Working in Pajamas: Telecommuting, Unfairness Sources, and Unfairness Perceptions

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Abstract

We utilize organizational justice theory and the multifoci framework to illustrate that coworkers are seen as unfairness sources in the telecommuting context. We show that nontelecommuters often perceive unfairness when their coworkers telecommute. However, working in pajamas is not a panacea as telecommuters also perceive unfairness owing to their remoteness. We support our arguments by highlighting representative quotes from employees and managers in four telecommuting organizations.

Organizational justice theory researchers investigate employees' perceptions of unfairness. Traditionally, these scholars have considered the sources of unfairness to be the organization itself and its managers. However, more recent research acknowledges multiple sources of justice (e.g., Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007). According to Lavelle et al. (2007), ''the multi-foci perspective holds that employees can judge the distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice of any party, as long as the employee has reason to believe that the entity in question was indeed responsible for the fairness the employees received (p. 843).'' This new trend in the organizational justice literature closely aligns itself with the reality of current management developments. For instance, in decentralized organizations, where power is delegated to employees who participate in the decision-making process, coworkers may also be perceived as a source of unfairness.

Organizations with telecommuting policies tend to be structurally flat, as distributed workers are geographically separated from the organization and generally have high levels of autonomy. The telecommuting context suits our purpose for investigating

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coworker unfairness source issues, as the forced exchange relationship between telecommuting and nontelecommuting coworkers may cause perceptions of unfairness for both telecommuters and nontelecommuters. Although nontelecommuters are not *directly* impacted by an organization's decision to support telecommuting, they are *indirectly* affected and may as such be recipients of unfairness. As a result, telecommuters and their nontelecommuting coworkers act as both sources and recipients of unfairness. For instance, by being remote, additional workloads may accrue to nontelecommuting coworkers physically present in the workplace. At the same time, telecommuters may perceive their nontelecommuting coworkers as a source of unfairness if important information or knowledge is withheld. Although telecommuting as a working mode has gained acceptance and support in organizations, the growth rate has been slower than what was initially predicted (ITAC, 2001). It has been estimated that the number of telecommuters working at home at least 1 day per month has grown 7.5% between 2003 and 2004 (ITAC, 2004). This relatively slow increase can be partially attributed to the already investigated technological and managerial challenges (Gupta, Karimi, & Somers, 2000; Harrington, 1999; Stanworth, 1998), but we believe there may be additional reasons. Building on early research in this area (Kurland & Egan, 1999), we use organizational justice theory to evaluate employees' experiences with telecommuting to provide a fresh approach for understanding the mixed telecommuting outcomes that have been reported in this literature.

Despite the interest and increase in telecommuting, only recently have researchers applied existing theory, such as identity theory or organizational justice theory, to the telecommuting context (e.g., Thatcher & Zhu, 2006; Weisenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 1999; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001). We extend the existing literature on telecommuting (e.g., Kurland & Egan, 1999) by viewing it through the lens of organizational justice. Additionally, the majority of existing research on telecommuting focuses on telecommuters and their managers. To our knowledge, few papers have discussed the issues surrounding the nontelecommuting employees in an organization that allows telecommuting (e.g., Kurland & Bailey, 1999). Whereas the individuals directly affected by organizational telecommuting policies are telecommuters and their managers, the indirect effects on nontelecommuting employees should be considered as well. By highlighting the experiences of all three parties, we are better able to realize the consequences that telecommuting policies have on organizations overall.

In sum, we aim to contribute to the intersection of organizational justice and telecommuting. By applying the multifoci framework (e.g., Branscombe, Spears, Ellemers, & Doosje, 2002; Cropanzano, Li, & James, 2007; Lavelle et al., 2007) and considering coworkers as an unfairness source to the flexible work mode of telecommuting, we contribute to both literatures. We focus on both unfairness perceptions around the telecommuting policy itself and its impacts on other dimensions of organizational life. Throughout this article, we use representative quotes to illustrate perceived fairness violations in organizations with telecommuting policies. These quotes are provided from 24 semistructured interviews with telecommuters and their nontelecommuting peers and managers at four organizations providing telecommuting as a flexible work mode option (one medium-sized clothing retailer, one fortune 100 financial organization, and two

large telecom organizations). The authors read through the transcribed interviews and highlighted responses that were consistent with the different aspects of unfairness that we discuss in this article.

Each interview lasted between 50 min and 1 hr and covered a range of open-ended questions. Telecommuters answered questions around the following issues: general job descriptions; the frequency with which they telecommute; their telecommuting location (e.g., home, coffee shop); their access to equipment and resources needed for telecommuting; their experiences with telecommuting; the extent to which they saw telecommuting as a reward; the benefits of telecommuting; the drawbacks to telecommuting; suggestions for improving their telecommuting experience; communication and interaction experiences with coworkers and supervisors; perceptions of how their performance is measured; and the extent to which they receive effective mentoring and guidance. Nontelecommuters answered questions about the following issues: general job descriptions; their desire to telecommute; the extent to which they saw telecommuting, or some aspects of telecommuting, as a reward (e.g., access to more or different equipment and resources); their perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of telecommuting; and their communication and interaction experiences with telecommuting coworkers. Managers were asked about the following issues: general job descriptions; the number of employees and telecommuters they supervise; their general view of telecommuting (e.g., the extent to which they support the idea or not); their perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of telecommuting; their communication and interaction experiences with telecommuting and nontelecommuting subordinates; their ability to effectively guide and mentor telecommuters; and their ability to effectively measure performance of telecommuters.

This article is divided into four major sections. First, we review the literature on organizational justice types and sources. We then briefly review the benefits and drawbacks of telecommuting. Third, we describe telecommuting issues using a justice type by source framework for both telecommuters and nontelecommuters. Finally, we discuss the implications of this study for theory and managers and provide suggestions for future research.

Organizational Justice

Justice Types

Organizational justice researchers investigate people's fairness perceptions. Extensive evidence exists supporting the notion that justice (or fairness) affects employees' actions and reactions within organizations (e.g., Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Positive outcomes of justice include employee loyalty (Schaubroeck, May, & Brown, 1994), commitment (Folger & Konovsky, 1989) and extra role behavior (Moorman, 1991). Negative outcomes of injustice include retaliatory behaviors (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), theft (Greenberg, 1990), rule breaking (Tyler, 1990), and turnover and absenteeism (Hulin, 1991). Originally researchers argued for two basic forms of justice: distributive and procedural (Folger & Konovsky, 1989). Some recent evidence supports a four-construct framework with distributive,

procedural, interpersonal and informational justice types (Colquitt et al., 2001). Other justice researchers tend to look at interpersonal and informational justice types together as interactional justice (e.g., Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Although we have organized the article around a three-construct framework, our discussion of interactional justice will delineate between examples of interpersonal and informational justice when relevant.[1]

Distributive Justice

Distributive justice involves perceptions of outcome fairness (Adams, 1965). Originally, this justice type was basically synonymous with the idea of *equity,* where employees compare their ratio of input and output with the ratio of others. Following the introduction to equity theory, two additional allocation rules were proposed: *need* and *equality* (Deutsch, 1975). Distribution according to the need rule of allocation involves providing the object only to individuals for which the object is personally needed (Deutsch, 1975).[2] Distribution according to the equality rule gives everyone equal access to the resource. Individuals use one of these rules or a combination of rules to determine fairness outcomes. Despite the abundance of research on distributive justice rules, there is no clear understanding as to when a particular rule is used or which rule is seen as most fair in a given situation (McLean Parks, Conlon, Conlon, & Bontempo, 1999). For instance, the organizational benefit of health insurance for which the same policy is provided to all employees is based on the equality rule, and compensation policies such as pay-for-performance are based on the equity rule. Resource distribution in North America is usually based on the equity rule or the equality rule (Rothausen, Gonzalez, Clarke, & O'Dell, 1998). In contrast, telecommuting policies are sometimes distributed according to the need rule. In sum, distributive justice refers to perceptions and responses regarding outcomes received, which are formed using one of the three distribution rules (Adams, 1965; Deutsch, 1975).

Procedural Justice

Procedural justice refers to the perceptions an employee has regarding *how* the outcomes are distributed (Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Processes are thought to be fair when they are free from bias, consistent, accurate, and correctable and when they allow voice (Greenberg, 1986; Leventhal, 1980). Theoretical work on the dimensions of procedural justice states that when a worker has a voice during a decision-making process or resulting outcome or when decision makers adhere to criteria of a fair process,

[1]A recent investigation into justice types concluded that whereas informational and interpersonal justice can be viewed as separate constructs, there are many areas of overlap (Roch & Shanock, 2006). Following their advice, our definition and use of interactional justice are inclusive of both informational and interactional components.

[2]Needs-based allocation of resources can be based on personal or business needs (e.g., Conlon, Porter, & McLean Parks, 2004). In accordance with the prevailing approach in the justice literature, we focus on personal needs. However, we return to this point in the discussion section where we expand on both types of needs.

procedural fairness has taken place (e.g., Leventhal, 1980). Cropanzano and Greenberg (1997) argue that procedural justice is context-specific and that the importance of certain existing theoretical procedural guidelines changes depending on the specific situation; therefore, procedural justice measures should be modified to fit the particular context of study (Greenberg, 1996). As such, further investigation into various contexts is prudent.

Procedural justice is important for organizational outcomes. Even in situations when the outcome of a process, such as pay, is perceived as unfavorable, people stay committed to their organizations if they perceive the procedures as being fair (Cooper, Dyck, & Frolich, 1992). In sum, employees evaluate the fairness of the decision-making *processes* used to distribute outcomes to determine whether they are free from bias or allow voice.

Interactional Justice

Interactional justice refers to the idea that employees care about the interpersonal treatment received during the enactment of procedures and the information received and take this into account when making fairness assessments (Bies & Moag, 1986). The quality of interactions that exist between the authority and his or her employees is particularly important (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Some argue that interactional justice consists of two types of justice (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Greenberg, 1993). The first type, interpersonal justice, refers to the interactions that take place between the distributor and the receiver, such that the individual feels he or she is treated with dignity and respect by the decision maker (Bies, 1989). The respect shown by a manager to his or her subordinates is an example of interpersonal justice. The second type, informational justice, refers to the quality and timeliness of information received regarding a distributed outcome. For example, if an employee receives specific and timely information, we say that informational justice has taken place (e.g., Bies, 1989; Bobocel & Farrell, 1996). In conclusion, employees pay attention to the interpersonal treatment they receive and the information related to the distribution of outcomes to judge whether interactional fairness has taken place.

Justice Sources

In addition to investigating fairness perceptions categorized by justice type as reviewed above, considering the unfairness source can help in understanding how employees perceive activities within an organization. Work in the area of the multifoci framework has established that it is important to know whom the aggrieved worker thinks is responsible for the unfairness (e.g., their manager, the organization) (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002). The traditionally studied unfairness sources focus on traditional hierarchies such as the relationship between the employer and its representatives and the employees (e.g., Pfeffer, 1997; Porter, Allen, & Angle, 1981). The manager has direct influence over the employee and in most instances has the decision-making power about salaries and benefits. The organization acts as a source of (un)fairness by setting policies and determining the overall organizational decision-making structure. Both organizations and managers have been perceived as the source of unfairness

for both procedural and interactional injustice (Cropanzano & Bryne, 2000; Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002; Malatesta & Byrne, 1997).

More recently, organizational justice researchers have begun investigating coworkers as a source of unfairness (e.g., Lavelle et al., 2007). Early research in this area investigated the role that coworkers play in forming justice perceptions (Goldman & Thatcher, 2001) and how accommodations for some employees, such as those necessary under the Americans with Disabilities Act, may cause perceptions of unfairness by coworkers of the disabled (Colella, 2001). When considering decentralized organizations where employees participate in the decision-making process (e.g., organizations with telecommuters), it becomes increasingly crucial to examine relationships *between employees*. We find theoretical support for this argument in the justice literature, as one building block for justice is consistent treatment of individuals of equal status (Leventhal, 1980). Thus, in this article, we explore why coworkers, in addition to organization and managers, may be sources of unfairness in the multifoci framework.

We know from the literature on third-party observers (e.g., Brockner, 1990; Brockner, Davy, & Carter, 1985; Brockner, Grover, Reed, DeWitt, & O'Malley, 1987) that fairness perceptions may form regardless of whether the unfairness is directed at the focal individual or other individuals in his or her surroundings. While these studies focus on observed injustices (something unfavorable, such as layoffs) of others, to our knowledge there has been very little discussion of employees receiving something perceived as *favorable* that the focal person is *not* receiving (e.g., a nontelecommuter). To complicate matters further, individuals tend to conflate what is fair with what benefits oneself (Babcock & Loewenstein, 1997). This points to a key area of concern in the justice literature, namely the tension that exists between the focus on *consistency* (i.e., procedures are applied consistently to all employees) and the need to be sensitive to individuals' *unique needs* when distributing favorable outcomes. One basic criterion for justice is consistent treatment of individuals of equal status (Leventhal, 1980). As such, inconsistencies among coworkers are likely to engender unfairness perceptions. For instance, some studies show that employees who are single and childless tend to resent their parenting coworkers for utilizing family-friendly policies (see Harris, 1997; Parker & Allen, 2001). One explanation for such "family-friendly backlash" is that employees without access to family-friendly policies experience an inequitable situation (Grandey, 2001; Harris, 1997). Given this, organizations implementing flexible work modes to accommodate individuals' diverse needs may find themselves in a bind, attempting to please those employees wanting consistent treatment and those wanting treatment according to individual needs. This dichotomy surfaced frequently in our interviews and will be discussed throughout the article.

In sum, considering the well-established consequences of unfairness perceptions, it is important to understand how new policies that influence work design, such as telecommuting, affect organizational justice perceptions. As organizations adapt to allow more flexibility for their employees, new fairness issues will arise. To understand the totality of telecommuting's impact on an organization, we need to investigate the fairness perceptions of *all* employees affected by telecommuting. We now provide a brief review of telecommuting and the advantages and drawbacks associated with this policy.

Telecommuting

Working outside the office is certainly not a new idea. Before the industrial revolution, "homework" was carried out near the home in independent establishments and the workers were often self-employed craftsmen. Modern telecommuters, on the other hand, may be employed by an organization and conduct some work activities outside the main organization (Harpaz, 2002). Telecommuting is a human resource benefit that is defined as a policy permitting employees to work away from the office (Davenport & Pearlson, 1998). Telecommuters may be mobile (e.g., work at a client site), work in a satellite office, or work out of their homes (Kurland & Bailey, 1999). The modern telecommuter performs work duties through information and communication technologies, such as computers and the Internet (Belanger, 1999; Nilles, 1994). Several benefits are associated with telecommuting including increased flexibility, increased commitment to the organization, greater job satisfaction, greater productivity on the part of the telecommuter, and an ability to retain and attract employees (e.g., Belanger, 1999; Kurland & Bailey, 1999; Maume, 1991; Youngblood & Chambers-Cook, 1984).

Although telecommuting has benefits for an organization and its employees, it is not without drawbacks. Among the more cited problems are the difficulties of distant management, lack of informal learning and mentoring, and increased communication challenges (Kurland & Bailey, 1999). Below, we utilize organizational justice theory to explain how issues associated with telecommuting can be understood by juxtaposing the types and sources of perceived injustice for two groups of employees, those directly affected (telecommuters) and those indirectly affected (nontelecommuters). First, we discuss the source of unfairness: the organization, the manager, or the coworker. Within each source, we distinguish the justice types: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Where relevant, we use quotes from employees to support our arguments. We begin with perceived unfairness issues from the telecommuters' point of view.

Justice Perceptions and the Telecommuting Context

In the telecommuting context, employees who feel that an unfair event has taken place may feel that distributive, procedural, and interactional justice rules have been violated. As some researchers have argued, procedures and outcomes are intertwined such that the procedures may be perceived as outcomes, or vice versa, depending on the perspective of the observer (e.g., Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Cropanzano & Ambrose, 2001; Roch & Shanock, 2006). Our interviews support this view of intertwined justice types; however, our approach here is to use a quote in the category that it best represents (vs. multiple categories) to maintain clarity.

Perceived Unfairness from the Telecommuters' View

Organization Source—Distributive Justice

For telecommuters, having access to organizational resources and benefits equal to those of nontelecommuters may be a challenge. Some telecommuters feel that the organization

has a duty to provide them with equipment, technology, or other benefits that would be equivalent to what they would receive if they were not telecommuting. One of the organizations participating in this study provided partial monetary reimbursement for Internet access and did not provide hardware such as computers or printers. A telecommuter at this organization said that he charged all the necessities to his personal business since:

> They don't provide [anything]. They actually just provide [an] internet connection; they do reimburse you partial VPN connection.

Another telecommuter whose organization did provide all the hardware and software for all full-time telecommuters was still unsatisfied since the organization did not provide furniture, storage areas, or worker's compensation if anything were to happen to her in her home office. In these situations, telecommuters feel that their outcomes are inadequate for carrying out their work.

Organization Source—Procedural Justice

Kurland and Egan (1999) in their study of telecommuting and fairness perceptions found a significant relationship between telecommuting and procedural justice. Organizations may either have extensive policies regulating issues surrounding telecommuting, or leave these decisions to individual managers. If there are no formal policies dictating how decisions are to be made, inconsistencies in decisions or manager biases, among other things, may contribute to a sense of unfairness. In one of the participating organizations, there was no formal telecommuting policy, which was a cause of distress, as demonstrated in the following quote:

> There are some things that are such in nature that they really require a policy in order to be implemented, officially. I think this [telecommuting] is one of those … I think what a policy does is it takes all of that and presents it in a structured format that can be consistently applied and fairly applied to the company as a whole. It should be something like a health benefit policy; everybody has these options and these are the rules. It should be well communicated and the policy would enable it to be well communicated.

As this quote illustrates, the inconsistent procedures for determining who is allowed to telecommute are perceived as a source of unfairness. As Lind and Tyler (1988) argue, individuals want to have a voice in the processes that affect outcomes.

Additionally, telecommuters may draw the short stick when it comes time for promotions. In one organization loose telecommuting guidelines had been established. A concern among telecommuters at this organization was the fact that the lack of formal procedures might potentially impact promotions to leadership positions. These telecommuters' concerns are an example of anticipatory injustice (Shapiro & Kirkman, 1999) whereby employees' current perceptions are influenced by injustices that may occur in the future.

Organization Source—Interactional Justice

Interactional justice is mainly thought of as taking place between individuals, such as between the manager and the employee. However, organizations may at times need to

justify their behavior as fair (Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993). Employees often personify their employing organizations, developing a common attitude regarding "the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being" (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990: p. 51). For a formal human resource policy to be implemented successfully, both formal organizational support and informal organizational support are of utmost importance. The organization may have formal policies in place but may not support managers in following these policies, leading employees to view treatment by the organization as unfair. Employees we interviewed expressed that when a new telecommuting policy was established by their organization, the organization was perceived as insincere and untrustworthy as it seemed to formally support the policy while informally making it difficult to access. In such an instance, the organization is the authority figure ultimately responsible for enacting the policy. By not communicating in an entirely truthful and sincere manner with the employees, the organization was seen as violating interactional justice. Generally, implementing new policies is viewed as a good thing for employees, but by not explaining the policies clearly, employees may perceive them as negative events.

Manager Source—Distributive Justice

Managerial discretion concerning implementation of a telecommuting policy has implications for all three types of justice. For telecommuters, receiving valued organizational resources (distributive justice) may be more challenging than for nontelecommuters. In organizations, rewards are often based on performance evaluations and assessments of employees' levels of productivity. When employees work outside the office, traditional ways of controlling outputs are inadequate as control shifts from the manager to the employee (Helms & Raiszadeh, 2002). As one manager stated:

> From a management standpoint I think not knowing for sure if you're getting 40 hours [from somebody is a drawback].

As a result, rewards may be distributed based on perceived productivity by the manager, leaving the telecommuter with fewer rewards than his or her actual productivity level would dictate. As with many jobs where the outcome is not easily determined, managers of telecommuters might need to use different assessments to determine a telecommuter's productivity because managers are unable to see telecommuters working (e.g., Baruch, 2001). If no such assessments exist, telecommuters may then receive a smaller bonus or a smaller increase in salary than they would had they not been telecommuting. In this instance, the equity rule is violated (Gilliland & Paddock, 2005), creating a sense of unfairness.

In addition to economic outcomes, socio-emotional rewards hold great value for employees. In their experimental studies of how managers divided hypothetical rewards among participants, Martin and Harder (1994) found that socio-emotional rewards were most often distributed equally, while monetary rewards were allocated equitably. This suggests that while employees perceive it fair to allocate economic rewards in different amounts among employees, one should not do so with socio-emotional rewards. Since

telecommuters do not have face-to-face interactions with their managers to the same extent as their nontelecommuting colleagues, they may miss out on socio-emotional rewards, such as spontaneous praise for a job well done. At one organization, employees celebrated successfully completed projects by having a team dinner. As one telecommuter said:

> I was sad that I was missing out on these dinners. My manager sent me gift certificates but I think it would have been fairer had he paid for me to physically attend the dinner.

Manager Source—Procedural Justice

Organizations have gone to great lengths to aid employees by providing family-friendly benefits (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Breaugh & Frye, 2008; Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brockwood, & Colton, 2005), such as telecommuting. However, research shows that the effects of such benefits, albeit well intended, tend to be quite marginal when they are not accompanied by informal support from supervisors (Behson, 2005; Rooney & Gottlieb, 2007; Thompson, Jahn, Kopelman, & Prottas, 2004).

Given this, managers are viewed as fair when they act in a procedurally-just fashion, such as when making decisions regarding telecommuting accessibility. In contrast, employees with managers who do not administer these policies in a procedurally fair way are less likely to view the manager as fair. The employee quoted below discusses the variation between managers and how these differences influence the procedures used for deciding on promotions:

> I also want to clarify what ramifications telecommuting has for an individual professionally. For example, I have interest in pursuing leadership. If someone above me somewhere along the way sees that I like to telecommute, I would really hate it if that impacted my career plans … and I also feel quite cheated if another person's manager saw telecommuting as a great thing and had no qualms about promoting people who are telecommuters. I would probably classify it as the one main issue I have with the [telecommuting] program: the possible inconsistency.

Managers who do allow telecommuting may create different unfairness concerns. Like previous findings, the telecommuters we interviewed often quoted the common phrase "out of sight, out of mind" when describing how they felt about how their physical absence may impact their opportunities for promotions or rewards (Baruch, 2000). This problem was echoed by both the telecommuters and managers in our study. One manager admitted that while it was never said out loud, telecommuters had a smaller chance of being promoted than did nontelecommuters. A telecommuter at the same organization was open about his concern regarding possibilities for promotion as a telecommuter:

> We run into situations where some leaders have said their subordinates would be more eligible for advancement if they did not telecommute.

Finally, managers often give employees a formal opportunity to raise their concerns. Procedures are perceived as more fair when employees are allowed to express their views and they are allowed voice (e.g., Van den Bos, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1996), such as when

employees participate in self-ratings during their performance evaluation. There are also informal opportunities for expressing concerns or questions, which telecommuters, by being physically absent, miss out on. Not surprisingly, some managers do not keep their telecommuting subordinates informed or simply forget about them:

> I'm mixed [in how I feel about supervising telecommuters]. I know that it's very beneficial for some people and I feel that some people can do it effectively. The one individual that I had, I know is an extremely hard worker—probably works harder at home than they would even at work. But my feeling is that it wouldn't work for everybody. I found it somewhat, personally myself, difficult to deal with because they're not there. It's like they're not there. So, there definitely is some adjusting and I admit to forgetting about them [the telecommuters] at times.

The telecommuters' informal voice is reduced, leading them to have less say in resource allocations and a greater perception of unfairness (Leventhal, 1980).

Manager Source—Interactional Justice

In this category, interactional justice refers to the perceived fairness of the information provided to, and treatment of, the employee by his/her manager. Telecommuters communicate with their managers exclusively over media such as e-mail and phone on their telecommuting days. Since the telecommuters are not in the managers' visual field, the personal contacts between the employee and management are reduced; as a consequence, the quality and amount of feedback are likely to suffer (Shamir & Salomon, 1985). When interacting via electronic communication, interactional unfairness perceptions ensue owing to the reduction in the perceived adequacy of the message (e.g., Culnan & Markus, 1987; Shapiro, Buttner, & Barry, 1994). This is consistent with other research suggesting that richer media are preferable for conveying information (Lengel & Daft, 1988). Several telecommuters emphasized the difficulties with communication taking place exclusively via phone and computer technology. It was expressed that misunderstandings were common. For example, one manager stated:

> There's a lot of non-organized communication. One of those things is talking face-to-face with your employees that you're working with and making sure what they're doing. There's a little less touchy-feely I suppose when you're [communicating] over the phone or an e-mail. And there's many times, and I can't stress that enough, that e-mail communication does not give subtle nuances of maybe what you're trying to convey. I know that if you put it all in caps, people know you're shouting but, um, you know… if you don't choose your words correctly, you know, it depends on the mood of the person when they're writing it, when they're reading it. It can be very subtle and I know that, in particular, the person that I supervise… He takes the time and analyzes when an e-mail is sent and when he sends one. I, on the other hand, I get swamped with e-mail. I am very much scanning, looking for key things. If somebody says something that's contentious I may miss it … It's not a substitute [for face-to-face communication].

Telecommuters also feel that communication with their managers is circumvented, regarding both personal and work-related issues.

> [Regarding] personal issues, [communication] is probably a little more difficult. You know, it is important to look at someone, especially if you're talking about something specifically personal. It's not impossible but more difficult. [Regarding] work-related issues, [communication is] not greatly more difficult. Maybe a little.

Communication is important for a working relationship to function, and when communication is limited or strained, interactional unfairness may be perceived.

Coworker Source—Distributive Justice

According to Foa and Foa's resource theory, any type of commodity—whether material or symbolic—can act as a resource to be passed from one individual to another (Foa & Foa, 1980). One type of organizational resource that has not received much attention in the justice literature, but becomes crucially important in a telecommuting, knowledge-based context, is information (documents and other information sources). Without information, work cannot be completed. A physically absent telecommuter is not able to partake in the casual information sharing that takes place in an organization.

This problem of not distributing information is more prevalent for organizations whose culture is informal (''last-minute'' type of culture), where meetings are called spontaneously and little or no organization regarding dissemination of relevant paperwork occurs. The lack of such information access was evident in more than one of the organizations included in our study and was mentioned by several of the interviewees. Even when nontelecommuters remembered to call a telecommuter so he or she could teleconference into an impromptu meeting, there was rarely time to distribute germane documents in advance. These telecommuters felt that the lack of access to relevant, time-sensitive information for meetings in particular, but also in general for completing projects and satisfying clients, was a big concern. Telecommuters held their coworkers responsible for not providing them with the relevant documents.

Coworker Source—Procedural Justice

Although organizations have formal decision power with respect to information dissemination, they may not have policies in place to dictate information management and sharing among employees. Especially in a project environment, coworkers are ultimately responsible for accurate and timely information sharing. In turn, they may be perceived as the unfairness source if they disregard information distribution policies, whether intentional or not. In addition, coworkers may not be vigilant enough in making sure that the telecommuter is a part of important events, such as meetings or debriefings. This quote by a nontelecommuter illustrates this point:

> There were many times when we [non-telecommuters] did scheduling and maybe somebody [a telecommuter] was invited to a meeting, we didn't call them, and there would be really no way for an individual to call into a department meeting, say, and listen. Many, many times that happened. So that person is just not hearing [important information].

Information distribution etiquette is likely to be affected by internal policies. One employee spoke fondly of her organization's internal policy whereby access to the majority of needed information was electronic. Therefore, this employee did not hold

her coworkers responsible for information distribution. The difference between this organization and the one discussed in the previous paragraph is the extent to which coworkers controlled access to required information. When access to valuable information is controlled by coworkers, perceptions of exclusion and procedural unfairness are likely to ensue.

Coworker Source—Interactional Justice

Although telecommuting may be officially endorsed by the organization, it does not guarantee that all involved are enthused about the policy. Nontelecommuters may shoulder additional burdens owing to their telecommuting peers' absence from the office. Resentment of this increased workload may lead to lower levels of respect toward telecommuters by nontelecommuters. The examples described above also impact interactional fairness perceptions from the telecommuter's point of view. When forgotten or left out of meetings, a problem that was reiterated numerous times, the telecommuters we interviewed interpreted this as a personal slight or as a sign that their coworkers did not value or respect them.

Please see Table 1 for an abbreviated overview of the above discussion.

Most research on telecommuting has focused on the impact of telecommuting on telecommuters and their managers. However, there are many employees who choose not to, or are not provided, the opportunity to telecommute. Despite their nontelecommuting status, these employees and their work perceptions are affected by telecommuting policies and the fact that they work with telecommuters. Previous research has not addressed the extent to which nontelecommuters' perceptions of telecommuting may offset some of the perceived benefits of this human resource policy. We now turn to this discussion, following the same structure as above.

Perceived Unfairness from the NonTelecommuters' View

Organization Source—Distributive Justice

Nontelecommuters often perceive that telecommuters receive benefits that nontelecommuters do not receive. A recurring issue during the interviews was whether the organization or the telecommuter should pay for the telecommuters' home work stations. One argument for providing a home office for the telecommuter is that it is a resource allocation based on needs. After all, the telecommuter needs to have sufficient tools to do his or her job. However, being given the opportunity to telecommute is often seen as a reward in itself. A manager affirms this perception:

> I would hate for it to be looked at as a reward, because then there are going to be people that will be upset because they don't get that reward although that's going to happen anyway, you know. You know there's going to be certain people that we're not going to allow to telecommute because of their job.

By giving the telecommuter benefits in addition to what is already perceived as a reward, nontelecommuters perceive unfairness. An employee who had been telecommuting for about 5 months stated:

Table 1
Examples of Fairness Violations Perceived by Telecommuters Using a Justice Type by Source Framework

	Justice type		
(Un)fairness source	Distributive	Procedural	Interactional
Organization	Feels that organization should provide them resources equal to what the nontelecommuters have. May miss out on rewards, such as promotions.	Lack of formal policy regulating telecommuting-related issues.	The organization may informally support managers to act against these formal policies.
Manager	Economic rewards may be less, owing to physical absence. Miss out on socio-emotional rewards.	Manager allows employees' access to the telecommuting policy in a biased, inconsistent way. Lack of informal voice during resource allocations.	Communication media increase unfairness perceptions owing to inadequacy of media to convey message.
Coworker (nontelecommuter)	Limited access to information.	Nontelecommuters do not distribute information.	Nontelecommuters resent the increased workload that may come with working with telecommuters; they may treat their fellow telecommuters with less respect.

> They've given us all the technology tools that we need so I can connect and get a good response. There are little glitches here and there but by and large, I think I get done what I needed to do. We have our entire office suite available through [our office system] and then I have an ambulator so I can get to any mainframe application which is programmer/programming. And then, a phone system to be able to forward the phone.

Nontelecommuters feel strongly about not being given such benefits. One of the nontelecommuters considered requesting the opportunity to telecommute just so she would receive the same material benefits as the telecommuters. She considered lying (i.e., requesting to telecommute without a legitimate reason) to even out the perceived unfair outcome.

In addition to perceiving the telecommuters as benefiting materially, access to telecommuting is itself seen as a reward since it allows for a flexible work schedule. A consistent finding throughout our interviews was the notion that only hard workers should be allowed to telecommute and thus have flexible schedules. In this instance, the flexible schedule is distributed based on the equity rule of justice; the better performers get to enjoy the benefit. As long as outcomes are distributed based on merit, there are no distributive justice violations. However, justice violations develop when not all hard workers are allowed to telecommute or when employees who believe they are hard workers

are not permitted to telecommute. When it comes to an organizational-level policy, individual managers and employees often have little or no control over which designated positions are covered by a certain policy. In many organizations, only certain positions lend themselves to telecommuting, and thus, only the high performers within certain jobs may be considered for telecommuting. Employees with a personal need to telecommute (e.g., having to care for an elderly parent) may have their telecommuting request denied because of their position. As a result, there may be violation of all three distributive justice rules: equity, equality, and need. This is consistent with research showing that different rules (e.g., equity vs. equality) may be applied to allocations of burdens and benefits (Sondak, Neale, & Pinkley, 1995).

Organization Source—Procedural Justice

Policies are generally perceived to be a benefit to those allowed to use them (Grover & Crooker, 1995). However, when the benefit is out of reach for some employees, they are likely to perceive the policy regulating the benefit distribution process as unfair. As discussed, it is common for a telecommuting policy to dictate which positions are eligible for remote work. Because the organization is responsible for creating and implementing a telecommuting policy, the organization is the source of unfairness. As emphasized by a nontelecommuting employee:

> Management needs to have consistent guidelines [set by the organization] or there may be a skewed view from employees. Different managers have different styles so there is some inconsistency. It is important that there is consistency.

To ensure consistent treatment in these issues, policies should be created by the organization.

Organization Source—Interactional Justice

It is not uncommon for organizations to formally implement a given human resource policy without informing the entire workforce. While the organization usually informs all parties who are directly affected by a policy, it may not inform indirectly affected parties. Several employees at one of the organizations where we conducted interviews felt strongly about this. In many instances, they worked on teams where some of the members suddenly started to telecommute. This happened without any information or training for the nontelecommuters, who to a large extent had to modify their own working styles to accommodate the telecommuters. It was felt that the organization had an obligation to inform and train *everybody* who would be affected by the newly implemented policy, not only the telecommuters and managers. In this instance, the organization is the source of interactional injustice because the organization did not inform the indirectly affected individuals of the policy and did not explain the procedures in a systematic manner.

Manager Source—Distributive Justice

Several distributive justice issues are bound to occur for nontelecommuters with managers as the source. A manager supervising both telecommuters and nontelecommuters

may discriminate in terms of workload, favoring the telecommuter. Physical presence is a prerequisite for not being ''out of sight, out of mind.'' While telecommuters may not want to be out of mind when it comes time for performance evaluations and subsequent rewards, when it is time to hand out work tasks, telecommuters may benefit from their absence. Although it is unlikely that managers intentionally distribute major work tasks in an unbalanced fashion, the nontelecommuters we spoke with felt that simple, menial tasks, such as preparing for a meeting, writing up a short memo, or calling a customer for service feedback, were more often assigned to individuals physically in the office. All these little tasks add up, eating away large amounts of time for the nontelecommuter. The telecommuter meanwhile can use this ''extra time'' to complete their work.

Furthermore, where managers have the definitive authority to determine who has access to human resource policies such as telecommuting, unfairness issues regarding restricted access to the human resource policy may appear. As such, being given the opportunity to telecommute may be viewed as completely arbitrary, depending on the preferences of the manager. While the particulars of these preferences may vary—for example, one manager does not support telecommuting in theory, while another finds it difficult to manage a telecommuter—the outcome is the same. Namely, the employee is denied access to the benefit, a violation of distributive justice. In a severe case, one manager may discriminate among his or her employees. This situation is particularly serious considering the salience of telecommuting to the employees denied the option to telecommute. Throughout our interviews, it was emphasized that managers had a multitude of management styles, making it hard for the employees to understand why some were allowed to telecommute and others were not. The existing inconsistency and biases among managers contributed to unfairness perceptions.

Manager Source—Procedural Justice

Human resource policies are often implemented in a top-down fashion, with the organization establishing the formal policy and the immediate manager making the determination as to whether an employee will be allowed access to the policy. Oftentimes, managers deny employees access to such policies because they are concerned about the performance of the group they manage. Therefore, these managers may not be able to provide the neutrality crucial to procedural justice (Tyler & Lind, 1992). The employees may perceive that the manager has included an undesirable bias into the decision-making process (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997). The nontelecommuters we interviewed did mention that managers differ in terms of feeling favorably toward telecommuting. While most managers indicated that they feel generally positive toward telecommuting, some are not, such as the manager who stated, ''In general, I don't like it [telecommuting].'' As a result, who the manager is may determine whether or not employees may telecommute. Even if a manager generally endorses telecommuting, he or she may not do so in all cases, creating an inconsistency leading to procedural unfairness perceptions.

Manager Source—Interactional Justice

Employees who are denied the opportunity to telecommute may feel that their manager is not treating them with dignity and respect. Interpersonally, an employee may feel that

the manager did not properly justify the decision as to why he or she was not allowed to telecommute. In interviews with nontelecommuters, we found that a common rationale for why they were not allowed to telecommute was "your position is one that does not qualify for the telecommuting option." This was seen as an inadequate explanation as other employees in seemingly "telecommuting-unfriendly" job positions (e.g., project manager, systems analyst) were allowed to telecommute.

Coworker Source—Distributive Justice

When a telecommuter is out of the office for any length of time, there is an increased workload on the part of their nontelecommuting coworkers. This increased workload occurs for two reasons. First, the nontelecommuters have to make extra efforts to work with the employee who is not in the office. For example, nontelecommuters must ensure that the telecommuter has copies of the notes to be distributed at a meeting beforehand or to remember to check the availability of the telecommuter (on his or her calendar) before scheduling meetings. Second, the nontelecommuters shoulder additional responsibilities because they are physically present, such as answering questions and responding to situations that would normally have been dealt with by the telecommuter.

The concern of nontelecommuting coworkers having to exert extra effort is illustrated by this passage from a manager, who speaks about the impact on his subordinates' workgroup owing to one of the members being a telecommuter: "[Coworkers] around him have to call or email him, when they instead could have walked to his cubicle." An employee, who expressed that he would never want to work with a telecommuter, articulated his concern:

> I would have like a fear, I guess, that I would be pulled in to cover some of their [the telecommuters'] responsibilities because they [the managers] would want someone of my level to answer questions and they [the telecommuters] are not perceived to be available even though they may be only a phone call away but not physically there.

Another nontelecommuting employee, who worked closely with a telecommuter, echoed this sentiment by saying that he (the nontelecommuting employee) was always "too available" and that he "helps out a lot." Not only did the nontelecommuters raise this concern, but the telecommuters themselves acknowledged that some of their workload was shifted to their nontelecommuting peers as illustrated in these quotes:

> I do have a bit more of an isolated work environment and I'm less prone to what I'll call "stop by interruptions." I think [if] people need to [make] the extra [effort], you know, raising the other finger to pick up the phone and dial a number or to make some clicks, they are not as quick to do that. Or they will talk to someone else instead.

> It does impose a little bit of extra effort on my peers and on my co-workers. They often have to accommodate the fact that I'm telecommuting, which I think is difficult.

Increased workload for telecommuters' coworkers not only comes from the assumption that a telecommuter is inaccessible, because there are times when the telecommuter really is unreachable. This is more frequent in organizations not requiring the telecommuters to

keep a working schedule consistent with the office schedule. Here, a nontelecommuter describes how the organization should have specific policies for telecommuters:

> … but just make it the policy if there are young children at home that they still go to daycare, that they're just not in the room with the people because they should be working, they should treat it like their home office. That's something and when they are working they have defined work hours, they don't work an hour and then go do something and work another hour but they have more work defined hours [so] that they can be contacted, not that they always have to be in there but for the most part they should generally be available during these set of hours. That I think would be helpful, it would make it more successful because then people know they can get a hold of them.

This quote exemplifies the need for the telecommuters to be available during office hours and to do their fair share of the workload. The increased workload experienced by nontelecommuters violates the equity rule. When nontelecommuters have to shoulder additional burdens (they experience increased input) and the telecommuters have fewer burdens (they experience decreased input), inequity results because the outputs (e.g., salaries, bonuses) are not adjusted for the change in inputs.

Coworker Source—Procedural Justice

When working with telecommuters, a majority of communication and information sharing transpires using computers and the Internet. Thus, it is important that the telecommuters have good organizational skills, good planning capabilities, and the ability to ensure that work is done within specified time limits (e.g., Belanger, 1999). When employees fail to meet their work obligations, there is different recourse depending on whether the coworker telecommutes. For instance, if a report is due, a nontelecommuting coworker can always drop by the office of other nontelecommuting coworkers to get the report. However, if the person responsible for the report is a telecommuter and he or she has not provided the report, the option of informally stopping by his or her office no longer exists. Rather, the communication and materials transfer must occur using technology. In situations like these, it is important that telecommuters realize their responsibility for the timely and accurate distribution of work-related information and materials. In instances where the telecommuter fails to provide timely information, the nontelecommuter may feel procedural injustice. That is, the nontelecommuter has little control over when or how the telecommuter chooses to share pertinent work-related information and materials.

Coworker Source—Interactional Justice

Among the many aspects of employee relationships is favor exchange. Flynn and Brockner (2003) examined the commitment of the relationship between givers and receivers. These authors found that receivers cared more about how the favors were performed (interactional justice), while the givers cared more about the favorability of the outcomes (distributive justice). Whereas Flynn and Brockner explicitly stated that "both givers and receivers prefer to engage in favor exchange in ways that strengthen their relationship with one another" (2003: p. 1034), this assumption does not hold in a telecommuting

context. In a traditional work setting, employees may have some freedom to choose with whom to enter into exchange relationships or, at the very least, have some control over how they interact with others. However, a nontelecommuter working on a task or project with a telecommuter has a forced exchange relationship and reduced control over how or when interactions take place. So, while employees in general often request favors for tasks and resources that they themselves cannot pursue (Blau, 1964), telecommuters request favors—by their absence—to which the nontelecommuters must comply. Specifically, the nontelecommuter may feel that she is completing work for the telecommuter, simply because the telecommuter is not present to do so himself. In addition, telecommuters face a host of logistical issues in terms of communication and information sharing, and the nontelecommuter is obliged to deal with these issues. In this sense, the nontelecommuter and the telecommuter engage in a forced exchange relationship, dictated by higher-order organizational goals. The resulting interpersonal treatment may leave the nontelecommuter feeling disrespected and devalued.

Please see Table 2 for an abbreviated overview of this discussion.

Summary and Implications

In this article, we utilize organizational justice theory to shed additional light on the practice of telecommuting, by considering the importance of considering coworkers as a source of unfairness and discussing fairness implications from the point of view of both the telecommuter and the nontelecommuter. Considering coworkers as a source of unfairness is important because studying context-specific unfairness situations exposes unique aspects of organizational justice and allows the field to assess the generalizability of justice theory (Greenberg, 1990, 1996). By contrasting the perceptions of telecommuters with those of nontelecommuters, we provide additional insight into the realm of effects, both direct and indirect, of telecommuting policies on different targets. Also, although not originally intended to do so, the interviews provide us with insight into implications for all forms of teamwork, and especially distributed teamwork. We discuss the theoretical implications of each of these contributions below as well as provide some direction for future research. We then discuss the practical implications of our theoretical argument.

Theoretical Implications

Joining the chorus of researchers suggesting that employees distinguish between different sources of unfairness, (e.g., Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobecel, & Rupp, 2001; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002), we found through our interviews with telecommuters, their managers, and peers that fairness violations were perceived as coming from coworkers. Future work using this framework might consider other sources of unfairness. For example, one additional unfairness source, which we did not include in the current article but which could be investigated in the future, is a family member.[3] This could extend the

[3]We thank a reviewer for this suggestion.

Table 2
Examples of Fairness Violations Perceived by Nontelecommuters Using a Justice Type by Source Framework

	Justice type		
(Un)fairness source	Distributive	Procedural	Interactional
Organization	The organization provides the telecommuters with hardware and software for use in their home offices.	Formal policy stating that only some positions are open to telecommuting.	Implementing a policy directed at a small portion of the workforce, while not fully informing employees indirectly affected about the changes.
Manager	The manager assigns a larger workload to the nontelecommuter as a function of the telecommuter being perceived as unavailable.	Managers often determine who can telecommute; this process may be perceived as arbitrary, especially if a manager is inconsistent or if there are inconsistencies among managers.	By disregarding some individuals' needs (by letting only some employees telecommute), employees feel that managers are not treating them with dignity and respect.
Coworker (telecommuter)	The nontelecommuter has to make extra efforts to keep the telecommuter in the loop. The telecommuter (by being absent) places additional burdens on the nontelecommuter who then has extra responsibilities.	Telecommuters fail to distribute work-related information and materials.	Telecommuter and nontelecommuters engage in a forced exchange relationship, which may lead to disrespectful interpersonal treatment by the telecommuter.

issues of unfairness for the telecommuter into the home domain (e.g., Mikula, 1998). For instance, family members may resent the telecommuter when she chooses to go into work rather than working from home. The resentful family member may perceive the additional commuting time as time better spent on household or family tasks. Children may also perceive unfairness by sensing that a telecommuting parent is not actively engaged in home issues when working from home. For example, in their article on choice of dress by female employees, Rafaeli, Dutton, Harquail, and Mackie-Lewis (1997) quote a child saying "Mom, change those clothes. I hate it when you wear a suit at home. It's like you're not really here (p. 9)."

In addition to illustrating the importance of coworkers as an unfairness source in the context of telecommuting, we also considered the effects of telecommuting on those who are excluded from using such a policy (the nontelecommuters as recipients of unfairness). This is especially crucial as organizations today utilize a diverse range of alternative work arrangements and family-friendly policies that change the landscape of

employee interactions. Traditional human resource policies, such as allocations of bonus pay or promotions, have been refined over the years and these programs are carefully managed and communicated. In contrast, human resource policies intended to increase flexibility for the organization and its employees—such as telecommuting—have generally not been implemented as effectively. As organizations wrestle with policies that promote alternative work arrangements, they will undoubtedly face issues of unfairness by those excluded from alternative work arrangements. For instance, in their sample of managers, Barham, Gottlieb, and Kelloway (1998) found that managers were more willing to allow women and those with child-care responsibilities access to family-friendly policies (such as job sharing, leave options, and part-time work hours) than men or employees without children. This finding points to unresolved unfairness issues in organizations. Future studies should investigate the extent to which such unfairness perceptions exist when implementing new policies as well as the extent to which these perceptions may ultimately harm an organization.

From the perspective of nontelecommuters, employees who telecommute out of a business need may also be a source of unfairness (in addition to the organization, managers, and employees who have asked to telecommute because of a personal need).[3] It is conceivable that an employee who asks to telecommute because of a personal need will be more likely to work out of a home office. However, employees who have been assigned to a client site or who work in a satellite office (Kurland & Bailey, 1999) do so because of a business need. Anecdotally, telecommuters who bear the brunt of the telecommuting backlash are those who have asked to telecommute because of a personal need. However, telecommuters working out of client sites or satellite offices may still be perceived as being provided with additional resources (e.g., equipment), flexibility, and less ''busy work'' than traditional employees. In one of the rare studies investigating the effects of working in different locations, Morganson, Major, Oborn, Verive, and Heelan (2010) found that nontelecommuters and telecommuters working from home perceived higher levels of work–life balance support and job satisfaction than telecommuters working from satellite or client offices. However, in the Morganson et al.'s (2010) study, all employees included in the study were able to choose their work location; thus, issues of personal versus business needs were not relevant. This study did not investigate perceptions of injustice or unfairness, but from the perspective of a telecommuter, working out of a satellite or client office may have more drawbacks than benefits. Given the void of research on this issue, additional research on this topic is encouraged.

Telecommuting as a work mode has gained acceptance and support in organizations. However, acceptance has been slower than initially predicted. Using an organizational justice approach to evaluate employees' experiences with telecommuting provides an explanation for why more organizations are not implementing telecommuting as a flexible work mode. Utilizing an organizational justice approach, and specifically the multifoci framework, allows use of theory to understand the mixed telecommuting outcomes that have been reported in the telecommuting literature. For example, study findings report that the relationship between telecommuting and satisfaction ranges from positive to negative to no effect (Ahrentzen, 1990; Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998; Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999; Standen, Daniels, & Lamond, 1999). Looking at the perceptions of

unfairness from the sources we discussed (organization, manager, coworker) as a moderator of the telecommuting–satisfaction relationship may help to explain the mixed results.

Although telecommuting has traditionally been viewed as a benefit, our interviews suggest that this may not necessarily be so. Human resource policies are bound to have implications for individuals other than those using the policy, such as the employees working with the policy users. In the case of telecommuting, nontelecommuters may have no choice but to work with the telecommuters (i.e., they are in a forced exchange relationship), and this may influence the nature of their job. Thus, organizational justice researchers must also consider multiple targets of unfairness when understanding the effects of policy decisions. This is consistent with research that has looked at survivors of downsizing policies (Brockner, Grover, Reed, & DeWitt, 1992; Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Martin, 1995; Weisenfeld et al., 1999). These researchers found that even though layoff decisions had not directly affected the survivors of layoffs, the justice perceptions of the survivors indirectly affected the organization. Thus, taking nontelecommuters' perceptions into account may help explain why telecommuting has not grown at the rate originally predicted. Future research should investigate all targets of injustice, including those that are indirectly impacted.

Finally, the discussion in this article has theoretical implications for justice perceptions of individuals in distributed and collocated teams. As organizations move to a less hierarchical environment (Donnellon, 1996) and individuals are forced to work together to complete assignments (LePine, 2003), it is imperative that justice researchers acknowledge coworkers' informal power. As our interviews indicated, one's ability to control information and information access has effects on perceived unfairness. Without information, employees are not able to complete their assigned projects and work tasks. Access to certain information may be restricted by organizational policies, leaving employees without needed data. In other situations, individuals may restrict access. Peers and managers may fail to share and distribute needed information in a timely manner. Under these conditions, it is critical to acknowledge that information and information access are crucial elements of perceived justice and that forced exchange relationships contain power elements that influence justice perceptions. These two points are critical to understand in all teamwork settings, but are even more critical when working in a distributed environment as control over information becomes more salient. Much research is needed to investigate these issues.

Practical Implications

Organizations implementing flexible human resource policies, such as telecommuting, need to consider training for both telecommuters and nontelecommuters. This is especially crucial for interdependent teams where at least one of the members is telecommuting. Training for both telecommuters and nontelecommuters should include appropriate use of technology for collaborating effectively, the need to be clear in written communication, and the need to be responsive. Telecommuters should be required to forward their office phone to their home or cell phone; update shared calendar

functions indicating work hours, availability, and contact information; and provide specific statements regarding their handling of contacts. For example, telecommuters should post a statement on their calendar for telecommuting days that reflects their ability to respond (e.g., ''I will check and respond to every email within 2 hr of receipt, and return all phone calls within 1 hr of receipt''). This does not mean that the telecommuter must act immediately on the content of the e-mail or phone call; only that she acknowledges receipt of the communication. Telecommuters must also learn to be proactive so that they stay current on projects. Nontelecommuters should also receive training for things as simple as understanding that they should *never* hesitate to contact telecommuters if they are scheduled for work, regardless of where they are. Other aspects of training for nontelecommuters should include immediate notification of impromptu meetings to telecommuters; assembly and distribution of important documents for meetings to telecommuters; and assignment of someone to keep telecommuters apprised of all relevant information concerning a project.

In addition, organizations should implement policies regulating distribution procedures—not only by managers, but by coworkers as well. Today's turbulent and competitive knowledge environment puts much power and decision-making authority in the hands of ''regular employees.'' By considering possible justice violations ahead of time, organizations can be proactive and write policies that will require the effective distribution of required resources by all employees. Policies should also clarify that if nontelecommuters shoulder an additional burden of work by accommodating telecommuters, this should be documented and the nontelecommuters should be compensated.

Given the surprising frequency of the needs-based rule for distributing resources (McLean Parks et al., 1999), it might behoove organizations to ponder on whose behalf the telecommuting is occurring. Organizations should note the potential for telecommuting based on personal needs to be viewed by nontelecommuters as unfair, and telecommuting owing to business needs to be viewed as fair. That is, when the telecommuter chooses to telecommute, issues of fairness—such as an uneven workload unfavorable to the nontelecommuter—might be more likely. On the other hand, when the telecommuter is being asked or told by the corporation to telecommute, it is part of a job requirement and as such may not be seen as unfair. Taking these potential unfairness issues into account may help organizations craft fair policies, as well as making sure that organizational communication regarding telecommuting policies is appropriate.

In this article, we have focused on some of the downsides of telecommuting. Whenever a policy is implemented for some of an organization's employees, the potential for unfairness perceptions arises. However, prior anecdotal and empirical data have made it clear that many benefits of telecommuting exist. Our discussions with the interviewees mentioned in this article confirmed those benefits. It is not our intention to dissuade companies and organizations from implementing telecommuting policies. We just caution them to do so with a more complete understanding of the implications of telecommuting for all employees. To that end, we feel that this article presents a comprehensive framework of organizational justice and its impact on organizations as they implement one such flexible work option, telecommuting. Future research on organizational justice and telecommuting should further investigate this framework and test it in different contexts.

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