Electronic Workplace Surveillance:

Notification of electronic workplace surveillance: Privacy and fairness reactions across high and low discretion tasks

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Electronic Workplace Surveillance

• American Management Association (2000): Nearly ¾ of all employers electronically monitor worker communication; 54% monitor Internet use
• Justice considerations: Fair implementation and warning given? (Ambrose & Alder, 2000)
• Privacy concerns: Do employees have control over information before monitoring? (Bies, 1993)
Why do Justice & Privacy Matter?

• Proc. Justice is linked to greater worker satisfaction with allocation decisions
  – Pay satisfaction; job satisfaction
• Invasion of Privacy related to negative worker reactions
  – Related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intentions

Research Questions

• Does the discretionary nature of the worker’s job affect their perceptions of fairness and invasion of privacy under electronic surveillance?
• Does advance notice of electronic surveillance affect perceptions of fairness and invasion of privacy?
• Do these two factors interact?
Research Program

• We are now testing these questions under various conditions
  – Scenario Study (Complete)
  – Laboratory Studies
  – Field Scenario Studies
• Preliminary results indicate support for our hypotheses…

The Scenario Study

• A scenario study; Ss were management grad students and upper division undergraduates (N=93)
• Workers were “managers in marketing department of nationally recognized retailer”
• 3x2 factorial design
  – IV = Notice = Post, Weak, Strong
  – IV = Task Discretion = High, Low
The Variables

• IV: Advance Notice
  – Post = Ss informed of surveillance after working
  – Weak = Ss informed of surveillance @ hire
  – Strong = Ss informed at each login
• IV: Task Discretion
  – High = Jobs involved unstructured work; boundary spanning activities
  – Low = Jobs involved carrying out rigid procedures little choice/latitude in implementation

Dependent Variables

• Perceived Procedural Justice
  – Used 3-item measure (α=.85)
    • Sample: “Overall, the policies and practices of my organization are fair”
• Perceived Invasion of Privacy
  – Used 10-item scale (α = .92) (Alge, in press; Eddy, Stone & Stone-Romero, 1999)
The Results

- H1: Advance Notice had significant effect on perceived fairness & invasion of privacy
- H2: Task Discretion had significant effect on invasion of privacy but not fairness
- H3: Notice X Discretion interaction significant for fairness but not privacy invasion

Estimated Marginal Means of Fairness

![Estimated Marginal Means of Fairness](image-url)
Implication of Results

• Who You’re Monitoring Matters
  – Workers w/higher freedom on the job will react more negatively to Internet monitoring

• Advance Notice of Monitoring Helps…
  – Can prevent abuses
  – Enhances all workers’ perceptions of fairness
  – Helps prevent negative outcomes

Discussion and Extensions

• A first step into efforts to determine how job level impacts surveillance-related perceptions
• Limitation: Scenario Study
  – Used frequently in privacy research (cf. Stone & Kotch, 1988)
• Positive results achieved with student sample; call for future research where conditions are actually “experienced” & work in organizational settings
• Public Policy - NEMA