Organization Science

"Seeing Eye to Eye" About Our Relationship Is Good for Us and Everyone Else: An Examination of LMX Agreement and Views of Fair Treatment

Fadel K. Matta, Emma L. Frank, Cindy P. Muir (Zapata)

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Fadel K. Matta,[a,*] Emma L. Frank,[b] Cindy P. Muir (Zapata)[c]

[a] Department of Management, Terry College of Business, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30605; [b] Department of Management, Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics, University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire 03824; [c] Department of Management and Organization, Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556
*Corresponding author
Contact: fmatta@uga.edu, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2056-0139 (FKM); emma.frank@unh.edu, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8065-2030 (ELF); cindy.muir@nd.edu, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4669-7814 (CPM(Z))

Abstract. Research across a wide array of fields has established the organizational importance of fair treatment and why it should be a primary consideration of supervisors. As such, scholars have begun to unpack characteristics of organizations, supervisors, and employees that may promote fair treatment. Although this literature has been informative and is growing, we know little about how the *dyadic* interplay between leaders and followers—and, in particular, how both parties' perceptions of that joint interplay—may facilitate or hinder views of fairness. The lack of clarity on this phenomenon is particularly problematic when one considers that there are several features of dyadic relationships within work units that—by their nature—work against the facilitation of fair treatment (e.g., supervisors inevitably provide some employees more/less information, support, and attention than others because they cannot establish high-quality exchange relationships with every employee). Drawing from common threads found in theories of fairness and role theory surrounding expectation alignment, we posit that the key to facilitating views of fair treatment at any level of relationship quality is for supervisors and employees to "see eye to eye" on LMX quality-LMX agreement. We further theorize that each party's views of fair treatment flowing from LMX agreement (within the dyad) will ultimately result in leaders being more efficacious about their fairness-related abilities and employees performing at higher levels (beyond the dyad). Results of three field studies (and two supplemental preregistered experiments) largely support our theorizing and further show that fair treatment can result in a self-reinforcing positive fairness-efficacy spiral for supervisors.

Over the past half-century, scholars have unequivocally established that supervisor fairness is important. Indeed, when it comes to job attitudes and/or leader variables, qualitative and quantitative reviews have underscored that fairness (i.e., global perceptions of whether a supervisor acts appropriately; see Colquitt and Zipay 2015) is among the most predictive of organizationally relevant criteria (Colquitt 2012, Colquitt et al. 2013). Given the value of facilitating fairness in organizations, scholarly work has recently shifted toward examining "justice as a dependent variable," that is, the "fifth wave" of justice research (Brockner et al. 2015). This developing literature has identified the types of organizations likely to be fair (e.g., organizational context and structure; see Schminke et al. 2000 and Rosen et al. 2009), the supervisors

predisposed to behave more fairly (e.g., supervisor personality traits, power and status, race, motives; see Mayer et al. 2007, Hollensbe et al. 2008, Blader and Chen 2012, Zapata et al. 2016, Muir et al. 2022), and/or the employees likely to receive/perceive fair treatment (e.g., employee fairness propensity, trust propensity, charisma, trustworthiness; see Scott et al. 2007, Bianchi and Brockner 2012, Zapata et al. 2013, Zhao et al. 2015, Colquitt et al. 2018). Although these approaches undoubtedly mark critical steps, they neglect that a supervisor's treatment of any given employee is an inherently *dyadic* experience. Thus, the present focus on either supervisor or employee antecedents to fairness provides little insight into how the dyadic interplay between leaders and followers—and, in particular, how both parties' perceptions of that

joint experience—may facilitate or hinder views of fair treatment.

This lack of clarity is particularly problematic because several features of dyadic leader-follower relationships within work units and organizations—by their nature—work against facilitating fair treatment. Indeed, the hallmark literature on leader-member relationships (the leader-member exchange or LMX literature) is built on the premise that leaders cannot do everything themselves and, therefore, must enlist "trusted assistants"—high LMX employees to whom the leader provides additional social support, attention, and insider information—to help achieve workgroup goals (Graen 1976, Liden et al. 1997, Erdogan and Bauer 2015). Thus, organizations nearly invariably feature differentiated levels of LMX quality (defined as the quality of the dyadic exchange relationship between leader and subordinate, ranging from low-quality transactional relationships based on formal contractual exchanges to high-quality socioemotional relationships supplemented with mutual trust, loyalty, obligation, and commitment; see Matta and Van Dyne 2020). Although creating high LMX (socioemotional) relationships with some and maintaining low LMX (transactional) relationships with others is (a) a more efficient use of leader resources (Dansereau et al. 1975, Graen 1976), (b) the norm for leaders rather than the exception (Yu et al. 2018, Matta and Van Dyne 2020), and (c) almost always unavoidable (materializing in 80 to 90% of work units; see Graen and Cashman 1975 and Liden and Graen 1980), the varied levels of support, attention, and information that accompany differentiated exchange quality naturally complicate views of fair treatment. Indeed, given that equity and equality concerns are primary determinants of fairness (Deutsch 1975), and differential allocation of resources may run counter to these norms, it seems natural to conclude that some dyadic exchange relationships (i.e., high LMX relationships) will enhance fairness perceptions, whereas others (i.e., low LMX relationships) are destined to seem unfair (Bolino and Turnley 2009). The question then follows: Given that low LMX relationships are an inevitable reality in organizations, can supervisors still be seen as fair under these constraints, and if so, how?

Thus, the goal of this paper is to provide the first dyadic account of precursors to fairness to (a) address how the interplay between a leader's and follower's perceptions of their relationship quality may facilitate views of fair treatment, (b) develop theory for how leaders can overcome the very feature of leader-member relationships that challenges that end—that leaders cannot establish high quality exchange relationships with all employees (Liden and Graen 1980, Yu et al. 2018, Matta and Van Dyne 2020), and (c) speak to the organizational relevance of this interplay by considering outcomes beyond the leader-member dyad. To this end, we apply concepts from nascent research on dyadic

relationship agreement (see, e.g., Matta et al. 2015) to fairness enactment and perceptions. In doing so, we propose and test a model (a) highlighting how any given dyad (regardless of LMX quality) can maximize the extent to which fairness is experienced, (b) demonstrating when and why low LMX (i.e., lower levels of social support, attention, and information) does not necessarily doom relational dynamics to be seen as unfair, and (c) tying this within-dyad phenomenon to organizationally relevant criteria beyond the dyad.

Our theorizing draws from common threads found in the fairness and leader-member exchange literatures surrounding expectation alignment. Many seminal works in the fairness literature—such as fairness theory (Folger and Cropanzano 1998, 2001), fairness heuristic theory (Lind 2001, Van den Bos 2001), and even early works on fairness and social exchange (Homans 1961, Blau 1964, Adams 1965)—highlight the importance of expectation alignment when it comes to judging an exchange as fair but offer little on how to achieve aligned expectations or how scholars might examine this phenomenon. Meanwhile, the LMX literature's foundational theory—role theory—speaks explicitly to expectation alignment (regarding expectations for the role behaviors of both parties; see Graen 1976), and recent research has suggested that LMX agreement is particularly relevant to these role theory dynamics (Matta et al. 2015). Integrating these two perspectives, the primary tenet of our theorizing is that LMX agreement (at high or low levels of LMX quality) provides an alignment in expectations that facilitates views of fairness. Building from this core tenet, we develop predictions for all combinations of LMX agreement and LMX levels, considering views of fair treatment as an outcome.

Although we begin by focusing on fair treatment *within the dyad*, suggesting that LMX agreement is key to facilitating views of fairness, we ultimately highlight the organizational relevance of this phenomenon by extending our theorizing to consider the broader impact of relational agreement (and subsequent views of fairness) *beyond the dyad*. Past research has solidified the notion that dyadic ties generally (see, e.g., Umphress et al. 2003, Bowler and Brass 2006, Wong and Boh 2010) and leader-member ties specifically (see, e.g., Sparrowe and Liden 1997, 2005; Erdogan et al. 2015) hold the power to influence broader organizational criteria. Applied to the context of our study, we suggest that when leaders believe they are fair to an employee as a result of LMX agreement (within the dyad), they ultimately feel more efficacious about their future ability to behave fairly in a more general sense (with both that employee and with others; beyond the dyad); that is, they experience greater fairness efficacy (Ambrose and Schminke 2009b). In essence, we contend that fairness perceptions stemming from a single aligned leader-employee exchange may result in a self-reinforcing positive fairness-efficacy

spiral for supervisors, carrying implications for those beyond the dyad. Turning to employees, we theorize that LMX agreement and perceptions of fair treatment that follow (within the dyad) trigger employee behaviors that benefit the organization as a whole (beyond the dyad). Our conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.

Our research provides several contributions to the management literature on fairness. Because supervisors cannot establish high-quality social exchanges with all employees (Yu et al. 2018, Matta and Van Dyne 2020), some employees receive less information, support, and attention than others (Bolino and Turnley 2009). Given that this reality can run counter to recommendations that supervisors adhere to the equity or equality norms typically equated with fairness (Deutsch 1975), how can fairness be maximally experienced across all dyads (i.e., by supervisors forced to differentially allocate resources across subordinates and by employees regardless of whether they are on the receiving end of those resources)? By extending work in the "fifth wave" of justice to consider the *dyadic* interplay between leaders and followers as precursors to fairness perceptions, our work reveals that getting both parties "on the same page" about their relational dynamics may be key in facilitating views of fair treatment by all. Importantly, these conclusions stand in stark contrast to the "more LMX, more fairness" approaches generally prescribed in the fairness and LMX literatures (Dulebohn et al. 2012, Matta and Frank 2023).

Second, we contribute to theories of fairness by introducing LMX agreement as a way to facilitate the fairness-inducing expectation alignment that is often discussed—but remains unexamined—in the fairness literature. Although theories of fairness highlight that met expectations are used to determine whether an exchange is fair (see, e.g., Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Adams 1965; Folger and Cropanzano 1998, 2001; Lind 2001; Van den Bos 2001), how to appropriately operationalize and trigger such alignment in expectations remains unclear. Our research establishes LMX agreement as a means to do so within the context of social exchange dynamics, furnishing empirical support for the criticality of expectation alignment to views of fairness as well as providing a means to study the phenomenon moving forward.

Finally, by extending our downstream focus to leader fairness efficacy and employee performance behavior, we unearth the theoretical and practical value of our phenomenon for organizations, showcasing that relational dynamics within a dyad have critical ramifications outside of it. Indeed, by showing that fairness flowing from a single dyad's LMX agreement also facilitates leader fairness efficacy more broadly, we offer up a new dependent variable to the "fifth wave" of justice (Brockner et al. 2015). Given that (a) a large body of work exists on ways to increase efficacy that may be applied to fairness efficacy (Frayne and Latham 1987, Saks 1995) and (b) fair treatment may become somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy as fairness efficacy increases, fairness efficacy could be a particularly easy and useful "lever to pull" to begin a cycle of fair treatment. Moreover, we show that perceptions of fair treatment flowing from LMX agreement trigger employee behavior with broader implications (e.g., elevating their performance on the job, refraining from speaking poorly about the organization to others), displaying predictive validity of the phenomenon for organizations at large.

Theory and Hypotheses
Expectation Alignment and Views of Fairness
The fairness literature has long discussed the role of expectations when it comes to determining whether an

Figure 1. Hypothesized Model
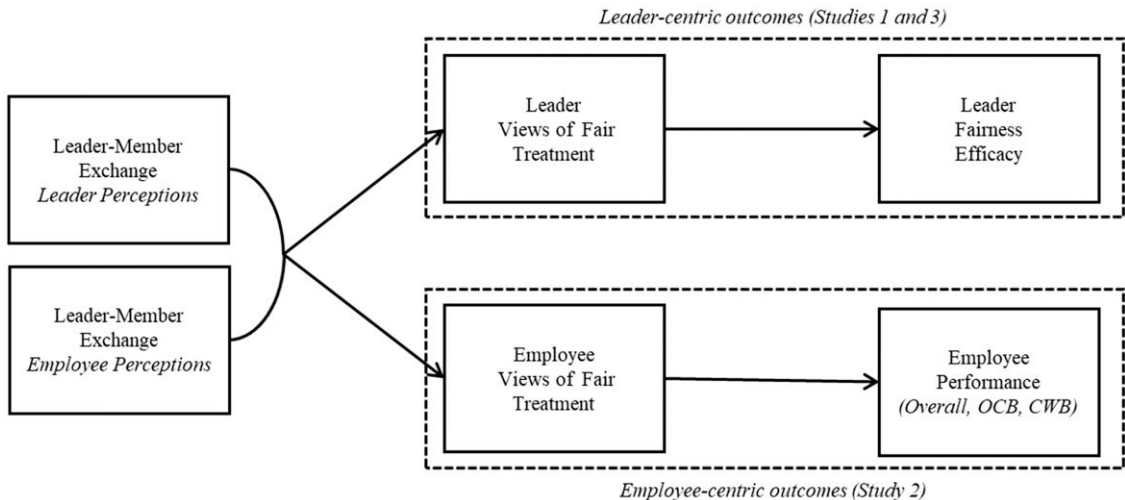
exchange is fair. Indeed, the critical role of expectations and expectation alignment to judgments of fairness can be found throughout seminal works on fairness and social exchange. For instance, Homans (1961) posited that fairness exists when expectations (of profits being proportional to investments) are met. Similarly, Blau (1964) theorized that the fairness of an exchange relationship is determined based on one's comparison of benefits relative to expectations held. As a final example, Adams (1965) contended "what is just is based upon relatively strong expectations," (p. 270) and in any social situation where an exchange takes place, "there are expectations of what is fair exchange" (p. 275).

Interestingly, this emphasis on expectations in early fairness theorizing has remained a common thread as the literature has progressed. Take, for example, two of the most popular theories of fairness: fairness theory (Folger and Cropanzano 1998, 2001) and fairness heuristic theory (Lind 2001, Van den Bos 2001); both highlight expectation alignment as foundational to fairness. For instance, fairness theory posits that fairness is determined by comparing supervisor actions to counterfactual expectations regarding whether a supervisor would, could, or should have behaved differently (Folger and Cropanzano 1998, 2001). Similarly, fairness heuristic theory contends that expectations serve as a critical reference point for fairness, such that behavior deviating from expectations results in intense processing of fairness-related information (Lind 2001, Van den Bos 2001). Beyond these discussions, the significance of expectations to fairness is also supported by empirical work revealing that people take expectations into account as they process fairness-related information (Bell et al. 2006, Rodell and Colquitt 2009).

Although theories of fairness suggest that expectations—and, specifically, met expectations—are core to viewing an exchange as fair, there has been no systematic research into the concept of expectation alignment. Accordingly, organizations have little guidance on how to meet employees' expectations. To that end, we turn to the LMX literature for a way to promote expectation alignment and thus views of fairness in leader-member dyads—via LMX agreement.

LMX Agreement and Expectation Alignment
As the dominant perspective of leader-employee relationships, the leader-member exchange literature is built upon the premise that leaders have limited time and energy (Graen 1976, Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995). Thus, in order to make efficient use of their resources, supervisors enlist "trusted assistants" (i.e., high LMX employees) with whom they exchange additional socioemotional resources (such as social support, attention, and insider information) to help them maximize workgroup effectiveness (Graen and Scandura 1987, Liden et al. 1997). This high LMX status is theorized to develop

out of a role-making process described in role theory (Graen and Cashman 1975, Graen 1976, Graen and Scandura 1987).

Although this perspective has typically assumed that LMX quality crystalizes at a level upon which the leader and employee both agree (e.g., "The idea of role as a set of expected activities associated with the occupancy of a given position assumes substantial agreement among the relevant people"; Katz and Kahn 1978, p. 200), more than 40 years of empirical work on LMX quality suggests that this is seldom the case. For instance, beyond role theory suggesting that agreement should be characteristically less than complete (Graen 1976, Katz and Kahn 1978, p. 201), meta-analyses have revealed that only 8% to 13% of variance in LMX perceptions is shared between leaders and employees (Gerstner and Day 1997, Sin et al. 2009). Interestingly, role theory—the theory upon which the LMX literature was built—provides some conceptual guidance on the implications of low agreement. Indeed, Graen's (1976) seminal work highlighted that (a) the interpersonal role-making process inherently includes "noise" in terms of the alignment between role expectations of leaders, role expectations of employees, role behavior of leaders, and role behavior of employees and (b) misalignment of expectations and/or behavior ultimately alters the cognitions, feelings, and actions flowing from it.

Although research has largely glossed over this idea, we align with emerging conceptualizations suggesting that LMX agreement captures the essence of this conceptual dynamic that Graen theorized about nearly 50 years ago (cf. Matta et al. 2015). Indeed, given that one's perception of LMX quality drives both (a) one's own behavior within an exchange relationship and (b) one's expectations regarding the behavior of the other party, agreement (disagreement) in views of LMX quality directly manifests in alignment (discrepancies) in expectations surrounding the dyad's social exchange dynamics. When one party views LMX in high-quality terms, they invest additional socioemotional resources into the exchange and expect to receive similar socioemotional resources back in kind (Wilson et al. 2010). If the other party does not reciprocate similar resources, expectations are left unmet. Similarly, when one party views LMX in low-quality terms, they invest only what is required for the basic completion of work and expect the other party to simply support that end (Liden et al. 2000). If the other party overinvests in the relationship, these discrepant expectations create an undesired obligation. However, when both parties agree—they both see the exchange as either socioemotional (high agreement at high LMX quality) or transactional (high agreement at low LMX quality)—exchange-related behavior meets both party's expectations. As such, applying core tenets from role theory (Graen 1976, Katz and Kahn 1978), we posit that LMX agreement manifests in

expectation alignment surrounding the dyad's social exchange dynamics.

Hypothesis Development

The primary tenet of our theorizing is that high LMX agreement (at all levels of LMX quality) relative to low LMX agreement provides an alignment in expectations that facilitates views of fair treatment. This theorizing flows from (a) the fairness literature's contention that met expectations are the mark of a fair exchange (Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Adams 1965; Folger and Cropanzano 1998, 2001) and (b) the role theory-based notion that LMX agreement is likely to manifest in an alignment in expectations surrounding the dyad's social exchange dynamics (Graen 1976, Matta et al. 2015). We develop and outline predictions for each of our specific contrasts below (which we summarize in Figure 2).

Contrast 1: High LMX Agreement Versus Low LMX Agreement.

When a supervisor and employee experience high LMX agreement at a high level of LMX quality, both the leader and employee see their relationship as being socioemotional. In such dyads, expectations surrounding the socioemotional exchange align with the ongoing mutual socioemotional exchange behavior. For instance, both parties expect each other to go the extra mile to defend and justify each other's decisions, bail each other out, and help each other solve problems (Scandura and Graen 1984, Liden et al. 1993, Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995, Bauer and Green 1996), and both parties' behavior reflects those expectations. Similarly, when a supervisor and employee experience high LMX agreement at a low level of LMX quality, both the leader and employee see their relationship as purely transactional in nature (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995). In such dyads,

members expect the exchange of only what is necessary for the basic completion of their work (Liden et al. 2000), which aligns with ongoing mutual transactional exchange behavior. In each case, the expectations of both parties align with their behaviors, and as such, these met expectations likely result in each party viewing exchange dynamics as appropriate and thus fair. Indeed, theories of fairness underscore that it is met expectations—regardless of whether those expectations are high or low—that serve as the benchmark for a fair exchange (see, e.g., Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Adams 1965; Folger and Cropanzano 1998, 2001; Lind 2001; Van den Bos 2001).

In contrast, the expectation discrepancies associated with low LMX agreement likely negatively impact views of fair treatment. A lack of alignment between leader and employee perceptions of LMX quality is likely to result in failure to fulfill expectations surrounding exchange-related behavior (cf. Matta et al. 2015). Indeed, when one party sees an exchange relationship as high quality (socioemotional) and the other sees it as low quality (transactional), expectation discrepancies result because one party expects a socioemotional exchange and behaves accordingly (Matta and Van Dyne 2020), whereas the other expects and behaves in accordance with a simple transactional exchange (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995). For instance, one party may expect and behave as though both parties will go the extra mile to defend and justify each other's decisions, bail each other out, and help each other solve problems (Scandura and Graen 1984, Liden et al. 1993, Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995, Bauer and Green 1996), whereas the other party will not. These situations are likely to fall into the categories of "too much" or "too little"—as opposed to "appropriate"—involvement (Graen 1976). Beyond

Figure 2. 2 × 2 Matrix of LMX Agreement Predicting Fair Treatment (Lighter Shading → Fairer)

		Leader LMX	
		Low LMX Leader views relationship as purely transactional	**High LMX** Leader views relationship as socio-emotional
Subordinate LMX	**High LMX** Subordinate views relationship as socio-emotional	*Detriments to views of fair treatment:* Low expectation alignment Low leader socio-emotional resources	*Benefits to views of fair treatment:* High expectation alignment Exchange of socio-emotional resources
	Low LMX Subordinate views relationship as purely transactional	*Benefits to views of fair treatment:* High expectation alignment *Detriments to views of fair treatment:* Low socio-emotional resources	*Benefits to views of fair treatment:* High leader socio-emotional resources *Detriments to views of fair treatment:* Low expectation alignment

"appropriateness" being definitional to the fairness construct (Colquitt and Rodell 2015, Colquitt and Zipay 2015), as noted in fairness theory (Folger and Cropanzano 1998, 2001), each party often uses their expectations as a referent for how exchanges would, could, or should have unraveled. Thus, the unmet expectations that accompany low LMX agreement provide precisely the types of referent counterfactuals that signal unfairness. In summary, we predict that LMX agreement will be positively associated with each party viewing exchange dynamics as fair.

Hypothesis 1. *The more agreement (i.e., higher congruence) between a leader's and employee's ratings of LMX quality, the higher are leader (Study 1) and employee (Study 2) views of fair treatment.*

Contrast 2: Differentiating the Effects of LMX Levels When LMX Agreement is High.

Having predicted that high LMX agreement is superior to low agreement, we turn our attention to differences between high and low LMX levels when high agreement exists. We posit that high agreement at high levels of LMX results in more positive views of fairness relative to high agreement at low levels.

When a supervisor and employee demonstrate high agreement at a high level of LMX quality, both parties' expectations surrounding the socioemotional exchange (Matta and Van Dyne 2020) align with the ongoing mutual socioemotional exchange behavior. Although expectation alignment in and of itself is likely to elicit views of fairness, we posit that expectation alignment surrounding a socioemotional exchange is even more conducive to that end. Indeed, the interlocked socioemotional behaviors that flow within a high-agreement, high-LMX dyad hold additional relevance to views of fairness. For instance, role theory notes that supplemental information is exchanged within high-LMX dyads (Graen and Scandura 1987, Wilson et al. 2010), and candid, honest, and adequate information is a core determinant of fair treatment (Bies and Moag 1986, Greenberg 1993, Scott et al. 2009). Similarly, leaders give employees greater influence in decisions within high-LMX dyads (Graen and Scandura 1987, Wilson et al. 2010), and voice in decisions is pivotal to seeing treatment as fair (Thibaut and Walker 1975, Scott et al. 2009). Finally, high-LMX exchanges are centered on mutual respect (Liden and Maslyn 1998), and respectful treatment is a vital aspect of a fair exchange (Bies and Moag 1986, Greenberg 1993, Scott et al. 2009). Thus, these dyads benefit not only from the fairness-inducing expectation alignment that accompanies high agreement but also from the fairness-enhancing socioemotional behavior that accompanies high LMX quality.

In contrast, when a supervisor and employee exhibit high LMX agreement at a low level of LMX quality, both

parties' expectations for a purely transactional exchange (Liden et al. 2000) align with the ongoing mutual transactional exchange behavior. Although alignment in transactional expectations and behaviors is likely to elicit views of fair treatment, the interlocked exchange lacks socioemotional behaviors (e.g., less information, influence in decisions, and mutual respect; see Graen and Scandura 1987, Liden and Maslyn 1998, Wilson et al. 2010) that help maximize fairness (Thibaut and Walker 1975, Bies and Moag 1986, Greenberg 1993, Scott et al. 2009). Indirectly supporting our arguments, research shows that indicators of trust are conducive to fairness (Zapata et al. 2013, Zhao et al. 2015), and high-agreement, high-LMX dyads consist of shared "trusted assistantships" relative to high-agreement, low-LMX "transactional assistantships" (Dansereau et al. 1975, Kinicki and Vecchio 1994, Tepper et al. 2006). In summary, within cases where LMX agreement is high, we posit that agreement at high levels of LMX quality will result in more positive views of fair treatment relative to agreement at low levels.

Hypothesis 2. *When LMX agreement is high, leader (Study 1) and employee (Study 2) views of fair treatment are higher when a leader is in agreement with an employee at a high level of LMX in comparison with when a leader is in agreement with an employee at a low level of LMX.*

Contrast 3: Differentiating the Effects of LMX Levels When LMX Agreement is Low.

Although we suggest that high LMX agreement is superior to low LMX agreement, low LMX agreement can occur where the employee perceives high LMX and the leader perceives low LMX or where the employee perceives low LMX and the leader perceives high LMX; we argue that these are not synonymous. We posit that low LMX agreement with lower leader perceptions of LMX quality is more aversive to views of fair treatment than low LMX agreement with higher leader perceptions.

When an employee perceives LMX as high quality and the leader perceives LMX as low quality, expectation discrepancies exist because the employee expects and behaves in line with a socioemotional exchange (Matta and Van Dyne 2020), whereas the leader expects a basic transactional exchange and acts accordingly (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995). Given that the leader initiates and controls the differentiation of exchange behavior (Graen 1976, Liden and Graen 1980, Graen and Scandura 1987) and is providing less socioemotional support to the employee than the employee is providing to the leader (Matta et al. 2015), this type of expectation discrepancy should be particularly problematic when it comes to views of fair treatment. Indeed, the exchange is disadvantaged in terms of both the fairness-inhibiting expectation discrepancies that exist (low agreement) and the lack of socioemotional behaviors from the leader

(e.g., providing social support, attention, and insider information; see Graen and Scandura 1987) that help to enhance views of fairness (low leader perceptions of LMX).

In contrast, when an employee perceives LMX as low quality and the leader perceives LMX as high quality, expectation discrepancies exist because the employee expects and acts in accordance with a basic transactional exchange (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995), whereas the leader expects and behaves in line with a socioemotional exchange (Matta and Van Dyne 2020). Because the leader is providing more socioemotional support to the employee than the employee is providing to the leader, the negative effects of these expectation discrepancies on views of fairness may be less detrimental than the reverse. Indeed, the exchange is disadvantaged in terms of fairness-inhibiting expectation discrepancies (low agreement) but not in terms of fairness-conducive socioemotional exchange behavior from the leader (high leader LMX quality). This argument is indirectly supported by research on the equity rule that suggests that over-rewarding employees is more tolerated and easily justified than under-rewarding (Adams 1965, Cosier and Dalton 1983, Mowday 1991). Thus, we expect sharper declines in views of fairness when an employee perceives higher LMX than the leader and weaker declines when a leader perceives higher LMX than the employee.

Hypothesis 3. *When LMX agreement is low, leader (Study 1) and employee (Study 2) views of fair treatment are higher when leader LMX exceeds employee LMX in comparison with when employee LMX exceeds leader LMX.*

Downstream Effects of LMX Agreement and Fair Treatment for Leaders and Employees
To this point, we have focused on the linkage between LMX agreement and fair treatment, i.e., a within-dyad focus. This is consistent with the fairness literature's (Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Adams 1965; Folger and Cropanzano 1998, 2001; Lind 2001; Van den Bos 2001) and role theory's (Graen 1976, Matta et al. 2015) focus on expectation alignment within the dyad. However, it is well documented in the networks' literature that dyadic ties generally (see, e.g., Umphress et al. 2003, Bowler and Brass 2006, Wong and Boh 2010) and leader-member ties specifically (see, e.g., Sparrowe and Liden 1997, 2005; Erdogan et al. 2015) often hold organizational implications that span beyond the dyad.

With respect to leaders, role theory has been extended to explain how clarity in roles and task enactment trigger more generalized efficacy beliefs (Chen and Bliese 2002). Moreover, nascent theorizing in the fairness literature suggests that efficacy beliefs about fairness flow from being fair (Ambrose and Schminke 2009b). Thus, as a downstream outcome of fair treatment toward a given employee, we posit that the leader will feel more

efficacious about their future ability to enact fairness broadly (toward that employee as well as others). Fairness efficacy refers to an "individual's belief that he or she has the ability to enact the fair course of action" (Ambrose and Schminke 2009b, p. 224). And although scholarly understanding of the phenomenon is still in its infancy, the notion that leaders form efficacy beliefs about treating employees fairly is in line with research showing that people (e.g., leaders) form efficacy beliefs about specific tasks that they perform (Bandura 1977, 1986, 1997). Given that successful task enactment and efficacy beliefs are integrally related (Lindsley et al. 1995, Shea and Howell 2000), we posit that views of fair treatment are likely intertwined with the fairness efficacy construct.

As leaders see themselves successfully enact fair treatment toward a specific employee (as a result of "seeing eye to eye" with the employee on their LMX), they should increasingly see themselves as generally able to enact fairness moving forward (i.e., enhanced fairness efficacy). This argument is supported by scholarly work on efficacy beliefs, which highlight that one of the primary drivers of efficacy is enactive mastery—personal accomplishments on the task (Bandura 1977, 1986, 1997). Indeed, Bandura (1986, p. 399) emphasized that task "successes raise efficacy appraisals; repeated failures lower them." Relatedly, feedback on task accomplishments enables people to reevaluate their beliefs in their ability to perform said task (Locke et al. 1984, Wood and Bandura 1989, Bandura and Jourden 1991). Moving forward, the perceived accomplishment of having treated a specific employee in a fair manner is likely to give the leader confidence in his or her ability to behave fairly in a more general sense.

In summary, we suggest that LMX agreement influences fairness efficacy via perceptions of successfully enacted fair treatment toward a given employee. In line with our role theory argument, research has shown that clear roles facilitate task success—task success that ultimately drives efficacy beliefs (see, e.g., Chen and Bliese 2002). In our case, clear roles should be obtained when a leader and follower share an understanding of their level of LMX quality. In turn, this is likely to drive leader task success in the form of fair treatment, ultimately promoting feelings of fairness efficacy. Thus, we predict that LMX agreement indirectly influences leader fairness efficacy via leader views of their treatment as fair.

Hypothesis 4. *Leader views of fair treatment (Study 1) are positively associated with leader fairness efficacy.*

Hypothesis 5. *LMX agreement and LMX quality indirectly influence leader fairness efficacy via leader views of fair treatment (Study 1).*

Shifting to the employee, we suggest they likely reciprocate fair treatment flowing from LMX agreement (within the dyad) by engaging in behavior beneficial to

the organization more broadly (beyond the dyad). Indeed, given that (a) supervisors are agents of the organization and (b) employee performance reflects on leaders, employees are likely to reciprocate what they feel is fair treatment with enhanced job performance, increased organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and decreased counterproductive work behavior (CWB) (Colquitt et al. 2013, Hill et al. 2020, Lennard et al. 2022).

Specifically, we posit that as LMX agreement increases and exchange dynamics are seen as increasingly fair, employees are moved to engage in reciprocal behaviors that benefit the leader/organization for at least two reasons. First, viewing an exchange as fair solidifies exchange dynamics and triggers the desire to reciprocate (Colquitt et al. 2013). Indeed, as elucidated by Masterson et al. (2000, p. 740), "Employees perceive acts of fairness to be contributions that enhance the quality and desirability of their ongoing relationships. These contributions in turn obligate the employees to reciprocate in ways that preserve the social exchange relationships, through voluntary behaviors or attitudes that benefit the parties who treated them fairly." In other words, fair treatment is a currency in exchange relationships that spurs actions by employees intended to "return the favor" (Blau 1964, Organ 1990, Cropanzano and Byrne 2000, Cropanzano et al. 2001). Second, beyond solidifying the exchange dynamic and spurring reciprocation, fairness flowing from LMX agreement should also generally leave employees feeling better about the exchange. As employees feel more positive (and less negative) about the exchange, they should naturally be disposed toward more positive (and less negative) performance behavior to maintain that exchange moving forward (Colquitt et al. 2013, Colquitt and Zipay 2015).

In line with meta-analytic research showing that fairness is positively related to task performance and OCB as well as negatively related to CWB (because it facilitates exchange dynamics and triggers more positive feelings; Colquitt et al. 2013), we theorize that employee views of fair treatment flowing from LMX agreement result in employee increases in performance, efforts to go above and beyond for the organization, and declines in harmful behaviors in an effort to reciprocate and uphold the "fair exchange."

Hypothesis 6. *Employee views of fair treatment (Study 2) are positively associated with employee job performance and OCB as well as negatively associated with CWB.*

Hypothesis 7. *LMX agreement and LMX quality indirectly influence employee job performance, OCB, and CWB via employee views of fair treatment (Study 2).*

Transparency and Openness
A full list of items used in all studies, our content as well as convergent and discriminant validity studies for fairness efficacy, and our data and analysis code are available online on the website for the Center for Open Science (OSF) at https://osf.io/4rjza/?view_only=3b2c08a 2d68b4f62bf71b1d6a13596db.

Study 1 and Study 2 Method
Samples and Procedures
We tested the leader-centric effects of LMX agreement in Study 1 (LMX agreement → leader views of fair treatment → leader fairness efficacy) and the employee-centric effects of LMX agreement in Study 2 (LMX agreement → employee views of fair treatment → supervisor-rated employee performance outcomes) using parallel designs. In Study 1, we recruited participants from an Executive Master in Business Administration (EMBA) class tied to a large university (56 contacted and 51 participated; response rate = 91%) as well as from the alumni network of the program (136 contacted and 110 participated; response rate = 81%). In their online survey, these participants provided ratings of LMX quality, demographic information, and the name and contact information of their direct supervisor. Supervisors were then emailed a separate online survey, where they completed a corresponding measure of LMX quality along with measures of their fair treatment and fairness efficacy (51 EMBA supervisors contacted and 44 participated, response rate = 91%; 110 alumni supervisors contacted and 98 participated, response rate = 89%). Supervisors and the participants recruited from the alumni network were each paid $5 for their participation. In Study 1, we had complete data for 142 supervisor-employee dyads. Of the employees (supervisors), 66.2% (69.0%) were male, and the average age was 40.7 (46.5) years. On average, supervisors reported working with the employee for 4.1 years. In terms of ethnicity, 73.2% of the participants identified as Caucasian, 15.5% identified as African American, 3.9% identified as Hispanic, 4.6% identified as Asian or Pacific Islander, and 4% identified as "other."

In Study 2, participants were a cohort of professional MBA students from a large university. As in Study 1, these participants provided ratings of LMX quality, demographic information, and the name and contact information of their direct supervisor. Approximately two months later, focal employees provided ratings of fair treatment from their supervisor, and supervisors completed a corresponding measure of LMX quality along with measures of employee job performance (overall performance, OCB, and CWB). For participating, focal employees received course credit and a customized feedback report after the study closed. Recruited supervisors received a $10 gift card. We received data from all 159 focal employees in the cohort and 128 of the supervisors contacted (response rate = 81%). Of the employees (supervisors), 61.7% (66.4%)

were male, and the average age was 30.5 (43.1) years. On average, employees reported working under their participating supervisor for 2.2 years (SD = 2.5). In terms of ethnicity, 53.1% of the participants identified as Caucasian, 15.6% identified as African American, 9.4% identified as Hispanic, 17.2% identified as Asian or Pacific Islander, and 4.7% identified as "other."

Measures

Unless noted, responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

Leader-Member Exchange. In both studies, employees and leaders rated LMX using the LMX-7 (Liden et al. 1993). Sample employee and leader items are "My working relationship with my supervisor is extremely effective" (Study 1 reliability = 0.87; Study 2 reliability = 0.90) and "My working relationship with my subordinate is extremely effective" (Study 1 reliability = 0.84; Study 2 reliability = 0.76).

Views of Fair Treatment. Given our leader-centric focus in Study 1 (cf. Cornelis et al. 2013, Johnson et al. 2014, Scott et al. 2014, Sherf et al. 2019), supervisors rated items adapted from established three-item measures of leader fairness (see, e.g., Ambrose and Schminke 2009a, Colquitt et al. 2015). A sample item is, "How fair do you think you are towards this subordinate?" (1 = *very unfair* to 5 = *very fair*; reliability = 0.86). In Study 2, employees rated fair treatment from their supervisor using the three-item employee fairness measure from Colquitt et al. (2015). A sample item is, "Does your supervisor act fair toward you?" (1 = *to a very small extent* to 5 = *to a very large extent*; reliability = 0.98).

Fairness Efficacy (Study 1). Although scholars have called for the study of fairness efficacy (Ambrose and Schminke 2009b), no validated scale exists. Thus, we created a measure of fairness efficacy drawing from past measures of job-related self-efficacy (see, e.g., Riggs et al. 1994). We followed the recommendations for scale validation outlined by Hinkin and Tracey (1999) and present the results of our content as well as convergent and discriminant validity studies in an online Appendix posted on the website for the Center for Open Science (linked in the "Transparency and Openness" section). In Study 1, leaders rated their fairness efficacy with our newly created and validated six-item measure. A sample item is, "I have confidence in my ability to treat employees fairly" (reliability = 0.74).

Job Performance Behavior: Overall, OCB, CWB (Study 2). Supervisors rated the overall performance of their subordinates using the five-item measure from Rodell (2013) as well as the subordinate's organization-focused OCB and CWB using the six-item measures from Dalal et al. (2009). A sample overall performance item is, "All things considered, [Subordinate Name] is outstanding at his or her job" (reliability = 0.92). A sample OCB item is, "[Subordinate Name] went above and beyond what was required for the work task" (reliability = 0.89). A sample CWB item is, "[Subordinate Name] spent time on tasks unrelated to work" (reliability = 0.85).

Controls. We controlled for several potential confounds theoretically relevant to LMX agreement, expectation alignment, and fair treatment (Carlson and Wu 2012, Bernerth and Aguinis 2016). First, given similarity's role in the development of LMX relationships (Liden et al. 1993) and responses to fairness (Rupp et al. 2014), we followed past work on LMX agreement (Matta et al. 2015) and controlled for demographic similarity (i.e., leader and employee gender, age, and ethnicity). We created dummy variables for both gender and ethnicity, coded as "1" (for female and minority, respectively) or "0." Age was recorded in years. We controlled for dyadic tenure and opportunities for interaction because of their meta-analytic links to LMX agreement (Sin et al. 2009) and relevance to fairness (Lind 2001, Van den Bos 2001, Lind and Van den Bos 2002, Van den Bos and Lind 2002). Leaders provided the length of the working relationship, and employees provided the extent of opportunities to interact with their leader. Opportunity for interaction was measured with four items inspired by the construct as defined by Napier and Ferris (1993). An example item is, "I often have the opportunity to interact with my supervisor" (Study 1 reliability = 0.77; Study 2 reliability = 0.94). Finally, to ensure that feelings of LMX agreement, fair treatment, and fairness efficacy were not skewed by span of control (or opportunities for (un)fair treatment afforded by being higher in the organizational chart and overseeing many employees) in our leader-centric study (Study 2), we also controlled for the number of employees reporting to the leader. We also tested our model without controls, and the results of hypothesis tests were identical to those reported.[1]

Analyses

To assess our measurement model in both Study 1 and Study 2, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs). In Study 1, our proposed five-factor model (leader and employee LMX, leader views of fairness, fairness efficacy, and interaction opportunity) fit the data well: χ^2 (314) = 433.94, $p < 0.01$; RMSEA = 0.05; CFI = 0.95. Moreover, the fit was superior to all possible four-factor models: $\Delta\chi^2$s (Δdf = 4) 137.43 – 636.48. In Study 2, given that the Dalal et al. (2009) OCB/CWB measures use parallel item structures for each of the six items, we followed best-practice recommendations to allow the residuals of the parallel items to covary (Cole et al. 2007). Our proposed seven-factor model (leader

and employee LMX; employee views of fairness; supervisor ratings of overall performance, OCB, and CWB; and interaction opportunity) fit the data well: χ^2 (602) = 983.11, $p < 0.01$; RMSEA = 0.06; CFI = 0.90. Moreover, the fit was superior to all possible six-factor models: $\Delta\chi^2$s ($\Delta df = 6$) 69.43 − 792.89.

Given our interest in agreement (or congruence) as a predictor in both Study 1 and Study 2, we followed best practice by using polynomial regression and response surface methodology (Edwards 2002, Edwards and Cable 2009, Matta and Frank 2024). To test our predictions using this approach, we regressed views of fair treatment (the leader's in Study 1 and the employee's in Study 2) on the control variables and on employee-rated LMX, leader-rated LMX, their squared terms, and their product term. Excluding controls for simplicity, the equation was as follows:

$$F = b_0 + b_1E + b_2S + b_3E^2 + b_4(SE) + b_5S^2 + e \quad (1)$$

E represents employee-rated LMX, S represents leader-rated LMX, and F represents fair treatment. To maintain meaningful coefficients with second-order terms present and to remove nonessential multicollinearity (Cohen et al. 2003), leader and employee ratings of LMX were centered at the midpoint of the means (Lambert et al. 2012, Baer et al. 2021), and the centered variables were used to calculate the product and squared terms. Following current best practice in studying congruence generally (Matta and Frank 2024) as well as LMX agreement specifically (see, e.g., Matta et al. 2015), we relied on the criteria outlined in Edwards and Cable (2009) to support an agreement (or congruence) effect. We tested the significance of the slope and curvature along the line of incongruence (where leader-employee LMX perceptions are misaligned in either direction, or $E = -S$) and the line of congruence (where leader-employee LMX perceptions are matched at varying levels, or $E = S$) using methods for testing linear combinations of regression coefficients (Edwards and Parry 1993, Edwards 2002). Figures 3 (Study 1) and 4 (Study 2) depict a three-dimensional response surface with employee ratings of LMX (E) on the x-axis, leader ratings of LMX (S) on the y-axis, and fair treatment (F) on the z-axis. To test indirect polynomial effects, we used the block variable approach (Edwards and Cable 2009, Matta et al. 2015).

Study 1 and Study 2 Results

Tables 1 (Study 1) and 2 (Study 2) present reliabilities, correlations, and descriptive statistics. Results of our polynomial regression models and tests of slopes and curvatures along the congruence and incongruence lines of the response surface (visually depicted in Figures 3 and 4) are shown in Tables 3 (Study 1) and 4 (Study 2). Hypothesis 1 predicted that views of fair treatment will be higher when the dyad agrees on their level of LMX

Figure 3. Study 1: Congruence Effects of LMX with Supervisor Views of Fair Treatment
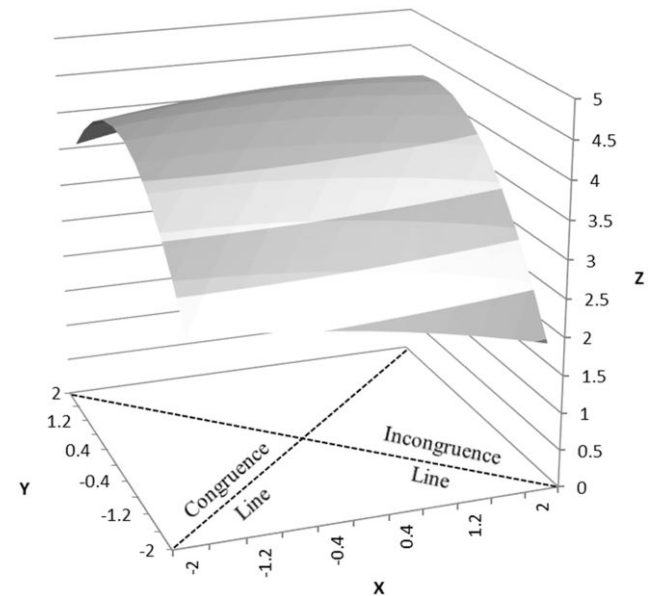
quality in comparison with when leader LMX exceeds employee LMX or employee LMX exceeds leader LMX. To test this hypothesis, we examined two features of our response surfaces: (1) whether the line of incongruence (leader-employee LMX misalignment in either direction, ranging from where leader LMX exceeds employee LMX to where employee LMX exceeds leader LMX) had negative and significant curvature and (2) whether the first principal axis (the ridge of the surface) runs along the line of congruence (i.e., has a slope of 1.0 and an intercept of zero) (Matta and Frank 2024). The curvature along the line of incongruence was negative and significant in Study 1 for leader views of fair treatment (*curvature* = −0.40, $p < 0.01$; Table 3) and in Study 2 for employee views of fair treatment (*curvature* = −0.84, $p < 0.05$; Table 4). This indicates that, for both leaders and employees, views of the leader's treatment as fair decrease as dyads stray from agreement on their level of LMX quality toward either regions where leader LMX exceeds employee LMX or regions where employee LMX exceeds leader LMX. We next tested whether the principal axis had a slope of 1.0 and an intercept of zero. In both studies, the 95% CI for the intercept included zero (Study 1: 95% CI = −4.25, 4.13; Study 2: 95% CI = −1.95, 2.11), and the 95% CI for the slope included 1.0 (Study 1: 95% CI = −2.12, 1.94; Study 2: 95% CI = −1.06, 3.01). This suggests that the ridge describing the peak of the response surface exists along the line of congruence (where leader-employee LMX quality perceptions align). In sum, LMX agreement maximizes leader and employee views of fair treatment. Hypothesis 1 was supported.

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

| Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Employee gender	0.34	0.48	—												
2 Employee age	40.68	9.17	0.14	—											
3 Employee ethnicity	0.43	0.50	-0.05	-0.11	—										
4 Supervisor gender	0.31	0.46	0.26**	0.13	0.13	—									
5 Supervisor age	46.54	8.82	0.09	0.31**	0.01	-0.05	—								
6 Supervisor ethnicity	0.11	0.31	0.09	-0.03	0.12	0.02	-0.18*	—							
7 Span of control (supervisor-rated)	31.54	85.82	-0.12	0.11	-0.05	-0.06	-0.07	0.28**	—						
8 Dyadic tenure (in months, supervisor-rated)	49.75	55.94	0.01	0.28**	0.02	-0.12	0.48**	-0.12	-0.01	—					
9 Opportunity for interaction (employee-rated)	4.15	0.65	0.08	0.06	-0.04	0.04	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.11	(0.77)				
10 LMX (employee-rated)	4.09	0.62	0.12	0.32**	-0.06	0.06	0.06	0.10	0.14	0.08	0.27**	(0.87)			
11 LMX (supervisor-rated)	4.19	0.46	0.11	0.14	0.05	0.06	0.24**	0.05	-0.03	0.15	0.04	0.24**	(0.84)		
12 Fair treatment (supervisor-rated)	4.83	0.41	-0.04	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.20*	-0.09	0.03	-0.09	0.08	0.05	0.48**	(0.86)	
13 Fairness efficacy (supervisor-rated)	3.94	0.53	0.07	-0.01	0.09	0.01	0.09	-0.03	0.11	-0.11	-0.05	0.05	0.26**	0.29**	(0.74)

Notes. $N = 142$. Gender was coded "0 = male", Ethnicity was coded "0 = Caucasian".

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Study 2 Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Employee Gender	0.38	0.49	—													
2 Employee Age	30.42	6.00	-0.09	—												
3 Employee Ethnicity	0.47	0.50	0.16	0.06	—											
4 Supervisor Gender	0.34	0.48	0.04	0.02	0.18*	—										
5 Supervisor Age	43.13	9.41	0.05	0.31**	-0.02	-0.08	—									
6 Supervisor Ethnicity	0.23	0.42	0.15	0.02	0.24*	0.16	-0.05	—								
7 Dyadic Tenure (in months, employee-rated)	26.72	30.12	-0.07	0.43**	-0.08	-0.04	0.21*	-0.07	—							
8 Opportunity for Interaction (supervisor-rated)	3.73	0.98	0.08	0.05	-0.01	0.06	-0.02	0.13	0.09	(0.94)						
9 LMX (employee-rated)	4.20	0.56	0.03	0.08	-0.03	0.08	0.04	-0.03	0.01	-0.03	(0.90)					
10 LMX (supervisor-rated)	4.41	0.40	0.10	0.04	-0.05	0.01	-0.05	0.03	0.09	0.37**	0.10	(0.76)				
11 Fair Treatment (employee-rated)	4.44	0.78	0.06	-0.01	0.05	0.05	-0.02	-0.14	-0.15	-0.02	0.62**	0.17	(0.98)			
12 Job Performance (supervisor-rated)	4.34	0.62	0.08	0.10	-0.17	0.01	0.04	0.05	0.09	0.27**	0.10	0.55**	0.22*	(0.92)		
13 OCB (supervisor-rated)	4.02	0.67	0.05	0.12	-0.19*	-0.06	0.06	0.00	0.02	0.37**	0.14	0.56**	0.17	0.67**	(0.89)	
14 CWB (supervisor-rated)	1.38	0.47	0.01	-0.05	0.15	0.05	-0.03	0.03	0.04	-0.06	-0.19*	-0.28**	-0.49**	-0.40**		(0.85)

Note. $N = 128$. Gender was coded "0 = male", Ethnicity was coded "0 = Caucasian".

Figure 4. Study 2: Congruence Effects of LMX with Employee Views of Fair Treatment
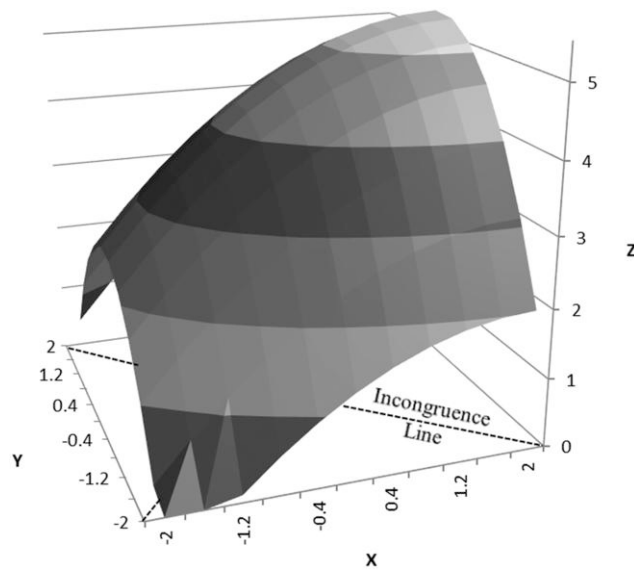
Note. x-axis is employee-rated (*E*) LMX quality; y-axis is supervisor-rated (*S*) LMX quality; z-axis is fair treatment.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that—given high LMX agreement—agreement at high levels of LMX quality will increase views of fair treatment relative to agreement at low levels of LMX. To test this, we examined the slope of the surface along the line of congruence (Matta and Frank 2024). The slope along the line of congruence was positive and significant for leader views of fair treatment in Study 1 (*slope* = 0.34, *p* < 0.01; Table 3) and for employee views of fair treatment in Study 2 (*slope* = 1.09, *p* < 0.01; Table 4). This demonstrates that both leader and employee views of fair treatment increase as the level of agreed-upon LMX quality increases, supporting Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that views of fair treatment are higher when leader LMX exceeds employee LMX in comparison with when employee LMX exceeds leader LMX. Given our Hypothesis 1, results in both studies showed that values of fair treatment decrease as perceptions diverge from agreement in either direction, to test Hypothesis 3 we compared the conditional slopes along the line of incongruence 1 SD into both the region in which leader perceptions of LMX exceed the follower's and the region in which employee perceptions of LMX exceed the leader's in order to draw conclusions about which effects are stronger (Tepper et al. 2018). Beginning with Study 1 (leader views), in the region where employee LMX exceeded leader LMX, the slope was negative (*slope moving from LMX agreement to employee LMX exceeding leader LMX* = −0.83, *p* < 0.01). Thus, leader views of fair treatment decreased as employee LMX exceeded leader LMX. In the region where leader LMX exceeded employee LMX, the slope was positive

but not significant (*slope moving from leader LMX exceeding employee LMX to LMX agreement* = 0.03, not significant). In other words, leader views of fair treatment decreased as leader LMX exceeded employee LMX, but the effect was not meaningfully different from zero. These results suggest that leader views of fair treatment increase moving from where employee LMX exceeds leader LMX toward conditions of LMX agreement are maximized as leader-employee perceptions of LMX align and reach a threshold/plateau and decline less sharply as leader LMX exceeds employee LMX (Lambert et al. 2012). This is further supported by the negative slope of the incongruence line (*slope* = −0.40, *p* < 0.01; Table 3). Thus, leader perceptions of LMX loomed larger than the employee's, and our results supported Hypothesis 3 for leader views of fairness. Shifting to Study 2 (employee views), in the region where employee LMX exceeded leader LMX, the slope was negative but not significant (*slope moving from LMX agreement to employee LMX exceeding leader LMX* = −0.41, not significant). Thus, employee views of fair treatment decreased as employee LMX exceeded leader LMX, but the effect was not significantly different from zero. In the region where leader LMX exceeded employee LMX, the slope was positive (*slope moving from leader LMX exceeding employee*

Table 3. Study 1: Polynomial Regression of Supervisor Views of Fair Treatment on LMX Agreement and Regression of Fairness Efficacy on Fair Treatment

Variables	Fair treatment		Fairness efficacy	
Constant	4.34**	(0.26)	2.53**	(0.70)
Controls				
Employee age	−0.00	(0.00)	−0.00	(0.01)
Employee gender	−0.05	(0.06)	0.11	(0.09)
Employee race	−0.01	(0.05)	0.12	(0.09)
Supervisor age	0.01*	(0.00)	0.01	(0.01)
Supervisor gender	−0.03	(0.06)	−0.03	(0.09)
Supervisor race	−0.18*	(0.09)	−0.14	(0.15)
Supervisor span of control	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Supervisor-employee interaction	0.09*	(0.04)	−0.06	(0.07)
Dyadic tenure (months)	−0.00**	(0.00)	−0.00	(0.00)
Polynomial terms				
b_1 Employee LMX (*E*)	−0.03	(0.06)	0.00	(0.09)
b_2 Supervisor LMX (*S*)	0.37**	(0.06)	0.22*	(0.11)
b_3 E^2	−0.03	(0.05)	−0.00	(0.07)
b_4 $E \times S$	0.07	(0.10)	−0.00	(0.16)
b_5 S^2	−0.30**	(0.07)	0.18	(0.11)
Mediator				
Fair treatment			0.30*	(0.13)
R^2	0.43**		0.18**	
Congruence line (*E* = *S*)				
Slope ($b_1 + b_2$)	0.34**	(0.08)	0.22	(0.13)
Curvature ($b_3 + b_4 + b_5$)	−0.26*	(0.13)	0.17	(0.21)
Incongruence line (*E* = −*S*)				
Slope ($b_1 − b_2$)	−0.40**	(0.09)	−0.22	(0.15)
Curvature ($b_3 − b_4 + b_5$)	−0.40*	(0.12)	0.18	(0.19)

Notes. N = 142 dyads. Gender was coded "0 = male"; ethnicity was coded "0 = Caucasian".

Table 4. Study 2: Polynomial Regression of Employee Views of Fair Treatment on LMX Agreement and Regression of Fairness Efficacy on Fair Treatment

Variables	Fair treatment		Job performance		OCB		CWB	
Constant	4.59**	(0.38)	3.02**	(0.48)	2.54**	(0.50)	2.29**	(0.43)
Controls								
Employee age	0.00	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)	0.02†	(0.01)	−0.01	(0.01)
Employee gender	0.10	(0.11)	0.05	(0.10)	−0.02	(0.10)	0.02	(0.08)
Employee race	0.11	(0.11)	−0.24*	(0.09)	−0.24*	(0.10)	0.16†	(0.08)
Supervisor age	0.00	(0.01)	0.00	(0.01)	0.00	(0.01)	−0.00	(0.00)
Supervisor gender	−0.01	(0.11)	0.03	(0.10)	−0.06	(0.10)	0.04	(0.08)
Supervisor race	−0.27*	(0.13)	0.14	(0.11)	0.02	(0.12)	−0.06	(0.10)
Supervisor-employee interaction	0.01	(0.06)	0.04	(0.05)	0.12*	(0.05)	−0.01	(0.04)
Dyadic tenure (months)	−0.00*	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	−0.00†	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Polynomial terms								
b_1 Employee LMX (E)	0.75**	(0.12)	−0.10	(0.12)	0.02	(0.12)	0.00	(0.10)
b_2 Supervisor LMX (S)	0.34*	(0.14)	0.74**	(0.12)	0.69**	(0.13)	−0.16	(0.11)
b_3 E^2	−0.18†	(0.11)	−0.05	(0.09)	−0.00	(0.10)	0.05	(0.08)
b_4 $E \times S$	0.00	(0.24)	−0.14	(0.21)	−0.13	(0.22)	0.21	(0.19)
b_5 S^2	−0.66*	(0.31)	0.01	(0.27)	0.70*	(0.28)	−0.11	(0.24)
Mediator								
Fair treatment			0.17*	(0.08)	0.09	(0.08)	−0.16*	(0.07)
R^2	0.48**		0.37**		0.44**		0.15**	
Congruence line ($E = S$)								
Slope ($b_1 + b_2$)	1.09**	(0.17)	0.63**	(0.17)	0.71**	(0.18)	−0.16	(0.15)
Curvature ($b_3 + b_4 + b_5$)	−0.84*	(0.39)	−0.17	(0.35)	0.57	(0.36)	0.16	(0.31)
Incongruence line ($E = -S$)								
Slope ($b_1 - b_2$)	0.40*	(0.19)	−0.84**	(0.17)	−0.67**	(0.17)	0.16	(0.15)
Curvature ($b_3 - b_4 + b_5$)	−0.84*	(0.42)	0.10	(0.37)	0.82*	(0.38)	−0.26	(0.33)

Notes. $N = 128$ dyads. Gender was coded "0 = male"; ethnicity was coded "0 = Caucasian".

LMX to LMX agreement = 1.21, $p < 0.01$), and employee views of fair treatment decreased as leader LMX exceeded employee LMX. Contrary to our prediction, these results reveal that employee views of fair treatment increase moving from where leader LMX exceeds employee LMX toward conditions of LMX agreement are maximized as leader-employee perceptions of LMX align and reach a threshold/plateau and decline less sharply as employee LMX exceeds leader LMX (Lambert et al. 2012). This is further supported by the positive slope of the incongruence line (*slope* = 0.40, $p < 0.01$; Table 4). In summary, employee perceptions of LMX loomed larger than the leader's, and Hypothesis 3 was not supported for employee views of fairness.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that leader views of fair treatment have a positive relationship with fairness efficacy, and Hypothesis 5 predicted that LMX agreement and LMX quality indirectly impact leader fairness efficacy via leader views of fair treatment. The path coefficient from fair treatment to fairness efficacy was positive and significant ($B = 0.30$, $p < 0.05$; Table 3). To test the indirect polynomial effect, we utilized the block variable approach (Edwards and Cable 2009). We created a block variable, a weighted linear combination of the polynomial terms, which was then used as the first stage path of the indirect effect. The indirect effect of LMX agreement on leader fairness efficacy via fair treatment was

positive and significant ($B = 0.30$, 95% CI = 0.03, 0.56). Thus, Hypotheses 4 and 5 were supported.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that employee views of fair treatment have a positive relationship with employee performance—(a) overall performance, (b) OCB, and (c) CWB—and Hypothesis 7 predicted that LMX agreement and LMX quality indirectly influence employee job performance, OCB, and CWB via employee views of fair treatment. As reported in Table 4, the path coefficients from perceived fair treatment to overall performance ($B = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$), OCB ($B = 0.09$, not significant), and CWB ($B = -0.16$, $p < 0.05$) were all in the right direction but were significant only for overall performance and CWB. Using the block variable approach (Edwards and Cable 2009), results indicated that the indirect effects of LMX agreement on employee performance via views of fair treatment were in the proper direction and significant for overall performance ($B = 0.17$, 95% CI = 0.01, 0.32) and CWB ($B = -0.16$, 95% CI = −0.29, −0.02) but not OCB ($B = 0.09$, 95% CI = −0.07, 0.25). Thus, Hypotheses 6a, 7a, 6c, and 7c were supported, but Hypotheses 6b and 7b were not.

Study 1 and Study 2 Discussion
Our studies showed that leader (Study 1) and employee (Study 2) views of fair treatment were enhanced as leader and employee perceptions of high LMX quality (i.e., socio-emotional) or low LMX quality (i.e.,

transactional) came into alignment. Moreover, in both studies, levels of LMX quality still played a meaningful role when agreement was present; leader (Study 1) and employee (Study 2) views of fair treatment were strengthened when a leader and employee agreed upon a high level of LMX quality relative to agreeing upon a low level. Thus, the results of both studies provide support for exact correspondence (fit exactly along the congruence line—1-1, 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 5-5—maximizes fair treatment relative to misfit at the same level) with a linear level effect (5-5 enhances fair treatment relative to 1-1) (Matta and Frank 2024).[2] However, when it came to situations of low agreement, our results diverged, with effects being contingent on whose view of fairness was considered. The Study 1 results aligned with our theorizing that supervisor LMX would loom larger than employee LMX when assessing fairness; leader views of fair treatment were higher when the leader saw LMX as high quality and the employee saw it as low relative to when the leader saw LMX as low quality and the employee saw it as high. However, contrary to our predictions and the Study 1 results, employee views of fairness (Study 2) were higher when the employee saw LMX as high quality and the leader saw it as low relative to when the employee saw LMX as low quality and the leader saw it as high. Thus, although high agreement may trump low agreement, it appears as though views of fair treatment may skew toward the eye of the beholder (i.e., one's own view is more influential) when perceptions of LMX quality diverge.

Beyond establishing the criticality of LMX agreement to leader and employee views of fair treatment, both studies further demonstrated that these proximal dyadic fairness effects within the leader-member dyad had broader, long-run implications for leaders, employees, and organizations. Specifically, because of leaders seeing themselves as more (less) fair toward an employee as a result of LMX agreement, the leader ultimately felt more (less) efficacious about his or her ability to enact fairness toward that employee as well as others in the future (Study 1). Moreover, because of employees seeing themselves as more (less) fairly treated by their leader as a result of LMX agreement, the employee reciprocated by (not) engaging in acts beneficial to the organization more broadly (Study 2).

Transition to Study 3

While Study 1 provides initial support for our theorizing surrounding fairness efficacy as a leader-centric outcome of fair treatment, given that this research is the first to formally examine the construct, we felt it critical to untangle potential temporal interrelationships between views of fair treatment and fairness efficacy. Although both our role theory and fairness perspectives position fair treatment within the dyad

as a proximal outcome of LMX agreement and place generalized efficacy beliefs about fairness as a more downstream consequence, task enactment and efficacy beliefs are likely to be reciprocally related (Bandura 1977, 1986, 1997). Testing and showing that fairness and fairness efficacy are reciprocal would enhance our research in two ways. First, showing that a bidirectional relationship exists would provide further evidence that views of fair treatment (within the dyad) do indeed facilitate efficacy beliefs about fairness (beyond the dyad). Second, establishing a reciprocal relationship would provide further evidence for the value of fairness efficacy. Such a result would suggest that the effects of LMX agreement on fair treatment and ultimately fairness efficacy do not end at efficacy beliefs. Rather, these effects are likely to result in a positive fairness-efficacy spiral into the future (cf. Lindsley et al. 1995, Shea and Howell 2000).

With that in mind, we designed a follow-up to Study 1 to test the temporal interrelationships between dyadic fair treatment and generalized fairness efficacy to provide further targeted evidence supporting Hypothesis 4 and to show the value of fairness efficacy. Toward these ends, we collected three-wave panel data to estimate cross-lagged relations between the two constructs accounting for auto-regressive (i.e., stability) paths. Not only does this design provide the flexibility to examine the potential for reciprocal effects, but statistically significant cross-lagged effects provide the strongest possible evidence of causality in field research (Finkel 1995, Lang et al. 2011, Zablah et al. 2016), which is particularly valuable given that the indirect effect analysis in Study 1 does not demonstrate causality.

Study 3 Method
Sample and Procedures
We specifically targeted supervisors through an online survey platform, Prolific Academic. We set the online platform to screen participants such that only current, full-time supervisors with at least one direct report were able to enter our study (we verified this again in our registration survey); 250 supervisors were deemed eligible for our study. Supervisors were asked to complete weekly measures of their fair treatment toward a specific employee as well as their fairness efficacy for three consecutive weeks (cf. Schaubroeck et al. 2018, Matta et al. 2020). Upon registering for the study, supervisor participants were asked to provide the names of three current subordinates who report to them. One name was then randomly selected in the survey software, and participants were asked to report on this subordinate for the duration of the study. We offered up to $3.50 for complete participation, and a total of 218 supervisors completed all three surveys (response rate = 87%). Average age was 40.9 years (SD = 11.3), average organization

tenure was 9.9 years (SD = 7.3), and the majority of the sample was male (66%). Supervisors reported having overseen their employee for an average of 4.9 years (SD = 4.3) and reported an average of 5.0 hours (SD = 2.4) of daily interaction with them. Ethnicities included Caucasian (79.8%), African American (5.0%), Asian/Pacific Islander (4.1%), Hispanic/Latino (5.5%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (2.3%), and other (3.2%).

Measures

We measured views of fair treatment toward the subordinate (reliabilities = 0.84, 0.89, and 0.89 for time points 1-3) and general fairness efficacy (reliabilities = 0.80, 0.83, and 0.87 for time points 1-3) each week using the same measures from Study 1.

Analysis

We ran CFAs and tested our cross-lagged model with structural equation modeling. First, we tested our measurement model with item-level indicators for our two latent variables across three time points. In line with other cross-lagged designs, we allowed the disturbance terms of our latent variables within each time period to covary as well as the error terms for the same items across time (Little et al. 2007, Zablah et al. 2016). Our measurement model fit the data well: χ^2 (282) = 609.95 p < 0.01; RMSEA = 0.07; CFI = 0.91. In addition to validating our measures, a strong measurement model across the three time points provides support for configural invariance or consistent factor structure across waves (Vandenberg and Morelli 2016). Following best practice (see, e.g., Meier and Spector 2013, Eby et al. 2015), we next tested for metric invariance. We constrained factor loadings to remain equal across the three waves of data, and our measurement model continued to fit the data well: χ^2 (296) = 637.01, p < 0.01; RMSEA = 0.08; CFI = 0.91. Such minor changes in fit (ΔCFI < 0.010; ΔRMSEA < 0.015) provide evidence of metric invariance across time (Cheung and Rensvold 2002, Chen 2007, Zablah et al. 2016).

Study 3 Results

Table 5 presents the reliabilities, correlations, and descriptive statistics for our variables measured at each time point. As with our measurement model, we again followed best practice and allowed the disturbance terms of our latent variables within each time period to covary as well as the error terms for the same items across time (Little et al. 2007, Zablah et al. 2016). We then modeled our structural model both with and without constraints on the structural coefficients and found no significant differences. As such, we opted to use the more parsimonious and conservative model, holding the same conceptual paths equal across time (cf. Meier and Spector 2013). For example, in the constrained model, we specified that the estimated path from views of fair treatment at time 1 to fairness efficacy at time 2 be equivalent to the path estimated from views of fair treatment at time 2 to fairness efficacy at time 3. This aligns with our theorizing regarding the influence of views of fair treatment at time x predicting fairness efficacy at time x + 1. This model fit the data well: χ^2 (290) = 635.75, p < 0.01; RMSEA = 0.07; CFI = 0.91.

Figure 5 presents our structural model and path coefficients. Hypothesis 4 predicted a positive relationship between views of fair treatment and fairness efficacy. Consistent with Study 1, our model further supported Hypothesis 4 with a positive path from dyad-specific fair treatment to subsequent generalized fairness efficacy (B = 0.11, p < 0.05) (while controlling for prior fairness efficacy level). Our cross-lagged panel design also offers further insight. First, by controlling for prior ratings of fairness efficacy at each time point, our analyses show the magnitude of this relationship above and beyond variance explained by the constancy of fairness efficacy over time (Finkel 1995). Second, aligned with the notion of a reciprocal relationship (i.e., a fairness-fairness efficacy spiral), generalized fairness efficacy positively predicted subsequent dyadic fair treatment (B = 0.14, p < 0.01). Thus, Study 2 provides additional support for Hypothesis 4 and showcases the value of fairness efficacy as both an outcome of past fairness and a catalyst for future fairness.

Study 3 Discussion

Given the perceptual nature of supervisor views of fair treatment and fairness efficacy, our Study 1 was limited in its ability to tease apart temporal ordering and the full

Table 5. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Study 3 Variables

	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Fair treatment (*Time 1*)	4.79	0.42	(0.84)					
2	Fairness efficacy (*Time 1*)	4.33	0.51	0.43**	(0.80)				
3	Fair treatment (*Time 2*)	4.75	0.47	0.67**	0.39**	(0.89)			
4	Fairness efficacy (*Time 2*)	4.28	0.53	0.47**	0.73**	0.53**	(0.83)		
5	Fair treatment (*Time 3*)	4.76	0.47	0.69**	0.44**	0.75**	0.52**	(0.89)	
6	Fairness efficacy (*Time 3*)	4.32	0.56	0.53**	0.69**	0.51**	0.76**	0.53**	(0.87)

Note. N = 218.

Figure 5. Study 3: Results of Cross-Lagged Path Model
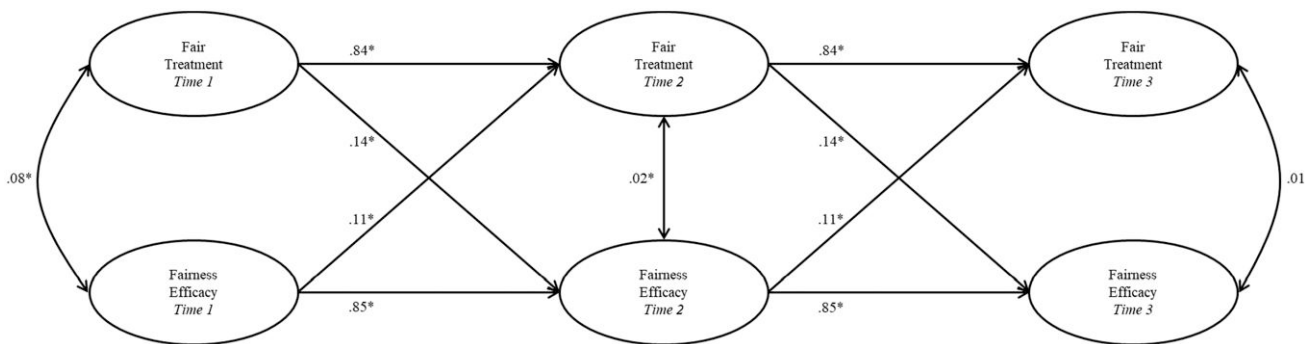
Chi-Square = 635.75 (*df*=290); RMSEA = .07; CFI = .91

Note. $n = 218$.

nature of interrelationships between the constructs. We conducted Study 3 to overcome these limitations. Utilizing a three-wave, cross-lagged panel design, Study 3 allowed us to (a) provide additional support for Hypothesis 4 by demonstrating a causal link between views of dyadic fair treatment and generalized fairness efficacy (above and beyond past levels of fairness efficacy) and (b) show that fairness efficacy is both an outcome of past, more pointed fairness and a stimulus for future fairness (i.e., a fairness-fairness efficacy spiral).

Supplemental Studies

Despite our field studies providing strong support for the influence of LMX agreement on views of fair treatment in real-world settings, the correlational nature of the data limited our ability to unpack the way in which these fairness-related dynamics play out. To provide further support for our theorizing and more directly simulate these dynamics, we conducted two preregistered experiments to unpack how LMX agreement is likely to manifest in expectation alignment and impact views of fairness, one from a leader perspective (Online Appendix B) and one from an employee perspective (Online Appendix C). Full details on the method, results, and discussion of both studies are posted on the website for the Center for Open Science (linked in the "Transparency and Openness" section).

To briefly summarize, both scenario studies utilized 2×2 experimental designs and included 260 participants (65 participants per cell, in line with a medium effect size with power of ~0.80) recruited from Prolific Academic (one supervisor and one employee sample). In line with similar research published in top-tier journals (Hussain et al. 2019), we first manipulated the focal participant's—either leader (Online Appendix B) or employee (Online Appendix C)—view of LMX quality. Then, given that views of LMX quality—in terms of both theory (Graen and Scandura 1987) and measurement (Liden et al. 1993)—manifest as observable exchange

behavior, we next manipulated the LMX-related exchange behavior of the other party (either employee or leader). Indeed, our theorizing suggests it is the *alignment/discrepancy* between the focal individual's perception of their LMX quality and the LMX-related exchange behavior of the other party that drives views of fairness/unfairness. After our manipulations, we assessed views of fair treatment and the relevant downstream outcomes (using the same measures from Studies 1 and 2). We also collected expectation alignment to examine our implicit proposal that it (a) is core to the LMX agreement phenomenon and (b) explains LMX agreement's effects on views of fair treatment.

Results of these studies from both leader and employee perspectives fully supported our hypotheses and also highlighted the criticality of expectation alignment to these dynamics. From both leader (Online Appendix B) and employee (Online Appendix C) perspectives, views of fair treatment were (a) higher in the high LMX agreement conditions than in the low LMX agreement conditions (supporting Hypothesis 1), (b) higher in the high agreement at high levels of LMX condition than in the high agreement at low levels of LMX condition (supporting Hypothesis 2), and (c) higher in the low LMX agreement with high leader LMX condition than in the low LMX agreement with low leader LMX condition (supporting Hypothesis 3).[3] Two additional insights replicated across both experiments that are important to highlight. First, in addition to agreement at high levels of LMX being optimal for views of fairness, the results of both experiments showed that agreement at low levels of LMX quality was (a) superior to low-leader LMX and high-employee LMX and (b) no different than high-leader LMX and low-employee LMX (which aligns with the criticality of LMX agreement relative to LMX levels alone). Second, our supplemental analyses revealed that expectation alignment played an integral role in how LMX agreement facilitates views of fair treatment. Indeed, in addition to the pattern for

expectation alignment across conditions aligning with our theorizing (agreement at high LMX quality > agreement at low LMX quality > both low LMX agreement conditions), our indirect effect analysis showed that expectation alignment fully accounted for the effects of LMX agreement on supervisor and employee views of fair treatment.

General Discussion

Our integration of theories of fairness and role theory suggests that facilitating views of fair treatment at any level of LMX rests not on convincing employees or leaders that they have high-quality relationships with the other party when they in fact do not; rather, it hinges on getting them both "on the same page" about their relationship (whatever that relationship is). The importance of LMX agreement on views of fairness was robust across leaders (Study 1) and employees (Study 2). Indeed, our use of polynomial regression and response surface methods revealed that the other party's perception of LMX quality provides a threshold for one's own perception. In other words, although views of fair treatment (and organizationally relevant outcomes flowing from those views) were maximized in situations of agreement, fairness increased when moving from situations where one's own perceptions were lower than the other party's toward conditions of agreement but plateaued and decreased as one's own perceptions exceeded those of the other party. We note that these insights were largely paralleled in our two preregistered experiments (Online Appendixes B and C). Thus, although the literature has generally taken a "more LMX, more fair" approach (Dulebohn et al. 2012, Matta and Frank 2023) and assumed that fairness flows from perceptions of high LMX quality (Bolino and Turnley 2009), our work suggests that it may not matter how effective one thinks their relationship is. Indeed, if the other party does not agree, then expectation discrepancies create cracks in the façade of what one sees as a seemingly "good relationship." Taken together, our results show that views of fairness may be more about alignment in LMX quality than one's level of LMX quality (although LMX quality is beneficial when agreement is present). Indeed, increasing one party's perception alone resulted in no benefits when not accompanied by agreement.

Our research further revealed that what happens within a given dyad—LMX agreement and views of fair treatment—has downstream implications for organizations beyond the dyad. For leaders, views of fair treatment flowing from dyadic LMX agreement left them feeling more efficacious about their future ability to behave in a fair manner in a more general sense (toward both that employee and others). Study 3 expanded on this finding, showing that views of fair treatment and

fairness efficacy exhibit reciprocal effects in a cross-lagged design tailored for supporting causal relationships in field data (Finkel 1995, Lang et al. 2011, Zablah et al. 2016). This suggests that dyadic fair treatment does facilitate fairness efficacy beliefs and underscores the value of fairness efficacy in initiating positive fairness-efficacy spirals. For employees, views of fair treatment flowing from LMX agreement led to behavior that benefits the organization more generally (e.g., excelling in their job activities, abstaining from slacking off).

Implications for Theory and Practice

Our work has several theoretical implications for the management literature on fairness. First, we advance theory by addressing how views of fairness can be optimized across all types of leader-member dyads despite the fact that not all dyads are able to exchange identical amounts of information, support, and attention (Graen and Scandura 1987). Indeed, although fairness is of critical importance to organizations and a "fifth wave" of justice research has begun to identify supervisor as well as employee antecedents to fairness (Brockner et al. 2015), there is still an underdeveloped understanding of how the *dyadic* interplay between leaders and followers may facilitate or hinder views of fairness. This oversight is particularly problematic when one considers that the norm to differentiate exchange quality (Liden and Graen 1980) may often violate the equity and equality norms that typically drive views of fairness (Deutsch 1975). Our work reveals how dyads can maximize views of fair treatment despite this paradox within organizations. Specifically, regardless of (high or low) LMX quality, we show that views of fairness are maximized when both parties' views of their LMX relationship are in alignment. Critically, we show that leaders are sensitive to LMX agreement (and the accompanying expectation alignment) in much the same way that employees are, experiencing "dips" in perceptions of their own fairness when low agreement exists.

Further highlighting the utility of our dyadic approach, we note that our models ($R^2 = 0.43$ for leaders and 0.48 for employees) explain more than double the amount of variance in fairness relative to models from past work in the "fifth wave" of justice (average reported $R^2 = 0.19$; see Schminke et al. 2000, Mayer et al. 2007, Bianchi and Brockner 2012, Zapata et al. 2013, Zhao et al. 2015, Zapata et al. 2016, Colquitt et al. 2018, Muir et al. 2022). Moreover, the inferences we provide—a dyadic focus on agreement in perceptions of LMX quality plays a larger role in both leader and employee views of fairness than levels of LMX quality themselves—differ dramatically from the "more LMX, more fairness" prescription common in the LMX and fairness literatures (Dulebohn et al. 2012, Matta and Frank 2023).

We also advance theories of fairness by providing the first examination into how to facilitate expectation alignment. The fairness literature—both in seminal works (see, e.g., Homans 1961, Blau 1964, Adams 1965) and in more recent theoretical advancements (see, e.g., Folger and Cropanzano 1998, 2001; Lind 2001; Van den Bos 2001)—contends that expectation alignment is a key factor in gauging whether an exchange is fair. Although notions of expectation alignment are implicit throughout the literature, they remain largely unexamined. We introduce LMX agreement as way to indirectly trigger and examine fairness-inducing expectation alignment. Directly supporting our approach, our preregistered experiments (see Online Appendixes B and C) showed that expectation alignment indeed underlies the LMX agreement phenomenon and explains its effects on views of fair treatment. Taken together, we open the door for future research into the concept of expectation alignment relevant to both theories of fairness and LMX.

Our work also highlights the theoretical and practical value of the LMX agreement phenomenon to fairness and fairness-relevant consequences by illuminating that what occurs within the dyad (i.e., LMX agreement and views of fair treatment) has broad, organizationally relevant implications beyond it. In line with networks research showing that dyadic phenomena—whether it be dyadic ties generally (see, e.g., Umphress et al. 2003, Bowler and Brass 2006, Wong and Boh 2010) or leader-member ties specifically (e.g., Sparrowe and Liden 1997, 2005; Erdogan et al. 2015)—often have consequences that span well beyond that tie, we reveal organizational implications of this dyadic phenomenon transmitted via each member. For leaders, fairness flowing from LMX agreement with a single employee ultimately facilitated broader leader fairness efficacy (agnostic to the specific employee). Given the reciprocal relations revealed between fair treatment and fairness efficacy, fairness efficacy seems a particularly useful fairness-related outcome to introduce to the "fifth wave" of justice literature (Brockner et al. 2015) as well as to make use of in practice. For the employee side of the dyad, we showed that perceptions of dyadic fair treatment flowing from LMX agreement ultimately led employees to channel reciprocation in ways that impact the organization more broadly. Thus, our employee-centric study establishes the practical utility of—and value of work on—this organizational phenomenon (Colquitt 2012).

On that note, our work provides several implications for practice. When it comes to LMX and fairness, past research would tell us that to be seen as fair, leaders should either (a) develop high LMX relationships with every single employee or (b) convince them all that they are recipients of high LMX (even if they are not). The first is not feasible, whereas the latter is disingenuous. Fortunately, our work shows that neither approach is the answer. Indeed, even if LMX perceptions are increased, if they are not being delivered on by the other party, then the benefits are neutralized and, in certain combinations, harmful to fair treatment. By introducing alignment in LMX perceptions (even at low levels of LMX) as an unconsidered third option, we offer a more effective (and perhaps more efficient) approach for leaders. Indeed, "seeing eye to eye" in terms of dyadic LMX quality appears to be the key to promoting views of fair treatment within organizations. So, how might managers and organizations go about doing so?

The nascent LMX agreement literature highlights that increasing dyadic interaction intensity enhances LMX agreement (Sin et al. 2009). Thus, whether a leader has high or low LMX quality with a particular employee, investing time in dyadic interactions with that employee is an actionable step that leaders can take to develop perceptual alignment. Interestingly, this contention parallels (a) the discussion of psychological distance in the "fifth wave of justice" literature, given that reducing psychological distance tends to result in two parties seeing fairness-relevant information more similarly (Blader et al. 2013, Brockner et al. 2015), and (b) meta-analytic evidence demonstrating that interaction frequency as well as interpersonal intimacy improve self-other agreement (Connelly and Ones 2010). Because past research shows that leaders' instincts may be to distance themselves from employees in challenging situations (Folger and Skarlicki 1998), this advice may be especially important for leaders that view LMX quality as low.

We also contribute to practice by highlighting why fairness efficacy is important and how leaders may develop it. Our research shows a positive and reciprocal spiral between isolated views of fair treatment and fairness efficacy. Considering that fairness plays a key role in influencing employee attitudes and performance, organizations would be well served to focus on increasing leader fairness efficacy. We show that getting employees and leaders to "see eye to eye" on LMX quality is one way to achieve this. Based on early theorizing on the topic (Ambrose and Schminke 2009b) and research on efficacy beliefs (Frayne and Latham 1987, Saks 1995), fairness training (Skarlicki and Latham 1996, Greenberg 2006) may also be an effective tool for organizations to increase not only views of fair treatment but also fairness efficacy. With that in mind, when organizations identify leaders hampered with low fairness efficacy beliefs, they may consider providing them with specific instances (or employees) with whom they can "practice" being fair. The result of this practice is not only gaining experience with acting fairly in that situation but also building confidence in one's fairness-related capabilities beyond those instances.

Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation of Studies 1 and 2 was the largely cross-sectional nature of the data. Although this type of design

is unlikely to result in spurious polynomial effects (Evans 1985, Siemsen et al. 2010) and is common in studies using polynomial regression generally (see, e.g., Edwards and Cable 2009, Wilson et al. 2018) and examining LMX agreement specifically (see, e.g., Matta et al. 2015), we followed up with studies and designs tailored to eliminate CMV and concerns over causality (i.e., a cross-lagged panel design and two preregistered experiments). One limitation of Study 3 was the exclusive focus on reciprocal relationships between views of fair treatment and fairness efficacy. Although Study 3 tests and expands on only a small portion of our model (to pointedly establish the value of fairness efficacy in driving positive fairness-efficacy spirals), our other studies complement it, examining the model with designs tailored to maximize external (Studies 1 and 2) and internal (Online Appendixes B and C) validity.

An additional limitation of our work is that we approach the connections between LMX agreement and fairness using a somewhat static snapshot both theoretically and empirically. Although we ask—and answer—how LMX agreement (at a given point of time) influences leader and employee views of fair treatment and unpack expectation alignment as theoretically and empirically integral to explaining these effects, interesting questions remain that likely require dynamic approaches. For example, scholars may consider how LMX agreement and LMX quality unfold over time. For instance, if low LMX agreement and unmet expectations exist, wouldn't both parties adjust to reach a more satisfying equilibrium? Interestingly, current evidence suggests that LMX disagreement tends to persist (with dyadic relationship tenure explaining only 11% to 15% of variance in LMX agreement; see Sin et al. 2009). Nonetheless, research is needed to examine the dynamics of LMX agreement over time.

Given that LMX (dis)agreement appears to drive not only views of (un)fair treatment within leader-member dyads but also important outcomes beyond the dyad, we see two next steps as critical. We urge scholars to further consider ways to (a) directly enhance perceptual overlap in LMX and (b) mitigate the deleterious effects of LMX disagreement on views of unfair treatment when perceptual misalignment persists or is not recognized in the first place. When it comes to exploring how to help leaders and employees enhance perceptual alignment, nascent work provides a potential starting point. Indeed, to some degree, relationship tenure and interaction intensity enhance self-other agreement generally (Connelly and Ones 2010) and LMX agreement specifically (Sin et al. 2009). Thus, constructs relevant to consistency and uncertainty reduction should be uniquely pertinent to promoting alignment in views.

Although we urge scholars to unpack ways to directly enhance agreement on LMX quality, we also recognize that some degree of misalignment is likely to persist and

may never be explicitly noticed by interaction partners (Graen 1976). Thus, it is critical that future work also focuses on practical ways to buffer against the harm caused by low LMX agreement. Fortunately, our supplementary studies reveal that expectation alignment is key. Indeed, expectation alignment not only underlies the LMX agreement phenomenon but also fully drives the effects of LMX agreement on outcomes (see Online Appendixes B and C). Given that expectations are more explicit and communicable than are views of relationship quality, future research could examine the efficacy of leader-follower interventions targeted at communicating expectations for one another as a means to buffer against misalignment in perceptions of LMX quality. On that point, although it may be difficult or even impossible to expect all dyads to "see eye to eye" on LMX quality, it is likely easier and more realistic for them to "see eye to eye" on expectations.

Acknowledgments

Endnotes
[1] Given that research in the "fifth wave" of justice has focused on characteristics of organizations, characteristics of supervisors, and characteristics of employees that promote fair treatment, we also explored several of these characteristics as controls. For instance, although their linkages to LMX agreement are unknown, research has shown that fair treatment can be affected by organizational context (see, e.g., Schminke et al. 2000, Rosen et al. 2009), supervisor race (see, e.g., Zapata et al. 2016), and employee trust propensity (see e.g., Bianchi and Brockner 2012). In both Study 1 and Study 2, when controlling for industry, supervisor race (which is also included in our primary analysis given its relevance to both fair treatment and LMX agreement), and employee agreeableness (a trait that subsumes trust propensity), results of all hypothesis tests were identical to those reported. Full results are available upon request from the first author.

[2] In both studies, there was also an unpredicted negative curvature along the congruence line. This may be indicative of a ceiling effect for views of fairness when employees and leaders both see LMX in high-quality terms.

[3] Although the results from the leader perspective replicated perfectly across the field and experimental studies, there was one discrepancy across these designs from the employee perspective. Specifically, the experiment did not show the same "eye of the beholder" effect observed in the field, wherein employee perceptions were a larger driver when disagreement existed. Rather, Hypothesis 3 was supported for the importance of the leader's social exchange resources. A likely reason is that a scenario provides participants objective and concrete information about both their own views of LMX quality and the LMX exchange behavior their leader provides (which our manipulation checks show were cleanly separated in the controlled experiment; see Aguinis and Bradley 2014). However, this type of segmentation may be unrealistic in the "real world." For more detail on this point, see Online Appendix C.

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Fadel K. Matta is the Terry Dean's Advisory Council Distinguished Professor in the Department of Management at the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business. He received his PhD from Michigan State University. His research focuses on organizational justice, leader-member exchange, and emotions in the workplace.

Emma L. Frank is an assistant professor in the Department of Management at the University of New Hampshire's Paul College of Business. She received her PhD from the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business. Her research interests include emotions, social exchange relationships, and stress.

Cindy P. Muir (Zapata) is a Professor at the University of Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business. She received her PhD from the University of Florida. Dr. Muir studies people's relationship with their job and the relationships that influence their work. With respect to the latter, she tends to focus on the context of supervisor-employee relationships. As most leaders know, a disconnect often exists between leader behaviors and employee perceptions of those same behaviors. Because of the importance of leader-direct report relationships (and their impact on performance and turnover, among other outcomes), Dr. Muir aims to help understand that divide by studying factors that exacerbate or minimize this disconnect.