help explain the effectiveness of other aspects of leadership, and that leader fairness and other aspects of leadership, or the leadership context, may interact in predicting leadership effectiveness. We conclude that future research should especially focus on interaction effects of leader fairness and other aspects of leadership, and on the processes mediating these effects.

## Leadership and Fairness: The State of the Art

The core question in leadership research has always been what makes leaders influential and effective in mobilizing and motivating followers (e.g., Chemers, 2001; Yukl, 2002). Leadership effectiveness has been approached from multiple angles, and the massive body of empirical research in leadership testifies to its central place in the social, organizational, and political sciences. Yet, despite its volume, this research left the issue of what exactly makes leadership effective largely undecided, leading one to suspect that it might have missed out on important aspects. We assert that perhaps research has devoted less attention to the role of fairness in leadership effectiveness than it should have. This is regretful because as Colquitt and Greenberg (2003, p. 196) note, “perhaps the most natural connection can be made between justice and leadership.” However, more recently, this has started to change. There is increasing attention in leadership research to the role of fairness concerns in leadership effectiveness. Capturing this growing interest, we review the existing empirical evidence in research on leadership and fairness. In doing so, we hope to assess the extent to which fairness informs leadership effectiveness. Specifically, our first aim is to define the field of leadership and fairness and identify its main research questions. The second and main aim is to assess the state of the art in relation to these research questions. The third aim of the present study is to suggest a research agenda for future efforts in the field.

### *Leadership and Fairness: Defining the Field*

Justice has been shown to have a great impact on people, both within and outside of organizations. Justice research has for instance shown that fairness is associated with greater satisfaction with and acceptance of decisions (Thibaut & Walker, 1975), higher perceived legitimacy of authorities (Tyler, 1994), higher job satisfaction (Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993), greater commitment to organizations, groups, and society (Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997), higher task performance (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997), more organizational

citizenship behavior (Moorman, 1991), and less employee theft (Greenberg, 1990b). In short, research in organizational justice provides compelling evidence that fair treatment is associated with more desirable attitudes and behavior in response (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2002; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Clearly thus, people care about fairness. Whether this is because fairness is believed to serve self-interested motives (Thibaut & Walker, 1975), because fairness reflects social evaluations (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Koper, van Knippenberg, Bouhuijs, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1993), or because fairness is a value in and of itself (Folger 2001), people respond more positively if they feel to have been treated fairly. One may expect followers to be concerned about leader as well, (e.g., Greenberg, 1990a; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Konovsky, 2000; Tyler, 1999), specifically so because a core function of leaders is to carry the responsibility for decisions that directly and indirectly concern and affect followers (e.g., promotion decisions, pay raises, allocation of duties, etc.).

Fairness research has long recognized that the fairness of treatment received from authorities is an important influence on people's attitudes and behavior (Adams, 1965; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Somewhat surprisingly, given that leaders clearly are in authority positions, research in (organizational) justice has typically not focused on leaders as sources of justice (with the exception of the more recent focus on interactional justice). Rather, it has focused on more systemic or institutionalized distributive and procedural justice (i.e., the organization or "management" as source of decisions and procedures) or on the fairness of authorities that are not in a leader-follower relationship with the target of justice (e.g., judges in a court of law, government decision makers, teachers; cf. Blader & Tyler, 2003).

Perhaps equally surprising is that leadership research has typically not focused on fairness. That is, research on leadership effectiveness paid little attention to the extent to which leader fairness affected leaders' ability to mobilize and motivate followers. Indeed, it

seems that somewhere “justice got “lost” in more recent models of leadership” (Bies, 2005, p. 105). However, fairness research clearly suggests that the fairness of the outcomes and treatment received from their leaders will be a key concern to followers (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2003; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Inevitably, the prediction for the effects of leader fairness is that leadership that is perceived to be more fair in terms of the outcomes received, in terms of the procedures used to arrive at these outcomes, or in terms of the quality of interpersonal treatment in this process is more effective in engendering desirable follower attitudes and behavior. Moreover, leader behavior associated with fairness may also interact with other aspects of leadership. That is, the effectiveness of some aspects of leadership may be contingent on the extent to which leaders act fairly (see De Cremer & Tyler, in press, for a review of such contingency approach). Fairness concerns may thus both directly and indirectly affect responses to leadership.

The field of leadership and fairness thus encompasses the study of leadership that conceptually and empirically integrates insights from leadership research and (organizational) justice research to advance the theory and practice of leadership. Leadership is understood here as the behavior of individuals in hierarchically higher positions (rather than of groups’ of individuals, i.e., management, or of organizations) vis-à-vis (groups of) individuals in hierarchically subordinate positions (i.e., “followers”). Following from the previous, the core research issues in leadership and fairness include the effects of leader fairness on indicators of leadership effectiveness, and comprises the contingencies of these processes as well .

To assess the state of the art in relation to these research topics, we review the empirical literature on leadership and fairness as published in international peer-reviewed outlets (on the assumption that the academic review process ensures a certain quality standard). We accessed these studies through electronic data base search as well as through manual search of the major journals in organizational behavior, and applied and social psychology. While

we aimed to cover as much of the relevant research as possible, the present review has no claim to being exhaustive. However, we do expect to be able to present an accurate assessment of the state of the art based on our selection of studies.

The majority of the studies reviewed concerns the “main effects” of leader distributive, procedural, and especially interactional fairness. The first part of this review is dedicated to studies addressing these relationships. The second part focuses on the effects of other aspects of leadership that, although not defined in terms of distributive, procedural, or interactional fairness, may be associated with perceptions of fairness. The third part of the review focuses on the contingencies of the effects of leader fairness. This section discusses interactions of leader fairness and other aspects of leadership as well as of leader fairness and factors such as follower and situational characteristics. Building on this review, the final section of this review highlights not only the main conclusions based on the state of the art in research in leadership and fairness, but also our conclusions in terms of a research agenda for future efforts in the field of leadership and fairness.

#### *Leader Distributive, Procedural, and Interactional Fairness*

Research in social and organizational justice has introduced distinctions between different types, or aspects, of justice. Traditionally, distributive justice has been distinguished from procedural justice (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997). Later, the concept of interactional justice was introduced in the literature (Bies & Moag, 1986). Although some researchers regard the latter as a part of procedural justice, it is most often viewed and treated as a distinct aspect of justice (e.g., Bies, 2001; Tyler, 1994; Tyler & Blader, 2000; Tyler, DeGoey, & Smith, 1996; cf. Colquitt, 2001). As the distinction between distributive, procedural and interactional fairness is commonly made in the literature, we will use it in the present review as well.

Distributive justice refers to the fairness of outcomes received, and is typically thought



of in terms of equity (Adams, 1965). Given one's inputs, to what extent is the outcome received fair in comparison to what comparable others receive, to what one received in the past, or to what one could reasonably expect to receive (Folger, 1987)? In addition to equity, considerations of equality (equal division of outcomes over the parties involved) and need (allocation based on need) may also inform considerations of distributive fairness (Deutsch, 1975).

Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the procedures used to derive at these outcomes (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Following Thibaut and Walker (1975) and Leventhal (1980), justice research typically identifies such factors as voice in the decision-making procedure (in terms of being heard as well as in terms of having actual decision-making responsibility), and the accuracy, consistency, and unbiased nature of decision-making procedures as core aspects of procedural justice.

Interactional fairness refers to the dignity and respect with which one is treated, and to the extent in which one is timely, honest, and accurately informed about personally relevant issues (Bies & Moag, 1986). Recent developments have suggested that a meaningful distinction can be made between the interpersonal (respect) and informational (honest and timely communication) aspects of interactional justice (Greenberg, 1993). For the present purposes, however, grouping these aspects of justice under the label interactional suffices. Most of the studies reviewed did not make a distinction between interpersonal and informational fairness, and the present set of studies suggest no differential effects of interpersonal and informational fairness.

We structure the first section of this review according to the influences associated with leader distributive, procedural, and interactional fairness. Note that these studies concern justice research more than an effort to integrate leadership and fairness research. However, the results of these studies may point to new leads in a more integrated study of leadership

and fairness.

### *Leader Distributive Fairness*

Most organizational justice research seems to treat outcomes as deriving more from institutionalized processes than from leader decisions. Accordingly, most studies reviewed have considered distributive fairness as a more systemic aspect of justice rather than as an aspect of leadership. As a consequence, there are relatively few studies that focus specifically on leader distributive fairness.

Folger and Konovsky (1989) report a positive relationship between leader distributive fairness and outcome satisfaction. Konovsky and Pugh (1994) found no relationship of leader distributive fairness with trust in leadership or with organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). A line of experimental research by Platow and colleagues suggests that leaders that favor one group member over the other are perceived as less fair and receive less leadership endorsement than leaders whose allocation decisions seem more informed by consideration of equity or equality (Platow, Hoar, Reid, Harley, & Morrison, 1997; Platow, Mills, & Morrison, 2000; Platow, Reid, & Andrew, 1998).

The conclusion that the evidence for the role of leader distributive fairness in leadership effectiveness is modest seems justified. If anything, its effects are positive, but the evidence for this effect is inconsistent. As we mentioned earlier only a limited number of studies has considered distributive fairness as an aspect of leadership, even when these studies considered procedural fairness or interactional fairness to be an aspect of leadership. An obvious avenue for future research would therefore be to pay more attention to distributive fairness as an aspect of leadership. Given the inconsistent evidence for its effects, a focus on the contingencies of the effects of leader distributive fairness would also seem in order (also see the section on contingencies of the effects of leader fairness in the following).

### *Leader Procedural Fairness*

Research on leader procedural fairness is more abundant than research on leader distributive fairness, but not as common as research on leader interactional fairness. In that sense, procedural fairness too seems often to be treated as a more systemic part of fairness and less as an aspect of leadership. Indeed, for some researchers, the defining difference between procedural and interactional fairness more or less seems to be the systemic versus personalized aspect of leadership (Bies, 2005). Procedural fairness may often be up to the leader's discretion, however, and procedural fairness may fruitfully be studied as an aspect of leadership. Indeed, a whole body of literature on participative leadership (see e.g., Yukl, 2002) potentially speaks to the importance of voice as an aspect of leader procedural fairness – the reason not to cover it here is that research on participative leadership typically does not include explicit evidence of the fairness that it may be associated with.

Tyler, Rasinski, and McGraw (1985) show that procedural fairness positively shapes both evaluations of incumbent political leaders (i.e. the president), and evaluations of political institutions. In subsequent studies of legal (Lind & Tyler, 1988), political (Gibson, 2002; Kershaw & Alexander, 2003), and managerial leadership (Kim & Maubourgne, 1993; Tyler & Blader, 2000), studies consistently suggested that people's reactions to leaders were strongly based upon evaluations of the fairness of the procedures through which those leaders exercised their authority.

Several field studies show that procedural fairness may, among other things, affect followers' trust in the leader, and some studies also show that that these feelings of trust may, in turn, explain several other effects. For instance, Folger and Konovsky (1989) showed that leader procedural fairness is positively related to outcome satisfaction, trust in the leader, and organizational commitment. Ramaswami and Singh (2003) find that leader procedural fairness predicts trust in leadership and job satisfaction, and Wat and Shaffer (2005) show that leader procedural/interactional fairness (the measure seems to confound the two) predicts

trust in leadership and OCB. Konovsky and Pugh (1994) found that leader procedural fairness predicted OCB, and that this relationship was mediated by trust in the leader.

Other field research seems to have focused more on the relationship between procedural fairness and satisfaction and commitment. For instance, Miller (1989) reports that leader procedural fairness is positively related to job satisfaction and leadership satisfaction, but unrelated to organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Aquino, Griffeth, Allen, and Hom (1997) report that leader procedural fairness predicted satisfaction with the leader, which mediated the relationship between procedural fairness and turnover intentions. Jeanquart-Barone (1996a) similarly found that leader procedural fairness predicts satisfaction with the leader, and Colquitt (2001) finds that leader procedural fairness predicts leadership evaluations and group commitment. Liao and Rupp (2005) focused not only on leader procedural fairness, but also on socially shared perceptions of fairness (leader procedural fairness climate), and found that both made independent contributions to the prediction of commitment to and satisfaction with the leader. Moreover, they found that leader procedural fairness also predicted organizational commitment and satisfaction, and OCB.

Not all field studies report on the positive consequences of procedural fairness of the leader though. Leung, Wang, and Smith (2001) find that leader procedural fairness does not predict job satisfaction, commitment, leadership satisfaction, or turnover intentions, Rupp and Cropanzano (2002) do not find that leader procedural fairness predicts evaluations of the exchange relationship (cf. LMX), performance, or OCB, and Roberts and Markel (2001) find that leader procedural fairness does not predict claim filing. Note that, as is true of procedural fairness research more generally, field research in leader procedural fairness mostly employs composite measures that aim to canvass several indicators of procedural fairness (cf. Colquitt, 2001). The experimental studies typically focus on manipulations of a single aspect of procedural fairness – often voice.

This experimental evidence generally seems to point to positive effects of leader procedural fairness. Platow et al. (1998) experimentally show that biased (vs. unbiased) allocation of voice to group members is associated with lower leadership endorsement. De Cremer (2003) similarly shows experimentally that leader procedural fairness affects leadership endorsement, and De Cremer and van Knippenberg (2003) show that leader procedural fairness (voice, accuracy) affects leadership effectiveness in engendering follower cooperation. Similar evidence was provided by De Cremer and van Knippenberg (2002) and van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, and De Cremer (2005) in studies that also showed that these findings extend to field contexts (i.e., leaders in organizations). Other research by De Cremer and colleagues suggests that leader procedural fairness may also reflect positively on follower self-esteem and positive affect (De Cremer & Alberts, 2004; De Cremer, van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, Mullenders, & Stinglhamber, 2005).

Focusing more on team decision making settings, Korsgaard, Schwieger, and Sapienza (1995) showed experimentally that leader procedural fairness (voice in decision process and outcome) affects commitment to the decision, group attachment, and trust. Peterson (1999) found in an experiment that leader procedural fairness (voice) in group decision making affected a combined measure of satisfaction with the decision and the leader. Phillips, Douhitt, and Hyland (2001) experimentally showed that two manipulations of leadership akin to voice affected satisfaction with the leader and attachment to the team. Not exclusively focusing on leader procedural fairness but providing important field experimental evidence, Skarlicki and Latham (1996, 1997) show in field experiments that leader training in procedural and interactional fairness may raise perceptions of leader fairness (combined procedural and interactional fairness measure; also see Cole & Latham, 1997) among followers, and that these perceptions, in turn, affect OCB.

The evidence that leader procedural fairness contributes to leadership effectiveness is

thus more abundant and more consistent than the evidence for the role of leader distributive fairness. Clearly thus, leadership researchers may look upon leader procedural fairness as an important predictor of leadership effectiveness. Moreover, justice researchers may want to realize that procedural fairness is not (only) a systemic aspect of justice, but also as an aspect of leadership (Tyler & De Cremer, 2005; cf. Colquitt, 2001).

### *Leader Interactional Fairness*

As noted in the previous, for organizational justice research, interactional fairness seems the “natural home” for leader influences. Reflecting this bias of sorts (i.e., leaders can also be a source of distributive and interactional fairness), most research in leadership and fairness is on interactional fairness. The available research may be roughly divided in research focusing on follower evaluative responses (to the leader, the job, or the organization) and research focusing on relationships with follower behavioral outcomes such as OCB, deviance, and task performance.

Leung et al. (2001) find that leader interactional fairness predicts job satisfaction and commitment (but not leadership satisfaction and turnover intentions), while Leung, Su, and Morris (2001) show in a scenario experiment that leader interactional fairness positively affects trust in and satisfaction with leadership in general as well as openness to (negative) feedback. Colquitt (2001) shows that leader interactional fairness predicts leadership evaluations, collective self-esteem, and OCB. Ramaswami and Singh (2003) similarly find that leader interactional fairness predicts trust in the leader and job satisfaction. Roch and Shanock (2006) show that leader interactional fairness predicts LMX, and Stinglhamber, De Cremer, and Mercken (2006) find that leader interactional fairness predicts trust in the leader through perceived supervisor support (cf. LMX). De Cremer, van Dijke, and Bos (in press) illustrate that leader interactional fairness predicts charismatic leadership perceptions (but leader procedural and distributive fairness do not). Lipponen, Koivisto, and Olkkonen (2005)

find that followers feel more pride and feel more respected the more their leader is interactionally fair. Liao and Rupp (2005) focused on leader interactional fairness as well as socially shared interactional fairness climate, and found that both made independent contributions to the prediction of commitment and satisfaction.

Other studies also focused on (subjective ratings of) behaviors that entail positive (OCB) or negative (deviance) deviations from job descriptions, and task performance. Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, and Taylor (2000) found that leader interactional fairness predicted task performance, OCB, and job satisfaction, mediated by LMX. Finding very similar results, Rupp and Cropanzano (2002) showed that leader interactional fairness predicted OCB and job performance mediated by evaluations of the exchange relationship with the leader (similar to LMX and perceived supervisor support; cf. van Knippenberg, van Dick, & Tavares, in press). In a similar vein, Aryee, Budhwar, and Chen (2002) and Wong, Wong, and Ngo (2002) observed that leader interactional fairness predicted OCB and task performance and that this effect was mediated by trust in the leader. More prone to percept-percept biases, Williams, Pitre, and Zainuba (2002) find that leader interactional fairness predicts OCB intentions.

Focusing more on behaviors less desired by organizations, Aquino, Lewis, and Bradfield (1999) find that leader interactional fairness predicts follower deviance (also see Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Skarlicki, Folger, & Tesluk, 1999). Judge, Scott, and Ilies (2006) find a similar relationship and also obtained a relationship between leader interactional fairness and job satisfaction. Roberts and Markel (2001) find that leader interactional fairness but not leader procedural fairness predicts claim filing. In sum, then, the evidence for the positive relationship between leader interactional fairness on the one hand and evaluative responses as well as desirable behavior (and lack of undesirable behavior) on the other seems quite consistent (cf. Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2002; Colquitt et al., 2001).

*A First Assessment*

Based on the evidence for the “main effects” of leader distributive, procedural, and interactional fairness, a first conclusion is that leader fairness is associated with leadership effectiveness.

Research so far has concentrated mainly on leader interactional fairness, however, and it would be good if future research would build a firmer empirical base for conclusions regarding the role of leader distributive and procedural fairness. Additionally, many of the studies reviewed rely on cross-sectional surveys with single-source percept-percept data. Common method variance may thus have inflated relationships, and more evidence from experimental and multiple-source studies would be valuable. Also, we believe that studies that focus solely on the main effects of leader distributive, procedural, and interactional fairness will not move us much beyond well-established findings in organizational justice research (cf. Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2002; Colquitt et al., 2001). A more full-blown contribution to research in leadership requires research focusing on the link between fairness and other aspects of leadership – either focusing on fairness as an explanatory (mediating) mechanism or on leader fairness as interacting with other aspects of leadership. Research focusing on such relationships is reviewed in the following sections.

*Other Aspects of Leadership Associated with Fairness*

The organizational justice framework identifies the favorability of outcomes received as a factor closely related to fairness. With more favorable outcomes, people generally seem to perceive higher fairness – or care less about fairness (cf. Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). Accordingly, we may expect leadership that directly affects the favorability of follower outcomes to be related to justice perceptions. A recent meta-analysis of the effects of leader reward and punishment by Podsakoff, Bommer, Podsakoff, and Mackenzie (2006) shows exactly this. Leader contingent reward is associated with higher distributive, procedural, and



interactional fairness. In this study they found insufficient evidence for a relationship between contingent punishment, noncontingent reward and punishment and fairness perceptions. However, individual studies suggest that leader punishment too may affect follower fairness experiences. Ball, Travino, and Sims (1993) for instance showed that leader punishment leads to lowered perceptions of distributive and procedural fairness. In a related vein, Gavin, Green, and Fairhurst (1995) found that leader control strategies that seem akin to punishing behavior negatively predicted interactional fairness.

A concern with outcome favorability may also transcend individual self-interest and extend to outcomes for the group or organization, or for members of the group or organization (e.g., van Knippenberg, 2000). Leaders that favor their own group in allocation decisions may thus be seen as more fair than leaders that favor another group. This is precisely what Platow and van Knippenberg (2001) and Duck and Fielding (2003) found (also see Platow et al., 1997, 1998, 2000).

Other aspects of leadership seem more likely to relate to the procedural and interactional aspects of fairness. Niehoff and Moorman (1993), for instance, found that leader monitoring (direct observation; cf. the accuracy dimension of procedural fairness) was associated with higher ratings of procedural and interactional (but not distributive) fairness, and that these fairness ratings explained the relationship between leader monitoring and follower OCB. Work on abusive supervision also seems relevant here. Abusive leadership is conceptualized and operationalized in a way suggesting similarities with interactional fairness, involving such issues as disrespectful leader behavior. Tepper (2000) for instance operationalized abusive leadership in this way, and found that it predicted perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional fairness (entered as a block). Zellars, Tepper, and Duffy (2002) likewise found that abusive leadership is seen as less procedurally fair by followers and these perceptions of fairness mediated the relationship between abusive

leadership and OCB (to the extent that followers perceived OCB as extra-role rather than in-role behavior). Although conceptually the relationship with leader procedural fairness seems somewhat more distal, Tepper and Taylor (2003) found that leader mentoring behavior was positively related to follower perceptions of procedural fairness, and that this explained the relationship between leader mentoring and OCB.

Harder, more coercive influence tactics leave the target of influence less leeway in responding than softer influence tactics and may thus put more strain on the leader-follower relationship than softer tactics (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, Blaauw, & Vermunt, 1999). Accordingly, we may expect that the use of harder tactics is seen as less interactionally fair, and this is exactly what Tepper, Eisenbach, Kirby, and Potter (1998) found. However, they also found that the relationship between hard tactic use and interactional fairness was less pronounced when the leader combined the use of hard tactics with soft tactics. A similar pattern of results was found vis-à-vis resistance to influence.

Analyses of leader-follower relationships in terms of social exchange – most evident in research in leader-member exchange (LMX; Graen & Scandura, 1987) and in perceived supervisor support (PSS; cf. Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) – accord an important role to fairness (reciprocity) considerations. As discussed in the previous, several studies showed that leader fairness predicts LMX.. Bhal (2006), however, reversed the presumed causal sequence and tested a model in which LMX predicts fairness. Results showed that LMX predicted perceptions of procedural and interactional, but not distributive fairness. Procedural and interactional fairness also mediated the relationship between LMX and OCB. This study vis-à-vis the studies discussed earlier raises the issue whether LMX (and PSS) should be seen as causes of perceived fairness or as consequences of perceived fairness, or whether fairness should be seen as implied in the concepts of LMX and PSS (i.e., as correlate or even as part of the concept). The answer to this question awaits conceptual work as well as experimental

work to establish causal linkages.

Pillai, Schriesheim, and Williams (1999) found that more transformational (cf. charismatic) leadership is seen as more procedurally fair and that this relationship mediated the relationship with trust in the leader and with organizational commitment. Trust in turn mediated the relationships between transformational leadership on the one hand and OCB and job satisfaction on the other hand. Transactional (i.e., more exchange-based) leadership predicted perceptions of distributive fairness but not trust, job satisfaction, or OCB. Related to the issue of transformational leadership, Ehrhart (2004) showed that servant leadership was positively related to unit-level OCB, and that this relationship was mediated by justice climate.

Diversity research suggests that individuals that are demographically similar may find it easier to build harmonious, conflict-free work relationships. This tentatively hints at the possibility that similarity in leader-follower relationships may render it more likely that fairness is experienced in the relationship. Both Jeanquart-Barone (1996b) and Wesolowski and Mossholder (1997) find evidence for this notion, showing that followers perceive their leader to be more procedurally fair when he or she is more similar to them in ethnic background. At the same time, however, Wesolowski and Mossholder do not find similar relationships for similarity in age, gender, and educational background, suggesting that the issue may be less straightforward than expected (cf. van Knippenberg & Schippers, in press).

The available evidence thus suggests that follower fairness judgments may help make sense of the effects of different aspects of leadership – especially when they are more closely related to the outcomes associated with leadership, the way leaders arrive at these outcomes, and the quality of interpersonal treatment. At the same time it is clear, however, that there hardly is any systematic effort to understand the effects of leadership through a fairness framework. The main conclusion from the work reviewed in this section thus would seem to

be that leadership research may advance the understanding of leadership effectiveness by more systematically incorporating fairness concerns into the analysis and by the development of a theoretical framework to guide these endeavors.

### *Contingencies of the Effects of Leader Fairness*

A recent review by De Cremer and Tyler (in press) advocated the use of a contingency approach to gain a deeper understanding when fairness will have the most impact as a function of the leadership style accompanying the fairness decision and vice versa (see also De Cremer & Tyler, 2005). In this view, research on the contingencies of the effects of leader fairness can roughly be divided into research that focuses on interactions that flow directly from organizational justice research, and research that really connects with research in leadership and focuses on interactions between leader fairness and aspects of leadership more conventionally distinguished in the leadership literature. The first type of research is important because it extends the basis for research in leadership and fairness, the second type of research is perhaps even more important because it engages with the core issue at stake in research in leadership and fairness – integrating fairness theory into the leadership domain.

Brockner and Wiesenfeld (1996) review a large body of literature to conclude that procedural fairness and distributive fairness (as well as outcome favorability) interact. The more favorable or fair outcomes, the less influence procedural fairness has. Vice versa, the less favorable or fair outcomes, the more procedural fairness matters. Testifying to the applicability of this more general principle to leader fairness, De Cremer and van Knippenberg (2003) show across two experiments that leader procedural fairness (i.e., voice and accuracy) interacts with the favorability of outcomes allocated by the leader to predict group member cooperative behavior. In a related vein, Rahim, Magner, and Shapiro (2000) show that leader interactional fairness interacts with systemic distributive fairness and with systemic procedural fairness in predicting the extent to which follower try to constructively

find integrative solutions when in conflict with their leader. Consistent with the general framework proposed by Brockner and Wiesenfeld (1996), distributive fairness was more strongly related to integrative conflict handling (i.e., followers were more willing to try to find integrative solutions the more they perceived to be treated distributively fair) when leader interactional fairness was low. Somewhat surprisingly, however, procedural fairness had a greater impact with higher interactional fairness, showing that followers were more willing to find integrative conflict solutions with increasing perceptions of procedural fairness, to the extent that they considered their leader to treat them interactionally fair. In a sense focusing on the flip side of cooperation, Skarlicki and Folger (1997) studied retaliative behavior (cf. deviance) and found that leader interactional fairness interacted with systemic procedural and distributive fairness. Retaliative behavior was higher the more negative followers perceived to have been treated on all three justice dimensions (also see Skarlicki, Folger, & Tesluk, 1999).

Working from a similar logic, Jones and Skarlicki (2003) show that systemic distributive fairness reduces turnover for employees reporting low leader interactional fairness, while distributive fairness is unrelated to turnover for employees reporting high leader interactional fairness. In a field experiment, Greenberg (2006) compared a measure of insomnia across a group of nurses in which pay decreased (lowered outcome favorability) and a control group as a function of whether or not leaders had received interactional justice training, and found that leader interactional justice interacted with outcome favorability to predict insomnia – interactional fairness reduced insomnia under low outcome favorability. Barclay, Skarlicki, and Pugh (2005), however, found that the relationship between outcome favorability and inward-focused emotions (i.e., shame and guilt) was more pronounced when either procedural or leader interactional fairness was high versus low. Barclay et al argue that this occurs because when either procedural or interactional justice is low, followers attribute

the cause of their low outcomes to external sources (i.e., to the procedures or their leader) instead of to themselves. They found a similar pattern of results for outward focused emotions (i.e., anger).

Research from a social identity perspective suggests that the standard for distributive fairness may change from intra-group to inter-group context. More specifically, while leaders that favor one group member over the other may be seen as less fair than leaders that do not seem biased in favor of one or the other person, leaders that favor a member of own group over a member of another group may not be seen as less fair than leaders that appear unbiased in allocation decisions. Platow and colleagues provide consistent evidence for exactly this focusing on leadership endorsement as a function of leader allocation behavior in an intra versus intergroup context (Platow et al., 1997, 1998, 2000). Moreover, Platow et al. (1998) demonstrate that the same principle applies to leader procedural fairness (voice).

Also working from a social identity perspective, Lind, Kray, and Thompson (2001) experimentally show how group identification moderates the effects of leader procedural fairness. Specifically, they find that the timing (i.e., earlier vs. later in the collaborative relationship) of a procedurally unfair event (no voice) affects fairness judgments and acceptance of the leader's authority (more negative impact the earlier the unfair event), but only for followers that identify highly with the group.

Research in the effects of leader fairness has also been attuned to individual differences as moderator – mostly dispositional differences in feelings about self and aggressive and hostile tendencies. What all these studies seem to have in common is the argument that dispositional differences may render some individuals more sensitive to justice than others. Skarlicki et al. (1999) for instance show that leader interactional fairness interacts with systemic distributive fairness and follower negative affectivity as well as follower agreeableness to explain retaliative behavior of followers. Leader interactional fairness and

distributive fairness only interact for followers low in agreeableness and for followers high in negative affectivity to predict retaliative behavior (which is highest when both aspects of fairness are low). In a related vein, focusing on leader procedural rather than interactional fairness, Tepper, Duffy, Henle, and Lambert (2006) found that the relationship between leader procedural fairness and leader evaluations is stronger for followers that are high in negative affectivity.

Brennan and Skarlicki (2004) find that leader interactional fairness predicts OCB positively for followers high in self-discipline, but negatively for followers low in self-discipline. They also find that leader interactional fairness predicts commitment and turnover intentions only for individuals low in hostility. Judge et al. (2006), in contrast, find that leader interactional fairness predicts state hostility more strongly for followers high in trait hostility. Focusing on aggressiveness rather than hostility, Aquino, Galperin, and Bennett (2004) find that leader interactional fairness and follower aggressiveness interact to affect followers with different status positions (operationalized in terms of race, gender, and hierarchical position) differently in terms of relationships with deviance. Also focusing on deviance, Henle (2005) shows that leader interactional fairness interacts with follower socialization and follower impulsivity. Interactional fairness was more strongly associated with lower deviance for followers low in socialization and high in impulsivity.

De Cremer (2003) demonstrated experimentally that leader procedural fairness and follower self-esteem interact (stronger effects for followers lower in self-esteem; cf. Vermunt, van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, & Blaauw, 2001) in predicting leadership endorsement. Related to notions of social identity investigated by Lind et al. (2001), De Cremer and Alberts (2004) find in an experimental study that leader procedural fairness (voice) interacts with followers need to belong (cf. a desire for group affiliation) to affect follower emotions. Follower emotions were more positive under conditions of voice, but only

for individuals with a higher need to belong. Liao and Rupp (2006) find that procedural fairness climate is more strongly positive related commitment to the leader and satisfaction with the leader for individuals with a stronger justice orientation (i.e., who are more sensitive to justice).

Other studies have focused on the context in which leadership is enacted – climate or culture – as a moderator of the influence of leader fairness. Lee, Pillutla, and Law (2000) showed that leader procedural and interactional fairness are more strongly related to trust in the leader in lower power distance cultures. Ambrose and Schminke (2003) found that followers had more trust in their leader when he or she was perceived to be interactionally fair, but also showed that this relationship was stronger when followers worked in organizations with a more organic instead of a more mechanistic organizational culture. Moliner, Martinez, Peiro, Ramos, and Cropanzano (2005) find that leader interactional fairness is associated with less burnout especially in stronger interactional fairness climates. Erdogan and Liden (2006) and Erdogan, Liden, and Kraimer (2006) show that the relationship between leader interactional fairness and LMX is contingent on collectivism: stronger effects are found in more collectivistic cultures. Erdogan et al. show that team orientation culture moderates the relationship between leader interactional fairness and LMX in a similar vein.

While all the studies discussed so far in the section may be categorized as first and foremost justice studies, a few studies have more explicitly engaged with the leadership literature to integrate insights from leadership research and justice research. De Cremer and van Knippenberg (2002) find evidence across three studies using different methods (laboratory experiment, scenario experiment, field survey) that leader procedural fairness (voice) in interaction with leader self-sacrificing versus self-benefiting behavior leads to higher follower cooperative behavior. They also show that this interactive effect is mediated



by group identification. De Cremer, van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, Mullenders, and Stinglhamber (2005) also focused on leader procedural fairness (voice), and show that the positive relationship between leader procedural fairness and follower self-esteem is more pronounced when the leader was high in rewarding behavior. De Cremer (in press) shows across an experimental and field study that leader distributive fairness influenced followers' negative emotions, but only so when the leader did not use an autocratic and pushy decision-making style.

Platow and van Knippenberg (2001) demonstrated experimentally that endorsement of ingroup versus outgroup-favoring versus distributively even-handed leaders was contingent on leader group prototypicality (i.e., the extent to which the leader is representative of the group identity; see Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003) and group identification. Followers highly identifying with the group endorsed group prototypical leaders regardless of their distributive decisions, while they only endorsed non-prototypical leaders if they favored ingroup. Followers identifying less with the group endorsed an even-handed leader most. Following a logic related to the Platow and van Knippenberg (2001) study, van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, and De Cremer (2005) argue that leader group prototypicality increases trust in the leader and thus renders leadership effectiveness less contingent on leader procedural fairness. This prediction was supported across a lab, a field, and a scenario study – both for ratings of leadership effectiveness and for a measure of cooperative behavior. Lipponen, Koivisto, and Olkkonen (2005) show that leader group prototypicality may also increase the sensitivity to fairness. They find that leader interactional fairness and leader group prototypicality interacted in the predicting of follower feelings of pride and respect – fairness was more strongly related to these evaluations with higher leader group prototypicality.

In sum then, by far the larger body of research in the contingencies of the effects of

leader fairness is probably better classified as further developments of justice analyses than research making a true effort to integrate the leadership and the justice research domains. From the current perspective, these studies are important because they sensitize us to the need to take contingencies of the effects of leader fairness into account – whether these are other aspects of fairness, follower characteristics, or more cultural variables. Remarkably little research has been done on the interactive effects of leader fairness and other aspects of leadership, however, and here potentially lies the greatest challenge for research in leadership and fairness.

### *Now What? Some Concluding Thoughts*

Leaders are important sources of fairness and unfairness in organizations (as well as outside organizations). We assert that research in leadership and fairness should integrate insights from both traditions to come to a more sophisticated understanding of the role of fairness in leadership effectiveness. In the present review, we aimed to define the field of leadership and fairness, and identify its main research questions. Most importantly, we aimed to assess the state of the art in the field. In addition, we also aimed to identify an agenda for future research in leadership and fairness.

If one thing is clear in relation to the main goal of the current study, it is that leader fairness matters. Leader fairness, whether in distributive, procedural, or interactional terms, feeds into leadership effectiveness. Leaders that are more fair build better relationships with their followers (e.g., trust, LMX, PSS), engender more positive attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, commitment) and emotions, and seem able to engender more desirable (e.g., task performance, OCB, cooperation) and less undesirable (e.g., deviance, retaliation) behavior. Importantly too, several field experiments show that leader procedural and interactional fairness can be trained (Cole & Latham, 1997; Greenberg, 2006; Skarlicki & Latham, 1996, 1997). From a human resource management or leadership development perspective, leader

fairness therefore provides a clear angle to improve leadership effectiveness.

At the same time, however, to let leader fairness not be “just another factor”, it would seem essential to actively explore the potential to integrate (or contrast) insights from theories on (leader) fairness with theories of leadership effectiveness (cf. van Knippenberg, & Hogg, 2003). In this respect, the current state of the art may provide a basis, but most of the work still needs to be done. When it comes to the potential of fairness as a mediating mechanism explaining the effects leader characteristics or behaviors and to the interactive effects of leader fairness and other aspects of leadership, we have only just begun to explore. There is for instance a growing interest in ethical and moral leadership, and this is clearly related to issues of leader fairness. Indeed, recent research in ethical leadership has validated a measure of ethical leadership based on its relationship with a measure of leader (interactional) fairness (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005) or has included fairness elements in the measure of ethical leadership (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, in press). This raises the question to what extent the justice framework is useful and has added value in developing theory in ethical leadership, and to what extent it may inform the measurement and empirical study of ethical leadership.

Of course, research on ethical leadership is a relatively new research direction, but also the more traditional and established leadership styles may be strongly related to issues of fairness and these relationships need to be examined in greater detail as well. For example, very recently, Judge, Piccolo, and Ilies (2004) suggested that “the integration of the Ohio State factors with justice theory is an important area for future research” (p. 45). A specific leadership style that according to Judge et al. (2004) is very representative of the Ohio State factors (which have consideration and initiation as two important leadership dimensions) is transformational leadership. In fact, Burns (1978) argued that transformational leaders encourage followers to embrace moral values such as justice, equality and the interests of the

collective, suggesting that “transformational leaders move followers to higher stages of moral development by directing their attention to important principles and end values as justice and equality” (Brown & Trevino, 2003, p. 158; cf. Pillai et al., 1999). Thus, future research is best served by examining the value of fairness within both established and relatively new leadership traditions.

Research on the interactive effects of leader fairness and other aspects of leadership seems to have mainly focused on the role of procedural and interactional fairness in instilling trust in the leader and addressing control-related concerns (e.g., De Cremer & Tyler, in press; van Knippenberg et al., 2005; cf. Brockner, Siegel, Daly, Tyler, & Martin, 1997; Tyler, 1994), and in conveying social evaluations (e.g., Lipponen et al., 2005; cf. Vermunt et al., 2001; Tyler, 1999). Building on these analyses, we may more generally propose that leader (procedural and interactional) fairness may moderate the influence of aspects of leadership that are either associated with trust in the leader and follower control concerns, or with a concern with and sensitivity to social evaluation. That is, leader fairness may be especially influential when other aspects of leadership are less able to instill trust in the leader (e.g., absent other signs of leader commitment to the group or organization; van Knippenberg et al., 2005) or raise follower concerns about how they are socially evaluated (e.g., when the leader is seen as an ingroup rather than an outgroup leader; Tyler, 1999). With this general proposition as a starting point, leadership research may make some additional steps in integrating insights from justice theory and theories of leadership effectiveness.

As a matter of fact, using a contingency approach in which both leadership styles and leader fairness can act as moderators has several theoretical and practical implications relevant to both theory development and managerial practice. With respect to theory development, it is clear that this contingency approach will help us to understand better when fairness enacted by the leader matters more versus less as a function of specific aspects of

leadership. Thus, leadership styles may constitute an important class of moderators to deepen our understanding of when and why fairness matters in organizations. Vice versa, specific aspects of leadership may become more or less effective depending on leader's distributive, procedural, or interactional fairness. As such, aspects of fairness may represent necessary conceptual tools to understand when and why different aspects of leadership feed into leadership effectiveness.

Understanding these interactive effects is important to the development of our understanding of leadership and fairness. Equally important, it would seem, is a further development of our understanding of the processes mediating these effects. Why do leader fairness and other aspects of leadership interact to affect follower attitudes and behavior? The work reviewed already highlighted the role of trust in the leader and follower concerns with social evaluation. Another processes that is likely to play an important role has to do with follower identity and self-concept. In both research in organizational justice and leadership the important role of self and identity has been highlighted in recent theoretical frameworks. More precisely, fairness has been noted to influence a variety of employees' reactions, because it affects their self-evaluations, their identification with the organization, and their (self-conceptual) uncertainty; all psychological outcomes that have significant influences on employees' citizenship and performance (e.g., De Cremer & Tyler, 2005; Tyler & Lind, 1992). In a similar vein, it is interesting to note that recent views on leadership have also stressed the importance of self and identity-related processes to determine leadership effectiveness (Lord & Brown, 2004; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003; van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004). Both leadership and fairness have the potential to shape people's self-evaluations and commitment as such influencing decisions and behavior within the work context. It is thus clear that another important task for researchers focusing on the relationship between fairness and leadership is to understand the pivotal role of the self

and identity in this process.

Given the clear importance of leader fairness, another important question for future research in leadership and fairness would pertain to the determinants of leader fairness. Such determinants may derive from a variety of sources such as leader dispositions (Turner, Barling, Epitropaki, Butcher, & Milner, 2002), follower characteristics and behavior (Korsgaard, Roberson, & Rymph, 1998), or more situational influences on leader behavior. Developing and testing theory concerning the influences on the fairness of leadership may be particularly important in terms of the management of effective leadership. Also, fairness arguably is a virtue in itself, and for that reason alone developing an understanding of the ways to manage and influence leader fairness would seem highly valuable to organizational practice.

In conclusion, then, research in leadership and fairness clearly speaks to the importance of fairness in explaining leadership effectiveness. At the same time, it raises more questions than it answers when it concerns the relationship between theories of leadership and theories of justice. In that sense, one of the primary contributions of the present review is that of a “call to arms” to leadership researchers and justice researchers alike to explore the interface of leadership and fairness theories.

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