

HUMAN RESOURCE SYSTEMS AND HELPING IN ORGANIZATIONS: A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes linkages between human resource (HR) systems, relational climates, and employee helping behavior. We suggest HR systems promote relational climates varying in terms of the motivation and sustenance of helping behavior. HR systems are expected to indirectly influence the nature of relationships and the character of helping within organizations. By considering HR systems and their respective relational climates together, a better understanding of expectations and dynamics surrounding helping behavior can emerge.

At the heart of theoretical and empirical work on helping behavior in organizations is the notion that organizations often depend on such behaviors to deal with non-routine aspects of work. Helping behavior is a robust predictor of group and organizational performance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000), and has become more important in light of movement toward greater employee involvement (e.g., Boxall & Macky, 2009), interactive work structures (e.g., Frenkel & Sanders, 2007), and human resource flexibility within organizations (e.g., Beltrán-Martín, Roca-Puig, Escrig-Tena, & Bou-Llusar, 2008). As helping behavior involves actions by which individuals positively affect others, much organizational research has sought to identify its immediate dispositional and situational antecedents. Less work has been devoted toward establishing broader mechanisms organizations can use to harness these antecedents (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). Thus, although current research offers guidance regarding individual level influences on helping behavior, it is less informative as to how organizations should promote and sustain helping between employees.

In this paper, we propose that strategic human resource (HR) systems can serve as a broad-based influence on helping behavior within organizations. This argument is consistent with the behavioral perspective of strategic HR, which argues HR systems influence organizational performance by eliciting and controlling employee behaviors (Jackson, Schuler, & Rivero, 1989). Establishing conceptual linkages between HR systems and employee helping behavior could offer a more coherent understanding of how helping can be facilitated in varying circumstances. Strategic HR scholars have argued that through appropriate HR systems, organizations can influence employee behaviors and build social capital as a potential source of competitive advantage (e.g., Collins & Smith, 2006; Evans & Davis, 2005). Despite the stated importance of employee behaviors in such work, HR systems have been examined most often in connection with firm level outcomes rather than individual level behaviors like helping. Such work provides a conceptual basis for considering helping behavior, but it is less useful in uncovering intervening mechanisms that characterize and encourage helping. Because HR system effects often are described as occurring through individual level variables, researchers

have suggested a need to better understand HR systems' influence on employees and relationships formed among them (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Gerhart, 2005).

We describe three archetypal HR systems posited to exist in organizations and which could influence how employees relate and interact with one another. We use a meso level approach (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005) to link differing HR systems with employees' helping behavior. A key in this approach is recognizing intermediate socio-cognitive environments that stem from strategic HR systems, and then support conceptually distinct forms of interpersonal relationships among employees. Such environments, which we label as *relational climates*, influence how and why helping is likely to emerge and be sustained among employees. We argue HR systems are associated with particular relational climates, and offer propositions regarding dimensions central to describing the impetus and maintenance of helping within particular HR systems and their associated relational climates. After highlighting configurations of practices emblematic of specific HR systems, we characterize the nature and prevalence of helping behavior anticipated within them.

HUMAN RESOURCE SYSTEMS AND RELATIONAL CLIMATES

Helping has been described as interpersonal organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) that is affiliative, cooperative, and directed at other individuals (Flynn, 2006; Settoon & Mossholder, 2002; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). These qualities differentiate it from prosocial behaviors that are more challenging (e.g., voice), prohibitive (e.g., whistle blowing), or directed at the organization in general (e.g., civic virtue). Helping can be proactive as well as reactive (Grant, Parker, & Collins, 2009). Because of its discretionary roots, helping connotes relations among employees at similar rather than different hierarchical levels in the organization. Finally, helping behavior has been conceptualized as addressing both person- and task-focused needs (Dudley & Cortina, 2008). The former is more likely to entail personal problem-solving and emotional support, whereas the latter is more likely to involve instrumental assistance and informational support.

The decision to help is affected by a stream of evaluations that flow from relationships (Ames, Flynn, & Weber, 2004) and influence helping exchanges (Deckop, Cirka, & Andersson, 2003). Individuals determine the relevance of their helping behavior based in part on the problems and resolution opportunities afforded by their interpersonal circumstances. As such, managers seeking to influence the likelihood of helping in the organization should be aware of the broader relational climate in which their employees work. We offer that HR systems are a principal means by which managers affect relational climates, and empirical support for this notion has begun to surface. For example, Collins and Smith (2006) have shown that HR practices emphasizing employee commitment were positively related with climates for trust, cooperation, and knowledge sharing across a sample of high technology firms. Elsewhere, Takeuchi, Chen, and Lepak (2009) and Chuang and Liao (2010) found strategic HR systems affected employee perceptions of a concern-for-employees climate, with the latter study also showing that employee helping behavior was positively influenced by this climate. Finally, Sun, Aryee, and Law (2007) found high performance HR practices were positively correlated with firm-level service-oriented citizenship behavior, and suggested such behavior should affect norms that encourage helping among organization members.

Three Archetypal HR Systems

Lepak, Bartol, and Erhardt (2005) suggested focusing on the purpose of HR systems when defining them. Two contrasting archetypal alternatives, each representing a distinct approach to managing human resources, have been widely discussed. A compliance system views employees as extrinsically motivated commodities. As such, it seeks to establish control and efficiency in the administration and deployment of the workforce (Walton, 1985). Alternatively, a commitment system views employees and the organization as having a high regard for one another – much like family or clan members (Ouchi, 1980). Its goal is to elevate employee performance by bolstering this collective commitment. In addition to these two alternatives, Lepak and Snell (1999) have discussed a collaboration-based HR system, aspects of which entail more of a partnership with employees. Building on their reasoning, we

conceptualize a collaboration system as one in which employees are viewed as members in alliance with the organization. Using Lepak and Snell (1999) as our guide, we define each HR system in terms of elements supporting and reinforcing the characteristic employment relationship (i.e., whether the implied psychological contract between the organization and employees is transactional, balanced, or relational; see Rousseau, 1995) and employment mode (i.e., whether human capital acquisition and development is more internal or external to the organization). Although the three HR systems discussed are theoretically derived, research indicates there are strategic reasons for implementing them and empirical support for their existence in organizations (e.g., Arthur, 1994; Lepak & Snell, 2002; Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997).

We maintain that the emergent relational climate experienced by employees working within a particular HR system will be a function of the two system elements (i.e. employment relationship and employment mode) and practices enacted to operationalize these elements. HR practices have been discussed as having secondary signaling influences on employees' psychological contracts with organizations (e.g., Rousseau, 1995), and a recent comprehensive literature review concluded that HR practices substantially determine such contracts (Suazo, Martinez, & Sandoval, 2009). Research also suggests that in evaluating psychological contracts, employees rely on information from coworkers (Ho & Levesque, 2005). We are unaware of empirical evidence showing that HR systems directly affect employees' sensemaking about relationships with one another, but there is theoretical support for this notion (e.g., Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ferris, Arthur, Berkson, Kaplan, Harrell-Cook, & Frink, 1998). Researchers have also begun to uncover evidence that organizational systems intersecting with human resource goals can have this effect. For example, Frenkel and Sanders (2007) proposed that employee control systems reflecting employer-employee social partnerships should carry over to employee-employee relationships, and found such a system positively influenced coworker helping. Other researchers have argued relational governance mechanisms are associated with

greater employee cooperation, sense of community, and firm-specific human capital investments (Wang, He, & Mahoney, 2009).

We treat the three HR systems as archetypes, recognizing organizations can enact them to varying degrees. A given relational climate will be likely to emerge to the extent that an HR system more closely resembles one of these archetypes, as would be the case when major HR system elements—employment relationship, employment mode—and HR practices are coherently implemented (cf. Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). As explained below, a compliance HR system is likely to engender a market pricing climate. With a collaboration system, an equality matching relational climate is more likely to emerge. Finally, a commitment HR system is most likely to sustain a communal sharing climate. Accordingly, we assume it is the combination of HR system elements and practices that leads to the emergence of the relational climates rather than any one of them in isolation.

Relational Climates: Schema and Dimensions

Researchers have argued that HR systems can influence employee climate perceptions (e.g., Gelade & Ivery, 2003; Zacharatos, Barling, & Iverson, 2005) by symbolically signaling (Rousseau, 1995) and directly communicating (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) key organizational values and behaviors. Among organizational systems, HR systems impinge most directly upon employees in a collective sense because they are designed to manage the potential resource employees represent. Others have noted climate is a powerful social mechanism through which HR systems impact employees' values and behaviors, because it shapes what employees construe the systems to mean (Ferris et al., 1998; Ostroff & Bowen, 2000). Interestingly, scholars emphasize the collective social effects of HR systems, but have said little about their influence on the interpersonal connections employees develop as a result. Although some have recently turned in this direction by investigating HR systems links with a “concern for employees” climate (Chuang & Liao, 2010; Takeuchi et al., 2009), the focus still has not been on inherently relational behaviors like helping.

With regard to specific types of climate, scholars have long noted the importance of binding the climate construct to characteristics critical in understanding the associated focal behavior (e.g., Schneider, 1990). In accordance with this notion, *relational climate* refers to shared employee perceptions and appraisals of policies, practices, and behaviors affecting interpersonal relationships in a given context. Depending on the system, operational HR policies and procedures could encourage employees to develop close ties or ones that are guarded or tenuous. We suggest varying relational climates exist, as has been demonstrated with other facet-specific climates like service, safety, and ethics (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009). Congruent with an integrated approach to climate etiology (Schneider & Reichers, 1983), we view relational climate as beginning with structural aspects of HR systems (e.g., policies, procedures) which initialize and guide employee interactions. As employees interact under the influence of a particular HR system, sensemaking processes result in collective interpretations and norms that shape employee expectations for interpersonal relationships within the system. In essence, employees will perceive organizations to enact climates supportive of varying levels of interdependency and mutuality expected within such relationships. These qualities are central to a relational focus (Sun et al., 2007).

Scholars considering how relationships serve as a context for employee interactions (e.g., Blatt, 2009; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Sheppard & Sherman, 1998) have used Fiske's (1992) relational models theory to explicate how contextual differences can affect important organizational outcomes. Given that our focus is on *relational climate*, his framework provides a viable means for substantively differentiating among particular relational climates and, in turn, understanding connections between HR systems and helping behavior. Employing tenets of this theory, we focus on three relational climates that vary in terms of the antecedents and enactment of helping. Fiske (1992) posited four distinct relational forms—*market pricing*, *equality matching*, *communal sharing*, and *authority ranking*. Broad in scope and examined in a number of disciplines, they describe interpersonal activities such as how people understand and motivate each other in their relationships (Fiske & Haslam, 2005). These forms comprise cognitive

schemas individuals share regarding relationships (cf. Blatt, 2009), and as such, can be viewed as paralleling broader relational climates. Because our focus is on relationships between individuals of similar hierarchical status, and authority ranking concerns partners differing in power status, this form was excluded from consideration here.

Relationships occurring in a market pricing context are predicated largely on means-ends considerations. Consistent with game-theoretic perspectives, individuals in market pricing contexts are guided by a desire to optimize personal outcomes by engaging in relationships that appear to offer the best cost-benefit ratio (Murnighan, 1994). In equality matching contexts, relationships are founded on a sense of social obligation and of turn-taking in exchanges. Individuals' primary concern is whether relationships are balanced, and they attach importance to long-term equivalence (Buunk, Doosje, Jans, & Hopstaken, 1993; Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994). Finally, in communal sharing contexts, feelings of solidarity predominate. People blur individual distinctions in interactions over time, and the personal welfare of the other party is considered significant above self-concerns (Fiske & Haslam, 2005).

Although relational models theory provides a broad foundation for conceptualizing relational behavior within distinct relational climates, we further differentiate such climates using dimensions identified in the relevant literature as critical for helping in relationships. The emphasis on dimensions that employees weigh strongly in relationships is consistent with a problem-centered approach to studying relational phenomena (Bigley & Pearce, 1998). We argue this approach is useful when examining specific climate types, because it focuses on the criterion of interest and highlights what is unique about it (cf. Schneider, 1990). Thus, we reviewed research concerning helping in organizations, intending to identify actionable dimensions rather than develop an exhaustive list. Among the substantive areas reviewed were social capital (e.g., Adler & Kwon, 2002; Bolino, Turnley, & Bloodgood, 2002; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), psychological contracts (e.g., Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Rousseau, 1995, 2004), interpersonal relations (e.g., Penner et al., 2005; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003), interpersonal helping (e.g.,

Bowler & Brass, 2006; Flynn, 2006; Settoon & Mossholder, 2002), and relational capital (e.g., Blatt, 2009; Cousins, Handfield, Lawson, & Petersen, 2006).

Our grounding principle was that the dimensions be integral in effecting core relational processes of interdependency and mutuality (Sun et al., 2007). The dimensions identified involve the motivation for exchanges in the relationship, justice norms by which exchange fairness is weighed, risks that potentially undermine the relationship, and the basis for trust between parties. Briefly, underlying the genesis of helping exchanges are distinct motives for which employees enter into relationships (e.g., Rioux & Penner, 2001; Flynn, 2006). As the exchange of help is central to the relationship, partners attempt to gauge the fairness of this process against appropriate expectations or norms (e.g., Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Kabanoff, 1991; Molm, Collett, & Schaeffer, 2007). Because helping exposes employees to real as well as perceived risks (e.g., Molm, 1994; Sheppard & Sherman, 1998), mechanisms that increase the confidence one party has in the other also increase relationship stability. Trust development is perhaps the principal mechanism for this purpose (e.g., Malhotra, 2004; Sheppard & Sherman, 1998), making it critical for successful helping exchanges. Table 1 displays these dimensions and how they should differ across the three relational climates.

Insert Table 1 here

In separate sections below, we discuss the three HR systems and their associated relational climates in greater depth. We begin by describing the overall approach to managing and valuing employees in the given HR system, as well as its characteristic employment relationship and mode. We then address the relational climate expected to emerge as a result of the HR system. Because each climate encompasses distinct forms of interpersonal relationships, we expect helping to be initiated and sustained differently within them. To convey this notion, we use the dimensions central to interpersonal relationships, and offer propositions regarding these dimensions vis-à-vis the HR system and relational climate. Although these focal

dimensions are commonly examined at individual level, they can also define relational climates to the extent the HR system signals distinct and consistent messages about normative interpersonal processes (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Finally, we explore configurations of exemplary practices that could be used to operationalize an HR system to illustrate connections between such practices and helping behaviors. Based on these connections, we offer propositions regarding the relative prevalence and type of helping likely in the associated climate.

COMPLIANCE HR SYSTEMS: EFFECTING HELPING THROUGH A MARKET PRICING CLIMATE

A compliance HR system represents a view of employees that is consistent with Theory-X management approaches and divergent from the high investment approaches emerging in recent decades (Boxall & Macky, 2009; Walton, 1985). This system views employees as externally motivated and benefiting from appreciable monitoring and control. Well-specified rules and procedures are viewed as necessary for obtaining employee adherence to organizational goals and expectations. Moreover, employees represent an expense to be minimized by reducing direct labor costs and improving efficiency (Arthur, 1994). Although strategic HR researchers initially viewed compliance systems as less viable than the alternatives, recent work recognizes there might be circumstances under which they are suitable, such as when employees' skills have little firm specificity or equivalent labor is widely available (Lepak & Snell, 1999).

Because this system assumes necessary human capital is available in the marketplace, there is little incentive to pursue enduring employment relationships. The implied employment relationship (or psychological contract) is transactional (Rousseau, 1995), involving short-term relationships marked by economic inducements for prescribed contributions. The obligations of both the organization and employees are narrow and well defined (Tsui et al., 1997). Viewing employees as commodities suggests a primarily external employment mode in which the organization hires from the marketplace or contracts for services externally. With an emphasis on efficient access to human capital, there will be a greater acceptance of non-standard employees (e.g., part-time or contingent workers) as a means to obtain requisite knowledge, skills, and

abilities (KSAs). As such, there is little organizational incentive to develop employees internally.

Motivation and Sustenance Propositions

A compliance HR system implies links between the organization and its employees are short-term and characterized by minimal investment and transactional connections. Building on the reasoning that HR systems affect employee sensemaking regarding suitable inter-relationships, we propose that compliance HR systems will lead to a relational climate in which employees perceive relationships as useful in accomplishing goals when appropriate vigilance over outcomes can be maintained. This implicitly creates a level of interpersonal reserve among employees, limiting relational depth. Workplace exchanges can take on a halting quality, as each relational partner assesses whether efforts exerted are worth the personal benefits derived. Such behavior reflects a minimalist logic likely to be adopted by help-givers who evaluate exchanges primarily on means-end considerations (Bacharach, Bamberger, & McKinney, 2000). As such, we argue a compliance HR system will signal a market pricing climate. Encompassing distinct forms of interpersonal relationships, we expect helping to be initiated and sustained in ways specific to this climate.

An undercurrent of self-concern implies helping behavior will be motivated by work attitudes, career issues, and job considerations of an instrumental nature (see e.g., De Dreu, 2006; Perlow & Weeks, 2002). Help most likely will be exchanged when it is discreet (e.g., expressly for use by the recipient) and utilitarian (e.g., a problem is sufficiently resolved). Such exchanges will help sustain productive interpersonal relationships in market pricing climates because they fulfill minimal expectations for transient relationships (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). When exchange partners evaluate the utility of help received, each weighs the distribution of outcomes. However, because equity is the norm by which fairness is evaluated in market pricing climates, the relative ratio of inputs and outputs of each person is the key consideration rather than some absolute amount. Close social interactions occur less because, on a daily basis, employees must be concerned with their own rather than others' work goals and responsibilities. As such, judgments about the fairness of help exchanged are likely to be tied to the event level (Gillespie

& Greenberg, 2005), meaning that each exchange event will be assessed in terms of its instrumentality to the help giver. We therefore posit:

Proposition 1a: A compliance HR system will lead to a market pricing climate in which helping behavior is motivated by self-interest and perceived instrumentality.

Proposition 1b: A compliance HR system will lead to a market pricing climate in which helping behavior is judged according to the norm of equity and evaluated as fair when input-output ratios of exchange partners are perceived as similar.

An uppermost concern of help givers in market pricing climates is receiving an inadequate return on invested helping behavior. Helping coworkers can enhance personal and organizational status, but even successful help-givers can become burdened with responsibilities. Receiving help can place the beneficiary in a position of dependence on the help-giver (Bamberger, 2009). The lack of knowledge about others and accurate a priori assessments of the costs and rewards of helping are difficult, making relationships in market pricing climates less stable and more dependent on the outcomes of the last exchange. Because of the tenuous nature of interpersonal interactions in this climate, decisions to help will be based in part upon trust that is grounded in the direct benefits anticipated from the relationship. The threat of sanctions for trust violations and promise of rewards for expected behavior will be noticeable. Helping behavior that is reliable and sensitive to possible downsides mitigates uneasiness about the risks involved (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). When expectations about help-givers' competence are validated, recipients will more likely view them as trustworthy. Such calculus-based trust (Lewicki, Tomlinson, & Gillespie, 2006) reduces the perceived risk of unfavorable returns from the helping relationship. This form of trust should be considered fragile because generally it exists when parties have less history of interpersonal exchange. Ineffective helping behavior could erode calculus-based trust because of reduced recipient confidence in the help-giver's competence. Thus, we offer:

Proposition 1c: A compliance HR system will lead to a market pricing climate in which a principal risk of helping behavior is an insufficient return on invested behavior.

Proposition 1d: A compliance HR system will lead to a market pricing climate in which the type of trust most likely to develop between individuals who exchange helping behavior is calculus-based trust.

Compliance HR Practices: Prevalence and Focus of Helping

Thus far, we have addressed the relationship between compliance HR systems and market pricing relational climates in conceptual terms. Although such an approach is useful for broad theory building, it is less helpful from an operational perspective. As such, we exemplify the tenor of practices that would affect helping behavior in a compliance HR system (the same is done when we address subsequent HR systems below). In organizationally viable interpersonal relationships, a mix of task-relevant and interpersonal obligations is considered (Zohar & Tenne-Gazit, 2008). Therefore, one practical consideration would be to address whether helping behavior will be directed toward task- or person-focused needs. It is also reasonable to expect that HR systems could constrain or amplify the overall prevalence of helping that occurs among employees. We therefore offer propositions regarding the prevalence and type of helping most likely in a compliance HR system.

For purposes of illustration, we organize our discussion around four practice categories considered by many as central HR concerns: selection and staffing, training and development, work design features, and reward and appraisal systems (see, e.g., Arthur, 1994; Beltrán-Martín, Roca-Puig, Escrig-Tena, & Bou-Llusar, 2008; Paré & Tremblay, 2007; Toh, Morgeson, & Campion, 2008). Table 2 displays these practices, along with corresponding HR system elements and relational climates. There likely are multiple configurations by which an HR system could be realized and through which a particular relational climate could emerge. Although all possible HR practices are not discussed, the configuration illustrated would be expected to influence the nature and prevalence of helping among employees.

Insert Table 2 here

Because human resources in compliance HR systems tend to be acquired externally and have short-term relationships with the organization, typical selection practices emphasize technical competencies rather than social ones (Koch & McGrath, 1996). The weight given to technical competence and the higher likelihood of non-standard workers in compliance systems (e.g., part-time, contract) could reduce helping overall in the work force. Stamper and Van Dyne (2001) found that part-time employees engaged in fewer helping behaviors than did their full-time counterparts. They suggested fewer social inducements can be used with part-time workers, whose efforts therefore become focused on tangible organizational rewards. Additionally, because of the emphasis on efficient access to work-ready human capital in compliance HR systems, there is less concern for training and development (Snell & Dean, 1992). Organizations turn to in-house development only when the preferred alternative is not available, as could occur in a tight labor market. The absence of formal socialization mechanisms that address interpersonal expectations might also reduce overall helping.

Compliance system work designs will favor jobs that are independent, clearly defined, and highly prescribed such that employees have less process dependence on others in the organization. Task independence lessens employees' perceived need to help one another and could heighten competition for mobility opportunities. Supporting this notion, Wageman and Baker (1997) found task interdependence was inversely associated with interpersonal cooperative behavior, and Van der Vegt and Van de Vliert (2005) found peer-rated helping decreased under conditions of low task interdependence.

The emphasis on specified contributions implies compliance compensation practices will emphasize greater pay dispersion and quantifying employee outputs, which creates interpersonal competition for rewards (Shaw, Gupta, & Delery, 2002). Results-based rewards should direct employees toward their own specific work responsibilities and organizational goals (Kang, Morris, & Snell, 2007). As noted above, in market pricing climates, equity norms are used to judge fairness. In a recent experiment, Bamberger and Levi (2008) found that when incentives were awarded according to the norm of equity, less helping occurred. Emphasizing individual

rewards can also diminish non-instrumental exchanges that might stimulate eventual helping relationships. Consistent with the independent work design and behavior-based pay likely in market pricing climates, judgments evaluating employee activity will tend to focus on individual accomplishments (Connelley & Folger, 2004). Performance feedback will be more evaluative than developmental and, again, emphasize technical competence over social fit. This emphasis aids the organization in deciding which employees should be retained, but necessitates employee discretion in help seeking to avoid creating detrimental impressions of their competencies.

Considering this illustrative compliance practice configuration, we suggest inferences can be made regarding the relative prevalence and nature of helping likely in the emergent market pricing climate. Although not precluded, employees' helping behavior will occur on an occasional basis because work is designed to enable goal accomplishment through employees' own efforts rather than jointly with others. Considering the summative influence of these practices, we therefore posit:

Proposition 1e: Helping behavior in compliance HR systems and market pricing climates will be constrained.

Proposition 1f: Helping behavior in compliance HR systems and market pricing climates will be more task-focused than person-focused.

COLLABORATIVE HR SYSTEMS: EFFECTING HELPING THROUGH AN EQUALITY MATCHING CLIMATE

A collaboration HR system views cooperative, goal-oriented relationships between the organization and employees as necessary for organizational success. The organization requires specific employee contributions that cannot be fully realized without their willing acceptance of organizational goals, which is unlikely achieved through rules and control measures alone. Although a collaboration system has not been formally identified in the literature, precedents for it exist nonetheless. For instance, Walton (1985) discusses a transitional approach to managing employees that is neither as market-driven nor control-focused as in a compliance system, nor as broadly mutual as in a commitment HR system (which is discussed below). Likewise, Lepak and

Snell (1999) describe a collaborative HR configuration in which the organization protects against employee opportunism by incorporating vestiges of an instrumental approach while simultaneously seeking cooperation with employees. Systemic processes like these facilitate organizational investment in the partnership while encouraging employee trust and information sharing, much as organizations do when creating strategic alliances.

A collaboration system suggests employment relationships that reflect a balanced psychological contract having both transactional and relational attributes (Rousseau, 1995). To achieve balance, both parties must be open to exchanging information regarding employee input opportunities and outcome needs (Rousseau, 2004). This employment relationship requires the organization and employee to strive toward common interests. As such, the organization might seek largely transactional but less transitional relationships with non-standard employees. An example would be a reliance on contract employees, who work on-site for the organization over an extended period and begin to view themselves as partners with the organization (Cascio & Aguinis, 2008). Alternatively, the organization might develop deeper relationships with standard employees, yet maintain an understanding for ending them should conditions require it. The relationships in both these examples are more durable arrangements than those likely in a compliance system.

Just as employment relationships in a collaboration HR system comprise a balance of elements, so too does the employment mode. This balance is necessary if the organization is to facilitate cooperative interactions among employees who engage in task goals as if partners with each other and the organization. As such, the organization can pursue an external employment mode in acquiring individual competencies, as happens in compliance HR systems. However, in addition to an external mode, an internal mode can be pursued whereby employee development occurs within the organization. Although a mixed employment mode might seem inconsistent with a collaboration orientation, research indicates organizations can successfully mix internally- and externally-sourced employees (e.g., full-time and contingent) when the goal is support and stability rather than simply cost reduction (Way, Lepak, Fay, & Thacker, 2010). Thus, unlike in

compliance systems, collaboration systems entail an expectation of some investment in interdependence by the organization.

Motivation and Sustenance Propositions

Organizational approaches to managing employees in collaboration HR systems are predicated on knowledge sharing required by goal commonalities (cf. Lepak & Snell, 1999, 2002). Under the influence of such systems, employee sensemaking will lead to a relational climate in which relationship partners each recognize that exchanges of help are beneficial in attaining immediate as well as more distal goals. This encourages employees to perceive that developing and maintaining relationships creates a tacit social resource from which to draw when pursuing more distal, less specified goals. Relationships among employees will be more lasting than in market pricing climates, for they serve as an asset that has value for both extrinsic and intrinsic reasons. Thus, collaboration HR systems are likely to stimulate equality matching climates, which are characterized by shared feelings of social obligation and turn-taking in exchanges. We now briefly propose how helping is initiated and sustained in equality matching climates using the same characteristics used to illustrate helping in market pricing climates.

Influenced by social exchange tenets, work relationships are more enduring in collaboration systems than in compliance systems. Reciprocity is the most widely recognized form of social exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), compelling employees to be mindful of both the longer-term obligations and immediate effects of helping acts. The motivation to provide help involves relational benefits (e.g., social support) as well as instrumental ones (e.g., knowledge and advice). However, the preeminence of reciprocity diminishes the self-interested bargaining associated with market pricing climates, and instead emphasizes that the actions of one person are tied with another's actions over time (Molm, 2003). Maintaining balanced exchanges is important, allowing parties to better manage relational indebtedness incurred during exchange cycles. Because reciprocity is integral to equality matching climates, the justice norm by which employees evaluate the fairness of their exchange relationships is equality of input (Fiske, 1992). As employees determine they are treated well in helping exchanges with others,

they develop fairness perceptions about particular partners that influence future exchanges. Thus, judgments about fairness are likely to be tied to the entity level (Gillespie & Greenberg, 2005) rather than event level as in market pricing climates. Favorable fairness impressions lead to continuing exchanges of help, whereas unfavorable impressions do not. Therefore, we posit:

Proposition 2a: A collaboration HR system will lead to an equality matching climate in which helping behavior is motivated by in-kind reciprocity and maintained by balanced exchanges in relationships.

Proposition 2b: A collaboration HR system will lead to an equality matching climate in which helping behavior is judged according to the norm of equality, and evaluated as fair to the degree that there is equality in exchange partners' inputs.

Too great or too small of a response to another's help can induce feelings of over-obligation or short-changing, respectively. Moreover, even when a response is well gauged, too great of a time lag in delivery will affect how it is perceived (Flynn, 2003). Thus, common hazards in an equality matching climate are unbalanced reciprocity and poor coordination. Well-designed interdependencies can reduce the perceived risk of poor coordination by creating more predictable and consistent contexts for helping (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). Greater certainty created by more durable relationships also creates situations in which exchange partners can anticipate one another's needs, thereby facilitating knowledge-based trust (Lewicki et al., 2006). Because this type of trust is based on understanding others and their behaviors, it is best developed through regular communication flowing from multiple exchanges. Gradually, the basis for trust shifts from outcome-based evidence provided by the content of exchanges, as commonly found in market pricing climates, to knowledge of help-givers' integrity. Those whose help has met desired requisites develop positive reputations, which can magnify the potential for positive helping exchanges in the future (Johnson, Erez, Kiker, & Motowidlo, 2002; Lewicki et al., 2006). We thus suggest:

Proposition 2c: A collaboration HR system will lead to an equality matching climate in which the principal risks of helping behavior are unbalanced reciprocity and poor coordination.

Proposition 2d: A collaboration HR system will lead to an equality matching climate in which the type of trust most likely to develop between individuals who exchange helping behavior is knowledge-based trust.

Collaboration HR Practices: Prevalence and Focus of Helping

Because collaboration employment relationships involve social cooperation and a goal-focused orientation, specific HR practices will integrate technical competence and social fit through a social exchange paradigm. Table 2 shows emblematic practices, system elements, and the relational climate expected for a collaboration HR system. When both technical and social criteria are weighed in the selection process, employees can be more effective because they possess problem-solving competencies as well as the social skills to use them. Cooperative exchanges also increase with the hiring of employees who can adapt to work contexts that require personal interactions. Once hired, newcomers are subject to socialization processes that introduce them to the importance of social interaction and encourage embeddedness in the organization (e.g., collective and investiture tactics—Allen, 2006). Other development practices will instruct employees on how their KSAs facilitate task accomplishment while relationships permit them to benefit from others' KSAs. Traditional development programs will be expanded to recognize organizational learning (Borgatti & Cross, 2003), informal social networks (Higgins & Kram, 2001), and lateral mentoring (Raabe & Beehr, 2003), all of which underscore the value of helping as a social exchange ware. Brown and Van Buren (2007) noted training that encourages interpersonal interaction should lead to a denser social network and increase the likelihood of helping-related behaviors in the organization.

Work design practices that acknowledge task interdependencies and reciprocal workflows among employees (e.g., Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007) will be apparent in collaboration HR systems. Network structures allow employees to share information and learn of others' work challenges, stimulating helping that benefits direct exchange partners as well as others connected through task interdependencies (e.g., Venkataramani & Dalal, 2007). Interpersonal exposure to interdependencies affords more frequent opportunities to exchange

help, and research has found greater task interdependency can result in more helping (e.g., DeJong, Van der Vegt, & Molleman, 2007). Where task interdependency is higher, some research suggests yoking potential rewards to cooperation with coworkers positively affects performance (Wageman & Baker, 1997). Collaboration systems are likely to incorporate explicit formal and implicit informal rewards for helping to manage employee interdependencies. Compensation practices involving individual and group incentives should facilitate employees' readiness to assist one another while respecting individual initiative (Siemsen, Balasubramanian, & Roth, 2007). Overall, pay ranges will be more compressed to avoid discouraging collaborative behaviors (Pfeffer & Langton, 1993). In attempting to determine how incentives are dispersed, even-handed assessments (Connelley & Folger, 2004) of both evaluative and developmental performance facets will be important, because work success involves shared tasks and goals. Performance appraisal and feedback will recognize not only how employees perform their own assignments, but also how well they cooperate with others' work efforts.

The practices operating in collaboration HR systems encourage both task- and person-focused helping. This makes employees' behavior more predictable, allowing for adaptation, task coordination, and a greater likelihood of future effective helping (Bolino et al., 2002). Consequently, helping will occur more frequently than in compliance systems. As practices alert employees that their work efforts affect those of others, they can relate in more heedful ways and are more likely to exchange helping behavior (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005). In view of the cumulative effects of these practices, we suggest:

Proposition 2e: Helping behavior will occur more frequently in collaboration HR systems and equality matching climates than in market pricing climates.

Proposition 2f: Helping behavior in collaboration HR systems and equality matching climates will be less-task focused and more person-focused than in market pricing climates.

COMMITMENT HR SYSTEMS: EFFECTING HELPING THROUGH A COMMUNAL SHARING CLIMATE

A commitment HR system has its roots in high performance, high involvement work

practices (Boxall & Macky, 2009; Lepak et al., 2007; Walton, 1985). This system views employees as capable and intrinsically motivated, and indicates concern for their well-being. Thus, the organization believes employees are worthy of its investment and wants them to be as committed to it as it is to them, such that they identify with and exert effort toward achieving its goals (Zacharatos et al., 2005). Psychological links are forged between the organization and employees, minimizing the need for extensive control mechanisms and giving employees discretion to act in ways beneficial to the collective (Arthur, 1994). Although initially discussed as preferable to other HR system alternatives, Lepak and Snell (1999) suggested commitment HR makes the most strategic sense when employees have knowledge and firm-specific skills that are not readily available in the external labor market.

The generalized mutuality in commitment by the organization and employees underpins an employment relationship having a collective focus. As such, the dominant employment relationship is likely to be long-term and relational, requiring open-ended obligations on the part of both organization and employees (Rousseau, 1995, 2004; Tsui et al., 1997). Employer inducements are directed at increasing employees' well-being and extending their organizational careers. In exchange, employees are expected to accept the organization's interests as their own. An HR system with a goal of creating strong links between the organization and employees reflects an employment mode that is primarily internal and recognizes the long-term benefits of developing critical task and social competencies. Accordingly, the organization relies on internal labor markets and training as means of developing employee capabilities, nurturing talent, and fostering affective outcomes.

Motivation and Sustenance Propositions

We now address the motivation and sustenance of helping in communal sharing climates in a manner similar to that used with the other two relational climates. In commitment HR systems, managing employees is predicated on developing secure, open-ended relationships featuring high personal regard. Under the influence of such systems, employee sensemaking leads to a relational climate in which employees feel encouraged to join in lasting relationships

that support mutual goal accomplishment and elevate the welfare of relationship partners. We argue, therefore, that commitment HR systems will produce communal sharing climates characterized by feelings of solidarity and blurred self-other distinctions over time. This also implies helping within this HR system will be motivated and sustained in ways deeper than in market pricing and equality matching climates.

In communal sharing climates, the welfare of the other party is respected. Because individuals care about the well-being of group members, their mindfulness of others' needs reinforces tendencies to extend help to them. Feelings of commonality with other employees increase the likelihood that relationships will be maintained for their own sake and prosocial motives will underpin helping (Rioux & Penner, 2001). Moreover, help giving can lead employees to further value the welfare of those to whom help has been given (Batson, Eklund, Chermok, Hoyt, & Ortiz, 2007; Grant, Dutton, & Rosso, 2008). Positive emotions flowing from exchanges tend to be attributed to the dense web of relationships rather than specific parties involved (Lawler, 2001), which means help is also extended partly due to affect levels within the collective group. Because resources exchanged through helping are considered shared and available to individual employees or the group as a whole, fairness is judged by how well needs for help are collectively met for a generalized recipient (Connelley & Folger, 2004). In communal sharing climates, fairness in relationships entails the experience of belonging, an absence of conflict, and desire for frequent interaction (Gillespie & Greenberg, 2005). We therefore propose:

Proposition 3a: A commitment HR system will lead to a communal sharing climate in which helping behavior is motivated by prosocial values and affective bonds with relational partners.

Proposition 3b: A commitment HR system will lead to a communal sharing climate in which helping behavior is judged by a need-based norm, and evaluated as fair to the degree that the needs of a generalized recipient are met.

Helping behavior within communal sharing climates is imbued with empathy and foresight (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). Empathy develops as relational partners make assumptions about each other's needs based on previous interactions. With time, employees develop more accurate person perceptions that allow them to better anticipate each other's needs (Davis, 1994). However, in close relationships, emotions can sometimes lead employees to feel they know the wants and needs of others, which could increase the risks of misreading others' feelings (e.g., empathic inaccuracy—Ickes, 1993) and misanticipating others' needs. These risks are mitigated somewhat by employee confidence that such actions are unintentional. The mutual understanding gained from stable relationships among employees with shared values fosters identification-based trust (Lewicki et al., 2006), which can instill a high level of unstated confidence among relational partners. Multiple motives (e.g., elicitive, compensatory, moralistic) underlie identification-based trust, making it overdetermined (Kramer, Brewer, & Hanna, 1996) and comforting to employees during exchanges. We thus offer:

Proposition 3c: A commitment HR system will lead to a communal sharing climate in which principal risks of helping behavior are empathic inaccuracy and the misanticipation of another's needs.

Proposition 3d: A commitment HR system will lead to a communal sharing climate in which the type of trust most likely to develop among individuals who exchange helping behavior is identification-based trust.

Commitment HR Practices: Prevalence and Focus of Helping

As with the other HR systems, Table 2 shows the combination of practices, system elements, and relational climate expected for a commitment HR system. The emphasis on goodwill in employee relationships in commitment systems means that selection practices are important for creating prosocial commonalities in employee beliefs and values. Efforts will be made to selectively attract employees who can meet broad work demands, and whose values support a willingness to work in concert with other employees (Hom et al., 2009). Likewise, an internal employment mode focused on social development and long-term potential suggests

extensive training and development will be offered, including an emphasis on socializing newcomers to prosocial sentiments in the organization. For instance, employees might receive training in interpersonal skills, team building, or relating to coworkers having personal problems as a way of increasing understanding of others (e.g., Heaney, Price, & Rafferty, 1995). Traditional mentoring programs would be expanded to include an emphasis on relational mentoring (Ragins & Verbos, 2007) to impart empathy and other social proficiencies.

With interdependence being a core feature of commitment HR systems, work design practices will include reliance on team structures and relational coordination (Gittell, 2008). Communal sharing climates comprise dense, multiplexed social networks in which employees must integrate their interests with those of the work unit. The close relationships experienced bring instrumental (e.g., task-relevant) and expressive (e.g., emotional support) benefits (Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004). Team-based work designs can induce employees to develop a shared understanding of critical work behaviors. This enables them to assist with task requirements before help is formally requested (Marks, Zaccaro, & Mathieu, 2001), or back up other team members when help is needed (Porter, Hollenbeck, Ilgen, Ellis, West, & Moon, 2003).

In commitment systems, social behaviors like knowledge sharing, peer support, and helping are promoted through incentives. Examining helping patterns in three joint ventures, Perlow, Gittell, and Katz (2004) found that rewarding team members for helping whoever needed it reinforced patterns of generalized helping among all team members. Elsewhere, Harrison, Price, Gavin, and Florey (2002) determined that team reward contingencies positively influenced cooperative interactions among team members. Because informal rewards like recognition and praise are delivered in a social context, they are fitting returns for cooperative behavior and occur more often. Higher wage benchmarks add to the embedding effects of social bonds (Evans & Davis, 2005) and compressed pay structures contribute to employee cohesiveness (Shaw et al., 2002). Performance appraisal and feedback is likely to include an ample developmental component through which expectations regarding social interactions are conveyed and the importance of interpersonal skills is emphasized (Reilly & McGourty, 1998).

Appraisals can also include a collective component, with some goals being participatively set by individuals or groups (London, 2007).

A configuration of these or similar practices suggests helping will occur frequently, and although it can be both task- and person-focused, the latter type of helping will occur more than in market pricing and equality matching climates. The variety of practices that increase employees' interconnectedness and require they learn interpersonal and teamwork skills (Hom et al., 2009) instills norms for helping in the social realm, and facilitates helping in group-oriented contexts (Ng & Van Dyne, 2005). Weighing the collective effect of the above practices, we thus offer:

Proposition 3e: Helping behavior will occur more frequently in commitment HR systems and communal sharing climates than in market pricing and equality matching climates.

Proposition 3f: Helping behavior in commitment HR systems and communal sharing climates will be less task-focused and more person-focused than in market pricing and equality matching climates.

DISCUSSION

Perhaps because of its inherently interpersonal nature, much organizational research involving helping behavior has focused at the individual level. As HR managers commonly contend with issues requiring multilevel considerations (e.g., Chuang & Liao, 2010; Takeuchi et al., 2009), taking only an individual level approach to understanding helping behavior within organizations is limited. Attempting to integrate both organizational and individual influences, we developed a conceptual framework identifying three archetypal HR systems, a relational climate supported by each particular system, and dimensions describing the impetus and maintenance of helping in each climate. We also discussed how the configuration of practices used to operationalize each HR system can influence the prevalence and nature of helping behavior expected to emerge in each climate.

A primary contribution of the proposed framework is to offer a new means of understanding the potential interplay between helping behavior and HR systems. Considering

how HR systems affect broader relational climates can allow the organization to positively influence employees' expectations regarding the nature of both task and interpersonal exchange dynamics occurring in the work place. We have underscored the role of relational climate as an intermediary between the three HR systems and helping, and mapped out dimensions it comprises. This climate construct has not been formally recognized in the management literature. However, such consideration is consistent with arguments made by scholars that shared employee perceptions and attributions concerning HR systems precede employee attitudinal and behavioral reactions (e.g., Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Nishii, Lepak, & Schneider, 2008). In essence, we argue that employee helping behavior can be shaped in the aggregate by the ways in which organizations manage their human resources, and offer propositions suggesting how helping might be facilitated within particular relational climates. Such information can inform managers of subtle features associated with helping stimulated by differing HR systems, and assist them in managing ensuing complexities.

An additional contribution of the proposed framework is its recognition of helping behavior as potentially increasing organizations' flexibility to meet competitive demands. Flexibility gives organizations more dynamic capacity to address changing environmental conditions (Beltrán-Martín et al., 2008), but initiatives to increase flexibility are sometimes unsuccessful because organizations emphasize restructuring or technology, overlooking the role employees play. One aspect of flexibility subject to influence by HR practices, skills flexibility, concerns human assets that can be drawn upon to meet specific needs (Wright & Snell, 1998). Another aspect of flexibility, behavioral flexibility, concerns broader adaptive processes that can be mobilized to meet unspecified future needs and involves employees' learning to apply appropriate discretionary efforts. Because helping behavior is often discretionary, we suggest that it represents a critical means of building behavioral flexibility in organizations. Wright and Snell (1998) described behavioral flexibility as partly emerging through scripts which employees gain knowledge of during workplace interactions. Our framework describes the tenor of three potential helping "scripts" likely associated with specific relational climates. A greater awareness

of differences among relational climates can allow for insights into processes by which flexibility is mobilized.

When implementing HR systems to increase behavioral flexibility, managers should consider the form of helping behavior that is most congruent with particular strategic objectives. Where there is strategic value in efficiently completing cyclical tasks, it might be more appropriate to implement compliance-based practices that reinforce human capital assets, as helping would involve short-term calculative exchanges leading to identifiable task outputs. A market pricing climate would be expected to emerge as a result of this configuration of practices, and would guide the employee relationships that develop. For example, Bhattacharya, Gibson, and Doty (2005) found that flexibility in the exchange of requisite skills was associated with firm-level cost efficiencies. In contrast, where there is strategic value in creating broader forms of flexibility (Beltrán-Martín et al., 2008), collaboration-based or commitment-based practices would be more appropriate. For instance, the former would lead to behavioral flexibility via the development of advice and friendship networks that enable knowledge sharing in work environments marked by change. Finally, when the work environment is non-routine and requires substantial creativity, relational flexibility may be beneficial (Beltrán-Martín, Roca-Puig, Escrig-Tena, & Bou-Llugar, 2009). In such instances, the collective orientation and interdependencies created by commitment-based practices and a communal sharing climate might facilitate rapid changes in how human resources are deployed.

A final contribution is that our propositions are pertinent to issues concerning the “black box” problem in strategic HR research (cf., Becker & Huselid, 2006). Although helping in the aggregate has been examined as an indirect mediator of HR system effects on firm performance (Chuang & Liao, 2010), little attention has been given to how HR systems affect individual level helping. And with the exception of the organizational justice domain, a similar situation has been noted regarding specific connections between climate and OCB/helping (Schneider, Ehrhart, Mayer, Saltz, & Niles-Jolly, 2005). Our framework suggests how aspects of HR systems and emergent relational climates encourage and uphold helping, partly addressing these issues.

Moreover, it is consistent with a “context theorizing” approach advanced by Bamberger (2008), which encourages researchers to identify phenomena typically associated with differing levels and substantively specify how these phenomena are linked. Focusing on processes that link macro (i.e., HR systems, relational climates) and micro (i.e., helping behavior), the present framework could compel researchers to conceptualize helping contexts in organizations as involving more than just temporal or situational constraints.

Implications and Future Research

The proposed framework has practical implications for researchers empirically exploring HR system-relational climate-helping links and for practicing managers wanting to facilitate helping in their organizations. In terms of research design, HR systems and collective employee climate perceptions should be assessed with data collected from multiple raters. Gerhart, Wright, McMahan, & Snell (2000) highlighted limitations (e.g., measurement error, bias) associated with gathering HR system information from single respondents (e.g., an HR director). Ideally, testing our framework would involve gathering HR systems data from multiple managers in multiple organizations and climate data from those managers’ employees. This would allow consideration of individuals nested within groups or climates nested within organizations. Additionally, consistent with the approach taken by Lepak and Snell (2002), only a single HR system-climate set in each unit or organization might be measured. Doing so could reduce the potential for problems caused by non-independent ratings or contrast errors from rating all three HR systems or relational climates simultaneously.

From the standpoint of practicing managers, a key implication is that action taken to increase the level of helping should work in concert with the given HR system and its associated relational climate. The HR literature has noted that strategic context can affect the appropriateness of an HR system (Jackson et al., 1989; Lepak & Snell, 1999). Organizations must be aware that institutional pressures can shape strategic choices regarding the HR system and associated relational climate. For example, managing helping among employees in social service organizations would require different emphases than those found in financial service

organizations. Because interpersonal support and care are a hallmark of their missions, social work or health care organizations might find that commitment-based practices supportive of helping in communal sharing climates would enable greater employee effectiveness. The relational architecture of work performed in these organizations is such that close coordination and empathic concern facilitate the delivery of services required to benefit clients and customers (Gittell, 2008; Grant, 2007). In contrast, practicing managers might find that a compliance HR system and accompanying market pricing climate are more apt for managing and supporting employee helping behavior in environments traditionally marked by employee striving in the midst of competitive forces (e.g., financial services).

Although we suggest helping will occur less frequently when compliance HR systems are enacted than when collaboration or commitment systems are enacted, we nonetheless expect some helping to occur in all three archetypal systems. This assumes, however, sufficient coherence among the policies and practices operationalizing the particular HR system. Applying HR system elements so they effectively complement each other facilitates common understanding across employees (Werbel & DeMarie, 2005). Alternatively, managers likely will find that systems comprising diverging elements fail to produce strong, consistently interpreted climates because they communicate to employees conflicting messages regarding expected behaviors (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). For example, if most employees are selected for their technical competence and participate in skills and abilities training, but subsequently are rewarded for how well their work groups accomplish organizational goals, confusion about the types of relationships to form with others (i.e., market pricing vs. communal sharing) will probably exist. Under such conditions, ambiguity would be manifested regarding appropriate helping behavior. If uncertainties militate against the formation of a strong relational climate, helping could still occur, but personality (e.g., conscientiousness, agreeableness) or other person variables might have a stronger influence. This possibility is consistent with the notion of individual differences exerting greater impact in weak situations (Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 1989).

Future work should consider potential management difficulties caused by different HR systems and climates extant between different sets of employees within an organization. For instance, individuals working in contexts amenable to an equality matching climate might become stressed when interacting with those whose work is more in line with a market pricing climate. This could occur because employees from the latter would be less likely to offer or reciprocate help than their equality matching counterparts. Other problems with helping exchanged across distinct relational climates could arise: unmet or conflicting expectations, misperceptions of the worth of helping given or received, and emotional hostility at perceived trust violations. Some scholars have compared how helping varies across different organizational cultures in the same industry (cf. Perlow et al., 2004), but little work has addressed difficulties arising across different cultures or climates within the same organization.

Some have argued that the significance of implementing particular HR practices might be less important than their net effect on the particular climate needed to achieve strategic objectives (e.g., Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Delery & Doty, 1996). Although we exemplified the archetypal HR systems using common practices, it should be noted that differing configurations of practices could stimulate helping as long as they generate behavioral expectations consistent with the targeted relational climate. An implication for managers wanting to increase the chances that employees will develop similar expectations regarding helping exchanges is that they should first attempt to enact relationally coherent HR systems, and then determine through employee feedback and observation whether the systems accomplish intended relational effects. Processes that strengthen the effect of HR practices on climate generally could be used to assist in implementing these practices. Evidence has accrued in the climate literature that managers can act as climate engineers (e.g., Naumann & Bennett, 2000), and that it is important for managers to behave in ways so as to demonstrate preferred climate characteristics (Schneider et al., 2005; Zohar & Tenne-Gazit, 2008). Thus, the roles that managers play in establishing focal relational processes should be underscored.

Managers can affect climate directly by adhering to the strategic focus of the selected HR

system and insuring coherence in implementing specific practices. For example, managers implementing a commitment HR system should insure that work design, rewards, and appraisal practices signal the importance of shared/team activities. Managers can also influence climate indirectly through role modeling and demonstrating competencies reflective of the preferred climate. For example, managers employing a collaborative HR system should use opportunities to share knowledge and distribute information in routine interactions with employees. In both formal and informal interactions, managers should operate in ways consonant with the relational climate, as this will send unambiguous signals to employees about appropriate helping behavior. The challenge of implementing relationally coherent practices is an issue that should be explored in future research.

Although suggesting that particular relational climates would tend to be propagated by certain sets of HR practices, we recognize there are obstacles to this happening. It has been documented that disconnects can occur between intended HR practices and the practices as experienced by employees (M. Lengnick-Hall, C. Lengnick-Hall, Andrade & Drake, 2009; Liao, Toya, Lepak, & Hong, 2009; Nishii et al., 2008). With regard to relational climates, managers might unintentionally promote varying practices across units, or realize that diverse relational requirements require suitably distinct practices be brought to bear in different units. Even when appropriate policies and practices have been formalized in the organization, certain kinds of managers could stymie the development of employee helping behavior. For example, managers whose styles could be described as toxic (Frost, 2004) or narcissistic (Macoby, 2000), would not likely see the worth of establishing a viable relational climate or employee helping behavior.

Complicating implementation issues, managers must deal with top down as well as bottom up dynamics that influence what is viable as help in each of the three relational climates. In organizations where market pricing relational forces are active, top down dynamics might exert more influence on helping behavior. Managers could more easily structure work relationships because task goals are, in comparison to other relational climates, better known. Management influence will not necessarily lessen the amount of cooperation and assistance that

occurs, but the significance of such helping behavior and the auspices under which it occurs would derive more directly from top management preferences and expectations (Frenkel & Sanders, 2007). In organizations marked by project teams and self-managed groups, bottom up dynamics would be expected to have greater influence in determining the character of helping. Managers would need to be attuned to and learn from informal and social help-related structures (e.g., ad hoc and lateral networks) that develop in connection with bottom up dynamics. Because of greater interdependencies, employees would likely engage in more helping-oriented sensemaking (Grant et al., 2008) regarding relations with other employees. Learning how to shape formal mechanisms so as to support these informal structures could allow managers to augment the helping capacities employees have developed on their own. Organizing emergent processes, such as bottom up helping, might require unaccustomed improvisation in managerial roles and routines (e.g., Dutton, Worline, Frost, & Lilius, 2006).

Our arguments imply managers should attempt to discern their units' relational climate and acquaint employees with the respective risks that helping exchanges entail. After diagnosing the forces underlying helping in their units, managers could then encourage helping in a more successful fashion or reduce interpersonal obstacles to helping within their units. For example, employees who need help tend to underestimate the likelihood of receiving it (Flynn & Lake, 2008). Counseling employees about the interpersonal risks and ways of mitigating them can assist in the development of helping relationships appropriate to particular relational climates. Such discussions might simultaneously legitimize help-seeking by employees and encourage suitable help-giving responses (Bamberger, 2009). Recent research suggests that when helping is viewed as normatively acceptable, employees are less reticent to seek help (Hofmann, Lei, & Grant, 2009). Facilitating employees' sensemaking regarding help appropriate in particular relational climates could reduce their hesitancy to both seek and give help.

The present paper proposes more emphasis be placed on an overlooked intersection of the micro- and macro-oriented HR systems literatures. Micro approaches have tended to focus on the effects of single practices (e.g., rewards) as judged against the criterion of in-role task

performance. Although in-role performance is obviously important, the greater flexibility desired by many organizations suggests a need for more fluid, discretionary forms of performance as well. It is clear that many employees' work behaviors extend beyond those specified in job descriptions. Managers must begin to contemplate the broader effects of HR practices on employee flexibility and cooperation in contributing to organizations' success. Doing so might require assessing HR practices (e.g., recruitment, selection, training, and evaluation practices) not only in terms of in-role performance, but behaviors (cooperation, helping, knowledge sharing) that contribute to organizational performance indirectly.

Conclusion

We have argued that researchers should begin to consider connections between HR systems, relational climates, and helping behavior, with the idea that the ability to purposely harness helping will become more critical in future organizations. It is important that organizations understand the processes that ultimately lead employees to exchange help over time. Too many organizations deal with helping on an as needed basis, without recognizing the full implications of continuities underlying helping exchanges in the workplace (cf. Flynn, 2006). Whereas in the short-term helping behaviors have consequences for interpersonal relationships, in the long run they might well have consequences for the organization as a whole. Research has shown that helping behavior is associated with an array of positive interpersonal outcomes, but broader organizational implications such as greater flexibility or coordination have not as yet been documented. Hopefully, the framework presented here will stimulate future research connecting strategic HR and helping behavior, and promote greater understanding of the challenge of cultivating viable relational climates in organizations.

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TABLE 1
Motivation and Sustenance of Helping Behavior

Relational Climate Dimensions	Market Pricing	Equality Matching	Communal Sharing
Motivation for exchange	Self-interests	In-kind reciprocity Knowledge sharing	Affective and emotional bonds Shared social values
Justice norm	Equity	Equality	Need-based
Perceived risks	Insufficient return on invested behavior	Poor coordination Unbalanced reciprocation	Misanticipation of others' needs Empathic inaccuracy
Type of trust established	Calculus-based	Knowledge-based	Identity-based

TABLE 2
HR Practices and Emergent Relational Climates

HR System Element	Compliance-based	Collaborative-based	Commitment-based
Employment Mode	External	External & internal	Internal
Employment Relationship	Transactional, short-term	Balanced, short- and long-term	Relational, long-term
Exemplary Practice Configurations:			
Staffing	Emphasis on technical selection criteria	Emphasis on technical, then social selection criteria	Emphasis on technical and social selection criteria together
Training/development	Individual competencies Human capital	Individual & social competencies Cognitive social capital	Shared competencies Relational social capital
Work design	Work independence Low involvement Structural barriers to interaction	Reciprocal interdependence Moderate involvement Integrated lateral networks	Mutual interdependence High involvement Dense networks, teams
Rewards & Appraisal Emphasis	Individual-based For quantifiable task outcomes Dispersed pay structures Evaluative appraisal	Individual & group-based rewards For task and social outcomes Compressed pay structures Evaluative & developmental appraisal	Team-based rewards For shared outcomes Compressed pay structures Evaluative & group developmental appraisal
Relational Climate	Market Pricing	Equality Matching	Communal Sharing

