

Leader–Team Congruence in Power Distance Values and Team Effectiveness: The Mediating Role of Procedural Justice Climate

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We examine the effect of (in)congruence between leaders' and teams' power distance values on team effectiveness. We hypothesize that the (in)congruence between these values would differentially predict team effectiveness, with procedural justice climate serving as a mediator. Using multisource data and polynomial regression, we found that similarities (and differences) between leaders' and their teams' power distance values can have consequential effects on teams' justice climate and, ultimately, their effectiveness (viz., team performance and team organizational citizenship behavior). We conclude that to fully understand the implications of power distance, one should consider the multiple perspectives of both leaders and team members.

Keywords: power distance values, value congruence theory, procedural justice climate, team performance, team organizational citizenship behavior

A considerable volume of research has accumulated concerning the beneficial effects of congruence between the values (i.e., beliefs about normatively desirable behaviors) of employees and organizations (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Ostroff & Judge, 2007). A fundamental assumption of this research is that outcomes are a function of the interaction between a person and his or her environment (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006)—where a good fit (or match) in values produces positive outcomes and a poor fit (or mismatch) in values results in negative outcomes. Indeed, research has consistently demonstrated that when individuals' values match those of their employing organizations, they are more committed, satisfied, and wish to continue their employment relationship (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). This research has unquestionably enriched our understanding of value congruence at the level of individual employees. Nevertheless, scholars (e.g., Gibson, Cooper, & Conger, 2009; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Seong, Kristof-Brown, Park, Hong, & Shin, 2012) have also suggested that this focus on individual-level

congruence effects may be limiting, as it neglects the shift toward team-based organizations that requires managers to “lead and motivate not only individuals but also teams as a whole” (Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen, & Rosen, 2007, p. 331). As such, researchers have yet to consider the dynamic interplay between a formal leader's values and his or her team's shared values despite consistent entreaties for extending value congruence concepts to higher levels of analysis (DeRue & Hollenbeck, 2007; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011).

Hence, significant questions pertaining to the confluence between leaders' and teams' values remain unanswered. Does it matter whether leaders and their teams hold differing beliefs about normatively desirable behaviors (e.g., those pertaining to authority and status differences)? And if yes, what are the implications for team functioning and its effectiveness? These questions are important from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Theoretically, whereas scholars have long acknowledged that a team's values can substantially influence the social system as a whole (Locke, 1976; Taras, Kirkman, & Steel, 2010), we likewise recognize that a leader's values will play an important role in how he or she prefers to supervise team members *in toto* (cf. Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007; see also Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001). As these ideas suggest, and given the practical reality that organizations are increasingly turning to teams because they are believed to have more and better resources than individuals, it is critical that we gain a better understanding of value congruence at the leader–team interface.

The purpose of the present study was to address this gap in the literature. To do so, we build on team effectiveness literature that adopts a multiple-stakeholder perspective, wherein perceptions are collected from different stakeholders (i.e., team leaders and team members) in order to better understand what contributes to team processes and team outcomes (Bashshur, Hernández, & González-

This article was published Online First September 23, 2013.

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We thank Jeff Edwards for data-analysis suggestions. Also, Abbie Shipp, Jennifer Jordan, Lisa Lambert, Vas Taras, and Jane Yang were helpful in vetting a draft manuscript.

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Romá, 2011; Gibson et al., 2009). Apart from team members' shared values, its formal leader also has a set of values that may or may not match those of his or her team, or what we call *leader–team fit*.¹ In particular, we investigate the joint effect of leaders' individually held power distance values and their teams' power distance values on two distal team outcomes (viz., team performance and team organizational citizenship behavior). We focus on one cultural value, *power distance*, because power, status, and authority differences are an inherent part of the organizational landscape (Blader & Chen, 2012) given its pertinence for how a team's members perceive and interact with its leader (Kirkman, Chen, Farh, Chen, & Lowe, 2009; Schaubroeck, Lam, & Cha, 2007). At both the individual and team levels, power distance refers to the degree to which a focal entity is accepting of an unequal distribution of power (Kirkman et al., 2009; J. Yang, Mossholder, & Peng, 2007). On this basis, we conceptualize and assess power distance congruence between leader and team in terms of *objective fit*, which assumes leader and team power distance values exist independently of one another (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). *Power distance values at the leader level* refer to the extent to which a leader expects his or her subordinates to acknowledge a formal power relationship and, therefore, be more obedient to and accept a leader's directive influence (Hofstede, 2001). Furthermore, as characterized by Schaubroeck et al. (2007) and J. Yang et al. (2007), *power distance values at the team level* reflect team members' shared preferences regarding the degree to which their leader's directives should be respected and shown deference.

Initial evidence suggests that power distance values held by subordinates (e.g., Kirkman et al., 2009; Lian, Ferris, & Brown, 2012) and teams (e.g., Schaubroeck et al., 2007) can substantively influence what is expected from authority figures as well as how they perceive and respond to managerial decision making and leadership styles. Yet, missing from this literature is a study examining the compatibility between a leader's and his or her team's power distance values and how the degree of fit or misfit will relate to team-level outcomes. It follows that an important area of needed inquiry is a consideration of how congruence between a leader's and a team's preferences about the formal power relationship might affect team functioning, as well as the potential negative impact that may occur when leader–team preferences for power differentials are misaligned. In regard to this latter point, a study conducted by Gibson et al. (2009) suggests that teams and their leaders may “not always see eye to eye” (p. 62). Given this possibility, the adoption of a single stakeholder's point of view (commonly referred to as *subjective fit*) is unlikely to provide a sufficient basis from which to understand the influence process between leaders and team members *en bloc* (see, e.g., Uhl-Bien, 2006). Consequently, rather than use a leader-centric or follower-centric approach (e.g., Howell & Shamir, 2005; Meindl, 1990) when developing and testing our conceptual model (see Figure 1), we propose that the interplay (objective fit or misfit) between leader and team power distance values will critically influence team functioning and effectiveness, and will do so above and beyond the main effects of leader and team values. In short, the present research not only integrates but extends value congruence, leadership, and team effectiveness literatures.

A second contribution is that we begin to explore plausible mediators in an attempt to explain *how* and *why* leader–team

congruence effects associated with power distance transfer to team outcomes. We focus on a distinct team-level cognition that is likely to be affected by leader–team power distance (in)congruence—*procedural justice climate* (PJC), defined as an emergent state that reflects “how fairly the team as a whole is treated procedurally” by authority figures (Colquitt, Noe, & Jackson, 2002, p. 84). We concentrated on procedural justice because, as Naumann and Bennett (2000) and Kirkman et al. (2009) have pointed out, fairness perceptions are most commonly framed around leader behavior, and, in counterpoint, leaders are often charged with enacting changes to policies and procedures (i.e., leaders as climate engineers). For example, to the extent a leader's decision-making behavior (guided by his or her values) is consistent with team member's preferences (i.e., congruence in the value of power distance), we predict the team will perceive such acts as reasonable and fair (e.g., if members, as a whole, prefer to not be included in the decision-making process and they are not, there is no violation of justice expectations). Conversely, an incongruence of power distance values across leaders and teams will lead to a violation of expectations and, therefore, have a negative impact on fairness perceptions. In turn, we draw on pertinent theory and empirical evidence that suggests procedural justice when operationalized at the team level is a key predictor of team effectiveness (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2002; Whitman, Caleo, Carpenter, Horner, & Bernerth, 2012). Our aim in doing so was to understand the underlying processes of leader–team value congruence effects on team effectiveness, as reflected in team performance and team organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). Furthermore, by incorporating PJC in our conceptual model, we respond to recent calls for integration of leadership and justice climate literatures (Li & Cropanzano, 2009; van Knippenberg, de Cremer, & van Knippenberg, 2007). These scholars have contended that collective fairness perceptions are fundamental to linking leadership inputs to team outcomes, yet with few exceptions (i.e., Ehrhart, 2004), empirical evidence does not exist.

Model Development and Hypotheses

Two prior studies have taken a multiple-stakeholder approach to investigate congruence effects between leaders and teams—both of which focused on the direct effects of perceptual congruence on team effectiveness outcomes. Gibson et al. (2009) showed that congruence between a leader and a team regarding goal accomplishment and constructive conflict were both positively related to team performance. Bashshur et al. (2011) demonstrated that similarities in leader and team perceptions of organizational support resulted in increased team performance. Yet, researchers have called for more integrative models that go beyond leader and team perceptions of the same social stimuli (Gibson et al.) and examine the mediators that help to explain how leader–team interactions

¹ Our approach parallels the person–environment fit domain dubbed person–group (PG) or person–team fit, which focuses on the interpersonal compatibility between individual team members and their work teams (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). Interestingly, based on their review of the literature, Kristof-Brown and Guay (2011) noted that of all types of fit, PG fit research is the most nascent.

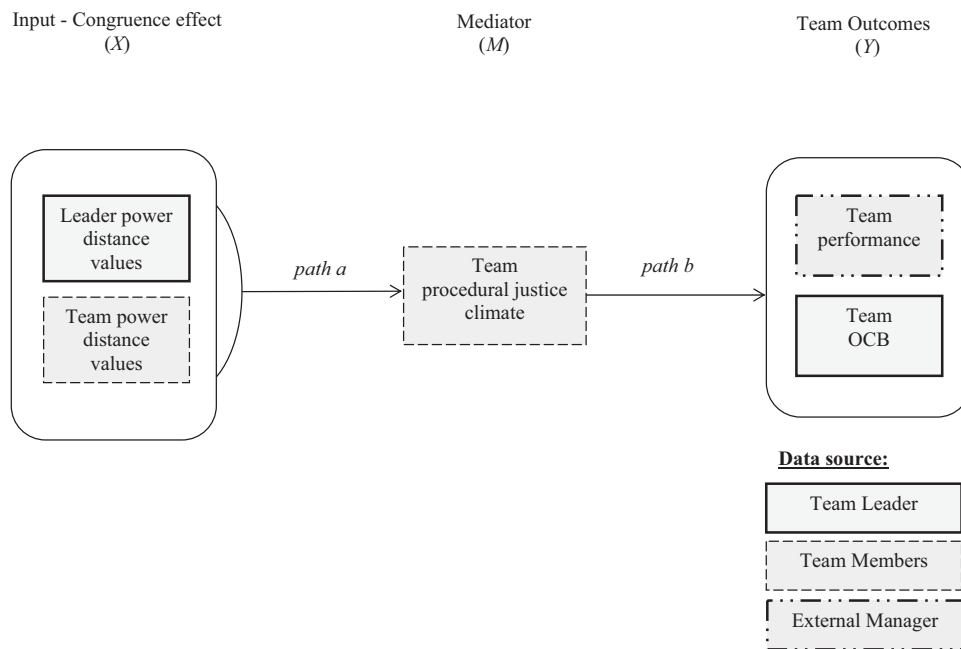


Figure 1. Hypothesized model of procedural justice climate linking power distance congruence to team effectiveness. OCB = organizational citizenship behavior.

influence intended outcomes (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Schaubroeck et al., 2007).

We therefore draw on the above-mentioned literature to propose a multiple-stakeholder perspective for leader–team value (i.e., power distance) congruence, but we also extend this research by advancing and testing an indirect effects model based on the input-mediator-output (IMO) framework (e.g., Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson, 2008). Specifically, our conceptual model considers the effects of value congruence (fit or misfit between leader–team power distance values) on the mediator (PJC) as well as the indirect effect that is carried through to team performance and team OCB by the mediator. We thus have shifted our study’s focus to more of a process view of congruence effects between teams and their leaders, rather than a simple focus on direct effects to outcomes (see Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006, for a detailed discussion). To the extent our proposed relationships receive empirical support, we advance value congruence research by examining fit-related phenomena at the leader–team level and, by extension, enrich our understanding of how value congruence has ramifications for leadership dynamics and team-level functioning. In what follows, we more fully delineate the constructs in our conceptual model and discuss the anticipated relationships among them.

Power Distance Congruence Effects on PJC

According to prior research (e.g., Kirkman et al., 2009; Schaubroeck et al., 2007), power distance is more theoretically relevant to leadership dynamics than other cultural values (e.g., individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance). This research likewise provides theoretical and empirical support for assessing culture-based values—including power distance—at the level of

work teams (Schaubroeck et al., 2007; J. Yang et al., 2007, and references therein). Thus, our focus on leaders’ and teams’ power distance values is narrower than the cultural dimension (i.e., differences between societal units) proposed by Hofstede (2001); however, it is in line with research in applied psychology and management.

As noted at the outset, we draw on value congruence literature and a multiple-stakeholder perspective to advance the notion that the confluence of leader–team power distance values—and whether they are aligned or not—will be significantly predictive of PJC levels. We theorize that PJC will be maximized when leader and team power distance values are perfectly matched. This prediction is based, in part, on prior research that suggests a team’s workplace climate is engineered via interactions between team members and their leaders (Gibson et al., 2009; Uhl-Bien, 2006). On this basis, congruence in leader–team power distance values suggests both parties hold similar preferences regarding the significance of hierarchical decision making (Tyler, Lind, & Huo, 2000).

With regard to high-power distance leaders and teams, decision-making authority clearly rests with the leader (Javidan, Dorfman, Sully de Luque, & House, 2006). According to Brockner et al. (2001), high-power distance leaders will use autocratic behavior with limited one-way communication, will not tolerate disagreement, and view criticism on the part of team members as insubordination. By the same token, high-power distance teams willingly comply with leaders’ directives, would prefer to not be involved in decision making, and may even feel distressed if asked to assume responsibilities they believe fall within the leadership domain (Tyler et al., 2000). Hence, when power distance values are congruent and high, team leaders will rarely ask for input and

team members favor not giving it (i.e., both parties prefer a minimal amount of exchange). In such a situation, teams should be more likely to believe that decisions are being made in a procedurally fair manner because their leaders' behavior adheres to teams' preferred *modus operandi*.

Low-power distance leaders are more likely to consult with team members when making decisions, and teams with low-power distance values prefer consultation and discussion to the hierarchical decision-making styles that are characteristic of high-power distance leaders. Low-power distance leaders and teams also view functional disagreements as appropriate and even desirable. For this reason, when both parties' power distance values are aligned but low, we likewise anticipate that teams will feel fairly treated.

The logic in the preceding paragraphs has clear parallels with the notion of supplementary fit (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987), which exists when "... two entities [i.e., leader and team] share similar characteristics, and because of that similarity are compatible" (Kristof-Brown, 2000, p. 646). As such, when leaders and the teams they lead have congruent value systems, they interpret and classify interactions in a similar way. Values similarity also serves to enhance predictability and reduce ambiguity (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998), thereby fulfilling a team's need for role clarity. In effect, supplementary fit lowers transaction costs between leaders and teams, reduces the need for reinforcement efforts, and lessens the likelihood of confusing leader-team interactions that may be viewed by teams as procedurally unfair.

These considerations combine to provide a theoretical basis for expecting a positive relationship between leader-team power distance congruence and PJC, such that fairness perceptions will be maximized when leaders' and teams' power distance values are aligned. In this respect, when a high- (low-) power distance leader is paired with a similarly high- (low-) power distance team, we posit that a similarity in preferences with respect to the formal reporting relationship between leaders and teams will be instrumental in fostering procedural fairness perceptions among team members. In contrast, when a leader's conduct is inconsistent with team preferences, it seems likely that those affected will experience a violation of procedural justice rules (i.e., from a team's perspective, preferred standards for the enactment of formal directives or policies were not respected). It follows that incongruence in power distance values will be detrimental to procedural fairness perceptions because of the misaligned preferences about the prerogatives of authority. We thus predict higher levels of PJC for teams when leaders and teams have matched, as opposed to mismatched, power distance values.

Hypothesis 1: Congruence between leader and team power distance values will be positively related to teams' PJC.

It should also be pointed out that the power distance values of leaders and teams include role prescriptions specifying what should and should not be done by both parties (Hofstede, 2001). In a high-power distance context, leaders do not consult teams when making decisions, and team members simply follow or obey their leader's decision. In a low-power distance context, team members are allowed more flexibility, and participation in decision making is encouraged. This suggests two scenarios of leader-team incongruence in which the influence process between leaders and teams will entail mismatched roles involving unequal status. We expect

that the consequences of incongruence are asymmetrical in the sense that it will be more detrimental to PJC when a leader's power distance values are higher than a team's as compared to when a leader's power distance values are lower than a team's.

In a mismatched situation in which a leader's power distance values are higher than his or her team's, the high-power distance leader assumes a wide range of prerogatives and authority with respect to the low-power distance team. On this basis, a low-power distance team may feel especially unfairly treated when led by a high-power distance leader. K.-S. Yang (1995) has contended that in unequal power relationships, the two parties' expectations are "asymmetric" (p. 24) in that the role prescriptions for the party with less power (i.e., a low-power distance team) are specified by those with greater power (i.e., a high-power distance leader) in much more detail than is actually preferred. As such, when a high-power distance leader is charged with commanding a low-power distance team, we predict that teams' perceptions of PJC will be adversely influenced by the leader's autocratic behavior, including the tendency to make all the decisions themselves, micromanage a team's members, and suppress their ideas (Javidan et al., 2006).

In a mismatched situation in which a leader's power distance values are lower as compared with his or her team's power distance, we anticipate that the team's PJC will be impacted to a lesser extent given that the leader's consultative style of decision making may be viewed by members as fair (although uncomfortable). A high-power distance team prefers its leader to provide all direction—and yet, at the same time, the lower power distance leader elicits, receives, and responds to team members' input. As initially put forward by Kirkman et al. (2009), although a team's individual members may view such leader requests as paradoxical, they are unlikely to question them (out of respect for legitimate authority), and, thus, we reason the team as a whole may still feel fairly treated procedurally. Although it is indirect, empirical evidence in support of our reasoning exists (see, e.g., Moon et al., 2004; Phillips, Douthitt, & Hyland, 2001). We therefore hypothesize an asymmetrical incongruence effect that:

Hypothesis 2: PJC will decline more sharply when a leader's power distance values are higher than a team's power distance values as compared to when a leader's power distance values are lower than a team's power distance values.

The Mediating Role of PJC

It is widely acknowledged that team effectiveness is a multidimensional construct. For our purposes, we build on research suggesting that team performance and team OCB are distinct, results-oriented criteria that provide a strategic competitive advantage to organizations (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004; Hu & Liden, 2011). Team performance focuses on task completion and goal accomplishment, whereas team OCB reflects members' discretionary behaviors that are not formally required but are necessary for effective team functioning (Organ et al., 2006). Furthermore, we draw on the IMO framework (Mathieu et al., 2008) and, thus, focus on the *indirect effect* of leader-team congruence in power distance values on team effectiveness via PJC—as the present investigation's purpose was to address *how* and through *what* mechanisms power distance congruence might influence team effectiveness criteria.

In keeping with this aim, we previously hypothesized that congruence in leader–team power distance values would be positively associated with PJC—and we expect PJC, in turn, to directly influence team performance and team OCB. We base these latter predictions on both the instrumental and relational models of justice. The instrumental model of procedural justice proposes that a team’s members are motivated by fair treatment (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). According to this perspective, fair team treatment reassures members that the team’s interests will be safeguarded and advanced (Lind & Tyler, 1988). As a result (and likewise consistent with social exchange theory; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), teams are more likely to perform better and engage in extrarole behavior as a way of improving its welfare. The relational model of justice argues that procedural justice is a key driver of team effectiveness because fair procedures signify to teams that they are appreciated by authority figures (Tyler & Lind, 1992; Tyler et al., 2000). In teams where members feel fairly treated, the relational model posits that team members will be more willing to enact behaviors that not only support the team’s leader but also help the team as a whole. As Roberson and Colquitt (2005) have explained, it should not be surprising that “as teams feel more fairly treated . . . members may be more likely to fulfill their role requirements and exert effort to benefit the team” (pp. 599–600). The positive associations between PJC and team performance and team OCB have been amply demonstrated (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Colquitt et al., 2002; Ehrhart, 2004; Li & Cropanzano, 2009). In line with the IMO framework and consistent with existing evidence that shows power distance values are more proximally related to job attitudes than to behavior (Taras et al., 2010), we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: Leader–team congruence in power distance values has a positive indirect effect on (a) team performance through PJC and (b) team OCB through PJC.

Method

Sample and Procedure

Study participants were employed by one of two service companies in China (Company A and Company B, hereafter). Company A specializes in networks and systems integration services. Teams in Company A can be characterized as technical support teams (i.e., performing routine system maintenance, upgrading client systems, and solving technical problems). Company B is a full-service travel agency specializing in both corporate and leisure travel. Teams in Company B performed a variety of tasks, ranging from the marketing and selling of travel packages to booking hotel reservations or guided tours. Our interviews with senior-level representatives from both companies indicated that the work teams were well defined, performed interdependent tasks, and were held jointly accountable for team performance by a formally appointed team leader (see Mathieu et al., 2008).

Data were collected from three independent sources (as part of a larger data collection effort; Carter, Armenakis, Feild, & Mossholder, in press). We distributed questionnaires to individual team members, formal team leaders, and external higher level managers (i.e., one hierarchical level above the teams). The team member survey asked participants to provide self-ascriptive ratings on their

power distance values, procedural justice perceptions, and demographic variables. The team leader survey requested that they provide ratings of their own power distance values along with demographic variables. It also asked leaders to assess each team member’s OCB. We asked the external managers to rate the overall performance of teams under their direct supervision.² All participants were assured confidentiality of their responses. Completed surveys were mailed directly to the research team in postage-paid envelopes.

For Company A, the average actual team size was five, ranging from three to six team members. Of the 52 teams in this company, we obtained usable data from 43 teams, yielding a team-level response rate of 83%. On average, three team members ($SD = 0.52$) completed the survey (not including the formal team leader) for a mean within-team response rate of 74%. A representative team member was male (81%), 26 years of age, and with an average organizational tenure of 2.2 years. A representative team leader was male (77%), 31 years of age, and with an average organizational tenure of 5.4 years. For Company B, the average actual team size was four, ranging from three to five team members. We received usable data from 35 teams out of 45 teams in this company, yielding a team-level response rate of 78%. On average, three team members ($SD = 0.28$) completed the survey (not including the formal team leader), resulting in a mean within-team response rate of 81%. A representative team member was male (66%), 26 years of age, and with an average organizational tenure of 3.4 years. A representative team leader was male (51%), 35 years of age, with an average organizational tenure of 10.9 years.

We pooled the teams ($n = 78$) into one data set to increase the statistical power of our analyses.³ We examined the potential for nonresponse bias based on personnel records. Across both companies, there were no significant differences between respondents and nonrespondents on gender, age, and organizational tenure.

Measures

All measures used a Likert response scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A double-blinded translation (Brislin, 1980) was followed when translating the items from English to Chinese. All study measures used in the present study have been shown to exhibit satisfactory psychometric properties in Chinese organizational contexts (e.g., Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007; Kirkman et al., 2009; Schaubroeck et al., 2007; J. Yang et al., 2007).

Power distance. We assessed team leaders’ and team members’ power distance values using the six-item measure developed by Dorfman and Howell (1988). Leaders and team members provided a self-ascriptive rating of their personal values; that is, the items referred to individuals’ conceptions about how managers and

² In total, three external (upper-level) managers rated team performance. Our discussions with company representatives indicated that these upper-level managers worked and interacted closely with the teams under their direct supervision.

³ Controlling for organizational differences (using a single dummy) yielded a pattern of results consistent with those found when we controlled for the three external managers. Due to the significant overlap between these two sets of dummy variables, the ensuing analyses controlled for the external manager clustering effects only.

subordinates should behave in general (not specific to any one organization or work unit). Sample items include “Managers should make most decisions without consulting subordinates” and “Subordinates should not disagree with managers’ decisions.” For leader power distance, the reliability was .89. For team power distance, we followed prior research (J. Yang et al., 2007) and used a direct consensus composition model (Chan, 1998) when assessing members’ responses. The reliability for team power distance was .94.

PJC. We used a slightly modified version of Moorman’s (1991) seven-item procedural justice measure. Consistent with research on justice climate (J. Yang et al., 2007), we modified the seven items to reflect a referent-shift consensus model (Chan, 1998). As such, the items referenced practices enacted by a team’s specific (formal or appointed) leader. Sample items include “Our manager generates standards so that decisions can be made with consistency” and “Our manager has all parties affected by the decision represented.” The reliability for this measure was .92.

Team performance. For the purpose of the present study, external managers provided ratings of team performance. In line with prior research (e.g., Lam, Schaubroeck, & Brown, 2004; Schaubroeck et al., 2007), we used a three-item performance measure originally developed by Heilman, Block, and Lucas (1992). Sample items include “This team gets its work done very effectively” and “This team has performed its job well.” The reliability for this measure was .80.

Team OCB. Team leaders were asked to judge each team member’s OCB using a 24-item measure developed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990). Consistent with previous research (e.g., Sun, Aryee, & Law, 2007), the five OCB facets (viz., altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue) were summed, averaged, and aggregated to yield an overall, team-level OCB score. Our measurement approach followed a direct consensus composition model (Chan, 1998). According to Ehrhart and Naumann (2004), a direct consensus model is the more appropriate composition model when one is interested in the actual discretionary behavior of a team’s members (as opposed to a descriptive norm). Sample items include “This employee willingly helps others who have work-related problems” [altruism]; “This employee is one of my most conscientious employees” [conscientiousness]; “This employee consumes a lot of time complaining about trivial matters” [sportsmanship]; “This employee tries to avoid creating problems for coworkers” [courtesy]; and “This employee attends functions that are not required, but help the company image” [civic virtue]. The reliability for this measure was .96.

Control variables. We controlled for *team size* (excluding team leaders), provided by team leaders, because prior research has found team size to influence both team performance and team OCB (Whitman, Van Rooy, & Viswesvaran, 2010). We also controlled for *mean team tenure* and *mean dyadic tenure* (i.e., length of individual members’ exposure to a leader) because of the possibility that variations in date of entry might affect intrateam relationships and overall levels of performance (e.g., Keller, 2006). Given the work teams were nested under three different external managers, we controlled for this nesting in our substantive analyses by using two dummy-coded variables. Finally, we computed and controlled for within-team dispersion (i.e., using standard deviation) of team members’ power distance values, allowing us to

examine study hypotheses after partialing out within-team variability (see Gibson et al., 2009).

Data Aggregation

Corresponding analysis of variance demonstrated that team power distance, $F(77, 173) = 2.19$; PJC, $F(77, 173) = 3.89$; and team OCB, $F(77, 173) = 2.83$, differed significantly ($p < .01$) across teams. The intraclass correlation (ICC1) for these three variables were .27 for team power distance, .47 for PJC, and .36 for team OCB. The reliability of the team-level means, as reflected by ICC(2) estimates, was .54 for team power distance, .74 for PJC, and .65 for team OCB. In regard to within-team agreement ($r_{WG(L)}$; James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984), we computed a lower and an upper bound estimate of agreement by considering two null distributions in the $r_{WG(L)}$ equation (Biemann, Cole, & Voelpel, 2012). For the lower bound, we selected a slightly skewed distribution ($\sigma_E^2 = 2.9$) given that a positive leniency of participant responses could be expected. The rectangular distribution ($\sigma_E^2 = 4.0$) was used because it is known to yield an upper bound estimate. The mean $r_{WG(L)}$ scores suggested strong within-team agreement (Biemann et al., 2012, p. 73), with estimates of .79 and .86 for team power distance, .97 and .98 for PJC, and .97 and .99 for team OCB.

Analytical Strategy

Tests of (in)congruence effect. Using polynomial regression and response surface methodology (see Edwards, 2002; Edwards & Cable, 2009), we tested Hypotheses 1 and 2 by estimating the following equation (to simplify, we omitted all control variables):

$$M = b_0 + b_1L + b_2T + b_3L^2 + b_4(LT) + b_5T^2 + e, \quad (1)$$

where M represents the mediator (viz., PJC), and L and T are leader and team power distance, respectively. We then used the regression coefficients to plot the three-dimensional response surfaces in which L and T were plotted on the perpendicular horizontal axes, and M was plotted on the vertical axis (Edwards & Parry, 1993).

To test Hypothesis 1 (i.e., congruence effect between leader and team power distance), we examined three key features of the plotted response surface as specified by Edwards (2007) and Edwards and Cable (2009). First, we examined the incongruence line on the response surface where $L = -T$. In order to claim support for the hypothesized congruence effect, the curvature along the incongruence line (i.e., calculated as $b_3 - b_4 + b_5$) should be negative (curved downward). Second, we inspected the first principle axis of the response surface. If this axis has a slope $p_{11} = 1.0$ and an intercept $p_{10} = 0$, then the ridge of the response surface runs along the congruence line. Such a finding would provide additional support for Hypothesis 1, suggesting that PJC is maximized when leader–team power distance values are equal. Because this second condition involves nonlinear combinations of regression coefficients from Equation 1, we used 10,000 bootstrapped samples to calculate 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) for p_{11} and p_{10} (Edwards, 2002; Edwards & Parry, 1993). Third, we determined whether the surface along the congruence line is flat (where $L = T$). If the surface is flat along the congruence line, indicating that the level of PJC is the same

irrespective of whether the aligned leader–team power distance values are low or high, its slope (i.e., calculated as $b_1 + b_2$) and curvature (i.e., calculated as $b_3 + b_4 + b_5$) do not significantly differ from zero.

According to Edwards and Cable (2009), failing to support all three conditions does not necessarily preclude a congruence effect. The first condition (i.e., negative curvature along the incongruence line), however, must be upheld. Furthermore, if the first and second (i.e., slope $p_{11} = 1.0$ and intercept $p_{10} = 0$) conditions are corroborated, but the third one is rejected, our hypothesized congruence effect can still be inferred with the caveat that the maximum level of PJC depends on whether leader and team power distance values are low or high. Edwards and Cable (2009) reasoned that affirming the third condition (i.e., a flat surface along the congruence line) is less of a priority because it assesses “deviation from the idealized surface” (p. 661). Following Edwards and Cable’s (2009) logic, we therefore inspected the third condition but prioritized the first two conditions. This means Hypothesis 1 will be deemed supported if the first and second conditions are met.

To test the asymmetrical incongruence effect posited in Hypothesis 2, we calculated the lateral shift quantity ($[b_2 - b_1] / [2 \times (b_3 - b_4 + b_5)]$), which indicates the magnitude and direction of a lateral shift of the response surface along the incongruence line (Atwater, Ostroff, Yammarino, & Fleenor, 1998). A negative quantity would denote a result that is consistent with Hypothesis 2.

Tests of mediation. For Hypothesis 3a and 3b (i.e., congruence effects on team outcomes are transmitted through PJC), we followed the “block variable” approach outlined by Edwards and Cable (2009). We combined the estimated coefficients (see Equation 1) to obtain a weighted linear composite (i.e., the block variable). We then regressed the mediator, PJC, on the block variable to obtain a regression coefficient commonly referred to as the “*a*” path in mediated models. We next regressed *Y* on the mediating variable and the block variable. The regression coefficients for the mediating variable on both outcomes represent the “*b*” path. We used the coefficients obtained from these analyses to compute an estimate of the indirect effect (i.e., $a \times b$) for each outcome. The significance of the indirect effects was tested using bias-corrected CIs constructed from 20,000 bootstrap samples (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993).

Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and reliability coefficients among the study variables.

Hypothesis 1 predicted a congruence effect such that levels of PJC will increase as leader–team power distance values become more aligned, and levels of PJC will decrease as any discrepancy between leader–team power distance values increases. As shown in Table 2, the second-order polynomial terms explain significant incremental variance in PJC ($\Delta R^2 = .14, p < .01$). This significant increase in R^2 indicates a nonlinear relationship between leader–team power distance values and PJC (Edwards, 2002). We thus examined whether the three conditions for the congruence effect were met. As also shown in Table 2, the surface along the incongruence line is curved downward (curvature = $-.28, p < .05$), meaning the first condition is satisfied.⁴ In addition, we found that the first principal axis has a slope (p_{11}) that is not significantly different

from 1.0 (95% CI [$-3.73, 6.05$]) and an intercept (p_{10}) that is not significantly different from zero (95% CI [$-.09, 2.32$]). These latter results satisfy the second condition for demonstrating a congruence effect. Finally, the congruence line exhibited significant slope and curvature (slope = $.28, p < .05$; curvature = $-.34, p < .01$), meaning the third condition was not met. Consistent with our expectations, results associated with Conditions 1 and 2 indicate that congruence between leader and team power distance values is associated with higher levels of PJC as compared to leader–team incongruence. Nevertheless, due to significant slope and curvature along the line of congruence (Condition 3), the nature of the congruence effect is more complex than we hypothesized.

To interpret these results in a more holistic manner, we used the coefficient estimates to plot the overall response surface in Figure 2. The surface along the incongruence (dashed) line is curved downward (a concave surface). This implies that levels of PJC are increasing as leader–team power distance values become more aligned, and levels of PJC are decreasing as leader–team power distance values become more discrepant (in either direction). As depicted, the ridge of the response surface does not deviate appreciably from the congruence (solid) line. Moreover, the surface along the congruence (solid) line illustrates that PJC reaches its highest point at medium levels of power distance congruence. In other words, PJC increases as perfect fit between leader–team power distance increases (due to its positive slope) from low-low to medium-medium; however, due to its negative curvature, PJC begins to decrease as the perfect fit between leader–team power distance continues to increase from medium-medium to high-high (a point we return to in the Discussion section).

Hypothesis 2 predicted an asymmetrical incongruence effect such that PJC will decline more sharply when a leader’s power distance is higher than a team’s power distance—as compared to when leaders’ power distance values are lower than their teams’ power distance. Although prior studies have elected to not formally test the significance of the quantity of lateral shift (e.g., Atwater et al., 1998; Gibson et al., 2009), we adopted a one-tailed significance test because our hypothesis is directional. The lateral shift quantity (see Table 2) is negative ($-.50, p < .05$, one-tailed), indicating a shift of the surface toward the region where $L < T$. Figure 2 likewise illustrates that the region to the right of the congruence (solid) line is visibly steeper than the region left of the congruence line. These results affirm Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3a and 3b suggested the congruence effect of leader–team power distance on team performance and team OCB is transmitted via PJC. Table 3 shows the results for Hypothesis 3a and 3b. As shown, the block variable for power distance congruence is positively related to PJC (path $a = .43, p < .01$). Additionally, PJC is positively associated with team performance (path $b = .44, p < .01$), and the effect of the block variable on team

⁴ We centered leader and team power distance scores on their grand-mean (e.g., Zhang, Wang, & Shi, 2012). Because our analyses are sensitive to extreme values, we used leverage, studentized residuals, and Cook’s *D* statistics to screen for multivariate outliers. Four cases were identified, dropped, and all analyses recomputed. The pattern of relationships remained largely unchanged (with exception of the slope of the surface along the incongruence line reaching statistical significance) when we omitted these four cases.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Team size	4.28	0.77	—											
2. Mean team tenure (years)	2.31	1.05	-.19	—										
3. Mean dyadic tenure (years)	2.12	0.80	-.16	.82	—									
4. External manager 1	0.28	0.45	.10	-.27	-.23	—								
5. External manager 2	0.27	0.45	.42	-.18	-.22	-.38	—							
6. External manager 3	0.45	0.50	-.47	.41	.40	-.57	-.55	—						
7. Power distance dispersion within teams	0.78	0.45	.10	-.02	-.05	.09	.12	-.18	—					
8. Leader power distance values	2.91	0.84	.09	.03	.05	.01	-.05	.03	.00	(.89)				
9. Team power distance values	2.88	0.75	.46	-.17	-.16	.24	.22	-.41	.52	.18	(.94)			
10. Procedural justice climate	5.70	0.48	.21	-.25	-.25	.21	.20	-.37	-.01	-.08	.20	(.92)		
11. Team performance	5.65	0.68	-.15	.17	.18	-.09	-.18	.25	-.07	-.02	-.03	.27	(.80)	
12. Team organizational citizenship behavior	5.06	0.42	-.12	-.05	-.08	-.17	-.08	.23	-.20	-.21	-.23	.51	.35	(.96)

Note. *N* = 78 work teams. Values on the diagonal represent coefficient alpha. Correlations greater than |.22| are significant at *p* < .05. Correlations greater than |.34| are significant at *p* < .01.

performance is not significant (path *c'* = .03, *ns*) when PJC is taken into account (a pattern consistent with full mediation). As also shown in Table 3, the effect of PJC on team OCB is in the predicted direction (path *b* = .63, *p* < .01), and the effect of the block variable on team OCB is significant (path *c'* = .19, *p* < .05) when PJC is taken into account (a pattern consistent with partial mediation). Finally, bias-corrected bootstrapped CIs of the indirect effect (*ab*) of leader–team power distance congruence on team performance (*ab* = .19, 99% CI [.04, .41]) and team OCB (*ab* = .27, 99% CI [.09, .51]) exclude zero, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 3a and 3b.

Table 2
Polynomial Regression Results for Procedural Justice Climate

Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	6.06**	6.47**
Team size	.01	-.04
Mean team tenure	-.02	-.05
Mean dyadic tenure	-.05	.01
External manager 2 ^a	-.00	.03
External manager 3 ^a	-.27	-.25
Power distance dispersion	-.16	-.26
Leader power distance values (<i>L</i>)	-.06	.00
Team power distance values (<i>T</i>)	.10	.28*
<i>L</i> ²		-.11
<i>L</i> × <i>T</i>		-.03
<i>T</i> ²		-.20**
<i>R</i> ²	.17**	.31**
Δ <i>R</i> ²		.14**
Incongruence (<i>L</i> = - <i>T</i>) line		
Slope (<i>b</i> ₁ - <i>b</i> ₂)		-.28
Curvature (<i>b</i> ₃ - <i>b</i> ₄ + <i>b</i> ₅)		-.28*
Congruence (<i>L</i> = <i>T</i>) line		
Slope (<i>b</i> ₁ + <i>b</i> ₂)		.28*
Curvature (<i>b</i> ₃ + <i>b</i> ₄ + <i>b</i> ₅)		-.34**
Lateral shift quantity		
(<i>b</i> ₂ - <i>b</i> ₁)/[2 × (<i>b</i> ₃ - <i>b</i> ₄ + <i>b</i> ₅)]		-.50*

Note. *N* = 78 work teams. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. The lateral shift quantity was examined with a one-tailed test.
^a We used External manager 1 as the referent.
 * *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01.

Discussion

We integrated two distinct lines of team-based research. The first concerned the well-established study of power distance in and of teams (Schaubroeck et al., 2007; Taras et al., 2010; J. Yang et al., 2007). The second concerned the more recent research that adopts a multiple-stakeholder perspective when exploring perceptual (dis)similarities between teams and their leaders (Bashshur et al., 2011; Gibson et al., 2009). Results of the present study suggest there are benefits associated with leader–team power distance congruence, and it provides insight into *how* and *why* these alignments are important for team effectiveness.

Theoretical Implications

Whereas previous research has revealed power distance values affect subordinate and team-member reactions to a leader’s behav-

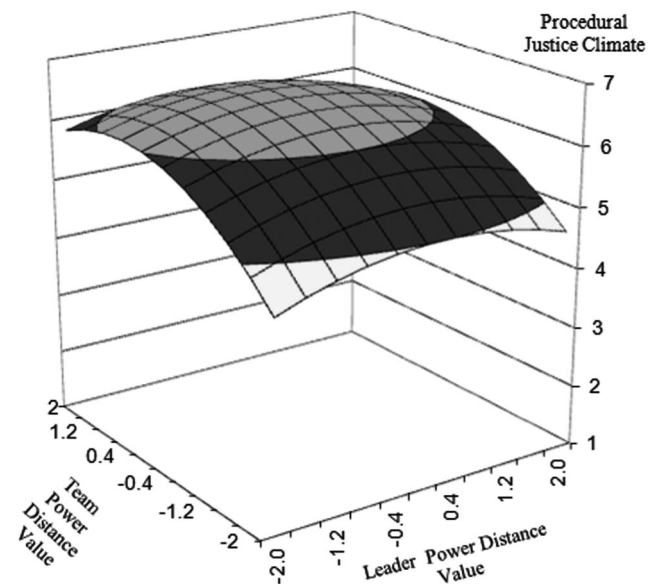


Figure 2. Congruence effect of leader–team power distance values on procedural justice climate.

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Table 3
Results of Indirect Effects Tests

Variable	Mediator	Team effectiveness outcome	
	PJC	Team performance	Team OCB
Coefficient of the block variable (<i>a</i> path)	.43**		
Coefficient of PJC, controlling for the block variable (<i>b</i> path)		.44**	.63**
Coefficient of the block variable, controlling for PJC (<i>c'</i> path)		.03	.19*
Indirect effect (<i>a</i> × <i>b</i>) of congruence via PJC		.19**	.27**
99% bootstrapped CIs for indirect effect (<i>a</i> × <i>b</i>)		[.04, .41]	[.09, .51]

Note. $N = 78$ work teams. Standardized coefficients are reported. Bootstrap $N = 20,000$. Bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) are reported. PJC = procedural justice climate; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior. Control variables include team size, mean team tenure, mean dyadic tenure, external manager 2, external manager 3, and power distance dispersion within teams.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

ior (e.g., Kirkman et al., 2009; Schaubroeck et al., 2007), less attention has been given to the joint effect of a leader's power distance orientation and his or her team's power distance preferences. This, in turn, makes it difficult to attain empirically based, refined conceptual precision about the role of power differentiation in the context of leaders and teams. Our results shed some light on the interplay between leader and team power distance, showing that when there is incongruence between leaders' and teams' power distance values, misalignment in either direction yields lower justice perceptions. Such a finding is interesting because it suggests that in comparison to their mismatched counterparts, when leaders do not solicit input from team members, the teams they lead might still enjoy relatively high levels of procedural fairness if they too have high power distance (i.e., open and receptive to top-down direction). Moreover, we found that the downstream consequences associated with a mismatch were more severe when a leader's level of power distance exceeded that of his or her team's power distance level. These results illustrate that one cannot explain the phenomenological experience inherent in this social influence process by examining the power distance of leaders or teams separately. To fully understand the implications of power distance, the perspectives of both leaders and team members should be taken into account.

Some interesting findings, which we did not hypothesize, were evidence showing that the height of the response surface varies along the congruence line. This suggests that PJC increases from low to medium levels of perfect fit (i.e., a positive slope), and then decreases from medium to high levels of perfect fit (i.e., negative curvature). There was also evidence of "deceleration" along the line of congruence, meaning that there were larger PJC increases at low to medium levels of perfect fit than at medium to high levels of fit. These results may be unique to our study's sample, or they may suggest that the benefit associated with congruence reaches its peak at moderate levels of perfect fit. Why might increasing levels of power distance congruence beyond a moderate level of perfect

fit actually decrease PJC levels? One explanation is related to the influence process between leaders and team members. Although authority figures are increasingly being charged with providing leadership for their teams as a whole, they must also interact and thus motivate individual members. As such, PJC may actually begin to decline at relatively high levels of perfect congruence because, with the passage of time, team leaders will unquestionably be required to make some (unilateral) decisions that affect the team on a per member basis (as opposed to the team as a whole). We wish to note, however, that the unexpected slope and curvature along the congruence line does not negate our supported hypotheses.

This study likewise advances the multiple-stakeholder literature by affirming that PJC is a proximal consequence of power distance congruence between leaders and teams, as well as explicating the indirect effect that is carried through to team performance and team OCB by PJC. This is a novel finding insofar as the indirect effect of leader-team value congruence on team effectiveness has received limited theoretical attention, as compared with that given to the direct effects of leader-team perceptual congruence on team outcomes (e.g., Bashshur et al., 2011; Gibson et al., 2009). Put differently, our results shed some light on the intervening mechanisms that help to explain *how* and *why* value alignments associated with power distance can have positive consequences on team effectiveness.

Managerial Implications

Organizations should encourage individuals in leadership and supervisory positions to become more aware of teams' power distance preferences—and, to the extent the context allows for it, modify and adapt their own behaviors to better match the values shared by their subordinates. For example, and contrary to conventional wisdom, our results show that high-power distance managers will not always be perceived as being unfair. When managers do not solicit team members' input and members prefer not to give it, we found that teams may continue to feel as though they are being fairly treated. We likewise show that a mismatch between a high-power distance leader and a low-power distance team results in a steeper decrease in justice climate than does the converse. At times, because managers must discount the input of team members in making decisions, managers of low-power distance teams may benefit by focusing on the procedures used (e.g., taking notes, active listening) when making decisions. Given that these are learnable behaviors, organizations should provide training to team managers to help them modify decision-making styles to be perceived as more fair by members of their teams. This suggestion is consistent with Burns (1978), who noted that "the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values" (p. 19).

Training programs might also be developed to help team members sharpen their communication skills, increasing the likelihood that managers understand and are aware of a team's desire for an authoritarian versus consultative leadership style. Organizations may also wish to design procedures (e.g., 360-degree surveys) as a way of encouraging everyone involved to appreciate and, thus, leverage power distance preferences to the benefit of leaders and teams. Such procedures may also prove beneficial when diagnosing team performance problems. For instance, discovering that a

team prefers participative decision making (i.e., low power distance) and, at the same time, a team's manager is high on power distance might provide insight into how to improve the quality of intrateam processes and associated performance problems.

Limitations and Future Research

As in all research, the present study is not without potential limitations. The study's cross-sectional nature, for example, prevented us from establishing the causal direction implied by our mediation model. Future research should endeavor to temporally separate the measurement of inputs (i.e., predictors), team processes (i.e., mediators), and outcomes (i.e., work-related criteria) to maximize the potential for causal inferences about leader–team value congruence. We also note there is a potential for bias in the present study's OCB ratings. Because team leaders responded to the items comprising the OCB measure, a team's OCB score might somehow be influenced by the leader's power distance orientation. This possibility cannot be unequivocally dismissed and should be considered when interpreting our findings—although the inclusion of leaders' power distance (as a main effect) in our analyses should help to minimize this concern. A further limitation is that we emphasized preferences and behavioral mechanisms likely to stem from leaders' and teams' power distance values when developing study hypotheses, but we did not assess them directly. Future research that expands our conceptual model to include such behavioral mechanisms would be a worthwhile contribution.

A final potential limitation is the extent to which our results generalize to other workforce populations. The sampled teams were in the services industry and located in China. There are several reasons why we do not feel the cultural context has unduly influenced our findings. First, power distance is widely viewed as a universal measure originating from a workplace frame of reference, carrying few cultural and moralistic overtones (Farh et al., 2007), with studies having repeatedly shown substantive within-country variations—particularly in larger countries, including the United States and China (Taras, Steel, & Kirkman, 2011). Second, because the mean scores on leader power distance (2.91 on a 7-point scale, $SD = 0.84$) and team power distance (2.88 on a 7-point scale, $SD = 0.75$) were slightly below midrange, we would not describe the samples as being extreme on power distance. Third, to the extent that the Chinese data introduced a “restriction of range” issue, the implication is a more conservative significance level in testing and not biased estimates. Fourth, recent cross-cultural research has found that the basic principles of individual (e.g., Kirkman et al., 2009) and team functioning (e.g., Schaubroeck et al., 2007) hold across Chinese and U.S. contexts.

Our results also suggest directions for future research. Although we examined the *actual* match (i.e., objective fit) between leaders' and teams' power distance values, much of the relevant literature (e.g., Hoffman, Bynum, Piccolo, & Sutton, 2011; van Vianen, Shen, & Chuang, 2011) has examined subjective fit perceptions of value congruence, which involves only one stakeholder's personal assessments. This research on subjective fit suggests that, regardless of the actual level of fit between leaders and teams, as long as there is a perceived match by respondents (e.g., team members), positive benefits may be realized. Future studies that simultaneously consider the importance of objective and subjective fit would contribute to our understanding of leader–team power distance

congruence. Future research can take this idea even further by exploring the importance of other values, such as collectivism, and/or uncertainty avoidance.

Our conceptual model can also be extended through careful consideration of other potential mediators. On the one hand, the present study emphasizes the crucial role of PJC, whereas on the other hand, much of the team effectiveness literature has focused on the mediating roles of behavioral processes (e.g., coordinating, goal setting) and motivational-affective states (e.g., team empowerment, team potency). Future research may integrate these perspectives in an effort to determine concurrent mediating effects of justice climate and team processes-motivational states. Research that expands our model to include boundary conditions (e.g., team interdependence, type of team tasks) would be a further contribution.

Conclusion

Our findings reflect a novel theoretical contribution by illustrating the importance of matching power distance values between leaders and teams, and highlight a mechanism through which such “actual fit” can enhance team outcomes. We therefore join Gibson et al. (2009) in calling for an expanded view of the leader–team interface (see also Bashshur et al., 2011), one that pays specific attention to the role of normatively desirable behaviors (i.e., values) from multiple stakeholders' point of view. It is thus hoped that the present investigation offers a springboard for future research and meaningful input for the accumulation of evidence in this area.

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Received May 3, 2012

Revision received August 1, 2013

Accepted August 2, 2013 ■