

Current Directions in Organizational Justice

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Abstract

The study of organizational justice, with its long and rich history, remains vibrant today. The aim of this article is to provide a “snapshot” of current directions. I set the stage by providing a brief sketch of the past, then I highlight two paradigm shifts—studying justice as a dependent variable and studying justice as a dynamic phenomenon—and show how these are changing how scholars think about and study justice in the workplace. Finally, I suggest one possible direction for the future—to actively investigate why and how injustice persists in the workplace. Altogether, scholars are launching exciting approaches for future research on managers’ justice actions, the subjectivity of fairness perceptions, temporal dynamics, and dyadic/multi-party influence processes. Overall, the organizational justice literature is broadening its scope and depth, and making increasing contact with other related research domains, a positive trend that should continue to be developed in the future.

150 words

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Public significant Statement: This article presents a broad overview of the past, present, and future of the scholarly research on justice and fairness in work organizations. It highlights two current directions that are changing how scholars think about and study fairness in the workplace, and points to key future research directions.

Current Directions in Organizational Justice

In work organizations, employees seek to be treated fairly and employers strive to be just. Consequently, questions of justice and fairness¹ are fundamental. Organizational justice—the study of fairness in the workplace—has a long and rich history of theory development and empirical research. After decades of scholarly research, there is no doubt that justice in the workplace matters: There is a vast literature documenting the effects of justice perceptions on key work attitudes and behaviours. We know that perceptions of justice are positively associated with outcomes such as organizational commitment, trust in management, task performance, and citizenship behaviours, and inversely related to burnout, workplace deviance, and other counterproductive reactions (e.g., meta-analytic reviews, Colquitt et al., 2013; Rupp et al., 2014).

Given the sheer volume of the literature, one might think that there is not much more to be learned. On the contrary, the justice literature continues to grow and remains vibrant. In this article, after setting the stage with a brief sketch of the past, I highlight two paradigm shifts that are changing the way that scholars think about organizational justice and consequently helping to define the questions that we are asking. In particular, past research has focused on demonstrating the effects of justice perceptions on work attitudes and behaviours, and has treated justice as a static construct, whereas more recent emphasis has shifted to the antecedents of justice actions and to justice as a dynamic process. These current directions will

¹ Historically, these terms have been used interchangeably although scholars have argued more recently for distinguishing them, as I will discuss later. For consistency with the literature, I use the terms as used in the original articles. In my own arguments, I try to incorporate the recent distinction.

continue to stimulate innovative theoretical and practical insights into the future. My aim is to call attention to these trends broadly, thus my coverage is in no way meant to be comprehensive. Overall, I will argue that organizational justice scholarship is broadening its scope and depth, and that this very positive trend should continue to be developed in the future. In particular, I will suggest the need for greater integration with other bodies of justice-related research that offer new ways of thinking about justice processes.

Historical Highlights

In their overview of the preceding four decades of justice research, Colquitt et al. (2005) described four major “waves” that defined the field from the early 1950s to the early 2000s— (1) the distributive justice wave, which characterized early research focused on the fairness of resource distributions; (2) the procedural justice wave, which shifted emphasis to the fairness of the methods used to make decisions; (3) the interactional justice wave, which focused on authorities’ interpersonal behaviours while planning and implementing decisions; and (4) the integrative wave, which sought to combine the justice constructs by examining their joint effects on employee attitudes and behaviours. In the early 2000s, interactional justice was further differentiated into informational justice (which emphasizes the adequacy of explanations) and interpersonal justice (which emphasizes the quality of interpersonal communication).

Over the course of these four waves, theory and research were primarily concerned with addressing two questions. First, why do people care about justice? Several major perspectives emerged and have evolved. In brief, justice matters because it fulfills people’s need for control (the instrumental model; Thibaut & Walker, 1975), it promotes self-regard and

group identity (the group-value, relational, group-engagement models; e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Blader, 2003), it reduces uncertainty (fairness heuristic theory, uncertainty management model; e.g., Lind, 2001; Lind & Van den Bos, 2002), and it is valued as an end in itself (Folger, 2001). Second, how do people appraise justice in the workplace? Emphasis was placed on describing the normative standards or “rules” by which employees appraise distributive, procedural, informational, and interpersonal justice (see Colquitt, 2001).

Together, these four waves of justice scholarship were characterized by efforts to distinguish and differentiate distributive, procedural, and interactional (informational and interpersonal) justice. By the early 2000s, consensus was emerging that justice is a multi-dimensional construct, and a standard indirect measure was created to assess perceptions of adherence to distributive, procedural, informational, and interpersonal justice rules (Colquitt, 2001), more recently expanded to assess justice rule violation as well (Colquitt et al., 2015). This measure is *indirect* because it assesses the specific justice rules rather than directly assessing perceptions of fairness (for review of measurement, see Colquitt & Rodell, 2015).

Two other related foundational distinctions emerged around the turn of the century which further clarified and consolidated the literature. First, researchers recognized that people not only evaluate justice with reference to outcomes, procedures, and interpersonal treatment, but that they also do so more holistically—as when they perceive a *global* sense of fairness—and a standard *direct* measure of overall justice was published (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009) to assess people’s global perceptions of fairness. Second, researchers recognized that people evaluate justice in reference to specific events, such as a performance evaluation or a layoff, and in reference to the people and organizations (social entities) whom they hold accountable

for upholding or for violating justice (the event vs. entity distinction, see Cropanzano et al., 2001). Typically, researchers assess event justice perceptions using the indirect measure of the four justice dimensions and they assess entity justice with the direct measure of overall justice.

Organizational justice scholars have learned much about why employees care about justice, how justice affects work attitudes and behaviours, and how employees appraise justice. But there still is much to be learned. In the next sections, I will highlight two current directions that are raising new questions and new ways of thinking about justice—studying justice as the dependent variable and studying justice as a dynamic construct. My goal is to give the flavour of these trends and to highlight some of the intriguing current directions. Ultimately, research in these two paradigms is interconnected, as will become increasingly clear in the future. Table 1 summarizes the focal current directions and lists a few illustrative articles.

Current Directions: Two Paradigm Shifts

1. Studying Justice as the Dependent Variable

The majority of research prior to the 2000s sought to demonstrate the effects of justice perceptions on work outcomes. Thus, justice was conceptualized as the independent (causal) variable. More recently the literature has studied the *antecedents* of justice, thereby conceptualizing justice as the dependent variable. In fact, so robust is this theme that Brockner and colleagues (2015) designated it as the “fifth wave” of organizational justice scholarship, following the framing of Colquitt et al. (2005). Brockner et al. (2015) described nine different ways in which researchers have studied justice as a dependent variable. Two that are attracting considerable attention are highlighted here.

1.1. Determinants of Managers' Justice Actions

What factors influence managers' adherence to—or violation of—justice rules? In this line of research, the dependent variable is managers' justice actions. Researchers have examined a range of variables (for review, see Graso et al., 2020), many of which pertain to characteristics of the manager, such as traits and values that predispose some managers to uphold justice rules more than other managers (e.g., trait emphatic concern; Patient & Skarlicki, 2010). Scholars have also developed conceptual models to describe the cognitive and affective motives that influence managers' justice actions (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Scott et al., 2009). Of course, being inclined to be fair by disposition or even being motivated to be fair is not enough—managers must possess the self-regulatory capacity to engage in justice actions and be aware of their justice behaviors (Whiteside & Barclay, 2016). They must also have the cognitive capacity to take the perspective of the justice recipient (Holt et al., in press). Context also matters; for example, Sherf et al. (2019) demonstrated that when managers have a high workload, justice actions are deprioritized unless the organization explicitly rewards these actions.

In addition to manager characteristics and situational influences, research provides another important observation—that managers' justice actions are shaped by attributes of the *justice recipients* themselves. Indeed, one of the first empirical studies on justice actions (Korsgaard et al., 1998) showed that performance appraisers acted in a more interactionally just manner when the recipients were more versus less assertive. Since then, studies have shown that managers' justice actions are shaped by the behaviour (e.g., Koopman et al., 2015; Oc et al., 2015), personality (e.g., Huang et al., 2017), and trustworthiness (Zhao et al., 2015) of

recipients. These findings indicate that employees have the power to shape managers' justice actions. Historically, the literature took a one-sided view of the manager-employee social exchange relationship: Justice was something that employees received and responded to in terms of work attitudes and behaviors. More recently, it is becoming clearer that employees are not merely "receivers": They also have upward influence (for review, see Graso et al., 2020). More generally, this line of research underscores the need to study justice recipients and justice actors together, a point to which I will return.

1.2. Foregrounding the Subjectivity of Fairness Perceptions

Another way that scholars have studied justice as a dependent variable is to ask: What factors influence people's perceptions of fairness? Thus, here, the dependent variable is operationalized as *fairness perceptions* (for review, see Brockner et al., 2015). Scholars have always recognized explicitly that fairness is "in the eye of the beholder." When we say that a person has treated us unfairly, we are saying that they have violated some standard(s) of social conduct that we believe they *should* have honoured (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). Thus, what is "fair" is subjective and socially constructed, which helps to explain why people often disagree about fairness. Nevertheless, this subjectivity often was relegated to the background at the turn of the millennium when the focus was on distinguishing justice dimensions and describing the normative rules by which people appraise justice.

In recent years, researchers are foregrounding the subjectivity of justice by delving into the psychological states and motivations of perceivers that shape their perceptions of fairness, beyond justice rule adherence. As one illustration, Bianchi and Brockner (2012) found that people's perceptions of procedural and interactional fairness were positively influenced by

their trait levels of trust (i.e., the extent to which they are generally trusting of others)—even when exposed to identical justice-related information. Similarly, Rodell et al. (2017) found that charismatic supervisors are perceived as fairer overall even after controlling for supervisor adherence to justice rules. Barclay and colleagues (Barclay et al., 2017) offered a motivated cognition perspective in which they highlighted the rich interplay between perceiver motives, affect, and cognitions as influences on fairness perceptions, thereby setting the stage for future research.

Like research on managers' justice actions, research on employees' fairness perceptions offers a picture of employees as active processors of justice-related information rather than as passive recipients. One key implication of this line of research is that employees' fairness perceptions do not solely depend on managers' justice actions. This is a crucial point for both practice and research because it has often come to be implicitly presumed that *adherence to justice rules* and *fairness perceptions* are the same construct. Indeed, Rupp and colleagues (Rupp et al., 2017, p. 940) have suggested that collectively the field may have engaged in construct reification whereby we treat "our evolved operationalization of justice as though it represents the actual phenomenon of experiencing justice" (also see Cropanzano et al., 2015).

To emphasize this point, scholars have begun to advocate distinguishing the terms "justice" and "fairness," defining justice in terms of whether normative rules or standards are perceived to be upheld or violated (e.g., "did your manager provide an opportunity for voice?"), and fairness perceptions in terms of the subjective evaluation of the rules² (e.g., "is the decision

² It is worth noting that of course *justice rule adherence and violation* are also measured as *perceptions*, which means that they too are open to subjective interpretation. This is itself an avenue for future research.

procedure fair?, “is my organization fair?”; see Barclay et al., 2017; Goldman & Cropanzano, 2015). Recognizing explicitly that adherence to justice rules and fairness perceptions are not the same construct opens new avenues for research adopting a person-centric approach (for reviews, see Guo et al., 2011; Rupp, 2011). In this approach, the goal is to examine the nature of fairness as it is experienced and perceived by the employee using methodologies other than the standard survey scales (e.g., verbal protocol analysis, content analysis, physiological measures) that enable researchers to assess basic cognitive processes (attention, memory), affective patterns, and behavioral responses *in situ* and over time.

It is worth highlighting too that research determining the set of justice rules has remained relatively limited until recently. For example, organizational justice scholarship defines distributive justice very narrowly—as employee perceptions that outcomes are proportional to their contributions. But equity is only one of multiple distributive justice rules, with others including equality and need (for review, see Törnblom & Kazemi, 2015). Thus, one path in the person-centric approach in the future will be to examine how employees experience and use justice rules. Recent conceptual (e.g., Cropanzano et al., 2015; Rupp et al., 2017) and empirical work (see Fortin et al., 2020) provides important directions forward.

2. Studying Justice as a Dynamic Construct

The dominant research paradigm in the past has treated justice as a static phenomenon—that is, research has examined relations between justice and work outcomes within a narrow window of time and only at the between-person level. Therefore, we know that employees who perceive more justice respond better (e.g., are more committed) compared to employees who perceive less justice (e.g., see Colquitt et al., 2013; Rupp et al.,

2014). Nevertheless, scholars have always recognized that perceptions at any given point in time are likely to be influenced by past justice experiences and by future justice expectations. Only more recently are researchers theorizing explicitly about time and systematically incorporating time—and patterns of stability or change over time—into empirical research. Facilitating this shift, the current literature is characterized by advances in research methodology including longitudinal and experience-sampling designs that allow examination of temporal dynamics. Researchers have begun to incorporate time into the study of justice in many intriguing ways (for review, see Fortin et al., 2016) only two of which I can single out here due to space constraints.

2.1. Focus on Recipients: Within-Person Variability and Justice Histories

Much of the research on recipients has been stimulated by fairness heuristic theory and the closely allied uncertainty management theory (for review, see Lind & Van den Bos, 2002), because these approaches explicitly theorize about the role of time and in particular about how employees aggregate justice information. A central assumption is that people are motivated to quickly form a holistic impression of the fairness of decision-making authorities (or of the organization as a whole) to help them to manage uncertainty about whether they can trust the authorities. Moreover, once formed, overall justice judgments should be relatively stable over time leading people to assimilate or to overlook subsequent variations in justice-related information. Only when faced with major events that raise uncertainty should people be motivated to reformulate their overall justice judgments.

But a more complex picture has emerged. Holtz and Harold (2009) found considerable within-person variance in overall justice perceptions across a four-month period, challenging

the idea that overall justice perceptions are stable in the absence of major change. Other studies have shown significant within-person variation in justice perceptions over much shorter time intervals: Even daily levels of interpersonal and informational justice predict work attitudes (e.g., Loi et al., 2009). Adding yet more nuance, Matta et al. (2017) have demonstrated that variability in justice perceptions matters beyond mean levels of justice in the same time period. Strikingly, people who were treated fairly sometimes and unfairly other times experienced greater stress than did people who were treated consistently unfairly over the same time period (despite the mean level of justice being higher in the variable group than in the consistent group). Matta et al. (2020) have gone on to demonstrate that variability in justice perceptions negates the usual beneficial effect of mean levels of justice on cooperative behaviour.

Taken together, these studies challenge the view that employees overlook everyday justice events. Short-term fluctuations in interpersonal justice are impactful because they lead employees to feel uncertain about how fairly they will be treated in the future. Consequently, more research is needed to examine how perceivers aggregate justice-related information over time, and what leads them to reformulate their overall justice perceptions. Several conceptual papers offer paths forward (see Jones & Skarlicki, 2013; Rupp & Paddock, 2010) and empirical work is emerging (e.g., Soenen et al., 2017) but this is a key direction for the future.

It is interesting to consider a converging line of work on dynamic justice effects. In addition to their current levels of justice, employees are influenced by the longer-term patterns of their justice histories. Hausknecht et al. (2011) drew on Gestalt characteristics theory to examine employees' past justice trends—that is, whether they have experienced increasing,

decreasing, or constant levels of justice over the course of one year—revealing that justice trends exert unique effects on work attitudes—over and above current justice levels.

Rubenstein et al. (2019) recently extended these findings by examining the interaction between present justice perceptions and past justice trends. They found that employees' past distributive and procedural justice experiences contextualize their reactions to current levels of justice, such that the beneficial effects of current justice perceptions on work behaviours are stronger among employees with improving justice trends. Of note, their study was conducted over four years, indicative of the extent to which experiences of justice and injustice can persist over the long term.

Among other things, research on daily justice variability and on past justice trends suggests that employees are in some way “keeping score” in memory of their justice experiences both in the short-term and in the longer-term, and that current levels of justice are contextualized by short-term variability in one's experiences and by longer-term trends in their past experiences. A promising direction for the future is to study factors that influence employees' memories of justice-related information.

2.2. Other Perspectives: Actor and Dyadic/Multi-Party Dynamics

To date, much of the research on temporal dynamics of justice has been conducted from the recipient perspective but, importantly, research has begun to examine dynamic effects from the actor perspective. As one illustration, Scott et al. (2014) examined the role of justice motives in shaping managers' daily justice behaviors and found high within-person variability in justice actions. So rather than thinking of some managers as always being more just than others, it will also be important to consider justice enactment from a within-person

perspective. Researchers have also begun to examine consequences of managers' justice actions, revealing that engaging in justice actions may have both costs and benefits. For example, Johnson et al. (2014) found that managers who had engaged in procedural justice actions on one day felt more mentally drained and unfocused the next day, and engaged in fewer citizenship behaviours. However, engaging in interpersonal justice behaviours had the opposite effect: Actors felt more replenished mentally and engaged in greater citizenship behaviours. It will be imperative to continue to examine the consequences of engaging in justice-related actions both for the actors themselves and for those with whom they interact.

Of course, the recipient and actor perspectives can be combined: Another way to study justice as a dynamic construct is to incorporate *dyadic*, or multi-party, justice processes. Employees' justice experiences involve interactions with at least one other person that occur over time. Prior justice literature has focused on these parties in isolation from each other, not considering how managers and employees influence one another in a dynamic, dyadic process over time. Although some justice scholars have recognized the dyadic perspective in past conceptual work (e.g., Bies, 1987; Cooper & Scandura, 2012), systematic research is lacking. Whiteside and Barclay (2015) proposed a dyadic approach to study conflicting perceptions of fairness between managers and employees, a perspective which will be important in spurring future empirical work.

Directions for the Future: Connecting with Other Domains of Justice-Related Research

Clearly the present paradigms and the streams of research within them will continue to shape the literature for the foreseeable future. Along the way, I mentioned just a few important immediate directions. Moreover, the present paradigms will become increasingly

intertwined as researchers incorporate temporal and dyadic dynamics into the study of managers' justice actions and people's fairness perceptions. Indeed, in the future we will likely look back on dynamism in its many forms as the defining feature of the "sixth wave" of organizational justice scholarship. But where else might or should research go in the longer term? Despite there being many specific roads to travel, I will conclude by suggesting the need to increase our ties with outside literatures, especially those that offer new ways of thinking about justice processes.

There has always been a strong connection between organizational justice theory and theory and research in other topic areas in psychology and in the organizational sciences. Equity theory was rooted in basic psychological theory on social comparison; the group value model derived from social identity theory; fairness theory grew out of research on counterfactual reasoning; and fairness heuristic theory connects closely with research on dual process models of cognition (for reviews, see Bobocel & Gosse, 2015; Colquitt et al. 2005; Cropanzano et al., 2001). Nevertheless, as justice constructs and theory proliferated, the field turned inward, with researchers focusing on distinguishing and differentiating justice dimensions, and on testing justice theory of the day.

More recently, there has been a healthy resurgence in connecting with outside literatures to move justice scholarship forward. In fact, this is a defining feature of research highlighted in the previous sections, with researchers examining justice through novel conceptual lenses, including far greater appreciation of the role of emotions and affect than was true historically, coupled with a rise in social exchange theorizing (see Colquitt et al., 2013; Rupp et. al., 2014). Despite current healthy cross-fertilization, more should be done in the

future to actively connect with other bodies of justice-related research that offer different—and sometimes competing—views on justice processes. Consider two illustrations.

Research on stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and diversity. These topics are fundamentally about justice for all, without consideration of race, gender, age, and other distinctions. Yet these literatures and organizational justice scholarship have evolved separately and have remained relatively disconnected overall (for review, see Kulik & Li, 2015). Both bodies of scholarship have much to gain from greater integration. To date, organizational justice scholarship has largely focused on people (actors, recipients, and observers) as individuals rather than as members of collectives. That is, researchers have studied the implications of justice and injustice without regard to social category membership of recipients, actors, and observers. Yet recent organizational justice research is revealing that the social identity (race, age, gender) of justice actors can indeed matter (Caleo, 2016, 2018; Marques et al., 2017; Mu et al., 2020; Varty et al., 2020; Zapata et al., 2016). For example, Zapata et al. (2015) found that, relative to Caucasian managers, Black and Hispanic managers face bias when they *adhere to* justice rules. Mu et al. (2020) found that female managers face greater relational penalties relative to male managers when they *violate* justice rules. Much more research is needed in this realm but already such findings have implications for organizational justice theory as well as disturbing practical implications for the career trajectories of minority group member managers.

As another illustration of discrimination, Belliveau (2012) found that under conditions in which managers could offer social accounts (explanations) to justify low pay, they paid women less than men. She demonstrated that this was due to managers' beliefs that women value

accounts as substitutes for pay because accounts/explanations increase procedural fairness perceptions, which they believed are more motivating for women than men. This work suggests that in some conditions managers who behave fairly by upholding informational and procedural justice can simultaneously inadvertently create distributive injustice. When and how might adhering to procedural, informational, or interpersonal justice undermine distributive justice rule adherence? Organizational justice researchers have not yet examined within-person justice action “trade off” effects but this possibility, and the psychological mechanisms that underlie it, should be explored.

Research on the dark side of justice motivation. By and large, organizational justice scholarship assumes that people are motivated and readily able to perceive unfairness (whether directed at themselves or at others) and that they respond negatively to unfairness by for example reducing their commitment or engaging in less citizenship behavior, or by punishing the justice violator. However, a different picture emerges from much social psychological justice research which shows that people often rationalize injustice, ironically because of a basic motivation (need) to believe that their world is just (Lerner, 1977; for review, see Bobocel & Hafer, 2007). In the same vein, system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994) argues that people are fundamentally motivated to perceive the external systems to which they belong in a positive light because it is psychologically threatening to acknowledge that they are participants in an unfair or flawed system. As a result, people often downplay injustice or bolster positive aspects of the system, or both. Surprisingly, these effects are observed even among people who are disadvantaged by the system (for review, see Proudfoot & Kay, 2014).

These literatures are important to integrate because they offer new ways of thinking about organizational justice. In particular, the findings suggest that employees may sometimes be *motivated to avoid perceiving unfairness*. This can suggest new lines of research into the study of how injustice in the workplace may be perpetuated. It can be disturbing to think that one's workplace or one's manager is unfair, so people may be motivated to downplay—and even to fail to notice—instances of justice rule violation directed at oneself or at others. If so, unjust actions by managers can go unchecked, persisting into the future. This desire to downplay unfairness can also explain why employees may be unsympathetic to coworkers who claim that they have been treated unfairly, again the consequence being that unjust actions suffered by coworkers persist.

Some scholars have begun to incorporate ideas from system justification into existing organizational justice theory (Plunkett Tost & Lind, 2010; Proudfoot & Lind, 2015), but empirical work is lacking. System justification research has identified several conditions that heighten people's motivation to justify the system (and therefore to rationalize injustice), such as when they feel very dependent on the system or perceive low personal control (for review, see Proudfoot & Kay, 2014) which can guide workplace research. Interestingly, system justification research suggests that there could be negative consequences of entity (overall) justice perceptions. In conditions that heighten employees' motivation to justify the system (e.g., when they feel that they have no alternative job options), employees may be especially likely to rationalize instances of justice rule violations if they also believe that their organization is fair overall. That is, entity justice perceptions could amplify system justification effects, a possibility not yet explored.

Both of the areas of research that I have discussed in this section ultimately shed light on how and why inequalities and inequities come to exist. It is certainly understandable that historically organizational justice scholarship has been motivated by the fundamentally important practical question: How can we make workplaces more just? But the foregoing makes clear that this goal is much more multi-faceted than it first appears. In the future, therefore, we must actively address a related practical question: What factors and processes create injustice and cause it to persist in organizations?

Summary and Conclusion

As noted at the outset, this article is not intended as a comprehensive review of the literature, thus I certainly could not “do justice” to all that has been accomplished. After decades of research, we simply know far too much for any single review. Yet remarkably the literature continues to grow and remains extremely vibrant, a tribute both to the complexity of the issues and the creativity of the researchers.

In this article, I have provided a brief sketch of the past, and then highlighted two current paradigm shifts that are changing how scholars think about and study organizational justice, and the questions that they are asking. Current emphasis is on studying the antecedents of justice and on studying justice as a dynamic phenomenon. These current directions are opening exciting avenues for future research on the determinants of managers’ justice actions, the subjectivity of fairness perceptions, temporal dynamics, and the study of dyadic/multi-party influence processes. Finally, I have suggested that organizational justice scholarship should continue to evolve by connecting with other domains of investigation, for example research on stereotyping and discrimination, and social justice research on the dark side of justice

motivation. Such evolution will help all scholars to more fully address the problem of how and why injustice persists in the workplace.

The volume of the prior literature no doubt can be daunting to newcomers. But it should also be reassuring to know that there is still much more to learn. My goal in this article has been to provide the flavour of the current literature as well as a taste of some of the exciting roads we have yet to travel. From childhood, we all come to place a very high value on being treated fairly and on being fair to others. That most of our adult lives is spent working makes the study of organizational justice all the more fascinating and important. As the workplace and society change, so too should our scholarship.

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Table 1

Summary of Current Directions with Illustrative Articles

Current Direction	Illustrative Article	Primary Contribution
1. Justice as the Dependent Variable	Brockner et al. (2015)	Calls attention to the “fifth wave” of justice research. Organizes research in a 3 x 3 classification scheme, revealing nine ways that researchers have studied and can continue to study justice as the dependent variable.
1.1. Determinants of Managers’ Justice Actions	Graso et al. (2020)	Qualitative review of 44 published studies that examine justice enactment from the actor perspective. Integrates existing streams of research and empirical findings; identifies future directions.
1.2. Subjectivity of Fairness Perceptions	Barclay et al. (2017)	Integrative conceptual review highlighting the subjective nature of fairness perceptions by drawing on insights from motivated cognition literature. Integrates existing justice theory and research and generates new directions for research on fairness processes.
	Rupp et al. (2017)	Historical review and critique of the current conceptualization and measurement of organizational justice. Identifies key “roads not taken” and offers new approaches to assessing workplace fairness.
	Goldman & Cropanzano (2015)	Paper advocating for the need to treat “justice” and “fairness” as distinct concepts.
2. Justice as a Dynamic Construct	Fortin et al. (2016)	Qualitative review of 194 justice studies with temporal aspects, organized along three questions regarding the influence of time. Identifies key avenues for empirical research and justice theorizing.

2.1. Focus on Recipients: Within-Person Variability and Justice Histories

Holtz & Harold (2009)

One of the first studies to assess changes in overall justice across 3 points in time over 4 months, showing significant within-person variability.

Matta et al. (2017)

Examines effects of daily variability in supervisory justice. Introduces the concept of justice variability, to capture between-person differences in the stability of supervisory justice perceptions over time, revealing effects on uncertainty and stress beyond mean levels of justice.

Jones & Skarlicki (2013)

Conceptual paper presenting a dynamic model of organizational justice which describes a cyclical process in which entity and event justice perceptions shape each other in turn.

Rubenstein et al. (2019)

Examines the interactive effects of current justice levels and past justice changes for predicting social exchange behaviors across 4 points in time over 4 years, revealing that reactions to current levels are contextualized by past trends.

2.2. Other Perspectives: Actor & Dyadic/Multi-Party Dynamics

Scott et al. (2014)

Daily diary study examining the relations between cognitive and affective motives for predicting manager justice rule adherence as a function of their perceived discretion over justice actions.

Johnson et al. (2014)

Experience sampling study examining the effect of enacting procedural and interpersonal justice on managers' regulatory resources and citizenship behaviors.

Whiteside & Barclay (2015)

Conceptual chapter that presents a framework for understanding manager-employee conflict from a dynamic, dyadic perspective. Sets an agenda for future research.

Note. The articles are listed in the order in which they are discussed in text.