

THE IMPLICATIONS OF DISTANCE AND ENVY IN ORGANIZATIONS:
AN EXPLORATION OF LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE AND ORGANIZATIONAL
CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIORS

by

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Abstract

As organizations continue to expand across the country and around the globe, the context in which the average subordinate works becomes modified. Previous research has suggested that increased physical and psychological distance between leaders and their followers negatively impacts the relational quality between supervisor and subordinate. Additionally, studies have shown that workplace variations in leader-member exchange may promote general and relational envy on the part of subordinates. This research project presents findings into an investigation of the effect of physical and psychological distance on the supervisor-subordinate relationship, as well as the effect of general and relational envy in organizations. Outcomes of over 120 leader-follower dyads were analyzed for leader-member exchange, organizational citizenship behaviors, general and relational envy, and task performance. Findings suggest that both relational and general envy are significantly and negatively related to leader-member exchange quality and that psychological distance moderates the relationship between leader-member exchange and relational envy. Suggestions for industry professionals and implications for future research are discussed.

Keywords: leader-member exchange, organizational citizenship behaviors, physical distance, psychological distance, envy

The Implications of Distance and Envy in Organizations: An Exploration of Leader-Member
Exchange and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Introduction

Broad-based and consistent research has highlighted the positive relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX) and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), suggesting that high quality relations among supervisors and their subordinates result in increased occurrences of extra-role or prosocial behaviors by subordinates (Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). Several organizational constructs and individual differences are also known to affect both the leader-member relationship and instances of organizational citizenship behaviors, such as employee attitudes, dispositional variables, employee role perceptions, demographic variables, employee abilities, task and organizational characteristics, and leadership behaviors (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Recent research has sought to identify specific organizational constructs that may either promote or inhibit these relationships. Of particular interest, distance – both physical and psychological – in organizations has been studied (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; Howell, Neufeld, & Avolio, 2005). Distance has been shown to greatly effect the development of leader-member relations (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009; Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999) and occurrences of organizational citizenship behaviors (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004). Select variables, such as trust (Deluga, 1994), envy (Tai, Narayanan, & McAllister, 2012), and justice (Scandura, 1999), have been shown to moderate the relationship between leader-member exchange and organizational citizenship behaviors. The potential of distance as a moderator in this relationship has been postulated, but has yet to be explored in the literature. Further research has suggested that despite low-quality LMX relationships and

distance in organizations, subordinate envy may lead to increased prosocial behaviors (Kim, O'Neill, & Cho, 2010), specifically when trust and organizational justice are present.

Leader-Member Exchange

Both the empirical understanding and subsequent organizational implications for leader-member exchange have evolved since the theory was first postulated by Graen and his colleagues (Graen, 1976; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). LMX distinguishes itself from other leadership theories because of its focus on the dyadic relationship between supervisor and subordinate and its dependence upon that relationship as its fundamental level of analysis. As the LMX model relies upon organizational role-development, differentiated role conditions and leader-member exchanges will result (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). Additionally, time pressures and resource limitations constrain a leader to develop close relationships with only a few key followers and rely upon formal authority and organizational policies to ensure adequate performance of other subordinates (Graen, 1976). LMX draws on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) to suggest that a different relationship exists between a leader and each of their followers. The quality of these relationships may be categorized as high- or low-quality and is predictive of individual, group, and organizational outcomes (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). The quality of these relationships is typically divided into two main categories, composing the in-group and the out-group. Research suggests these group memberships are formed quickly and remain relatively stable across the course of the leader-member relationship (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Liden & Graen, 1980).

High-quality relationships are categorized by frequent interaction, high levels of trust, mutual respect and influence, support, and both formal and informal rewards (Dienesch & Liden,

1986). Leaders in this type of relationship rely heavily on key followers and encourage in-group subordinates to engage in higher-tier, more responsible activities (Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). Followers in high-quality relationships typically receive confidence, encouragement, and consideration (Ilies et al., 2007) while playing an increased role in team, group, and organizational outcomes beyond their typically contracted obligations (Dunegan, Duchon, & Uhl-Bien, 1992; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Low-quality relationships are almost exclusively contractual in nature and rely upon formal roles, top-down influence, economic exchanges, and greater distance between supervisors and subordinates. Followers in low-quality relationships adhere to formal organizational policies, accept leader authority, and work exclusively in pursuit of compensation and other benefits by the organization (Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). Supervisors in these relationships obtain standard performance by subordinates (Deluga, 1994). Because of the advantage afforded to in-group members, feelings of envy or unfairness may be common among out-group subordinates (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1994).

Previous research on this subject has primarily focused on the relationship between LMX and subordinate performance, LMX and numerous organizational variables, and the specific characteristics of LMX relationships. As situational moderators affect the relationship between leadership and subordinate outcomes (Fiedler, 1967; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Morgeson, 2005), the present study examines how distance moderates the impact of LMX on predicting prosocial behaviors. Historically, research on leader-member exchange has also focused on the “bright side” of LMX (Kim et al., 2010, p. 531), highlighting its positive relationship with increased job performance and satisfaction, and decreased turnover intentions (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Even though low-quality leader-member

exchanges can have a devastating impact on individual, group, and organizational outcomes, little research has been conducted to identify their specific antecedents and consequences (Kacmar, Zivnuska, & White, 2007). This body of research is necessary and our present study focuses on the effects of low-quality LMX relationships.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

The importance of followers engaging in behaviors beyond their usual or required roles was first recognized by Katz (1964), who emphasized the benefit of innovative and extemporal behaviors on organizational outcomes. These actions were later dubbed *organizational citizenship behaviors* by Smith, Organ, and Near (1983). Organ (1988) defined this phenomenon as “...individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization” (p. 4). Through this mechanism, subordinates are able to engage in a form of reciprocity whereby behavior that is unlikely to be prescribed in a job description or acknowledged by a reward system directly benefits the leader, others in the work setting, and the organization as a whole (Liden et al., 1997; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996). Though these behaviors are typically elective on the part of the subordinate, they may, in sum, include in-role requirements of their prescribed job role (Schnake, 1991). Organizational citizenship behaviors on part of the subordinate have been associated with job satisfaction (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith et al., 1983), justice (Moorman, Niehoff, & Organ, 1992), trust in and loyalty to the supervisor (Deluga, 1994; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990), and perceptions of fairness (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993; Organ & Konovsky, 1989). It has been postulated that perceived supervisor fairness is a primary factor behind extra-role behaviors (Organ, 1988).

The distinction between what actions qualify task and citizenship behaviors is of great interest (Ilies et al., 2007). Over the past several decades, increased scrutiny has been placed on the categorization of what instances of job performance fall outside the realm of traditional task performance, both in quantity and quality (Ilies et al., 2007; Podsakoff et al., 2000). A plethora of labels have been employed to describe these actions, some including organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, 1988; Smith et al., 1983), prosocial behavior (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986), organizational spontaneity (George & Brief, 1992; George & Jones, 1997), and extra-role behavior (Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998).

Organizational citizenship behaviors have been categorized into seven specific categories: helping behavior, sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, organizational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue, and self-development (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Williams and Anderson (1991) noted that these behaviors may be directed toward the organization (OCB-O) or toward specific individuals (OCB-I). Specific antecedents of organizational citizenship behaviors include the individual characteristics of employee attitudes, dispositional and demographic variables, employee abilities, and role perceptions; task characteristics; organizational characteristics; and leadership behaviors (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

Distance

When discussing distance in the context of leadership, prior empirical research has generally categorized the construct as being social or psychological (Bass, 1990; Bogardus, 1927; Salzmann & Grasha, 1991; Shamir, 1995; Waldman & Yammarino, 1999), physical (Anatonkis & Atwater, 2002; Kerr & Jermier, 1978; Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999; Howell et al., 2005), and hierarchical or relating to power (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Botero & Van Dyne, 2009; Hunt, 1991; Yammarino, 1994). Many leadership theories either hold an assumption or

implication of distance in their conceptualization, such as Fiedler's (1967) least preferred coworker, Blake and Mouton's (1964, p. 57) "country club" managerial behaviors, and Bass' (1985, 1998) Full-Range Leadership Theory (FRLT). As leadership is an influencing process in the supervisor-subordinate dyad, the dynamics and outcomes of this process may be affected by how close or distant the two parties are from one another. Leader behaviors, which influence followers, may be evaluated based on how close or distant followers are from their leader (Anatonkis & Atwater, 2002). Supervisors may be perceived as distant from their subordinates if they are physically distant, maximize their status and power by way of their elevated organizational position, or have infrequent contact (Anatonkis & Atwater, 2002). Effective leadership is contingent upon the degree to which supervisors can match the expected degree of closeness preferred by their followers (Roberts & Bradley, 1988). The ability of leaders to achieve this degree of closeness may be partially attributed to distance.

Napier and Ferris (1993) offer the most distinct definition of leader-follower distance, conceptualizing it as "a multidimensional construct that describes the psychological, structural, and functional separation, disparity, or discord between a supervisor and a subordinate" (p. 326). Psychological distance encompasses the "psychological effects of actual and perceived...differences between the supervisor and subordinate" (pp. 328-329), including demographic distance, power distance, perceived similarity, and values similarity. Structural distance refers to "distance brought about by physical structure, ...organizational structure, ...and supervision structure" (p. 333), incorporating span of control, interaction frequency, and physical distance or proximity. Finally, functional distance examines the "degree of closeness and quality of the functional working relationship between the supervisor and the subordinate" (p. 337) and includes leader-follower intimacy, congruence, and latitude. While describing and categorizing

functional distance, Napier and Ferris draw heavily upon the theory of Leader-Member Exchange (Anatonkis & Atwater, 2002). For this study, we will explore all of Napier and Ferris' dimensions of distance under the categorization of psychological distance (demographic distance and perceived similarity), physical distance (proximity and frequency of leader-follower interaction), and functional distance (leader-member exchange quality).

Psychological Distance. Psychological distance, which is often also referred to as psychosocial distance (Bass, 1990) or social distance (Park, 1924), was greatly explored by Napier and Ferris (1993). Bogardus (1927) was the first to postulate the notion that leadership entails a certain degree of social or psychological distance between supervisors and their subordinates. Empirically, followers have been shown to hold leader psychological proximity as highly beneficial for the receipt of “sensitive and individually-tailored confidence-building communication” (Yagil, 1998, p. 172). Yagil further argued that a socially and physically close leader was better able to serve as a role model of effective workplace behaviors, in addition to being increasingly approachable. Conversely, when psychological distance between leaders and followers is reduced, a leader's influence and respect may be diminished when followers are more capable of observing perceived leader weaknesses (Bogardus, 1927). It has also been discussed that proximity to a leader may allow followers to view their superior as more human and fallible, increasing self-identification and trust (Aronson, Willerman, & Floyd, 1966). The way in which trust develops within the supervisor-subordinate relationship is moderated by distance because “the leader's honesty, reliability, and trustworthiness can be directly manifested by the leader and assessed by close followers” (Shamir, 1995, p. 26).

Physical Distance. Physical proximity between leaders and followers, Bass (1990) observed, is essential and effectively facilitates the communication process and heightens the

quality of exchange. Increasing physical distance inhibits the ability for supervisors and subordinates to foster a high-quality relationship by preventing personal and social engagement (Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). Additionally, Howell & Hall-Merenda postulated that higher levels of trust are exhibited in leader-follower relationships that are closer in distance due to greater levels of interaction. Scholars in leadership have suggested that increased physical distance in supervisor-subordinate relationships may decrease leaders' direct influence and the effectiveness of the working relationship (Bass 1990; Liden et al., 1997; Napier & Ferris, 1993). Interestingly, Kerr and Jemier (1978) showed that task- and relationship-oriented leadership behaviors might be essentially neutralized in instances of great physical distance. Physical distance has also been shown to negatively impact follower performance, conscientiousness, and civic virtue (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996). Additionally, when leaders are physically distant, follower satisfaction is greatly reduced (Burrows, Munday, Tunnell, & Seay, 1996). An additional aspect of distance that may greatly affect individual, group, and organizational outcomes, as well as the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship, is leader-follower interaction frequency. As this construct acts independently of physical proximity and psychological distance, a follower may feel "closer" to a leader when the two have frequent interactions within a work setting (Anatonkis & Atwater, 2002, p. 687).

Leader-Member Exchange, Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, and Distance

As previously noted, high-quality relationships are categorized by frequent interaction, high levels of trust, mutual respect and influence, support, and both formal and informal rewards (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). Included within these relationships are material and nonmaterial exchanges that transcend the bounds of traditional job performance (Liden et al., 1997; Liden & Graen, 1980). In order to maintain relational equity, it is likely that followers will go beyond

required in-role behaviors to engage in prosocial behaviors (Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002). It was postulated that high-quality LMX would increase subordinate instances of organizational citizenship behaviors (Hackett, Farh, Song, & Lapierre, 2003), and later proven that the quality of the leader-follower relationship was positively related to the frequency in which subordinates engaged in OCBs (Hui, Law, & Chen, 1999; Ilies et al., 2007; Liden & Graen, 1980; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Settoon et al., 1996; Wayne & Green, 1993; Wayne et al., 1997). Additionally, a stronger relationship has been postulated between high-quality LMX and citizenship behaviors that are targeted toward an individual, as LMX is inherently interpersonal, rather than toward the organization as a whole (Ilies et al., 2007). However, stronger relationships have been observed between perceived organizational support and organizationally-targeted behaviors (Kaufman, Stamper, & Tesluk, 2001). Select variables, such as trust (Deluga, 1994), envy (Kim et al., 2010), and justice (Scandura, 1999), have been shown to moderate the relationship between leader-member exchange and organizational citizenship behaviors.

As situational moderators affect the relationship between leadership and subordinate outcomes (Fiedler, 1967; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Morgeson, 2005), the topic of distance has been of great interest to organizational scholars. Social exchanges are more easily cultivated in physical proximity when face-to-face interactions are common (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). As physical distance increases, opportunities for necessary supervisor-subordinate engagement are limited, and the likelihood of a leader and follower establishing and sustaining a high-quality relationship is greatly decreased (Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). Physical distance, combined with leader-member exchange, has been positively correlated with perceptions of group role conflict and negatively correlated with group altruism (Podsakoff et al.,

1996). Additionally, Podsakoff found that physical distance detrimentally impacted follower performance, conscientiousness, and civic virtue. Physical distance has also been shown to moderate the effectiveness of leadership behaviors (Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999), and reduced social interaction may neutralize the effects of leaders (Bass, 1998). Therefore, we would expect that as physical distance increases between a supervisor and their subordinate, the quality of their leader-member exchange reduces accordingly.

H1: Physical distance and leader-member exchange are negatively related.

Napier and Ferris (1993) suggested that less functional distance is associated with higher subordinate performance, higher satisfaction, and decreased withdrawal. Increased psychological distance has been shown to greatly negatively affect the quality of manager-subordinate relations (Salzmann & Grasha, 1991) and inhibit self-identification and trust development. Bass (1990) noted that distance, generally, has a negative effect on the quality of the supervisor-subordinate exchange and reduces the leader's influence because of the reduced richness of information transmission (Daft & Lengel, 1984). Previous research has indicated that leader-member exchange quality is greatly reduced in environments of increased psychological distance (Brunelle, 2013). As such, we would expect to observe a reduction in leader-member exchange quality as psychological distance among the dyad increases.

H2: Psychological distance and leader-member exchange are negatively related.

Envy

Unfavorable social comparisons serve as the foundation of envy's development (Gilbert, Giesler, & Morris, 1995). The present study adopts the definition of envy as *pain at another's good fortune* (Smith & Kim, 2007; Tai et al., 2012; van de Ven et al., 2009). When conceptualized as an episodic emotion, envy has been shown to positively predict increased

hostility toward envied parties, as well as a reduced desire for friendship (Salovey & Rodin, 1984). Additional outcomes of episodic envy include a strong desire to harm the envied (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007), unethical behaviors (Gino & Pierce, 2009), and reduced helping behavior (Gino & Pierce, 2010). Once experienced, envy has been found to be increasingly difficult to control, hide, or change (Parrott, 1991). Additionally, as physical and psychological proximity increase, the likelihood that social comparisons which result in envy increases (Tesser, 1988). With great deference given to these findings and the growing body of research on envy's negative outcomes, Tai and colleagues (2012) postulate that consistently coupling envy with negative outcomes may be greatly distorting the operationalization and study of envy.

Since its conceptualization and subsequent empirical exploration, envy has been viewed as a psychological state with exclusively negative individual, group, and organizational consequences (Smith & Kim, 2007). Central to the construct and state of envy is the notion that an envious party bears ill will and hostility towards the envied (Parrott, 1991; Parrott & Smith, 1993; Smith, 2004). This notion naturally aligns envy with negative consequences (Smith & Kim, 2007). Elster (1999) suggested that "the action tendency of envy is to destroy the envied object or its possessor" (p. 39). As such, the contention that envy exclusively activates negative behaviors and outcomes is just. However, Tai and colleagues (2012) contend that positive behaviors may be activated by envy because envious individuals genuinely do desire to attain the possessions of their envied targets.

Recent research has begun to highlight a more positive view of envy, noting its benign, admiring, and emulative properties (Neu, 1980; Rawls, 1971; van de Ven et al., 2009). The adaptation potential of envy has begun to proliferate in current research and has been shown to motivate positive behavior (Tai et al., 2012). This behavior, on the part of the envious, may

provide an avenue to elevate oneself to the same perceived level of the envied, rather than by engaging in negative behaviors to bring the envied party down (Tai et al., 2012). Recent work has highlighted further positive outcomes of envy, including increased admiration and willingness to learn (Cohen-Charash, 2009; van de Ven et al., 2009), enhanced job performance (Schaubroeck & Lam, 2004), and increased work motivation (Cohen-Charash, 2009). Within this growing body of research, a distinction has been made between benign and malicious envy (van de Ven et al., 2009). Benign envy was characterized by feelings of liking and admiration for the envied, as well as an increased motivation to excel, aligning benign envy with action behaviors oriented toward raising the level of oneself toward the envied target (Tai et al., 2012). This action-oriented behavior was categorized by van de Ven and colleagues (2009) as the response to a “challenge” situation. The response to envy in a perceived “challenge” situation has been distinguished from the perception of envy as a “threat” (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Vecchio 1997, 2007). Tai and colleagues (2012) reviewed this distinction and offered that the behavioral consequences of envy may derive from two action responses – threat and challenge – which may function jointly.

Leader-Member Exchange. Similarly to the perceived receipt of formal and informal rewards in the workplace setting, a subordinate with a low-quality LMX relationship with their supervisor may observe higher-quality exchanges taking place between their leader and fellow subordinates. The perception of injustice and a lack of perceived fairness often support the development of envy (Ben-Ze’ev, 2000; Smith, 1991). Therefore, we would expect envy, generally, to hold a negative relationship with leader-member exchange quality. Additionally, relational envy, experienced on the part of subordinates, should also be observed to relate negatively to leader-member exchange.

H3a: General envy is negatively related to leader-member exchange.

H3b: Relational envy is negatively related to leader-member exchange.

The feeling of envy may be further exacerbated by separation of a follower from their leader by organizational constructs that increase physical and psychological distance. We would expect feelings of envy to further the psychological separation of followers from their leaders, directly affecting the quality of the leader-member relationship. LMX has been shown to be strongly correlated with levels of job satisfaction, overall satisfaction, and satisfaction with a supervisor (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Recent research has highlighted the significant correlation between low-quality LMX relationships and manifestations of subordinate envy (Kim et al., 2010). Specific leader behaviors have been found to moderate the relationship between physical and psychological distance and leader-member relations (Brunelle, 2013).

H4a: Psychological distance moderates the relational envy – leader-member exchange relationship such that leader-member exchange is highest under conditions of low psychological distance and low relational envy, and lowest under conditions of high psychological distance and high relational envy.

H4b: Physical distance moderates the relational envy – leader-member exchange relationship such that leader-member exchange is highest under conditions of low physical distance and low relational envy, and lowest under conditions of high physical distance and high relational envy.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors. Withholding helping behaviors is a common response to perceived unfair treatment within an organization. This action provides the envious with a mode of restoring workplace equity (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002; Organ, 1990; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Reduced prosocial behaviors are consequences that are negatively associated with envy and follow the threat-oriented tendency (Tai et al., 2012). If an individual perceives unfair treatment within an organization as challenge-oriented, envy might predict the opposite to occur. Tai and colleagues

(2012) note that extra-role behaviors by envious parties can increase performance evaluations, chances for career advancement, and, generally, make people look better. Additionally, in a social exchange environment, individuals who feel excluded from the group – physically or psychologically – may experience envy, which, in turn, may stimulate prosocial behavior (Richman & Leary, 2009). Therefore, the traditional view of envy constricts its ability to affect individual, group, and organizational outcomes exclusively by threat-oriented actions. The alternative view of envy allows a challenge-oriented view to be implemented, whereby the individual raises the self, benefitting the organization and restoring perceived workplace equity (Tai et al., 2012). While Kim and colleagues (2010) suggest envy is an inhibitor of OCBs, they simultaneously support the notion of its moderating effect between LMX and OCB. As such, we would expect relational envy to greatly contribute to the established relationships between leader-member exchange and task performance and organizational citizenship behaviors.

H5a: Relational envy moderates the leader-member exchange (LMX) – task performance relationship, such that task performance is highest under conditions of low relational envy and high leader-member exchange, and lowest under conditions of high relational envy and low LMX.

H5b: Relational envy moderates the leader-member exchange (LMX) – organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) relationship, such that OCBs are highest when relational envy is high and LMX is low, and OCBs are lowest when relational envy is low and LMX is high.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

Employees at a large, American public university were surveyed. A total of 3,183 potential email addresses were generated from the university's records. Fifty-eight employees were no longer employed or were on leave at the time of the survey administration, reducing the total potential sample to 3,125 employees. Each email was personalized with the respondent's

name, a note introducing the research, and the contact information of the primary researchers. As an incentive for participation, the first 200 respondents were offered a \$5 Amazon gift credit. The researchers also personally contacted managers throughout the university to encourage their units to participate. Finally, a follow-up email was sent reminding individuals about the survey project. The link was accessed by 1,452 individuals (46.4%). Of these, 825 individuals began the survey (26.4% initial response rate), and a total of 521 surveys were completed (16.7% final response rate). Respondents identified themselves and their supervisors in the initial response (for matching purposes), which inquired about the nature of the work relationship with their supervisor, attitudes, and individual difference data.

Two hundred ninety-three unique supervisors were identified from the subordinate sample. To maintain statistical independence, one subordinate was randomly selected per supervisor, and then supervisors were asked to report on the performance of that employee. A total of 151 supervisor responses were started (51.5% initial response rate), and a total of 121 completed responses were received (41.2% final response rate).

Measures

Psychological Distance. Based on the theory of Napier and Ferris (1993), three items were developed for this investigation to measure psychological distance. The statement, “Think about your supervisor and how similar he or she is to you, and then respond with your agreement to the following items” preceded the three items: “I feel very similar to my supervisor,” “My supervisor and I share much in common,” and “My supervisor isn’t that different from me.” Items loaded onto a single factor with acceptable reliability. Scaling was 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), and aggregate scores were reverse-coded for interpretation.

Physical Distance. Physical distance was measured using a single item: “Indicate how close your workspace is to your manager/supervisor,” and the anchors were 1 (Very Distant), 2 (Fairly Distant), 3 (Somewhat Close), 4 (Fairly Close), and 5 (Very Close).

General Envy. General envy was measured using a scale adapted from Vecchio (2005). Items include, “Most of my co-workers have it better than I do,” “My supervisor values the efforts of others more than he/she values my efforts,” “I feel that I’ll never have a job as good as some that I’ve seen,” “I don’t know why, but I seem to be the underdog at work,” and “It is somewhat annoying to see others have all the luck in getting the best assignments.” Scale anchors ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Relational Envy. Relational envy was measured using five items developed from the theory of Tai, Narayanan, and McAllister (2012). Items include, “It bothers me when coworkers get access to my supervisor and I don’t,” “I feel threatened when my supervisor characterizes my coworkers as successful,” “I become agitated when I compare the relationship I have with my supervisor to the relationship others have with my supervisor,” “I can become upset when I think about the special treatment some coworkers receive by my supervisor,” and “It hurts to think about the good fortune others have from my supervisor that I don’t.” Scale anchors ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Scale items loaded onto a single factor with acceptable reliability.

Positive Affectivity. Positive affectivity was measured using the short-form PANAS scale from Thompson (2007). Respondents were asked to “Indicate to what extent you generally feel” and then respond to “Determined,” “Attentive,” “Alert,” “Inspired,” and “Active.” Scale anchors ranged from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always).

Negative Affectivity. Negative affectivity was measured using the short-form PANAS scale from Thompson (2007). Respondents were asked to “Indicate to what extent you generally feel” and then respond to “Afraid,” “Nervous,” “Upset,” “Ashamed,” and “Hostile.” Scale anchors ranged from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always).

Leader-Member Exchange. Leader-member exchange was measured using the LMX-7 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). An example item is, “How would you characterize your working relationship with your leader?” Scale anchors ranged from 1 to 5 and varied according to the item.

Communication Frequency. Supervisors were asked, “How often do you communicate with this subordinate?” Responses ranged from Never (1), Less Than Once a Month (2), Once A Month (3), 2-3 Times A Month (4), Once a Week (5), 2-3 Times a Week (6), and Daily (7).

Work Relationship Tenure. Supervisors were asked, “How many years have you supervised this subordinate?” Responses were continuous.

Participant Age. Participants were asked, “What is your age in years?” Consist with prior research, age was treated as a continuous variable because all results were presented solely in aggregate form (Ng & Feldman, 2009).

Participant Education. Participants were asked, “Please indicate the highest program of study you have completed.” Responses included, “Middle school or equivalent,” “High school diploma or equivalent,” “Bachelor’s degree,” “Master’s degree,” “Professional doctorate (e.g., M.D., J.D., Ed.D., Psy.D.),” or “Research doctorate (e.g., Ph.D., S.J.D.).” Responses were scaled from 1 (Middle school or equivalent) to 6 (Research Doctorate).

Participant Sex. Participants were asked, “What is your sex?” Responses were “Male” (1) or “Female” (2).

Task Performance. Task performance was measured using the four-item scale from Van Dyne and LePine (1998) and adapted to the current context. Supervisors were advised, “Please rate your level of agreement regarding the behavior of this subordinate at work.” Items include, “S/he fulfills the responsibilities in his or her job description,” “S/he performs the tasks expected as part of the job,” “S/he meets performance expectations,” and “S/he adequately completed responsibilities.” Anchors ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Supervisors were also allowed to indicate “Not Applicable” and “Unknown.” No supervisors selected “Not Applicable” or “Unknown” for these performance dimensions, suggesting they felt confident rating subordinates.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors. Organizational citizenship behaviors were measured using five-items drawn from Williams and Anderson (1991). Organ (1988) recommended that researchers select citizenship items that fit with their unique work context. The items are, “This subordinate helps others who have been absent,” “Assists me [the supervisor] with my work (when not asked),” “Takes time to listen to co-workers’ problems and worries,” “Goes out of his or her way to help new employees,” and “Takes a personal interest in other employees.” Anchors ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The items loaded onto a single factor and exhibited acceptable internal consistency.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using correlation analyses and hierarchical moderated multiple regression analyses. All predictor data were standardized prior to analyses, and standardized results are shown for all regression coefficients. To test moderation effects, constructs were combined multiplicatively, and main effects and controls were entered in a step-wise fashion. A hierarchical approach was employed, as recommended by Cohen and Cohen (1983).

Results

Table 1 summarizes hypotheses, measurement tools, and statistical outcomes of analysis. Results of hypotheses concerning physical and psychological distance, envy, leader-member exchange, organizational citizenship behaviors, task performance, and control variables are summarized in Table 2. Coefficient alphas for scale reliability are reported on the diagonal of Table 2. Hypothesis 1, which postulated that physical distance was negatively related with leader-member exchange, was supported with statistical significance ($r = -.12, p < .01$). Likewise, Hypothesis 2 was also supported in that psychological distance and leader-member exchange were significantly and negatively related ($r = -.58, p < .01$). Hypotheses 3a and 3b were both supported: general and relational envy emotions were negatively related to leader-member exchange ($r = -.61, p < .01$) and ($r = -.53, p < .01$).

Table 3 shows a hierarchical regression analysis predicting leader-member exchange. Hypothesis 4a predicted that psychological distance would moderate the relational envy – leader-member exchange relationship. This hypothesis was partially supported such that leader-member exchange is lowest under conditions of high psychological distance and high relational envy, yet highest under conditions of low psychological distance and high relational envy. The interaction term of psychological distance and relational envy significantly predicted leader-member exchange ($\beta = -.15, p < .05$), after controlling for main effects, general envy emotions, subordinate positive affectivity, subordinate negative affectivity, supervisor positive affectivity, and supervisor negative affectivity, communication frequency, and work relationship tenure. In total, the regression explained 51.1% of the variance in leader-member exchange. Figure 1 plots the psychological distance X relational envy interaction on leader-member exchange. Conversely, Hypothesis 4b was not supported. The interaction term of physical distance and

relational envy was not a significant predictor of leader-member exchange ($\beta = -.02, n.s.$) in that physical distance did not moderate the relational envy – leader-member exchange relationship.

Hypothesis 5a, predicting that envy would moderate the leader-member exchange – task performance relationship, was not supported. The interaction term of relational envy and leader-member exchange was not significant ($\beta = .12, n.s.$), after controlling for main effects, job satisfaction, subordinate positive affectivity, and subordinate negative affectivity. Likewise, Hypothesis 5b, suggesting that envy would moderate the leader-member exchange – organizational citizenship behaviors relationship, was also not supported. The interaction term of relational envy and leader-member exchange was not significant ($\beta = -.06, n.s.$), after controlling for main effects, job satisfaction, subordinate positive affectivity, and subordinate negative affectivity.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to explore the interactions of physical distance, psychological distance, and envy with leader-member exchange, organizational citizenship behaviors, and task performance. These findings greatly extend the body of empirical research surrounding the effect of emotions on relational and organizational outcomes by supporting that both general and relational envy are significantly and negatively correlated with leader-member exchange quality. Furthermore, as research continues its exploration into the effect of psychological and emotional states on relational quality, the finding that psychological distance accounts for over a majority of the variance in the relationship between relational envy and leader-member exchange should serve as a foundational keystone. Empirical investigation into the implications of emotions in organizations has recently grown, specifically for constructs such as fairness, justice, and trust (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005; Mayer &

Davis, 1999; McAllister, 1995). This exploration into envy and both its positive and negative outcomes, as well as its antecedents, reintroduces the field to this impactful emotion and urges continued study.

Since Napier and Ferris' (1993) review of distance in organizations and their postulation of its broad implications for individual, group, organizational, and relational outcomes, two decades passed with little empirical research conducted to examine the impact of distance on the quality of leader-member relationships. Brunelle (2013) was among the first to study the effect of physical and psychological distance on the relational quality of supervisors and their subordinates, as well as the moderation of specific leadership behaviors among those phenomena. The present study confirms the findings of Brunelle in that both physical and psychological distance have a significant, negative correlation with relational quality among supervisors and their subordinates. Additionally, it greatly extends this previous work by beginning the examination of emotions in the context of work environments and relational exchanges.

Empirically exploring the postulation offered by earlier scholars that envy and leader-member exchange may be related, this study suggests that a significant, negative relationship between these two constructs does in fact exist (Bolino & Turnley, 2009; Tai et al., 2012). Both of these dimensions of envy – general and relational – were found to significantly correlate with leader-member exchange quality. The present study differentiated and assessed general and relational envy with piloted and previously validated scales to ensure that an adequate measure of relational envy was achieved. Therefore, we would expect that subordinates do, in fact, make significant social comparisons to colleagues and experience relational envy when they observe higher relational exchanges between their supervisor and a fellow subordinate. This scholarship

has the potential to guide future study on envy and other emotions present in organizations with regard to leader-member exchange.

Next, the results of this study indicate that psychological distance serves as a moderator in the relational envy – leader-member exchange relationship, accounting for a majority of the variance in leader-member exchange quality after controlling for main effects, affectivity, communication frequency, relationship tenure, and even general envy emotions. As such, leader-member exchange was observed to be highest under conditions of low psychological distance and high relational envy, and lowest under conditions of high psychological distance and high relational envy. The interaction term of psychological distance and relational envy significantly predicted leader-member exchange. As envy and leader-member exchange quality are both greatly predicted by interpersonal and perceptual constructs (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Tai et al., 2012), it may be expected that psychological distance, as yet another subordinate-perceived interpersonal dynamic, would offer the greatest contribution to the examination of the relationship among these phenomena. This contention may also be applied conversely to our findings that suggest physical distance does not moderate the envy – leader-member exchange relationship. Here, we may observe that physical distance simply serves as a proxy for interaction frequency in this correlation.

Contrary to an original hypothesis, relational envy did not moderate the LMX – task performance relationship. Additionally, it was observed that relational envy did not moderate the relationship between LMX and organizational citizenship behaviors. This result questions previous findings where a significant relationship was observed, like that of Kim and colleagues (2010). It also questions the postulations that envy may result in positive organizational outcomes, like increased performance and helping behavior. It does, however, confirm previous

contentions that when envy is experienced by subordinates, helping behavior may be withheld from colleagues with perceived-to-be higher-quality LMX relationships (Kim et al., 2010).

Further research in this area is needed.

For managers, our study indicates that both envy and psychological distance can have significant and broad-based effects on individual, group, and organizational outcomes. If supervisors can do a better job of reducing the perceived distance between them and their subordinates, lower levels of relational envy may be experienced by followers, positively impacting leader-member exchange and its established outcomes. Conversely, if relational envy is present, the reduction in psychological distance by actions of a supervisor may serve as a means for the maintenance and improvement of leader-member relations. Managers should strive for increased interaction with subordinates and publically acknowledge their appreciation, support, and openness to followers. Additionally, workplace settings, job functions, and organizational procedures should be designed to prevent envy from manifesting from other workplace constructs and to reduce the potential for employees to view great amounts of psychological distance between them and their supervisor. Kim, O'Neill, and Jeong (2004) suggested that increased social activities and informal meetings could be an efficient and effective way to decrease envy and promote positive LMX quality. Other scholars recommend attempting to activate envy's potentially positive consequences by fostering an environment of appreciation for excellent job performance at the group level (Tai et al., 2012). Finally, as suggested by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), supervisors should make attempts to build better quality relationships with lower-quality LMX employees. This process, again, may reduce relational envy, decrease psychological distance, and increase LMX quality.

It is important to note specific limitations regarding this study. The sample was taken from a large, American public university and consisted of faculty, staff, and administrators. As college campuses may be more or less physically disbursed than the average organization, and may hold separate values systems, cultures, and governing policies, the generalizability of these findings may not be appropriate to all industries. As with many research studies, measurement perspectives may also present concern. All measurements were recorded cross-sectionally, albeit from different sources. As this study involved highly sensitive topics in human and leader relations like envy, task performance, and perceived psychological distance, many solicited participants indicated that they did not wish to respond to the survey items, even after extraordinary efforts were taken to ensure anonymity, because they feared a lack of anonymity or because they were uncomfortable with the specific content of some survey items. A future study may be able to garner a larger number of relational dyads for increased statistical power and examination. Additionally, measures of dyadic constructs, like leader-member exchange, distance, and interaction frequency, were only delivered to one member of the dyad – the supervisor or the subordinate. Having both parties complete measures may provide for a more holistic view of the exchange and work environment, providing more reliable results. Finally, a more sophisticated mode of analysis may have increased the power and understanding of the interrelatedness of our constructs.

Future research should further investigate the phenomenon of envy's occurrence as both an antecedent and an outcome. It may be interesting to explore how distance may impact the relationship between LMX and OCB, as well as how leader-member exchange and envy may interact to predict levels of job performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. If enough statistical power may be garnered, extending the current research on emotions, such as trust and

justice, may also offer increased understanding of the role of psychosocial constructs in performance outcomes, such as how justice and envy interact to predict job performance or how trust and politics predict prosocial behaviors. Additionally, further examining the relationships among envy and distance with subordinate task performance and occurrences of organizational citizenship behaviors may provide the field with an increased understanding of the interconnectedness of social and emotional constructs with individual, group, and organizational outcomes. It may also be useful to examine if a relationship exists between physical and psychological distance, and what that relationship, if any, would mean for these findings. Finally, further research is needed among positive organizational scholars to ground previous contentions that envy may be utilized as motivation for increased performance and prosocial behaviors.

In conclusion, the present study shows how psychological distance moderates the relationship between relational envy and leader-member exchange quality. Further research into this area is needed, but it is postulated that managers and organizations should work to reduce avenues for the perception of psychological distance between supervisors and their subordinates, as well as the potential for relational envy to manifest. These acts, if accomplished, may positively benefit the organization through both individual and group outcomes.

Table 1
Summation of Hypotheses and Statistical Analysis of Constructs

Hypothesis	Constructs	Measurements	Correlation, Interaction Term	Finding
<i>Physical distance and leader-member exchange are negatively related</i>	Physical distance	Sub. Indicated Proximity	$r = -.12, p < .01$	<i>Supported</i> , they are significantly and negatively related
	LMX	LMX-7		
<i>Psychological distance and leader-member exchange are negatively related</i>	Psychological distance	Pilot from Napier & Ferris (1993)	$r = -.58, p < .01$	<i>Supported</i> , they are significantly and negatively related
	LMX	LMX-7		
<i>General envy is negatively related to LMX</i>	General envy	Vecchio (2005)	$r = -.61, p < .01$	<i>Supported</i> , significantly and negatively related
	LMX	LMX-7		
<i>Relational envy is negatively related to LMX</i>	Relational envy	Pilot from Tai (2012)	$r = -.53, p < .01$	<i>Supported</i> , significantly and negatively related
	LMX	LMX-7		
<i>Psychological distance moderates the relational envy – leader-member exchange relationship</i>	Psychological distance	Pilot from Napier & Ferris (1993)	$\beta = -.15, p < .05$	<i>Supported</i> , interaction of psychological distance and relational envy predicted LMX
	Relational envy	Pilot from Tai (2012)		
	LMX	LMX-7		
<i>Physical distance moderates the relational envy – leader-member exchange relationship</i>	Physical distance	Sub. Indicated Proximity	$\beta = -.02, n.s.$	<i>Not supported</i> , interaction of physical distance and relational envy did not predict LMX
	Relational envy	Pilot from Tai (2012)		
	LMX	LMX-7		
<i>Relational envy moderates the relationship between leader-member exchange and task performance</i>	Relational envy	Pilot from Tai (2012)	$\beta = .12, n.s.$	<i>Not supported</i> , interaction of relational envy and LMX did not significantly predict task performance
	LMX	LMX-7		
	Task Performance	Van Dyne & LePine (1998)		
<i>Relational envy moderates the relationship between LMX and organizational citizenship behaviors</i>	Relational envy	Pilot from Tai (2012)	$\beta = -.06, n.s.$	<i>Not supported</i> , interaction of relational envy and LMX did not significantly predict OCB
	LMX	LMX-7		
	OCB	Williams & Anderson (1991)		

Note: Sub. = Subordinate

Table 2

Descriptive Stats and Item Intercorrelations

Construct	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.
1. Subordinate Age.	44.87	12.89	1															
2. Work Relationship Tenure	3.75	3.86	.18**	1														
3. Subordinate Sex	1.62	.49	-.14**	.03	1													
4. Sub. Education	4.16	1.36	.16**	-.03	-.27**	1												
5. Sub. Positive Affectivity	4.10	.53	.17**	.01	.03	.10*	.82											
6. Sub. Negative Affectivity	1.87	.59	-.18**	-.03	-.03	.02	-.33**	.82										
7. Super. Positive Affectivity	4.09	.39	.16	-.02	.17	.06	.13	-.17	.73									
8. Super. Negative Affectivity	1.95	.40	-.01	-.01	-.09	.01	-.14	.07	-.31**	.75								
9. Communication Frequency	5.81	1.36	-.06	.10*	.12**	-.41	.03	-.06	-.05	.11	1							
10. Physical Distance	2.28	1.18	.09*	-.14*	-.16**	.29	.09*	.04	-.03	.12	-.49**	1						
11. Psychological Distance	2.72	.90	-.04	-.09*	.01	-.03	-.29**	.23**	-.07	.08	-.19**	.09*	.91					
12. General Envy Emotions	2.03	.88	-.18**	-.04	-.03	-.07	-.34**	.41**	-.16	.04	-.12**	.07	.33**	.87				
13. Relational Envy Emotions	1.67	.75	-.19**	-.04	-.00	-.05	-.23**	.37**	.16	.04	-.07	.12**	.28**	.73**	.92			
14. Leader-Member Exchange	4.07	.79	.10*	.10*	-.02	.01	.29**	-.38**	.16	-.06	.25**	-.12**	-.58**	-.61**	-.53**	.92		
15. Task Performance	6.45	1.20	-.01	.10	.09	-.08	.17	-.05	.14	-.05	.04	.07	-.08	-.23*	-.23*	.32**	.98	
16. OCBs	6.17	.91	.23*	.22*	-.09	.04	.05	.03	.05	.19*	.42**	-.08	-.20*	-.21*	-.09	.35**	.30**	.84

Notes: Supervisor $n = 117$; Subordinate $n = 520$; Sub. = Subordinate; Super = Supervisor; * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; Cronbach alpha reliabilities on the diagonal, as applicable.

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Leader-Member Exchange

	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			Step 4		
Predictor	β	t	p -value	β	t	p -value	β	t	p -value	β	t	p -value
Subordinate Positive Affectivity	.32	3.13	.00	.19	1.96	.05	.03	.27	.79	.04	.42	.67
Subordinate Negative Affectivity	-.18	-1.71	.09	-.04	-.37	.71	-.05	-.56	.57	-.02	-.21	.84
Supervisor Positive Affectivity	.09	1.01	.32	.05	.66	.51	.05	.65	.52	.04	.50	.62
Supervisor Negative Affectivity	.01	.05	.96	-.02	-.18	.85	-.01	-.18	.86	-.03	-.35	.73
Work Relationship Tenure	.06	.75	.46	.08	1.06	.29	.08	1.15	.25	.08	1.08	.28
Communication Frequency	.04	.45	.65	.03	.32	.75	-.03	-.41	.68	.00	.03	.98
General Envy	---	---	---	-.44	-4.75	.00	-.39	-3.43	.00	-.45	-3.94	.00
Relational Envy	---	---	---	---	---	---	-.02	-.22	.83	.00	-.00	.99
Psychological Distance	---	---	---	---	---	---	-.39	-4.86	.00	-.43	-5.36	.00
Psychological Distance X Relational Envy	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-.19	-2.46	.02
R^2	.23**			.36**			.48**			.51**		

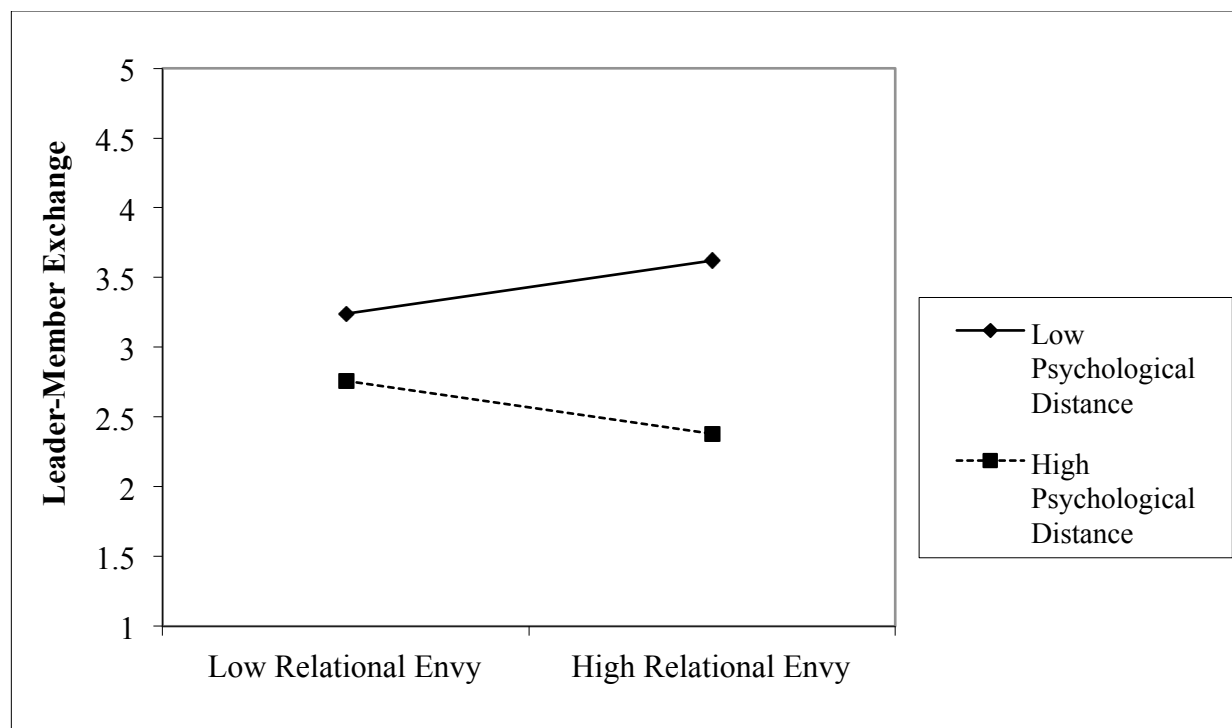


Figure 1. Plot of Psychological Distance X Relational Envy Interaction on Leader-Member Exchange

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