Organizational and supervisory justice effects on experienced threat during change: The moderating role of leader in-group representativeness ☆

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

We explore the complex interplay between organizational justice and supervisory justice when predicting group members' threat perceptions in a context of organizational change. Based on the assumptions of relational models of procedural justice and prior research done in the multifoci justice framework, we hypothesize that the extent to which a supervisor is seen to embody and represent key in-group attributes will moderate the interaction between the supervisor's own interactional justice and the overall organizational procedural justice. Specifically, organizational justice is expected to decrease employees' feelings of threat particularly when the supervisor treats group members fairly and is perceived to be in-group representative rather than non-representative. We found support for this hypothesis across two studies, a cross-sectional survey and a scenario experiment. The findings confirm the particularly powerful role that an in-group representative leader's interactional fairness has in managing group members' responses to fundamental organizational processes. The implications for further research and practice are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Change is constantly present in work organizations. There are mergers, reorganizations, layoffs and other major transformations that dramatically alter the status quo in organizations. Changes make the social environment more unpredictable; they may increase the perceived job insecurity and job demands, as well as decrease job control (Vahtera, Kivimäki, Pentti, & Theorell, 2000). Consequently, changes are often perceived as threatening (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) to the degree that they are appraised as exerting a potential threat that reflects a lack of confidence in one's ability to cope with this situation, and a concern that the situation might cause harm to the individual (Bardi, Guerra, & Ramdeny, 2009). Perceiving change as a threat can be detrimental to individual and organizational well-being, as it is likely to cause individual stress, increase absenteeism and quit intentions, and reduce the welfare and work ability of the personnel (Amiot, Terry, Jimmieson, & Callan, 2006; Fugate, Prussia, & Kinicki, 2012). Further, the negative effects of threat can even extend beyond the workplace and carry over to the home (Doby & Caplan, 1995). Thus, the way a change is viewed by those subject to this change has important implications for organizations and individual employees. Critically, and a focus of our current analysis, the perceived justice of the organization as a whole, as well as that of the immediate team supervisor, are both likely to play central roles in determining the manner in which a change is perceived by the employees.

From prior research, we know that overall fairness at the workplace reduces employees' experiences of threat during organizational change (Fugate et al., 2012). Recent research by Fugate and his colleagues (2012), for example, shows that employees'

perceptions of outcome fairness (distributive fairness, Folger & Cropanzano, 1998), the process that leads to this outcome (procedural fairness, Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975), or the treatment that is received during the change process (interactional justice, Bies & Moag, 1986) are important factors determining how threatening employees perceive organizational change. In the present research we extend the prior knowledge by further investigating the dynamics within these relationships; we suggest that in order to understand more fully the fairness processes during the change, it is important to decompose the overall fairness at the workplace in terms of the fairness *source*, and explore the interplay between the perceived fairness of two sources in particular: the immediate supervisor and the organization as a whole.

Examining the concomitant effects of fairness coming from the supervisor and the organization is important since both of these have been shown to separately affect the way employees view organizational change and react to it (e.g., Foster, 2010; Karriker, 2007; Rodell & Colquitt, 2009; Shapiro & Kirkman, 1999; Sousa & Vala, 2002; Tyler & De Cremer, 2005). Indeed, employees often perceive their supervisor and the organization as a whole as distinct agents exercising power and, thus, each can act fairly or unfairly (see multifoci justice research; e.g., Cropanzano, Chrobot-Mason, Rupp, & Prehar, 2004; Hollensbe, Khazanchi, & Masterson, 2008; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002; Treviño & Bies, 1997). Further, it may also be that the distinction between the supervisory and organizational justice is particularly evident in large scale, top-down organizational changes that are decided by the top management, further implemented by middle management, and executed by immediate supervisors. Then (and in other kinds of change situations), it may be that the organization as a whole is viewed as the source of procedural justice and the supervisor as the source of interactional justice (Bies & Moag, 1986; Greenberg, 2006; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). Procedural justice often follows formally through organizational policies. Individual supervisors, however, generally have jurisdiction over interactional aspects of justice (Scott, Colquitt, & Paddock, 2009); supervisors may freely choose, rather than are forced to adhere to or violate the interactional justice norms. In the present article, therefore, we explore the concomitant effects of immediate *supervisor's interactional justice* and *procedural justice of an organization* when explaining employees' feelings of threat in a context of organizational change.

Any interplay between supervisory and organizational justice, however, is likely to be contingent upon specific features of the group context. In particular, consistent with relational models of procedural justice (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992), we propose that the degree to which the supervisor is seen (or not seen) as in-group representative, and to embody key attributes and qualities of the broader organization (e.g., Haslam, 2001; Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011; Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), is likely to affect the interactive relationship between supervisory and organizational justice. Relational models of procedural justice assume that the justice of an in-group representative supervisor will be particularly important for group members because it conveys information about one's standing in the group better than that expressed by a supervisor not seen to represent (or embody) the relevant in-group. In the present research, we suggest that this same information is used to infer whether one should be threatened by organizational change. Thus, in the present paper we argue that in situations of organizational change: (1) interactional justice of an individual group supervisor and procedural justice of an organization interact to explain subsequent behavioral and attitudinal outcomes and, further, that (2) the magnitude of this moderation effect is contingent upon the extent that the supervisor is viewed as a representative member of the in-group. To develop these ideas more fully, we begin by introducing the relational models of procedural justice and elaborate the models' relationship with experienced threat during organizational change. We then review the relevant research on multifoci justice and interactions between justices coming from the supervisor and the organization, as well as present one way to conceptualize and operationalize the concept of leader in-group representativeness, before turning to our current studies.

2. Relational models of procedural justice and experienced threat

Relational models of procedural justice, such as the group value model (Lind & Tyler, 1988) and the relational model of authority (Tyler & Lind, 1992), offer a feasible framework for explaining how and why organizational procedural justice, and supervisory interactional justice, are able to alleviate experiences of threat during change. These models assume that fair and unfair procedures and treatment inform group members about their self-worth—specifically whether they are respected members in the in-group and whether they can be proud of their in-group (e.g., Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). These basic assumptions have been widely researched and, as a result, there is now considerable empirical support for the idea that justice conveys identity-relevant information that has significant group-level consequences (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Lipponen, Koivisto, & Olkkonen, 2005; Platow, Filardo, Troselj, Grace, & Ryan, 2006; Platow et al., 2012; Sousa & Vala, 2002; Tyler & De Cremer, 2005; Tyler, Degoey, & Smith, 1996; Tyler & Lind, 1992). However, earlier studies within this framework did not apply their analysis to the threat employees are likely to experience during organizational change.

We suggest that relational justice models may be applied in a context of organizational change (and concomitant threat) precisely because fair organizational procedures and fair treatment by the supervisor tell group members that they have a solid standing in the group. Effectively, to the degree to which fair behaviors are likely to convey information on group members' status during the change, it also tells them whether their own standing is assured and, thus, whether they should feel threatened by the change. We, thus, propose the information regarding group members' standing in good stead that is conveyed via fair treatment also conveys to group members that they can trust that the actions of authorities and the organization as a whole are undertaken to protect their rights during the change and, consequently, that they (the group members) should not be threatened by the change. In contrast, if group members are treated unfairly, or the procedures are unfair, they can infer that they are not particularly important members of the group and, as such, their interests and rights are not likely to be looked after during the change. This, in turn, is likely to give rise to feelings of threat. Based upon a multifoci understanding of justice (e.g., Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002), relatively high levels of organizational procedural justice and supervisor's interactional justice can, thus, separately serve as effective buffers against

experiences of threat from organizational change; in contrast, low levels of organizational procedural justice or supervisory interactional justice are likely, each individually, to increase further the threat that is experienced.

3. Combined effects of organizational justice and supervisory justice

So far, the relational models of procedural justice do not consider the concomitant effects of justice coming from multiple sources. Of course, supervisors are integral parts of the organization, and organizations provide supervisors with the conditions in which they act. Hence, we assert, the justice of either of these organizational actors cannot be examined separately without substantive simplification of reality. As was already noted, both organizational procedural justice and supervisory interactional justice influence the employees' perceptions and behaviors (e.g., Rodell & Colquitt, 2009; Shapiro & Kirkman, 1999; Sousa & Vala, 2002; Tyler & De Cremer, 2005), and thus, it is plausible that, in line with the ideas of multifoci justice research, they also each dynamically affect the processes proposed by the relational models of procedural justice.

Specifically, justice scholars argue that different justice sources (or, because of their interrelatedness, justice *forms*) often show *multiplicative* effects on outcomes (e.g., Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996; Tepper, 2001). Unfortunately, the empirical research on the interaction between organizational procedural justice and supervisory interactional justice is rather scarce. Instead, prior research has mainly focused on interactions of distributive injustice with interactional justice, and the interaction between these different justice forms without explicit reference to different justice sources in organizations (see e.g., Bies & Moag, 1986; Brockner, 2002; Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996; Greenberg, 2006; Masterson et al., 2000). Several studies have also suggested that interactional justice and procedural justice may simultaneously moderate the effects of distributive injustice with significant three-way interactions between these three forms of justice having been reported (e.g., Goldman, 2003; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997).

In the context of organizational changes, the actions of immediate supervisors are likely to be critical to employees' interpretations of events in the evolving change processes. Often the main source of fairness judgments accessible during the change is interpersonal treatment received from the supervisor, because voice, appeal mechanisms, and other structural means may not be available or they are not generally considered as realistic options during large-scale changes. In addition, employees usually expect their direct supervisor, as the organization's proximal representative, to be bearer of important change-related news (Mansour-Cole & Scott, 1998). Consequently, there is reason to believe that direct supervisors are able to moderate the effects of change-related justice information derived from the upper-levels of the organization.

One of the few studies that have focused on the interactive effects of procedural and interactional justice from different sources is one by Luo (2007). In this study, Luo hypothesized and found that, in a context of strategic alliance, interactional justice of a top manager (of another alliance party) interacted with procedural justice of strategic alliance's board to explain alliance performance (that is, for instance, profitability and employees' overall satisfaction). More specifically, Luo's study shows that the positive relationship between the board's procedural justice and alliance performance was stronger when the authority's interactional justice was high.

The theoretical rationale behind Luo's study is that, in a highly dynamic, unstable environment, employees may use interactional justice of an authority figure as a reference to evaluate different forms (or sources) of justice. In other words, high interactional justice of an authority may well *facilitate* the effects of procedural justice in bolstering the desired outcomes. This facilitation is thought to foster the positive consequences of procedural justice by creating a climate that encourages organizational procedural justice to operate. Consequently, when the immediate supervisor's interactional fairness is relatively high, organizational procedural justice has an even stronger impact on the desired outcomes (Luo, 2007). In the present research we further develop this idea. Particularly, we argue that not all supervisors' interactional justice is equally important in moderating the effects of organizational justice. Below we explain this argument in greater detail.

4. Leader in-group representativeness as a moderator

The key to our argument in this research is that the extent to which a leader is seen as a representative of the in-group moderates the interaction of supervisory interactional justice and organizational procedural justice. That is, relational models of procedural justice, particularly the relational model of authority (Tyler & Lind, 1992), suggest that the group supervisor's justice informs group members about identity-related issues to the extent that he or she is considered to embody and represent key attributes of the group as a whole. Indeed, leaders who are seen as unrepresentative of the group are unlikely to provide any meaningful information about the in-group-based standing of any of the group members.

Relational models of procedural justice remain silent on how a leader's group representativeness could be conceptualized, or further, operationalized. Consequently, in search of the suitable conceptualization of leader in-group representativeness, researchers in the field have turned to the social identity approach to group processes (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) whose concept of leader in-group prototypicality (Turner, 1991; Turner et al., 1987) offers a feasible alternative to conceptualize and operationalize leader in-group representativeness. Leader in-group prototypicality refers to the actively constructed and subjective representation of characteristics (e.g., attitudes, values, norms, beliefs, manners, goals, and behavior) that describe what the group is and what it is not (Haslam, 2001; Haslam, Oakes, Mc Garty, Turner, & Onorato, 1995; Hogg, 2001; Turner & Haslam, 2001). It is assumed both to describe and prescribe group membership attributes and, as such, it is closer to a representation of context-dependent ideal rather than typical (e.g., average, modal) group member (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Prototypicality is highly context-dependent, and reflects relative characteristics of an individual in a certain context rather than characteristics of an individual

in isolation (Haslam et al., 1995; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). In the present research, we draw upon the concept of leader in-group prototypicality to reflect the relational justice models' idea of leader in-group representativeness.

A concept of leader in-group prototypicality is an important feature of recent self-categorization analyses of leadership (e.g., Haslam et al., 2011; Hogg, 2001; Turner & Haslam, 2001). In line with the relational models of procedural justice, this approach holds that it is the behavior of leaders who are seen as an embodiment of the salient psychological in-group, or highly in-group prototypical (Haslam, 2001; Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), and who behave in a positive in-group-directed manner (Haslam et al., 2011), who are likely to have any influence over group members' attitudes, emotions, and behaviors (e.g., Hogg, 2000; Platow, Reicher, & Haslam, 2009; van Knippenberg, 2011).

Empirically, relative to non-in-group prototypical group members, in-group prototypical group members (1) are more influential (McGarty, Turner, Hogg, David, & Wetherell, 1992; van Knippenberg, Lossie, & Wilke, 1994), (2) are seen as more charismatic (Platow, van Knippenberg, Haslam, van Knippenberg, & Spears, 2006), (3) lead to enhanced job satisfaction among other group members (Cicero, Pierro, & van Knippenberg, 2007), and (4) are seen as more trustworthy (Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008). Moreover, followers are particularly sensitive to leaders' group prototypicality in uncertainty provoking situations, such as organizational change (Hogg, 2000; van Knippenberg, 2011; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). With respect to fairness, Lipponen et al. (2005) showed that the leader's interactional justice is related to group members' status judgments (i.e., respect and pride), but only when the leader is a prototypical in-group member. More recently, De Cremer, van Dijke, and Mayer (2010) found that a group leader's high procedural justice towards both oneself and fellow group members promotes one's cooperation in the group, but only if the leader is in-group prototypical. Thus, these latter findings suggest that leader in-group representativeness *accentuates* the effects of the leader's justice-related behaviors on identity-related outcomes.

It should be noted, however, that under circumstances in which outcomes are not related to group-based identity, the in-group representativeness of the leader may not have the same effect. Instead, in-group representativeness may actually give leaders more leeway in the scope of their fairness behaviors, and may even substitute for fairness (Ullrich, Christ, & van Dick, 2009). For example, Ullrich et al. showed that relative leader in-group prototypicality *decreased* the negative effects of low procedural justice on the extent group members supported the leader, particularly among high in-group identifiers. In light of these findings, it would seem that when group members evaluate the source of the (un)fairness (e.g., as in leader support), in-group representativeness may, at times, allow leaders to behave *unfairly* without negative consequences (e.g., Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001; Ullrich et al., 2009). In contrast, if the dependent variable is associated with one's in-group more broadly, or the self in particular, the influence of fairness will be enhanced by the leader's perceived in-group representativeness (e.g., Cornelis, Van Hiel, & De Cremer, 2006; Lipponen et al., 2005; Seppälä, Lipponen, & Pirttilä-Backman, 2012).

5. The present research

Taken together, there is theoretical and empirical support for (1) the idea that high interactional justice of an authority may moderate the effects of organizational procedural justice on the desired outcomes (Luo, 2007), (2) the key role of leader in-group representativeness in the relationship between leader justice and different outcome variables (e.g., De Cremer, van Dijke, & Mayer, 2010; Lipponen et al., 2005; Seppälä et al., 2012), and (3) the idea that group representativeness positions leaders to lead people more effectively during organizational changes (van Knippenberg, 2011). Consequently, it is plausible to propose that, because of in-group representative leaders' abilities to inform group members of the degree to which they should feel threatened by fundamental organizational change, supervisory justice is likely to moderate the effects of organizational procedural justice particularly powerfully when the supervisor is in-group representative. The non-representative supervisor, in contrast, does not have the same legitimacy to affect the identity-related processes and, thus, his or her fairness is not able to influence the relationship between organizational justice and experienced threat. We, thus, predict the following:

Hypothesis. Supervisory justice moderates the relationship between organizational justice and experienced threat during change. The negative relationship between organizational justice and threat will be stronger when supervisory justice is high. This two-way interaction of organizational and supervisory justice on threat will emerge primarily, if not solely, when the group supervisor represents and embodies the relevant in-group identity.

This hypothesis is first tested with a cross-sectional survey in a real organizational setting (Study 1), and then, to strengthen our arguments, in a scenario experiment (Study 2).

6. Study 1

6.1. Method

6.1.1. Sample and procedure

The cross-sectional survey was conducted in the Northern Hemisphere spring of 2009 in a Finnish public organization that was in the middle of a fundamental change process. In the fall of 2005, the Finnish government ordered the organization to move gradually during years 2008–2011 from the Helsinki metropolitan area to a town that was located over 300 km away. The situation was very demanding for the personnel because, in order to keep their posts, they were encouraged to move with the organization no matter how rooted they and their families were in the metropolitan area. At first, the change was managed very much from above. The

policies for the change were created at the higher organizational level long before the managers, such as team supervisors, at lower organizational levels were involved in the process. The survey was sent to the whole personnel ($N = 202$). A total of 109 returned the survey for a response rate of 54%. Of these 109 participants, five were removed from the sample due to missing data. These removals resulted in a final sample size of 104 employees. Seventy-two percent of the respondents were women. Most of the respondents (69%) worked in an expert position, 15% in support functions (e.g., secretarial work), and 15% in supervisory position. The average respondent was a 44-year old woman working in an expert position.

6.1.2. Measures

In developing the justice measures for the present study, we followed the recommendation of Cropanzano and Greenberg (1997, p. 19) to carefully tailor the justice measures to the specific settings in which they are assessed. However, previously validated scales were used as a starting point and then modified for the present context of organizational change. This procedure allowed us to measure justice in a way that was relevant in our context. Even though the same general justice principles may be relevant in all organizational environments, their relative weights and specific forms are shaped by the demands of the contexts in which they operate (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Participants responded to all of the measures on a rating scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Organizational procedural justice was measured with five items derived from previous procedural justice scale by Moorman (1991). These items reflected the four aspects of fair procedures suggested by Leventhal (1980): accuracy of information, correctability, consistency and representativeness in the decision-making process. The items were as follows: "In my organization there are procedures designed to…" (a) "allow for requests for clarification or additional information about the decisions during the change process," (b) "generate standards so that decisions could be made with consistency," (c) "collect accurate information necessary for making decisions," (d) "provide opportunities to appeal or challenge the decision," and (e) "hear the concerns of all those affected by the decision." All items focused on the perceived fairness of the organization during the current change process.

Supervisory interactional justice was measured with six items. Five of these were derived from Moorman's (1991) interactional justice scale. In addition, one item that measured the integrity of the leader's explanations in terms of his or her behavior was added to Moorman's scale. This operationalization of supervisory justice was used because it reflected both the quality of treatment and the quality of decision making received from the leader. The items that were used were as follows: "My supervisor" (a) "considers my viewpoint," (b) "is not able to suppress personal biases" (reverse scored), (c) "treats me with kindness and consideration," (d) "shows concern for my rights as an employee," (e) "takes steps to deal with me in a truthful manner," and (f) "usually gives an honest explanation for the decisions he/she makes." All items focused on the immediate supervisor as the source of justice.

The *in-group representativeness* of the supervisor was measured using four items developed by Platow and van Knippenberg (2001) to measure perceptions of a leaders' relative in-group prototypicality. The items were "Overall, I would say that my supervisor," (a) "represents what is characteristic about employees of (name of the organization)," (b) "is a good example of the kind of people who work at (name of the organization)," (c) "stands for what people who work at (name of the organization) have in common," and (d) "is not representative of the kind of people who work at (name of the organization)" (reverse-scored).

Experienced threat was measured by three items derived from a scale developed by Bardi et al. (2009). Bardi et al. modified their scale based on the Cognitive Appraisal Scale (Skinner & Brewer, 1999). In our study we chose three items from the Bardi et al.'s scale that directly focused on measuring how threatening individual respondents viewed the ongoing change process. These items were as follows: "It is very possible that I will not be able to adapt to the changes in my organization," "I feel that difficulties could pile up so much that I might not be able to overcome them," and "I worry that I may not cope with my work in my changing organization."

6.2. Results

The summary of descriptive statistics and correlations between all variables is presented in Table 1. To test our hypothesis, we conducted a regression analysis using a moderated multiple regression approach. At the first step, threat was predicted by the main effects of organizational justice, supervisory justice and supervisor's in-group representativeness. At the next step, the two-way interactions (i.e., product terms) among these three predictors were entered and, finally, at the third step the three-way interaction of the predictor variables was entered into analysis. Following Dawson and Richter (2006), organizational justice, supervisory justice, and supervisor's in-group representativeness were standardized, and the interaction terms were calculated on the basis of these standardized scores.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and relations between variables (Study 1).

	M	SD	α	1	2	3
1. Organizational justice	2.80	0.85	.88			
2. Supervisory justice	3.98	0.83	.91	.32**		
3. In-group representativeness	3.07	0.80	.88	.26**	.20*	
4. Threat	2.45	1.09	.81	− .41***	− .37***	− .22**

Note. N = 104.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

Table 2 shows that the predicted three-way interaction was significant and explained an additional 3% of variance. The nature of interaction is revealed in Fig. 1, which shows that the lowest levels of threat are reported when the leader is in-group representative and there are high levels of both organizational and supervisory justice. We further tested the significance of each pair of moderators (Aiken & West, 1991). It was found that for non-representative supervisors (1 SD below the mean), the relationship between organizational justice and feelings of threat was non-significant both when the supervisor was perceived as fair (1 SD above the mean) ($\beta = -.18$, $p > .05$), and unfair (1 SD below the mean), ($\beta = -.41$, $p > .05$). Importantly, these two slopes did not differ significantly from each other ($t = 0.90$, $p > .05$). When the leader was in-group representative (1 SD above the mean) and treated employees fairly, however, there was a negative relationship between organizational justice and threat ($\beta = -.51$, $p < .01$). Further, when the in-group representative supervisor was low in interactional justice, organizational procedural justice was not related to experienced threat ($\beta = .03$, $p > .05$). Importantly, these two slopes of in-group representative leader's different levels of interactional justice differed significantly from each other ($t = -2.11$, $p < .05$).

Overall, the findings support our hypothesis: they show that the interaction between organizational procedural justice and supervisory interactional justice is found only for in-group representative leaders. In addition, our findings show that organizational justice and threat are negatively related only when also supervisory justice is high and supervisor embodies the essence of the in-group.

7. Study 2

The findings of Study 1 support our current line of reasoning. However, Study 1 is purely correlational and thus the causal conclusions cannot be reliably drawn. To replicate conceptually the results of Study 1 and to provide stronger support for the hypothesized causal relationships, we designed a scenario experiment for Study 2.

7.1. Method

7.1.1. Participants and design

One hundred six undergraduate students (36 women, 70 men; mean age 25.13 years, $SD = 7.51$ years) participated voluntarily in a scenario study as part of a classroom demonstration. The design was a 2 (organizational justice: high vs. low) × 2 (leader in-group representativeness: high vs. low) × 2 (supervisory justice: high vs. low) between-subjects factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions. The scenario was distributed in the beginning of a lecture and it took about 15 min to be read and filled out. First, all participants read the following introduction to the scenario (translated from Finnish):

> "You have an interesting job in a middle-sized consultancy company. You and your team members are responsible for customizing the products of your company to suit the different needs of the different customers. You have had this job for a couple of years and you like it a lot. Recently your company has launched a major organizational change that aims at creating savings by reorganizing the functions. The plan is to merge some teams and departments. Because of this reorganizing some employees are going to be relocated in new assignments and some may even be laid off."

This description on the situation was followed by organizational justice manipulations. Participants in the low organizational justice condition read the following:

> "You have been pretty discontent with the actions of your organization in the current change process. It has been difficult to get the needed information on the decisions concerning the change process. Decision-making has been inconsistent and

Table 2
Regression analysis for organizational justice, supervisory justice and leader in-group representativeness predicting experienced threat during change (Study 1).

	Threat		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Step 1			
Organizational justice (A)	−.30**	−.25**	−.27**
Supervisory justice (B)	−.28**	−.38***	−.40***
In-group representativeness (C)	−.09	−.01	−.06
Step 2			
A*B		−.08	−.08
A*C		−.06	.03
B*C		−.21*	−.23*
Step 3			
A*B*C			−.21*
R^2	.26	.30	.33
Adjusted R^2	.24	.26	.29
R^2 change		.04	.03*

Note. * $p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$, two-tailed.

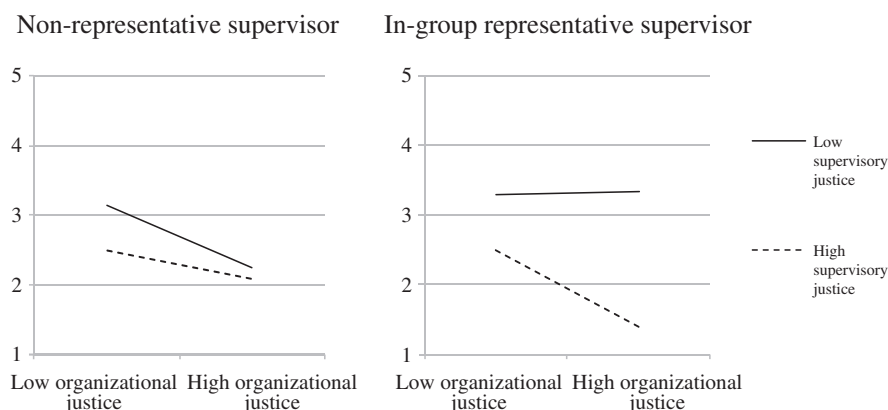Non-representative supervisor   In-group representative supervisor

Fig. 1. Interactions between organizational justice and supervisory justice predicting feelings of threat for non-representative and in-group representative supervisors (Study 1).

employees have not been treated impartially. The employees have not had a chance to express their opinions on the matters that concern themselves in a change."

Participants in the high organizational justice condition read the following:

"You have been pretty content with the actions of your organization in the current change process. You have received information you need on the decisions concerning the change process. Decision-making has been consistent and employees have been treated impartially. The organization has also emphasized that each employee has a right to express his or her opinions on the matters that concern him or herself in a change."

After that all participants read the following description: "Your team consists of five members, one of which is the team supervisor. You collaborate very intensively with your team."

Then the manipulation of leader in-group representativeness was introduced. To do so, we followed the basic procedure of Cicero, Bonaiuto, Pierro, and van Knippenberg (2008) in their operationalization of relative in-group prototypicality (see also Pierro, Cicero, & Higgins, 2009; van Dijke & De Cremer, 2008). Participants in the low-representativeness condition read the following:

"Your team supervisor is very different from other team members. S/he[1] has different educational background, different age and different interests in life. In your opinion the team supervisor does not represent your team as a person, but often remains as an outsider. S/he also prefers working independently rather than together with your team."

Participants in the high-representativeness condition read the following:

"Your team supervisor is an equal team member. S/he shares similar educational background, age and interests in life with you and other team members. In your opinion your team supervisor represents the team members well as a person and prefers working with you and other team members."

After that participants read the manipulation of supervisory justice. In the low supervisory justice condition it read as follows:

"Your supervisor invites you to his/her room to discuss the current organizational change. However, in the beginning of the meeting your supervisor tells you that he/she is not interested on your opinions or worries about the change. Your supervisor does not seem to listen to your opinions or suggestions on reorganizing your team in change. You feel that your supervisor treats you very unkindly and unfairly."

In the high supervisory justice condition it read as follows:

"Your supervisor invites you to his or her room to discuss the current organizational change. In the beginning of the meeting your supervisor tells you that he/she values your opinions and suggestions about the change. Your supervisor listens to your worries and asks your opinions and suggestions on how the work of your team should be organized in change. You feel that your supervisor treats you very kindly and fairly."

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[1] When describing the team supervisor in the scenarios we used a Finnish word "hän" that refers to both sexes. This notion is important because the use of gender-neutral pronouns ensures that possible differences or similarities in terms of the gender of the participant do not influence the results of this study.

7.1.2. Manipulations and a dependent measure

Participants answered all questions on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). To check the validity of our organizational justice manipulation, we asked participants to evaluate whether "in my organization the decisions are made by using fair procedures" and whether "the rules and procedures of decision-making are consistent in my organization" ($r = .96$, $p < .001$). The manipulation of supervisor's in-group representativeness was checked with two items ($r = .97$, $p < .001$) derived from the Platow and van Knippenberg's (2001) scale used in Study 1: "Overall, I would say that my supervisor," (a) "is very similar to most people in my work group" and (b) "stands for what people in my work group have in common." The manipulation of supervisory justice was checked with two items ($r = .97$, $p < .001$) derived from Moorman's (1991) interactional justice scale: "My supervisor treated me with kindness and consideration" and "My supervisor considered my viewpoint when making an important decision." Experienced threat ($\alpha = .75$, $M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.18$) was assessed with three items from Bardi et al. (2009): "I feel that during the organizational changes the difficulties could pile up so much that I might not be able to overcome them," "There are several things that can go wrong for me during the organizational change," and "I worry that I may not cope with my work in my changing organization."

7.2. Results

7.2.1. Manipulation checks

The effectiveness of the experimental manipulations was confirmed by analyses of variance (ANOVAs) that were performed on the three manipulation-check measures. A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ ANOVA on the organizational justice score revealed only a significant main effect of organizational justice, $F(1, 98) = 1229.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .93$, showing that participants in the low organizational justice condition perceived the organization to be less fair than those in the high organizational justice condition ($M = 1.74$ vs. 6.08, $SD = 0.65$ vs. 0.60, respectively).

A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ ANOVA on perceived leader in-group representativeness revealed only a significant main effect of leader in-group representativeness, $F(1, 98) = 1623.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .94$. Participants in the low representativeness condition reported their leader to be less in-group representative than those in the high leader in-group representativeness condition ($M = 1.48$ vs. 6.25, $SD = 0.56$ vs. 0.66, respectively).

A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ ANOVA on supervisory justice score revealed only a significant main effect of supervisory justice, $F(1, 98) = 1930.47$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .95$, showing that participants in the low supervisory justice condition perceived the leader to be less fair than those in the high supervisory justice condition ($M = 1.52$ vs. 6.33, $SD = 0.56$ vs. 0.56, respectively).

7.2.2. Threat

A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ ANOVA on the average threat score revealed only one significant main effect. The significant main effect was found for supervisory justice, $F(1, 98) = 18.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .16$. Experienced threat was higher when supervisory justice was low ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.12$) than when supervisor justice was high ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.18$). Importantly, this main effect was qualified by a significant three-way interaction, $F(1, 98) = 4.71$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$. We further explored the implication of this interaction with interaction contrast analyses. These analyses indicated that under the condition of non-in-group representative leader, the effects of organizational justice did not vary between two levels of supervisory justice ($t = -.69$, $p > .05$). In contrast, in the leader in-group representativeness condition there was a significant variation in the effects of organizational justice between the two levels of supervisory justice ($t = -2.17$, $p < .05$). As is shown in Fig. 2 and Table 3, high organizational justice decreased group members' feelings of threat when an in-group representative supervisor was high in interactional justice ($M_{\text{low OJ}} = 3.27$ vs. $M_{\text{high OJ}} = 2.33$, $F(1, 98) = 7.73$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .23$) but not when this kind of a leader was low in interactional justice ($M_{\text{low OJ}} = 3.82$ vs. $M_{\text{high OJ}} = 4.10$, $F(1, 98) = .46$, $p > .05$). These findings are consistent with our hypothesis. They indicate that the interaction between organizational procedural justice and supervisory interactional justice is present only when the supervisor is seen to be
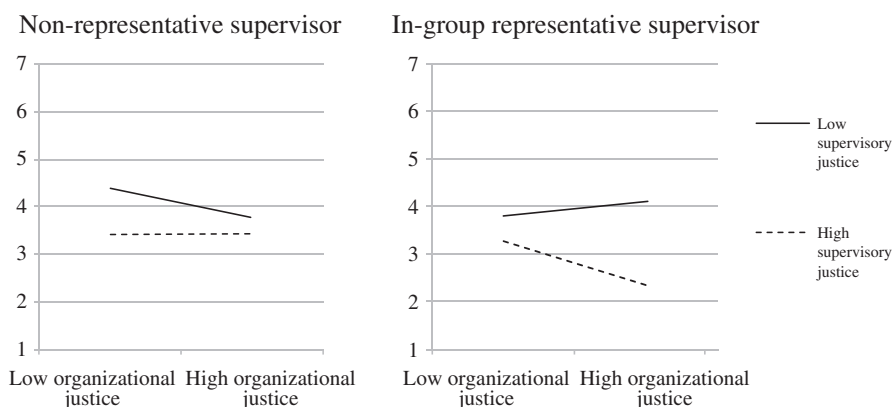

Fig. 2. Interactions between organizational justice and supervisory justice predicting feelings of threat for non-representative and in-group representative supervisors (Study 2).

Table 3
Threat as a function of leader in-group representativeness, organizational justice and supervisory justice (Study 2).

		Organizational justice		
	Supervisory justice	Low	High	Total
Non-representative supervisor	Low	4.39 (1.00)	3.79 (1.21)	4.05 (1.15)
	High	3.42 (0.99)	3.43 (1.27)	3.43 (1.10)
	Total	3.93 (1.09)	3.65 (1.22)	3.78 (1.16)
In-group representative supervisor	Low	3.82 (0.94)	4.10 (1.25)	3.98 (1.11)
	High	3.27 (0.91)	2.33 (0.84)	2.87 (0.99)
	Total	3.52 (0.95)	3.35 (1.40)	3.43 (1.18)

Note. Means are on a 7-point scale with high values representing higher threat; standard deviations are provided in parentheses.

representative of his or her in-group. Specifically, both organizational justice and in-group representative leader's justice are required in order to decrease employees' feelings of threat. The implications of the results will be discussed in the following section.

8. Discussion

In the present article, we integrated the relational models of procedural justice (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992) with the research on multifoci justice (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002) by examining the interaction between organizational procedural justice, a supervisor's interactional justice, and the supervisor's in-group representativeness on respondents' experienced threat during organizational change. A cross-sectional survey and a scenario experiment showed that, as expected, organizational procedural justice and supervisory interactional justice interact to affect experienced threat, but only when the supervisor is perceived to represent key attributes of the in-group.

8.1. Theoretical implications

The findings of the current research make several contributions to both relational models of procedural justice, especially the models' assumption of leader in-group representativeness, and the research on multifoci justice. First, the results are interesting to the degree that they consider the concomitant effects of organizational procedural justice and supervisory interactional justice. Relational models of procedural justice propose that both supervisory and organizational justice separately influence group members' identity-related inferences and, that this influence is particularly strong when the source of the justice represents the shared identity of a group (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Prior research has successfully shown that leader in-group representativeness moderates the relationship between supervisor's justice and several outcome variables (e.g., De Cremer, van Dijke, & Mayer, 2010; Lipponen et al., 2005). The present research extends these studies by adding the organizational justice into the equation. We believe that this kind of extension further develops the relational justice models to reflect better the organizational reality in which employees experience fairness (Cropanzano et al., 2004; Hollensbe et al., 2008; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002; Treviño & Bies, 1997).

Second, the present study contributes to the discussion on the stature of leader in-group representativeness in the emergence of these justice effects. It shows that, when it comes to explaining group members' experiences of threat, leaders' in-group representativeness does not allow the leaders more leeway in their behavior (cf. Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001; Ullrich et al., 2009) even if the organization-level justice is high. Presumably, however, this kind of dynamic only emerges in relation to effects that are related to oneself and one's identity (De Cremer, van Dijke, Brebels, & Hoogervorst, 2008).

Third, the findings are also important for the development of ideas presented by multifoci justice research. Prior to the current research, the empirical research on the area had mostly studied the interactions between organizational distributive injustice and supervisory interactional or procedural justice (e.g., Greenberg, 2006; Seifert, Sweeney, Joireman, & Thornton, 2010) and there was only one study focusing on the interaction between organizational procedural justice and supervisory interactional justice (Luo, 2007). Thus, our research provides new empirical evidence on the dynamics between organizational procedural justice and supervisory interactional justice, and extends Luo's work in a theoretically sound way based on self-categorization analyses of leadership (e.g., Haslam et al., 2011). It supports the idea that justice sources have multiplicative effects by showing that the employees' feelings of threat can be effectively decreased when both supervisory justice and organizational justice are high, *but only when the leader embodies or represents the in-group.*

8.2. Practical implications

The present research also has some practical implications. In general, it suggests that organizations going through fundamental changes should, in addition to investing in fair organizational procedures, pay particularly strong attention to the individual group leaders, as their behavior, too, very strongly affects the way employees come to view the change. In fact, the efforts and resources that the organization invests in the change at the higher organizational level may even be futile if the supervisors at the lower hierarchical level are not considered concurrently. This kind of emphasis on the group-level supervisors, particularly their justice related behaviors, is rather novel in the empirical research on change in organizations. Even though the literature on change suggests that leaders throughout an organization are important facilitators of change (e.g., Raelin, 2003), the focus in the empirical studies has rarely been on the supervisors at the workgroup or team-level (e.g., Huy, 2002). The present study contributes to the literature on

organizational change by revealing that group supervisors, particularly if they are in-group representative, are active agents in managing responses to the change process.

Specifically, our results indicate that the justice of a group representative leader is a very powerful tool, and that this tool can be used either positively to promote the organizational change and the welfare of the employees, or negatively to hamper the change and increase the threat that change often triggers. As the way employees view the change is a critical component for the success of the change (e.g., Jones, Jimmieson, & Griffiths, 2005; Smith, 2003), disclosing this relationship may help decision makers in organizations (usually senior managers) to support the change process, on the one hand, and help employees to better cope with the change, on the other hand. Hence, in practice, the key factor for senior managers to utilize the information that the current study provides is to pay more attention to the team level supervisors in the change process. Our findings indicate that in order to increase the welfare of the whole personnel and the success of change process, in addition to investing in fair organizational procedures, senior managers also need to consider the quality of treatment of employees' immediate supervisors. As the in-group representative supervisors' fairness or unfairness may severely influence the change process through affecting employees' feelings of threat, organizations would benefit from, for example, offering immediate supervisors training in interactional justice. Further, as the organizations rarely have resources to offer justice training to all supervisors at all hierarchical levels, it may be justified to identify in-group representative leaders and target the justice training to them because their justice seems to be particularly important for employees' identity-related inferences.

It should be noted, however, that in addition to investing in supervisory fairness at the workplace, organizations also need to do more in order to promote the successful change. Indeed, successful change process requires more than just fairness. It demands envisioning, inspiring, and motivating, and, hence, calls for leadership that has the capacity to convince and energize others to contribute to processes that bring about the change and turn visions and plans into reality (Haslam et al., 2011; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Thus, from a practical point of view, the present research hints that the extent the leader is viewed to represent the in-group may be a key to getting this kind of influence during change. Namely, it indicates that group leaders gain some of their influence simply by being representative members of a group. To this degree, leaders do not necessarily need to have any superb charismatic characteristics or skills (e.g., Carmeli & Tishler, 2006; Groves, 2006; Hogg, 2001; Platow, van Knippenberg, et al., 2006) to effectively lead the group in the middle of changes. Instead, a group member who best represents the values, attitudes, norms, beliefs, standards and manners of the group (i.e., is a prototypical in-group member), has a significant ability to affect the way his or her fellow group members view the change and consequently react to it (van Knippenberg & Wilke, 1992). More specifically, it is suggested that simply because of their in-group representativeness, leaders are able to mold social identities, and consequently, promote or also restrain the support and acceptance for the change among group members (Haslam et al., 2011; Reicher et al., 2005).

8.3. Strengths, limitations, and future directions

An important strength of the present research is that the results reported here were obtained using two different samples and two different research methods. In Study 1, the cross-sectional survey, the data were collected at a single point in time from personnel of a real working organization. The study was correlational in nature and, hence, does not allow for causal inference. This limitation was overcome in Study 2, a scenario experiment, which was particularly designed to establish the causality in the studied relationships. The scenario approach allows for strong internal validity and control while maintaining a high degree of mundane realism. However, this approach does not allow participants to experience a real situation and relies only on imagined reactions. Both of the used approaches have their weaknesses and limitations, but together these approaches complement each other and provide results that can be considered as reliable.

However, one limitation of the current research is that it did not include a group identification measure, despite identity processes undeniably being essential for our hypothesis. The relational models of procedural justice presume that leader in-group representativeness is an important basis for the cognitions of the in-group members particularly when they identify with the in-group (e.g., Hains, Hogg, & Duck, 1997; Hogg, Hains, & Mason, 1998; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Thus, including identification in the present analysis would have been informative, since it may be that the observed three-way interaction would be stronger when group members identify with their in-group. An important direction for future research would, therefore, be to test the higher order interaction between organizational justice, supervisory justice, leader in-group representativeness, and group identification.

Another possible limitation of the present study concerns the way we manipulated leader in-group representativeness in our second study. That is, we derived our manipulation from the studies of Pierro et al. (2009) and Cicero et al. (2008), and manipulated leader in-group representativeness both as (1) representing the persons in the team and being similar with other group members (Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001), and (2) enjoying working in close collaboration with team members. The non-representative leader, in turn, was described as having very different interests and background as well as preferring to work separately from the team. It can be argued that this kind of manipulation may have partly confounded the extent to which the leader is a team player with leader in-group representativeness. This, in turn, may have affected the results of the Study 2. However, to assuage the worries about possible confounding effects, we ran additional analyses of the Study 2 data and found an identical significant three-way interaction when using measured in-group representativeness (a "clean" manipulation check) instead of the representativeness manipulation ($F(1, 98) = 2.14, p < .05, \eta^2 = .19$). In addition, empirically, the correlation in our second study between the representativeness manipulation and the manipulation check items was extremely high ($r = .97, p < .001$); the manipulation was unquestionably successful.

However, this potential limitation highlights the inconsistency in the way leader in-group prototypicality is operationalized in different studies. Traditionally, leader in-group prototypicality has been purely seen as reflecting leader's ability to represent the group and exemplify group normative behavior (Hogg, 2001; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001). However, more recently researchers

in the field have highlighted that in-group prototypical leaders not only represent their in-group, but also behave in a positive group-serving manner (e.g., Haslam et al., 2011). In accordance with these ideas, in some studies leader in-group prototypicality has been manipulated as not only capturing the prototypical leader's group representativeness but also including aspects such as collaborating with the team (Cicero et al., 2008; Pierro et al., 2009), or feeling oneself at home in the team (van Dijke & De Cremer, 2008). It is clear that future research should thoroughly discuss the conceptualization of leader in-group prototypicality; it should discuss what it is and what it is not, and based on this discussion draw more attention to the consistency of the used operationalizations of leader in-group prototypicality.

It should also be noted that we investigated the interaction of different justice dimensions (procedural justice and interactional justice) such that they were operationalized as emerging from different justice sources (organization and supervisor). This kind of conceptualization of organizational justice as procedural justice and supervisory justice as interactional justice has been used a lot in the justice literature and is generally well accepted (Bies & Moag, 1986; Masterson et al., 2000). In addition, it has been noted that organizations are generally viewed as sources of procedural justice whereas supervisors have most jurisdiction over aspects of interactional justice (Bies & Moag, 1986; Greenberg, 2006; Masterson et al., 2000; Scott et al., 2009). However, because of the conceptual mixture of the justice sources and justice dimensions, we cannot reliably argue whether the interaction was found because of the different justice dimension or because of the different justice sources. In addition, recent research suggests that employees differentiate between the distributive, procedural, informational, interpersonal, and overall justice of various entities (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Choi, 2008) and, thus, the organization also can be viewed as a source of interactional justice and supervisor as a source of procedural justice. Consequently, future research should study the statistical interactions of different justice sources with the same justice dimensions.

Future research may also explore how outcome favorability, or distributive justice, affects the dynamics that we found to exist between organizational procedural justice, supervisory interactional justice and leader in-group representativeness. In our studies the outcomes were precarious: In our first study the employees were uncertain whether they would really lose their jobs if they refused to move or whether there would eventually be some ways that would enable working in the current location (e.g., remote work). In the second study, participants did not know whether they would really be relocated in new assignments or laid off; they were only at the risk of those. In real-life organizations, changes often are similar: their implications and favorability are not known in the beginning, but are realized only later in the course of time. Then, presumably, the favorability of outcomes plays a role in determining the way employees view the change (e.g., whether it is perceived as a threat rather than a challenge) and the extent to which they consider organizational procedural justice, supervisory interactional justice and leader in-group representativeness to be important for their inferences (De Cremer, Brockner, et al., 2010; Kwong & Leung, 2002, see also Hui, Au, & Zhao, 2007).

Another interesting avenue for future research would be viewing the justice perceptions as emotionally laden subjective experiences. That is, in our research we treated threat as a consequence of perceived fairness of organizational change. This is in line with traditional *cold view of justice* (see Barsky & Kaplan, 2007) that holds that justice perceptions are cognitive responses to decision outcomes and specific human resource practices, and perceptions reported by employees reflect objective instances of fair or unfair treatment. Then, ultimately the affective states are thought to be influenced by justice perceptions. In contrast, *hot view of justice* holds that justice perceptions are emotionally laden and subjective experiences; they are influenced by affective states, and as a consequence, even the same procedure can be perceived differently depending on the affective state of the perceiver. Traditionally this hot view of justice has been studied relatively little, but has gained some empirical support in recent years (e.g., Lang, Bliese, Lang, & Adler, 2011). In the context of organizational changes this could mean that if you feel highly threatened you also perceive the used procedures as unfair. We believe that both of these views may be highly relevant especially if we consider long-lasting and threatening organizational changes and the co-evolution of threat and perceived justice during these processes. Thus, in the future, longitudinal studies would reveal the possible bi-directional causalities between justice and threat.

9. Conclusion

To conclude, the present paper integrates relational models of procedural justice with the multifoci justice research and, building on these theoretical frameworks, tests the ideas across two different research methods. The paper shows that leader in-group representativeness moderates the interaction of supervisory and organizational justice in relation to employees' experiences of threat during change. The negative relationship between organizational justice and group members' feelings of threat was found to exist only when the supervisor was fair and represented the in-group. Thus, this study demonstrates that the individual in-group representative supervisor's justice plays an important role in determining the way group members come to view the change—in this case, whether change is a threat to them. This role is as important as the role of the organization's justice and, consequently, it should not be downplayed.

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