Family-Friendly Policies:
Organizational Justice Perceptions of Need-Based Allocations

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Abstract

This chapter will explore the issue of work-family conflict and the proposed solution of family-friendly policies. Fairness issues are considered a major barrier to the success of family-friendly policies. Fairness issues arise because family benefits are need-based allocations, while most organizations function with equity- or equality-based reward systems. This issue is explored using justice theory and research. Recommendations for organizations which apply justice theory to family-friendly policies will be proposed.
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Any human resource policy has certain functions: creating or modifying procedures, distributing resources, and regulating behavior (Zimmerman, 1995). Family-friendly policies are no exception. Policies are adopted which create new procedures, distribute resources such as flextime and paid leave, and establish norms about how the organization feels about family needs. The organizational justice literature has much theory and research on how fairness is involved in processes, distribution, and norms. As such, the justice literature is particularly relevant to our understanding of how well family-friendly policies “work.”

This chapter will explore a new issue in organizations: how to fairly adopt and implement policies which are, by nature, not given to everyone and not based on performance. First, the problem of work-family conflict is introduced, to present the rationale for the policies in the first place. Then, family-friendly policies are discussed in terms of their different manifestations and organizational and individual outcomes. Next, justice theory is briefly reviewed and applied to family-friendly policies. This chapter concludes with recommendations for family-friendly policies’ processes and allocations which consider the justice literature.

Work-Family Conflict: The Presenting Problem

“Workers with families are torn by competing forces because their family responsibilities are also demanding. Company culture frequently tells them to leave their family troubles at home. This is frequently impossible today because there is seldom anyone at home.” -James J. Renier, Chairman and CEO of Honeywell, Inc.¹

The changing demographics of our workforce is by now a familiar topic to those interested in organizations. In 1992, 58% of U.S. women populated the workforce (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993), and by 2000, almost 80% of women (between 25 and 54 years) will be paid U.S. employees (National Commission on Working Women, 1989). What this means is that
more couples are juggling both work and family responsibilities (Gupta & Jenkins, 1985). In scientific and popular journals, this balancing act is referred to as work-family conflict.

One study reported that over 75% of the married women surveyed experienced conflict between work and family every day (Wortman, Biernat & Lang, 1991). While having multiple roles, such as employee and mother, has been associated with positive outcomes like higher self-esteem and life satisfaction (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Barnett & Marshall, 1992; Roskies & Carrier, 1994), the lack of time and energy to perform both roles successfully is associated with detrimental outcomes. These outcomes include the individuals’ health and psychological state, as well as organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, work tension, burnout, absenteeism, and turnover intentions (e.g., Adams, King, & King, 1996; Burke, 1989; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1991; Goff, Mount, & Jamison, 1990; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983). For example, having to pick up a sick child at day care can result in absenteeism from work. Also, child care needs are a reason cited for distraction from work productivity (Mize & Freeman, 1989). Since economic demands may require both spouses to work, it is unlikely that this inter-role conflict will just go away. Thus, employees are looking to corporations to provide means of coping with these multiple demands.

Family Friendly-Policies: The Proposed Solution

One proposed method of coping with the prevalent issue of work-family conflict is the adoption of “family-friendly” policies. These are policies or programs designed to meet the family needs of employees, sponsored by the organization. Examples of these policies include paid and job-secure parental leave, flexible scheduling by the employee to work around family needs, and on-site child care centers. Most employees desire family-friendly policies in their organizations (Friedman, 1987). The extent of interest in this issue is apparent when one reads the popular press, with a column devoted to work and family issues in The Wall Street Journal, cover articles in Business Week (Hammonds, 1996) and Ms. (Carter & Peters, 1996), and lists of family-friendly corporations in magazines like Working Mother and Working Woman. There are also professional groups formed to address this issue, such as the Families and Work Institute.
and The Alliance of Work/Life Professionals. The federal government has also begun to respond to this issue with mandates: In 1993, the Clinton administration passed the Family and Medical Leave Act, which states that businesses with 50 or more employees must provide 12-week (unpaid) leave for those with child and elder care needs. Affordable and quality child care for all employees is another cause that this administration has taken on.

These popular and governmental responses to the issue of balancing work and family roles speak to the changing nature of the roles’ relationship to one another. While in the past organizations have been hesitant to cross over to the family domain (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990), it is now more common to find organizations embracing a holistic view of their employees’ lives. The existence of the policies demonstrate the organization’s willingness to respond to non-work demands on employees’ time and energy. This willingness is not only for the sake of societal responsibility. Since work-family conflict is associated with a variety of detrimental outcomes for organizations (see above), the desire to decrease this conflict is economically sound. It is believed that the use of family-friendly policies will decrease work-family conflict, which will lead to healthier and happier workers (Auerbach, 1990; Christensen & Staines, 1990; Galinsky & Stein, 1990). Likewise, since child or elder care demands are suspected to distract employees from work tasks and physically require them to be with their families, it seems reasonable to expect that work performance, absenteeism and turnover will be affected by the policies as well.

Thus, high expectations surround family-friendly policies when they are adopted. Unfortunately, many companies do not evaluate how changing their policies affects individual and organizational outcomes. Evaluating the outcomes within each organization is important; if the programs are not having the desired effect, the reason should be assessed. Some researchers have attempted to fill this gap, but few have performed controlled studies. In fact, the limited research that has assessed the effect of family-friendly policies on work-family conflict has not been overly positive (Goff et al., 1990; Solomon, 1994), although there is more support for the effect on organizational outcomes. This next section will introduce the general outcomes
attributed to the adoption of family-friendly policies, will describe specific types of family-friendly policies, and will outline the limited research relevant to assessing their outcomes.

Family-Friendly Policies and Their Outcomes

“Business needs specific, targeted work-family programs because they will help alleviate immediate problems faced by our employees and their families...we are all more productive when we can give work and home their due time.” -James L. Renier, Chairman and CEO of Honeywell, Inc. ²

In general, simply offering family-friendly policies seem to have positive results for organizations. For instance, those who offer these non-mandated fringe benefits are often considered “progressive” companies and may appear on a list of “family-friendly” corporations in the magazines and newspapers (Hammonds, 1996; Leib, 1996; Starrett, 1987; Trost, 1987). This may be good public relations in terms of recruitment and retention. A controlled study by Honeycutt and Rosen (1997) demonstrated that offering family-friendly leave policies made an organization more attractive to prospective applicants. These policies also seem related to retention; offering a family-friendly program had a positive relationship with organizational commitment and a negative relation to turnover intentions (Grover & Crooker, 1995).

To look more specifically at the outcomes of family-friendly benefits, we need to consider how various types may affect outcomes differently. Although the argument has been made that policies affect employees as a whole (Grover & Crooker, 1995), for the purposes of this section we shall categorize policies into two types: 1) segmentative policies, which provide the employee with the means to deal with family demands but continue to focus on work, and 2) integrative policies, which allow employees to restructure their work in order to more clearly focus on both work and family demands. In addition to a brief description of these categories of policies, the following section will present some of the research which has examined the relationship of policies with attraction to the organization, absenteeism, turnover, and performance.
Segmentative Policies. These types of policies are work-focused, in that they encourage the employee to cope with their family demands as efficiently as possible and focus on their work demands. They attempt to alleviate the workers’ concern about child or elder care via work-sponsored programs. These programs may involve starting up a child care center on-site, sponsoring a center in the community, joining with other companies sponsoring a center, or providing referrals and/or vouchers to employees for use at private centers (see Bureau of National Affairs, 1988). Problems with this solution include high start-up costs and an inability to provide the service to every employee, due to lack of space, fees for use, and age/health of child (Aldous, 1990; Ferber & O’Farrell, 1991). According to the ideology behind the segmentative policies, the expected benefits are a decrease in absenteeism and tardiness by providing convenient sites for dropping and picking up dependents, and a decrease in anxiety and psychological withdrawal by providing high quality environments for loved ones. These two benefits, increased convenience and decreased anxiety, should also affect withdrawal rates and work performance.

Few empirical studies have assessed if these expectations are warranted. Much of the support for organizations’ adopting child care services has drawn on survey or interview data. For instance, one survey reported that 88% of the organizations surveyed thought that providing child care programs increased attraction or recruiting ability, 72% thought they decreased absenteeism, and 65% thought they improved attitudes toward the organization (Perry, 1982). Auerbach (1990) interviewed hospitals in the Midwest which had recently implemented child care programs. She reported that before the center was opened, turnover rates for parents eligible to use the service was 40%. Two years after opening, parents using the center had a turnover rate of 24%. Over five years, there was a company-wide annual decrease in turnover of 7.8%. This same hospital also experienced a decrease in absenteeism from these parents, from 6% to 1%. The economic benefit of the child care program was calculated to be $250,000 annually (Auerbach, 1990). Survey and case studies provide interesting data, but any conclusions are tenuous due to the possibility that other factors are influencing the outcomes.
Empirical studies have found some predicted relationships between segmentative policies and the expected outcomes, although other studies dispute the favorable findings. The supposition that providing child-care centers directly affects the work performance of employees does not seem warranted (Milkovich & Gomez, 1976; Kossek & Nichol, 1992). One study found that the use of a child care center was related to lower absenteeism and turnover (Milkovich & Gomez, 1976), though other work did not find relationships with either (Goff et al, 1990; Grover & Crooker, 1995). One of those contradictory papers found that providing child care information had a significant relationship with turnover intentions, while actually providing child care assistance was not related (Grover & Crooker, 1995). Another empirical study assessing the effectiveness of an on-site child care center reported no reduction in absenteeism (Goff et al, 1990). Rather, employees who felt satisfied with child care arrangements in general, whatever those might be, had lower work-family conflict, which was related to lower absenteeism. It may be that each site has very specific needs, so that it is difficult to draw general conclusions about the effectiveness of any policy across companies. This chapter shall draw some inferences about these contradictory results.

Integrative Policies. An integrative policy is one which encourages employees to restructure their work time to cope with family demands. Programs include providing personal/parental leave, part-time employment, flexible scheduling, compressed work week, telecommuting, and job sharing (see Bureau of National Affairs, 1988; Lechner & Creedon, 1994). These policies do not separate work from family needs, but rather the organization directly helps with family needs. However, this lack of separation of the work and family domains can also lead to disruption at work. Supervisors are not always positive about flextime because they cannot supervise work if it is not done on-site, plus the work flow may be disrupted if certain employees are not present (Lechner & Creedon, 1995; Patridge, 1973). Especially in today’s team-based environments, this might be a noteworthy downfall of integrative policies. This issue will be discussed further in later sections of this chapter.
It is expected that if employees have more control over their hours, and can request time to deal with their family needs, they will feel more positively about the organization, have lower work-family conflict and tension, lower turnover rates, and better work performance (since they are not as distracted by family demands). Interestingly, work withdrawal (absenteeism, tardiness, leaving early) is also expected to decrease if these policies are implemented, although most of the policies involve the employee not being present at work. This is because the employee has control over his/her own scheduling, so theoretically there is no need to withdraw during scheduled hours. For example, rather than sneaking out early to pick up a child from school, the employee can arrange his or her schedule to match the child’s hours.

Most of the research on integrative policies has focused on flextime rather than the other options. The findings seem fairly positive in terms of the organizational outcomes of absenteeism, turnover, and performance. In a time series field study with hourly, white-collar service employees, absenteeism was greatly decreased for employees who were allowed flexible scheduling versus a control group who did not schedule their hours (Dalton & Mesch, 1990). In a study involving county welfare agency employees, Kim and Campagna (1981) employed experimental and control groups to assess the effects of flexible hours on absenteeism. They found that flextime's relationship to absenteeism depended on the type of absences one inspected. Flextime decreased unpaid absences, short-term (two or fewer hours a day) absenteeism. This makes sense, since employees could schedule their hours around the events which may have caused them to steal away from the workplace before. However, employees using flextime used just as many paid absences (sick time) as non-users. Work-family conflict is related to poor health (i.e., Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999), so if family policies are related to work-family conflict it would be reasonable to expect less sick leave from those using these policies. Kim and Campagna’s findings may suggest that paid leave simply provides another means to fulfill family needs, or it is possible that flextime has no buffering effect on ill health.

With turnover rates, one study did find that half of the cases experienced decreased turnover rates and also improved productivity (Nollen & Martin, 1978), but others did not find
that flextime interventions had any effect on turnover (Dalton & Mesch, 1990; Pierce & Newstrom, 1983). Dalton and Mesch (1990) propose that flextime may have an indirect relation with turnover through absenteeism. A positive association was found between flexible work schedules and performance (Pierce & Newstrom, 1983). One study found that flextime did not have a detrimental effect on performance, and if anything, performance increased for the experimental group (Kim & Campagna, 1981). Overall, these findings reasonably support the positive organizational outcomes of flexible scheduling.

Individual well-being should improve when employees have the opportunity to schedule their work lives to fit better with their family lives. After flextime was implemented, lower levels of work-family conflict were reported in a few studies (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981; Lee, 1983), but not for others (Shinn, Wong, Simco, & Ortiz-Torres, 1989). One study’s path analysis suggested that those with higher work-family conflict had a higher desire for flexible scheduling, or control over one’s schedule (Coakley & Karren, 1996). This finding was corroborated by a study which demonstrated an indirect association between flexible schedules and work-family conflict via the feeling of control (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Thomas and Ganster also found a direct positive connection between flexible schedules and somatic health, and other researchers have found reasonable evidence supporting the relation of flexible scheduling with job satisfaction (see Dunham, Pierce & Castenada, 1987; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Rothausen, 1994). Overall, flexible scheduling seems to relate to positive individual outcomes. Flextime offers employees a sense of control over their lives as well as a means of meeting their family role demands. More research needs to assess the outcomes of the other types of integrative policies, but it is easy to see how telecommuting, shorter work weeks, or job sharing may provide similar outcomes.

So, as family needs are becoming a larger issue for a greater proportion of the workforce, some corporations are responding by adopting family-friendly policies. The research suggests that this is a smart move, although some contradictions in the findings exist. It seems that simply adopting these policies may create positive outcomes; many of the above studies only looked at
the availability of the policies, not the use of them. If policies are so desirable to prospective and current employees, why aren’t more organizations making this fringe benefit package standard? And once the policies are adopted, what might keep the organization and employees from realizing the positive benefits, as demonstrated by some of the contradictory findings? Researchers need to ask what barriers might exist that would hinder the adoption and success of family-friendly policies. One proposed barrier is the issue of inequity perceptions.

**Distributive Justice and Family-Friendly Policies**

“I’m tired of hearing these people cry about their child-care problems. Why should the company help them? It isn’t helping me.” -white female manager

“The company didn’t help me with my four kids. Why should it help people now?” -Hispanic male manager

Various barriers to policy adoption and effectiveness have been suggested by other authors, such as cost, lack of demand or knowledge, and gender bias (Fernandez, 1990, Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Starrels, 1992; Friedman & Galinsky, 1992). Equity perceptions have also been raised as a potential hindrance to the adoption and success of family-friendly policies, and these perceptions of unfairness are the focus of this chapter. How fair is it that some employees have access to special, non-work-related benefits, such as flextime and leave time, while others do not? Worse still, the employees who can use these policies are not necessarily the ‘best’ employees, but those who need the organization’s assistance. Certainly the discretionary, need-based nature of these policies raises perceptions of unfairness if low-performing employees are seen as benefitting. These perceptions might arouse resentfulness among coworkers. When employees perceive some allocations as unfair, a host of negative organizational consequences are typically found, such as poor performance, employee theft, absenteeism, and turnover (e.g., Cowherd & Levine, 1992; Greenberg, 1990b; Schwarzwald, Koslowsky, & Shalit, 1992). If unfairness perceptions exist toward these policies, and these are the consequences of those perceptions, it is easy to see why organizations may be wary of them.
While fairness has been mentioned by those writing about family-friendly policies, it has rarely been explicitly tested. Only a few known studies have actually assessed the relationship of justice perceptions with family-friendly policies (Grover, 1991; Kossek & Nichol, 1992; Parker & Allen, 1999). To understand why all organizations are not in full support of these policies, and why the policies may not always be successful, family friendly policies should be considered within a justice framework. There are three ways we can focus on justice and family-friendly policies. First, social exchange as a mechanism by which individuals and organizations behave toward each other will be used as a framework to combine fairness and family-friendly policies. Second, justice theory will be applied to how family-friendly policies are allocated. Third, justice theory will be discussed in terms of how policies are perceived as fair or unfair by coworkers. The scant research which has applied justice theory to policies will be reviewed, and inferences will be drawn about how justice perceptions might affect the success of these family-oriented programs.

**Justice and Perceived Organizational Support**

How is it that the mere presence of family-friendly policies is associated with a range of organizational outcomes like attraction to the organization, turnover intentions, and commitment (Grover & Crooker, 1995; Honeycutt & Rosen, 1996; Sinclair et al., 1995)? One mechanism by which family policy researchers might explain this relationship is through the employee’s perception of organizational support (POS; Grover & Crooker, 1995; Sinclair et al., 1995). However, in order to inspire POS in employees, the organizational acts must be perceived fairly. This section will first explicate the POS mechanism for understanding the relation of family-friendly policies to organizational outcomes. Then, organizational justice will be discussed in terms of this mechanism.

Perception of organizational support (POS) occurs when employees believe that the organization cares about employees in a discretionary way (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). One way organizations might inspire such perceptions is by offering discretionary fringe benefits, such as paid parental leave. This policy is discretionary in the sense
that it is not mandated by law, and is given out to certain individuals as needed, not to everyone. It is believed that POS inspires a social exchange norm (Blau, 1964), so that employees feel they should reciprocate by acting in positive ways toward the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann, & Birjulin, in press). Research has found that employees with high POS are more likely to exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors and increased work effort (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990), and a lower intent to quit one’s job (Sinclair et al., 1995). Family-friendly benefits have been found to relate to POS (Sinclair et al., 1995). To reward the organization for its caring about their family needs, employees may respond with positive attitudes and behaviors toward the organization (Schiemann, 1987). This POS mechanism explains why just the presence of policies may have positive outcomes for the organization.

Some authors have suggested that perceptions of justice may change this social exchange relationship between the employee and organization (Masterson, Lewis-McCleary, Goldman, & Taylor, 1997; Shore & Shore, 1995; Sinclair et al., 1995), in the sense that without justice, POS is greatly diminished. Fairness on the part of the employing firm contributes to the perception of support between the employee and the organization (Masterson et al., 1997; Organ, 1988). When an employee perceives an act by the organization as fair, the organization is perceived as positive and caring. As such, the act inspires the employee to act accordingly toward the organization. Of course, this relationship could be reversed causally, such that caring acts make the organization seem more fair; either way the point holds true. Without fairness, POS is negatively affected. This relationship is supported by empirical work. One study suggests that without perceptions of organizational fairness, POS would diminish, and the positive outcomes of OCB and decreased turnover intentions would not be realized (Masterson et al., 1997). Thus, fairness perceptions surrounding family-friendly policies is a vital part of the policies’ success at the organizational level. With this assumption in mind, the next sections discuss how fairness could affect whether the policies are allocated, and how others may view allocation decisions that are based on need.
Distributive Justice Rules: The Fairness of Resource Allocations

As a discretionary policy, allocation decisions about family-friendly policies often fall on the shoulders of the front-line supervisor. It is up to this individual to decide if requests for the use of the formal policies shall be granted. Supervisory support for family needs is a major element for the success of family-friendly policies (Friedman, 1987; Galinsky, Friedman, & Hernandez, 1991). However, supervisors may not view family-friendly policies as fair. In the abstract, people have been found to be favorably predisposed toward family-friendly policies (Friedman, 1987). However, justice researchers would state that the actual allocation decisions require a specific comparison to a referent standard, or allocation rules (Cropanzano & Schminke, in press). Since supervisors receive the requests to enact the policies, and may have the power to decide if the request can be granted, it is important to understand the justice rules that the supervisor may consider beforehand.

There are three generally accepted justice rules which guide allocation decisions. With family-friendly policies, the relevant decisions are twofold: Should an organization adopt the policies, and should a supervisor grant requests for these policies? The three rules which may determine the outcomes of these decisions are the rules of equity, equality, and need. Research has demonstrated that each is acceptable to individuals, given specific environments. These environments can be characterized as supporting decision norms, where there are general rules for all transactions of resources (Greenberg & Cohen, 1982). For example, environments which support allocating resources on the basis of merit are considered environments with equity norms. But it is also the case that each situation may motivate the decision-maker to consider distribution rules which differ from the prevalent organizational norm. This section will define the three principles of distributive justice, discuss the situations in which they are often used, and relate them to family-friendly policies.

Equity. Equity theory proposes that employees will perceive unfairness when they perceive that the ratio of their own job inputs to job outcomes is unequal to the ratio of a comparison other, or referent (Adams, 1965; Greenberg, 1990a). Allocation decisions are
Family-friendly policies are partially made by considering the applicants’ input (hours worked, performance ratings) compared to the other applicants for the resource in question. This norm is most commonly found in environments of economic exchange, and is expected to encourage effective performance on the task at hand (Deutsch, 1975; Leventhal, 1976).

In Western culture, individualism is rampant. We expect economic rewards for our contributions such as our time and performance at work, and we expect to receive more than others who contribute less. Corporations are often set up with this reward structure. Family-friendly policies can provide both economic and non-economic rewards. They can provide money, as with child care credits, or they can provide time, autonomy, and special programs. However, these policies are not designed to reward meritorious performance. They are available to those who need the resources, not those who have provided the organization more time, money, or effort. For example, if a supervisor receives a request from an employee for paid time when they will not be present to do the work, this rule would state that such an allocation would be unfair. Thus, family-friendly policies may contradict equity rules, and in general, be viewed as an unfair practice.

Supervisors may also be hesitant to encourage or allow use of policies which make their lives more complicated (Ronen, 1984), and thereby create more work for themselves. Giving workers more scheduling autonomy may not only complicate the production for which they are responsible, but may strip the supervisor of some feelings of power. Supervisors may have a difficult time observing their subordinates for performance evaluations if the employees are choosing to work different hours than the supervisor. Telecommuting from home contains the same dilemma. Another way that family policies require more work from the supervisor is when an employee takes parental leave. This extended absence creates a void which the supervisor may be responsible for filling. This extra work for supervisors may be viewed as unfair: They have to increase their workload (more input) for the same pay (same output). Thus their ratio changes unfavorably, if they accommodate employees’ family needs. Organizations would need
to change reward structures in order for supervisors to view allocating certain family benefits as fair.

Equality. This rule encourages resources to be allocated equally across persons, regardless of input or performance (Deutsch, 1975). Conditions of social cooperation, where “getting along” with coworkers is important, would find this norm to be salient (Leventhal, 1976). Thus, allocation decisions would likely be motivated more by a desire to foster group harmony and cohesion than to encourage individuals’ higher effort. This is not to say that performance will necessarily suffer under equality norms. The literature suggests that under certain conditions, group cohesion relates to group performance (Goodman, 1986). When these conditions are met, allocations based on the equality norm may be beneficial to team-based organizations.

According to the equality rule, family-friendly policies can be considered fair when the policies are available to everyone. Benefits like sick time or health benefits are perceived as fair because they are available to all employees. However, sometimes policies are written specifically for certain groups, such as maternal leave and child care benefits. While anyone could apply for these policies at some point in their lives, they would only be granted to those who are new mothers or have small children, respectively. In theory, family-friendly policies are equality-based, but in practice, they only benefit those who have the pressing need. Even within the group which has the need, there is inequality. In practice is it difficult to provide the benefits so that everyone can use them. There are only so many spots available for children in care centers, and only so many people can take leave at one time. It is desirable to write family-friendly policies in such a way that they are available to, and can be used by, all employees, but this is exceedingly difficult, as will be discussed later. Flex-time is one policy which has been adopted by organizations as an "equal opportunity" life-balancing policy; anyone can apply for flextime, not just those with families. But other family-friendly policies may be seen as unfair if they contradict equality rules.
Family-friendly policies are typically need-based allocations. They are designed to respond to employees' needs, such as the need for the flexibility to leave work early to pick up a child from school, the need to stay at home with a new baby, or the need for affordable day care. Viewed through a justice perspective, the very nature of family-friendly policies as a need-based allocation may create perceptions of unfairness. As a remedy for this potential ill-will, the justice literature suggests three situational factors that can promote the perceived fairness of need-based allocations. These include identifying with the beneficiary, perceiving the source of the need as unintentional, and a positive organizational culture toward family. While the research on these determinants are scant, the few studies have been supportive (Greenberg & Cohen, 1982).

The first of these factors is that the person evaluating the request for a need-based resource identifies, or empathizes, with the potential beneficiary (Schwinger, 1986). Grover (1991) found that individuals identifying with persons who had the need for parental leave had a more positive attitude toward leave policies and those who receive this family policy. The identity variables of gender, having children, likelihood of having children, and likelihood of taking parental leave were all significantly related ($p < .05$ or better) to the perceived fairness of parental leave. Likewise, in Grover's study, fairness perceptions of this policy
mediated the relationship between most of the identity variables and attitudes toward the beneficiaries. In other words, if one identifies with the needs of those who would benefit from the policies, then they view those policies as more fair. If they view the policies as more fair, they have more positive attitudes toward those who use the policies. Conversely, if employees cannot identify with those in need, or they view the policies as unfair, then those positive attitudes toward leave takers would diminish. Thus, identifying with those who might use family-friendly policies would improve evaluations of those policies, and evaluations of those whom the policies help.

A second determinant is the intentionality, or controllability, of the source of need. When the cause of the need is beyond the potential recipient’s control, allocators are more likely to provide resources than if the cause stemmed from the individual. A study testing this idea found that when resources were scarce, allocators were less likely to provide resources to individuals who were responsible for their need (Skitka & Tetlock, 1992). Family needs may be viewed as intentional, since it would be assumed that the individual chose to have a child (Grover, 1991). (Along these lines, the need for elder care may be viewed as more fair, since such a need would not be viewed as intentional). Employees who sacrificed their careers to start a family may view others who intentionally choose to start a family and then still want to continue their careers as irresponsible. They may resent organizational programs which reward such behavior. On the other hand, some family-based requests may be perceived as less intentional, such a needing a day off to be with a sick child. More research is needed in this area as it relates to family policies.

Lastly, the organizational culture may affect whether need allocations are viewed as fair. Deutsch (1975) argues that need-based norms are salient when decision-makers are concerned for the recipients’ personal welfare and growth. Organizations are beginning to demonstrate a concern for societal needs, making family issues more acceptable within business policy. For example, The Conference Board, a forum for senior executives to discuss business policy, was formed “to enhance the contribution of business to society” (Peters, Peters, & Caropreso, 1990,
If a goal of the organization is to behave in a socially responsible way, then decisions which show caring for family needs may be seen as legitimate or fair. It may also be the case that providing need-based allocations helps the organization as well. Lamm & Schwinger (1983) found that providing need-based allocations enhanced the image of the allocator (the organization). In the case of family-friendly policies, the organization appears to greatly care about the employees, which facilitates POS.

While organizations with societal and personal goals are becoming more prevalent, such companies are still in the minority. Responding to personal needs is not considered to be within the domain of corporations. This creates a barrier to the adoption and usage of family-friendly policies. A “family-friendly” culture would encourage supporting individual needs, and encourage employees to identify with each other and appreciate each other’s diverse issues. Norm-based decisions encourage interpersonal liking and social exchange (Deutsch, 1975; Schwinger, 1990). Studies have supported the importance of the organizational culture in supporting need-based policies. One needs assessment study found that culture was the most important job condition, predictive of a range of child-care related individual and organizational outcomes (Galinsky & Stein, 1990). Thompson et al. (1997) found that the relationship between family demands and use of family-friendly benefits was moderated by a supportive organizational culture. If the workplace culture is not “family-friendly,” then the offered benefits may not be used by employees. Therefore, in order for family-friendly policies to thrive, the organization must foster a culture which will support these need-based allocations.

**Summary.** Family-friendly benefits are need-based policies trying to survive in the equity-based world of corporations. Although some businesses may make decisions based on combinations of justice norms, typically these norms are equity and equality, not need (Kabanoff, 1991). Family-friendly policies are designed to respond to family needs that some, and not other, employees have. They, by definition, violate equity rules, which are considered fair rules by most decision-makers in corporations. In addition, they may violate equality rules in that not everyone is eligible for the benefits offered, or that of those who are eligible, not all may actually
receive the benefits. These multiple violations of fairness rules for allocations are why family-friendly policies may be perceived as unfair. This perception may bar their acceptance or limit their usage in many corporations. However, need-based allocations may be perceived by employees as a fair distribution if the supervisor making the allocations can relate to the need (identity), if the source of the need is perceived as beyond the individual’s control (intention), or if the organization supports a need-based allocation norm within its culture.

Perceived Fairness of the Allocation Decision: Referents and Need Allocations

To determine if a decision is fair or not, persons look to referents, or comparison others. These different referent sources contribute to employees’ satisfaction with allocations beyond the allocation itself (Sweeney, McFarlin, and Inderrieden, 1990). In other words, receiving a benefit is more satisfying when it is fair. Conversely, not receiving a benefit is not pleasant, but may be viewed as fair depending on the referent standard. For example, getting a promotion when you know someone else is more deserving is not as satisfying as when you are certain you deserve the promotion. Not getting a promotion may still be seen as fair, provided that those who have similar levels of performance to yourself do not receive a promotion either. In both cases, the individual compares his or her own input/outcome ratio with that of referent others. The referent standard provides the individual with information to judge whether the allocation decision was fair. In different situations, individuals compare themselves to different referent standards. With equity rules, persons look at others’ inputs and outcomes and make sure that their own ratio is similar. Equality rules would inspire persons to look to similar others to make sure they are getting the same as those who are like them.

However, very little research has been done on the perceived fairness of need allocations, although quite a bit has explored equity and equality allocations (Kabanoff, 1991). Thus, no one really knows precisely how persons determine if a specific need allocation is fair. As mentioned earlier, many authors propose that fairness issues surround family benefits, without explaining what factors might affect the perceived fairness of these benefits. This chapter has already demonstrated why decision-makers might view need-based allocations as unfair, given the
equity-based nature of most organizations. It is also important to understand by what referent standards coworkers judge the fairness of need-based allocations.

This chapter proposes that need-based allocations can be judged by three types of referent standards. In each case, one individual perceives the policy to be unfair when compared to a certain referent standard. The three referent groups to be discussed here are employees with different needs, those with the same needs but limited access to the resource, and those with the same needs but different perceived access to the resource. If a comparison to these standards reveal a discrepancy, it is more likely that unfairness perceptions will exist. In the following section, these three referent standards will be discussed in terms of family-friendly policies as the need-based resource.

Employees with different needs. Employees who do not need family benefits might perceive those benefits as unfair. For example, a childless employee who has to pick up the slack may resent that an employee with children can take time off with the company's blessing. The quotes at the beginning of this section demonstrate the sentiment of this social comparison. This type of referent standard is probably the most mentioned potential source of inequity perceptions, but may actually be less of an issue than is believed. Surveys have found that, regardless of their own needs, employees evaluate family-friendly policies positively in general (DeMarr, 1997; Friedman, 1987). Research has not convincingly demonstrated that employees are resentful of those who have family needs and request family benefits. While this may be good news, some resentment from nonbeneficiaries is still likely to occur, particularly when allocations based on family needs have some effect on nonbeneficiaries (i.e., must do extra work, do not receive their own resource request).

Who does not identify with those who have family needs? Employees who have never had, and never plan to have, dependents may fall into this category (Grover, 1991). Parker and Allen (1999) found that parents felt family policies were more fair than nonparents. Employees
who choose not to have children, who cannot have children, or who have very satisfactory child care situation, such as an at-home spouse or grandparent, may not easily empathize with those who need help from family policies. Since those without family policy needs have arranged their situation so they may focus on work, they may wonder why other employees are rewarded for poor planning. Another possibility is that employees resent that others will receive benefits that they themselves never had the option of using in the past. Perhaps a women executive had to make the agonizing decision not to have children in order to reach her status in the company, and now if the organization offers family benefits others will not have to make that difficult decision that she did. Those who view the policy as unfair may view family-friendly policy beneficiaries as trying to get a “free ride,” which may affect how they interact with their coworker. Thus, the beneficiary of the policy may find himself or herself coping with negative attitudes from coworkers as well as juggling family and work.

**Same needs, different availability.** One set of authors mentions how difficult it is for organizations to offer policies equally across all employees (Nelson & Couch, 1990). In this category, the referent has family needs just like the one doing the comparing. However, something is keeping the two individual from receiving equal allocations, which then is perceived as unfair. The most discussed referent groups are women and men: Family policies are assumed to be women’s benefits, and in fact some parental leave policies are specifically available only to women. However, men are becoming more involved in family responsibilities, although women remain the primary family caregivers (Schor, 1991). In fact, one study did not find significant differences between men and women’s participation in family-family benefits (Thompson et al., 1997), indicating a similar level of need. Another study found significant gender differences in parental leave availability (Marshall & Barnett, 1994), with women more likely to receive paid parental leave benefits. Such differences can create unfairness perceptions, when men have similar needs to women who are the focus of the policies.

There are two other barriers to offering family policies equally across employees: the job one has and the resources available. The job one has may hinder someone from using family
programs because they do not make enough money to pay the fees for the child care center or to take an unpaid leave of absence (Ferber & O’Farrell, 1991). In fact, many jobs, such as the service industries, where women are the majority of employees do not pay enough for the women to take advantage of these kinds of policies. In addition, some jobs don’t lend themselves well to having flexible hours. Christensen and Staines (1990) remark that assembly line manufacturing, or any type of team-based production, make flextime awkward for supervisors. Thus, there are barriers to using policies for those who may very well need them the most (Lechner & Creedon, 1995).

Another case of same needs, different availability, is when the policy itself poses a barrier to the applicant. More specifically, child care centers often have limits on the number of children they will accept, in order to maintain quality standards. However, those on the long waiting lists may have negative attitudes toward the policy and the organization. In fact, Kossek and Nichols (1992) found that those who had the need (parents) but the policy was unavailable to them (full child care center), rated the child care policy as less fair than those who were using the center. The authors call this a “frustration effect,” where the employees react negatively to a policy when it cannot help all persons in need. Thus, those who wait to receive the allocation compare their situation to those who have similar needs and are receiving the desired outcome. The end result is that those who cannot participate in a program, but have the need, are likely to have negative attitudes towards the organization (Ronen, 1984), especially when engaging in social comparison.

Same needs, different perceived availability. Unfairness perceptions may exist because family-friendly policies are perceived as only available to certain people, when in fact they are available to everyone. They may be formally offered to everyone, but perceived as unavailable due to the consequences one might experience for using the policies. These perceptions are proposed to stem from gender biases and work norms. These two factors are closely intertwined with the organizational culture; how do the decision-makers of the organization view male and female roles, and how does the organization reward employees? If these components of
organizational culture do not coexist with the tenants of family-friendly policies, employees will not feel that the policies are, in actuality, available for their use. These ideas will be discussed further below.

With dual-career households, both spouses have to help out with family and household demands. The need for these policies certainly exists for both the spouses. Traditional views about women, however, still insist that home responsibilities fall on the woman’s shoulders (Pleck, 1985; Starrels, 1990). Such gender bias may affect how people view both women and men who take advantage of family-friendly policies. Parker and Allen (1999) found that women rated family policies as more fair than men did, suggesting that men are less likely to identify with this need or see it as appropriate. Grover’s (1991) study found that holding conservative attitudes about women (or believing that men and women are not equal) was negatively related to perceptions of fairness about family policies, and to attitudes toward male and female beneficiaries of parental leave policies. Coworkers or supervisors who hold this traditional view may hinder employees’ use of family policies, particularly male employees. Parental leave or flextime may not be seen as a viable option to men due to bias that men should not be responsible for the household responsibilities, and thus they may risk organization and potential ridicule (Haas, 1987). Thus, men may perceive the family-friendly policies are special benefits which they are excluded from receiving.

Research in Sweden provides support for the effect of these gender biases (Moen, 1989). Sweden offers liberal family-friendly policies, but men rarely take advantage of them. Men only took 14% of their total available days of parental leave in 1990 (Haas, 1992). But those who had female coworkers (who would be more likely to identify with the need for this allocation) were more likely to take parental leave (Haas, 1992). Research by Pleck (1989) in the U.S. supports this finding: An unsympathetic attitude from supervisors may keep men from using family leaves.

Gender bias then may hinder men from applying for family benefits. This may leave them feeling that policies are unfairly distributed; women have access to lucrative benefits that
men need but do not feel are available to them. The difficulty for changing this problem is that the unfairness is not due to the formal policy, but the informal norms of the organization. Gender bias embedded in the work culture would need to be altered in order to diminish this perception of unfairness. If men perceive that family-friendly policies are not available to them, these policies cannot have the individual and organizational benefits they were designed to elicit.

There is a second way that employees may perceived that family benefits are unavailable to them. Suppose an organization adopts the need-based policies of parental leave and flextime policies. The employee’s referent standard is then the expectation that the organization will help them in time of need. However, the organization may reward certain behaviors, and not others, which are incompatible with the use of family-friendly policies. Organizations reward employees’ commitment, which is judged by their presence (Perlow, 1995; Starrels, 1992). The use of integrative policies result in less time at work, or more specifically, less time being seen at work. Even if the employee is just as productive over time as before, using policies which take the employee out of the physical workspace is posited to result in loss of promotions and raises. The employee does not seem as committed to the organization as someone who does not use these policies. Thus, in order to use family benefits, the employee must give up other organizational rewards. The presence of a needed policy which one cannot use without being punished may lead to another type of “frustration effect.” Formally, the policy exists for them, but they may become frustrated when they realize that they will be penalized if they actually make use of the policies. A quote from an employee demonstrates this issue clearly:

“You really cannot leave for a few years and come back and expect to get to high levels. You have to recommend for a manager’s job. And so people look back at your record and see if you were committed, if you were willing to put the time in. And if not, well you don’t go anywhere” - Engineer in Fortune 100 company 5

The unfairness of this situation may be perceived by men and women. The organizational loss of rewards is what may happen with the “mommy track.” Many women believe the “mommy track” is an unequal career path for women who chose to take advantage of parental
leave and flextime policies (Kessler-Harris, 1987). Women who want to advance in their careers may be surprised to find that using an organizational policy bars them from attaining their goals. Men may also fear using family-friendly leave policies for fear of its impact on their careers (Haas, 1992; Moen, 1992). For men, this fear may be founded both in gender bias and work ethic norms. For both women and men, perceiving that they must choose between the advancement of their careers and responding to their family’s needs may make the formal policy seem unfair.

Providing a family-friendly culture, where family needs are valued and supported, may help with this source of injustice as well. One study found that both men and women were significantly more likely to apply for family benefits in a family-friendly culture than the men or women in a non-family-supportive culture (Thompson et al., 1997). This would suggest that if the culture valued families and supported individual needs, then the policies would be perceived as available to all. If policies truly are equally available, and there is no culture of punishment for using them, policies have a better chance of being used and having the outcomes they were designed to have.

**Family-Friendly Policies and Justice: Conclusions**

If perceptions of policies are not fair, we might predict that the positive outcomes of family-friendly policies would be diminished, if not obliterated. At the organizational level, we assume that the presence and use of family-friendly policies leads to perceived organizational support, attraction and retention, and OCB (i.e., Sinclair et al., 1995). However, without fair perceptions of the organization, this may not occur, and thus neither do the positive outcomes (Masterson et al, 1997). Supervisors may feel need-based allocations are not fair when using the equity and equality rules as the referent standard. This may result in supervisors not allocating discretionary benefits to those who request them (Skitka & Tetlock, 1992; Ronen, 1984). The policies cannot have the effects they were designed to have if no one receives the policies. If coworkers perceive that these need-based allocations are unfair, as compared to the referent standards discussed above, they may not themselves request these policies. In addition, they may
Family-friendly policies

feel negatively toward those who do use the family-friendly polices. Group cohesion may be negatively affected and morale may decrease (Cropanzano & Schminke, in press). Thus, the positive outcomes of family-friendly policies may not only be erased, but replaced with new problems.

Implementing Fair Family-Friendly Policies: Recommendations

“What have we done? We have invested considerable time in management and supervisory training...We believe the corporate culture has to change...We encourage all managers to work on the tough diversity issues, including those of individual family problems.” -Derek F. Harvey, Manager, Planning & Administration of Mobil Corporation  

Given the potential hassles of dealing with the fairness issue of family-friendly policies, some have asked whether these programs are worth the trouble (Kossek & Nichol, 1992). It certainly seems that inequity perceptions are likely when one uses need-based allocations, and inequity perceptions have been related to many negative consequences, as discussed above. Potentially, those perceptions could eliminate the positive effects the policies were designed to produce. This issue is then a weighty one for organizations to consider before adopting these programs. However, the justice literature provides the means to circumvent these problems with family-friendly policies. Although little research has assessed fringe benefits and justice (Folger & Greenberg, 1985), enough exists on both topics that inferences and recommendations can be made.

Since the outcomes will, by definition, be seen as inequitable, it is very important that the process be seen as fair. Research has demonstrated that if a process is fair, even if the outcome was unfavorable, the participants still tend to be positive about the organization (van den Bos, 1996). If the process of adopting the policies is fair, employees will perceive that the organization cares about their opinions and is fair to employees in general. These perceptions have been related to enhanced organizational commitment (Tyler, 1991), lower turnover intent (Dailey & Kirk, 1992), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Organ & Moorman, 1993).
Thus, providing procedures that will be perceived as fair by all employees is vital for the acceptance of family-friendly policies. This section contains recommendations based on the justice literature for organizations who wish to improve the perceptions of family policies within the workplace.

**Do a need analysis and get participation.** While providing family-friendly policies may attract people to an organization, if a need for these policies does not exist among employees the program is not going to be very successful (Lechner & Creedon, 1995). Beyond information gathering, the process of a need analysis provides employees an opportunity to voice their opinions, support, and concern about family-friendly policies. In the interest of this process being perceived as fair, it is very important to get input from everyone, not just the higher status decision makers (Cobb, Wooten, & Folger, 1995).

Company-wide surveys is the most common way of requesting a large set of responses. Forming a task force, made up of employees who represent a large cross-section of hierarchical levels, departments, and demographic groups, can also be a good way to give individuals a chance to influence the process of adopting programs (Lechner & Creedon, 1995). Voicing opinions, and being involved in the process, have been found to be important in fairness perceptions of procedures which already exist (Thibaut & Walker, 1975), and Cobb et al. (1995) suggest it is also important to assure workers that they helped contribute to the ground rules of a new policy.

**Change the culture.** Once a need is determined to exist, the organization should determine if the organization’s values will allow the policies to be successful. As discussed earlier, maintaining a strong equity-based allocation norm would make need-based requests difficult to perceive fairly. In order for need-based requests to be viewed more positively, some suggest the culture of the organization must change to encourage need-based rules to be followed in allocation decisions. The need principle is a norm which guides allocation in relationships where the parties identify with each other, and are highly interdependent (Greenberg & Cohen, 1982). Today’s team environment in the workplace makes this context more probable.
Family-friendly policies are an important part of team functioning. In environments which encourage positive relationships and interdependence between coworkers, a need-based allocation such as paid parental leave might be perceived more fairly than in a strictly task-oriented workplace. However, that independence also makes integrative policies more difficult - a member of a team who wants to take parental leave, or to only work certain hours, may make team functioning very difficult. Policies about such situations would need to be spelled out when adopted.

Changing the culture of the organization is a messy business. Norms must be changed, values disseminated, old ways of thinking replaced. Communicating the new values of the organization is extremely important. This can be accomplished through memos, official documents, and especially group meetings led by high status/profile members of the organization. Support for the changes needs to be demonstrated by decision-makers, in order for the changes to take hold (Cobb et al., 1995). Additionally, the reward structures need to be changed. Rewarding supervisors for helping employees balance work and family would send a strong message to employees. In a need-based culture, productivity as a desired outcome would be balanced with the outcome of personal and interpersonal harmony. A need-based culture, where individual needs are respected and responded to beyond the person’s inputs, would provide fertile soil for the family-friendly policies to take hold (DeMarr, 1997) and be viewed fairly.

Communicate the process and changes. In order for the adoption of family-friendly policies to be successful, employees need be informed about the policies and changes which will occur. Communicating how these new policies might meet the mission or values of the organization would lend credence to their adoption (Cobb et al., 1995). If the corporation is changing its culture, the new vision of the organization must be “bought” by those in power positions, and “sold” to the employees by communicating the new mission statement, organizational goals, etc. In addition, in order for a new policy to be successful, employees need to be aware of what is now offered. One study found that 6.9% of employees did not know if their corporation offered a child care center, 16.3% were unaware if time off for dependent care
was offered, and 20% weren’t sure if resource and referral services existed (Thompson et al., 1997). Other studies support the idea that employees are often unaware of their fringe benefits (Dreher et al., 1988; Sinclair et al., 1995). It is very important, as stated above, that all employees are informed of the services available.

Organizations also need to inform employees about how things will change, once the policy is adopted. When a coworker goes on leave, who will do that person’s work? This could be a large concern for non-beneficiaries. If an employee is on parental leave, do they get their same job back when they return? How will decisions about scarce resources, such as spaces in the child care center, be handled, and by whom? Will people who utilize these policies be passed over for promotions? Concerns such as these need to be alleviated by two-way, corporation-wide discussions of the new policy. For researchers, these are areas which need to be assessed.

Provide justification. For those who are dubious about the worth of family-friendly policies, providing justification for the organizational decision is essential (Bies, 1987; Greenberg, 1990b). Leaders should provide causal, ideological, and referential accounts to employees (Cobb et al, 1995). Causal accounts would explain why family-friendly policies are necessary to be competitive, perhaps in terms of the research on work-family conflict and the desirable outcomes the policies could provide. Lechner and Creedon (1995) recommend communicating to all employees that these programs are the organization’s response to the large issues of work stress and productivity. Ideological accounts provide the vision to employees; how adopting family-friendly policies plays a role in the values and goals of the organization. These accounts help spread the norms the organization supports, such as responding to individuals’ family needs. Lastly, leaders may want to provide referential accounts to employees. These provide a referent, or point of comparison, to which the employees can compare the new situation. For instance, the corporation may communicate to employees that Company X, a competitor, has installed flextime and generous family leave policies, and now some prospective employees are choosing Company X over this company. Or the leader could discuss where the company might go if this change was not implemented (Cobb et al., 1995).
Consider the type of policy to adopt. If the need exists, the organization should determine which types of policies are more acceptable and desirable - would people be more willing to help fund a child care center to help coworkers be at work more, or do employees want the organization to respond to the need for family time by offering telecommuting as an option? If a survey shows that employees need child care, but are ambivalent about flextime, that information should actually influence the policies chosen. Justice theory also would recommend that the type of policies adopted be ones available to everyone (whereas changing norms would make them perceived available). This is difficult to do, as discussed earlier, but necessary to avoid the inequity perceptions. On-site child care which charges an extra fee may not be available to everyone, neither will flexible hours for those doing line work.

To respond to this inequality, one recommendation is to adopt cafeteria style benefit packages, or flexible benefit plans (Friedman, 1985; Grover, 1991). Core benefits are offered to everyone, such as health and life insurance and vacation time. Optional benefits may be purchased with flexible credits, such as dependent care, mutual funds, or tuition (Friedman, 1985). Every employee should have access to all these options, though the number of flexible credits available to each employee may depend upon seniority, age, and/or salary. These provide employees with a choice, which are perceived as more fair than just providing the opportunity for voicing opinions (Folger & Greenberg, 1985). Not only do employees feel like they have a choice, but those who do not have family needs have other fringe benefit options. The need-based requests can be met, but the plan is perceived as providing equally for each individual. However, while this is a nice conclusion that has been drawn by many, it is not a panacea. Employees may have to choose between needed health benefits and needed dependent care (Friedman, 1985). Cafeteria plans also require understanding about policies which may be complicated for unskilled labor (Lechner & Creedon, 1995). And as discussed earlier, segmentative programs like child care alone may not result in the positive outcomes expected. Telecommuting and flexible hours are other family-friendly policies which would not appear on
a benefits option list, but which may serve the employee’s needs. In cases like these, the supervisor who arranges the policy with the employee becomes more important.

Provide supervisor training. Supervisors can make or break the most well-developed organizational programs (Galinsky et al., 1991). As discussed earlier, if the supervisor perceives the policies as unfair, s/he may not grant requests, or may punish those who use the policies when other allocation decisions arise. They may resent the inconvenience and lack of authority that flexible scheduling entails. If the supervisor has personal biases about male and female roles at work and at home, male subordinates may not feel comfortable requesting the family policies. From the subordinate’s point of view, it is very important that supervisors are consistent with the organization’s goals. If a formal policy is available, but a supervisor never grants a request for it, frustration may ensue. Since employees look to their leaders to represent the organization, employees may judge the fairness of the new policies based on how their supervisor behaves toward them (Cobb, 1992). This treatment includes both the decisions they make (distributive justice) and how they treat employees (procedural justice). Thus it is vital that organizations adopting family policies make sure that the supervisors who will be distributing the policies support these policies. Supervisor training can help supervisors identify with those who request the policies, communicate justification for need-based distribution, and interact in a supportive way with those who need the policies. These types of behaviors, as discussed throughout this chapter and elsewhere, are related to the perceived fairness of distribution decisions.

There are several steps in which an organization needs to engage to train employees to supportive of family policies. Policy statements from the top levels of the organization must make it clear that a family-supportive approach is expected from supervisors (Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Lechner & Creedon, 1995). The organization demonstrates the importance of this approach by investing time and money in training seminars for supervisors. Organizations can influence the decisions that supervisors make by educating them the nature of work-family conflict, its detrimental outcomes, on the policies available to counteract these problems, and on
the values of the organization. This information also provides justification for need-based policies to supervisors, and their subordinates, who may be hesitant to accept the policies.

Training should also demonstrate how to treat employees with respectful interactional styles. Interpersonal sensitivity is vital here (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997); employees need to be able to communicate with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in a respectful and caring manner. Even if the supervisor cannot provide the official organizational policy to an employee, s/he should listen to the employee’s needs and respect the employee’s situation. In fact, supervisor supportive behaviors themselves have been found to negatively relate to work-family conflict and detrimental outcomes (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Lastly, in order to encourage the transfer of this supervisor training to the workplace, organizations need to reward supervisors who act in such a manner. This may be done by formal recognition, promotions, prime assignments, vacation time, or other valued resources.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Family-friendly policies are not a fad. They attempt to answer a real societal need. Likewise, the concern about fairness perceptions is also very real, and this chapter attempts to provide the means to understand this concern and address the issue. The changing nature of the economic market means that getting women to work is an economic necessity (Auerbach, 1990), for both the national economy as well as the family finances. In families with children, both spouses usually need to work to maintain a desirable level of income. These families need policies which will provide care for the children, both in ways which will allow the parents to work without worry (segmentative policies), and be available for their children (integrative policies). Thus, it is not a question of whether organizations should provide these policies or not, but how. Justice literature provides some clue to why organizations have been hesitant to openly embrace family-friendly policies, and also what can make the policies more successful. The lack of a theoretical framework for family-friendly research is a limitation discussed by other authors (i.e., Dalton & Mesch, 1990). This paper aimed to provide such a framework. Hopefully, future
research can help organizations adopt policies which meet the needs of their employees in the most fair and effective way possible.
Footnotes

3 Fernandez (1990), p. 185.
4 Fernandez (1990), p. 185.
5 Perlow (1995), pg. 228
6 Peters et al. (1990), p. 39
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