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June 29, 2010

Kevin Mossholder
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Dear Professor Mossholder:

I have now received and considered the reviews of your revised manuscript submitted to *Academy of Management Review* "HUMAN RESOURCE SYSTEMS AND HELPING IN ORGANIZATIONS: A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE" (Manuscript AMR-09-0402.R1). All three of your reviewers agree that your manuscript has made good progress and you've made a good effort to respond to their earlier concerns. We all appreciate the clearer focus on the linkages between HR systems and helping and recognize the time and energies you put into this revision.

Your reviewers also agree that at this stage, several issues remain. I share the opinion that your revised manuscript is much improved and that you undertook great effort to be responsive to the earlier feedback. And, while I agree there are still some issues to address, I believe these issues can be addressed with relatively moderate additional effort and thus, I am pleased to ***conditionally accept your manuscript for publication in AMR*** subject to the changes below. Congratulations! I will not be returning your revised manuscript to the reviewers, but instead will be ensuring the remaining changes are made on their behalf.

In terms of the remaining changes I'd like you to make, it is important that you consider all the comments made by the reviewers but I would like to highlight the primary factors that I believe are necessary to move forward. I would like you to focus your energies on the points I note below.

Propositions. One of the more significant concerns that remain for the reviewers and myself relates to the propositions in your manuscript. For example, reviewer 1 (Comment 2) writes, "*The way in which all the propositions are currently stated is clumsy, convoluted, and would benefit from simplification. In each case you might remove the intermediary climate information, as this is contained in the preceding paragraphs. Please see the following examples: … P1a: In a compliance HR system, helping behavior is motivated by self-interest and instrumentality. (remove the "will lead to a market pricing climate in which") … P2a In a collaboration HR system, helping behavior is motivated by in-kind reciprocity and maintained by balanced exchanges (remove "will lead to an equality matching climate") … P1e is incomplete. Constrained by what or to what*?"

Reviewer 3 (Comments 4-6) raises similar concerns and writes, "*The very first proposition regarding helping indicates that helping will be "constrained." This is not testable as stated. Constrained relative to what? … All of the propositions regarding risk were worded in a way that I believe renders them impossible to test (1c, 2c, and 3c). I understand risk to be one of the dimensions of relational climate, so you cannot*

simply delete these propositions. Perhaps they could be reworded to indicate that perceived risk will be greater for X than for Y?... The causal model of hr systems -> relational climates -> helping is never presented, and the abstract even hints that you are not proposing mediation. I would think that at least partial mediation is expected here, and that logic should permeate the manuscript (abstract, introduction to big picture model, propositions, and perhaps even a figure). Is there a reason that you are shying away from proposing mediation?”

I'm not exactly certain as to what the best course of action is and I do not want to impose specific wording on how you structure your propositions. Having said that, I think it is imperative that you do address these concerns regarding the structure of your propositions. I believe this is doable with some effort to get to the essence of each proposition and to present clear and testable propositions.

Clarification and additional considerations. The reviewers pointed out several instances where some additional clarification would be very helpful for the reader. For example, reviewer 2 (Comment 1) writes, "*I believe the distinction between a "collaborative" system needs to be more clearly distinguished from collective system in the intro. In particular, if employees/org have "collective commitment" (p. 4) doesn't this also suggest "collaboration" between them? The distinction becomes clearer later when discussing the climates and the specific systems, but I believe this distinctions needs to be made very clear when first defining each HR system (p. 4).*" This reviewer goes on to note (Comment 2), "*I found the discussion of the "dimensions" (now bottom of p.8/top of p. 9) a bit difficult to follow as you are really trying to cover a lot of literatures and concepts (as I noted in the prior version of the manuscript). Perhaps most importantly, this discussion seems more focused on emphasizing that it's important to incorporate these constructs (and why), what "substantive areas " were reviewed (is it really necessary to state the specific literature, e.g., "social capital… interpersonal helping"), and the "grounding principle" for inclusion. I would suggest it would be more valuable to focus on how these constructs link to your framework (i.e., the link between HR systems, climate, and helping)*." Reviewer 2 also raises several useful points about your discussion section. In comment 6 s/he highlights a need for clarifying the relationship with flexibility. I agree with this reviewer that this focus in the discussion section does seem to be disconnected from the rest of the model. Moving forward, you need to be sure to somehow better incorporate this discussion with the major thrust of your contribution or more clearly articulate your arguments to address these concerns by reviewer 2.

Reviewer 3 suggests that you consider several additional points for your discussion section. Specifically, in comment 8 s/he writes, "*There are two interesting issues raised by reviewers (one mine, one from another reviewer) that I think could be mentioned as future research. The first is negative effects of competitive HR practices on helping; that is, HR practices that stimulate counter-productive work behaviors. The second is reverse causality, where certain relational climates alter the HR systems adopted, or at least how they are enacted/interpreted by certain managers.*"

From my own reading of your manuscript, I would like to make a minor suggestion and encourage you to simply refer to "hr systems' rather than 'strategic HR systems'. I think they convey the same thing and the reality is that any HR system could be used in a strategic manner. The key point that you are emphasizing is that you are focusing on the system.

Structure. Reviewer 3 raised several points regarding the structure of your paper. For example, in comment 1, this reviewer writes**, "***I'd prefer to see the definition of helping (along with some illustrations to make the definition more concrete and compelling) in the introduction. Then, in the HR systems section, I'd like to learn more detail about the three archetypes. This would mean shifting Table 2 to become Table 1, and walking the reader through at least some of Table 1 at this juncture. I think the reason to do this is simple – not every reader will understand the archetypes as described. You will want to offer an explanation of each grounded in the details of how employment relationship and employment mode play out with specific HR practices. This will help an AMR reader who is not a specialist in SHRM. Please note that I am not asking for a complete revision of structure here, I am suggesting shifting some material around to be more consistent with the*

structure you are now using." I am not suggesting that you must conform with this recommendation but I do agree with this reviewer that there are some parts of your paper in which some earlier definitions could help the reader. I agree that it would be helpful to make sure that constructs are defined before you make reference to them.

Editing. I would like to also request a good amount of effort in this final revision to focus on editing. Your paper is relatively long (probably because we asked you to do so much!), and now we need to pare it back. I'm not suggesting a hard page number to cut but I do believe with some careful editing you could probably reduce 4-5 pages of text by sharpening and tightening your message. Some specific suggestions to consider are:

a) *Tighten the discussion*. I realize that I have asked you to add to the discussion section. And, I realize that the discussion section is much improved over the first submission. However, what is currently there could be edited and more precise. Some of the points are speculative and might be reduced in length or eliminated.

b) *General Editing*. Within the body there are some areas in which transitions between sections are excessive. At other points, you note what you are about to discuss, then you state it, and then you state what you did state. This can be reduced. As noted by reviewer 1 (Comment 1), "*The paper contains a fair bit of repetition. In some instances this is called for; in others, it is overkill. Please go through the paper to reduce the repetition*." Reviewer 2 (Comment 7) adds, "*…throughout the paper, I believe the writing could be made more direct and less complicated*."

Resubmission Instructions
When you revise your manuscript, please log into http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/amr and enter your Author Center, where you will find your manuscript title listed under "Manuscripts with Decisions." Under "Actions," click on "Create a Revision." Your manuscript number will have been modified to denote a revision. You will be unable to make your revisions on the originally submitted version of the manuscript. Instead, revise your manuscript using a word processing program and save it on your computer. Once the revised manuscript is prepared, you can upload it and submit it through your Author Center. *IMPORTANT: Your original files are available to you when you upload your revised manuscript. Please delete any redundant files before completing the submission.*

When submitting your revised manuscript, you will be able to respond to this letter in the space provided. You do not need to append these comments to the end of your manuscript nor write individual responses to the reviewers' comments as they will not see this next version. You should, however, include a short one-paragraph bio of each author at the end of your manuscript. Because we are trying to facilitate timely revision of manuscripts submitted to *AMR*, please upload your revised manuscript by two months from today or contact me in advance to arrange an alternate deadline.

Again, I congratulate you on your interesting and well-executed research. I think your continued perseverance can result in a very fine end product. Thanks again for sending your research to the *Academy of Management Review*. Thank you for your revision and best of luck with the new revisions!

David Lepak
Associate Editor
Academy of Management Review

Comments from Reviewer 1:

The authors have attempted to revise the paper in response to the reviewers' concerns. As happens some times, however, in their attempt to address our comments, part of the original appeal has been lost (or perhaps buried) in the revision. Nonetheless, the paper is more thorough and complete.

The following comments are offered in the spirit of increasing the paper's contribution to the literature.

1. The paper contains a fair bit of repetition. In some instances this is called for; in others, it is overkill. Please go through the paper to reduce the repetition.

2. The way in which all the propositions are currently stated is clumsy, convoluted, and would benefit from simplification. In each case you might remove the intermediary climate information, as this is contained in the preceding paragraphs.
Please see the following examples:

P1a: In a compliance HR system, helping behavior is motivated by self-interest and instrumentality. (remove the "will lead to a market pricing climate in which")

P2a In a collaboration HR system, helping behavior is motivated by in-kind reciprocity and maintained by balanced exchanges (remove "will lead to an equality matching climate")

P1e is incomplete. Constrained by what or to what?

3. The paper would benefit from an additional proof reading. Some references are not properly listed in the text, and the format in the references needs to be corrected.

Comments from Reviewer 2:
I really enjoyed reading the revised version of your manuscript. I also appreciate your attention to my previous concerns/comments. I continue to believe this research is quite interesting and holds the potential to make a valuable contribution to the literature. I do have some additional comments, although I note that most of these comments are fairly editorial in nature.

1. I believe the distinction between a "collaborative" system needs to be more clearly distinguished from collective system in the intro. In particular, if employees/org have "collective commitment" (p. 4) doesn't this also suggest "collaboration" between them? The distinction becomes clearer later when discussing the climates and the specific systems, but I believe this distinctions needs to be made very clear when first defining each HR system (p. 4).

2. I found the discussion of the "dimensions" (now bottom of p.8/top of p. 9) a bit difficult to follow as you are really trying to cover a lot of literatures and concepts (as I noted in the prior version of the manuscript). Perhaps most importantly, this discussion seems more focused on emphasizing that it's important to incorporate these constructs (and why), what "substantive areas " were reviewed (is it really necessary to state the specific literature, e.g., "social capital… interpersonal helping"), and the "grounding principle" for inclusion. I would suggest it would be more valuable to focus on how these constructs link to your framework (i.e., the link between HR systems, climate, and helping). Also, a small point, but the term "dimensions" seems vague and somewhat awkward. What are these dimensions "of"? Perhaps a term such as "elements" or "factors" would be more appropriate?

3. I don't view 1999 (Lepak & Snell) as "recent work" (p. 10).

4. I believe it would be more appropriate to say "collaborative" (or "collaboration-based" HR system) rather than "collaboration HR system" (or "collaboration system"). Regardless, this type of system should be described consistently throughout the manuscript.

5. I would suggest dropping the sentence "We now address… in communal sharing climates…" (p. 21) as it seems somewhat disjointed to not develop the rationale for such a climate prior to mentioning it (which follows in the next few sentences). It would also help tighten the discussion – as noted in my comment below, there are places in the manuscript that seem quite redundant and/or unnecessary to get the basic point across.

6. I don't fully understand the link between your framework (and contribution) and the discussion of "flexibility" (pp. 25-26). Up to that point, the importance of flexibility (as a key focus) had not been specifically discussed in relation to your framework. Thus I believe this section (pp. 25-26) needs to be better aligned with the focus of the paper. It also suggests questions regarding the role of specific HR systems (and changing HR systems?) in regards to "flexibility." For example, do each of these HR systems (or climates, for that matter) allow for organizational flexibility or is one system (e.g., commitment-based) more likely to facilitate flexibility? Are you meaning to imply organizations can be flexible in adopting and/or changing HR systems? While helping behavior may allow for flexibility, I'm not really seeing the link here to your specific framework (which focuses on HR systems and climates in facilitating helping). The link becomes a bit clearer on page 27, but at a minimum, more should be said about "flexibility" in the front-end (and throughout in building your model) when positioning the contribution of the paper if indeed this is a key contribution of your paper.

7. While I found the paper to be generally well-written and enjoyable to read, I believe the writing style is a bit overly complex (e.g., wordy). For example, the opening sentence is a bit wordy. The sentence "With

regard to… the associated focal behavior" (p. 7) is confusing to follow. Another example of a confusing sentence is: "Scholars considering how… relational models theory to explicate… can affect important organizational outcomes" (p. 7). As a final example, "…as useful in accomplishing goals when appropriate vigilance over outcomes can be maintained" (p. 11). What does that really mean? I also note some vague statements. For example, "… there are strategic reasons for implementing them and empirical support for their existence…" (p. 5) is somewhat vague. Same issue with" "…can have this effect" (p. 5). I also saw sections where the same general idea is stated multiple ways (e.g., p. 2 2nd paragraph), and thus somewhat redundant. The Discussion of Future Research also seems somewhat repetitive where you discuss the importance of "coherence" (p. 29 & p. 31) in multiple paragraphs. More generally, I would suggest this discussion could be tightened, as it's currently fairly long (pp. 28-33). Yet, throughout the paper, I believe the writing could be made more direct and less complicated.

Comments from Reviewer 3:

The manuscript is much improved and I appreciate the effort that went into responding to our comments. I believe the primary contribution is still clear, and the refinements allow it to be even more accessible to AMR readers. With that said, I do have suggestions for ways in which the manuscript could be further improved:

1) I understand the revised structure to be, effectively, a move through the causal model of HR systems -> relational climates -> helping. In execution, this structure doesn't fully come through. Helping is defined at the beginning of a section labeled "HR Systems and Relational Climates" (p. 3) and details about HR systems are discussed in the middle of the paper (that is, not in the section with that title), and presented in the second table. I'd prefer to see the definition of helping (along with some illustrations to make the definition more concrete and compelling) in the introduction. Then, in the HR systems section, I'd like to learn more detail about the three archetypes. This would mean shifting Table 2 to become Table 1, and walking the reader through at least some of Table 1 at this juncture. I think the reason to do this is simple – not every reader will understand the archetypes as described. You will want to offer an explanation of each grounded in the details of how employment relationship and employment mode play out with specific HR practices. This will help an AMR reader who is not a specialist in SHRM. Please note that I am not asking for a complete revision of structure here, I am suggesting shifting some material around to be more consistent with the structure you are now using.

2) On p.9 the relational climate dimensions are listed, but it is done in such a way that I missed it the first time. I think the emphasis here should be strengthened, perhaps by having the first sentence begin with "The dimensions we identified are: …" and by numbering them. This is an important contribution and the structure of the section was not immediately obvious to me.

3) Beginning on p.10, the three major sections that introduce propositions could be streamlined a bit. If you do follow my suggestion #1 above, then you are not introducing each HR archetype here, just reviewing the elements of it that are relevant.

4) The very first proposition regarding helping indicates that helping will be "constrained." This is not testable as stated. Constrained relative to what?

5) All of the propositions regarding risk were worded in a way that I believe renders them impossible to test (1c, 2c, and 3c). I understand risk to be one of the dimensions of relational climate, so you cannot simply delete these propositions. Perhaps they could be reworded to indicate that perceived risk will be greater for X than for Y?

6) The causal model of hr systems -> relational climates -> helping is never presented, and the abstract even hints that you are not proposing mediation. I would think that at least partial mediation is expected here, and that logic should permeate the manuscript (abstract, introduction to big picture model, propositions, and perhaps even a figure). Is there a reason that you are shying away from proposing mediation?

7) I did not understand the point raised on p.28 about measuring only a single HR-system climate in unit. Unless you have a very large sample size, with randomization, this would seem a risky measurement approach. Could you explain in a little more detail?

8) There are two interesting issues raised by reviewers (one mine, one from another reviewer) that I think could be mentioned as future research. The first is negative effects of competitive HR practices on helping;

that is, HR practices that stimulate counter-productive work behaviors. The second is reverse causality, where certain relational climates alter the HR systems adopted, or at least how they are enacted/interpreted by certain managers.