

HUMAN RESOURCE SYSTEMS AND HELPING IN ORGANIZATIONS: A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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We propose linkages among human resource (HR) systems, relational climates, and employee helping behavior. We suggest that HR systems promote relational climates varying in terms of the motivation and sustenance of helping behavior, and we expect HR systems to indirectly influence the nature of relationships and the character of helping within organizations. By considering HR systems and their respective relational climates together, researchers can gain a better understanding of expectations and dynamics surrounding helping behavior.

Organizations often depend on helping behaviors to deal with nonroutine 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 the movement toward greater employee involvement (e.g., Boxall & Macky, 2009), interactive work structures (e.g., Frenkel & Sanders, 2007), and human resource (HR) flexibility within organizations (e.g., Beltrán-Martín, Roca-Puig, Escrig-Tena, & Boullusar, 2008). Because 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 to establishing broader mechanisms organizations can use to purposely harness helping (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.

Helping refers to 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). Finally, helping 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.

In this article we propose that HR systems serve as a broad-based influence on helping within organizations. This argument corresponds with the behavioral perspective of strategic HR, which suggests that HR systems influence organizational performance by eliciting and controlling employee behaviors (Jackson, Schuler, & Rivero, 1989). Establishing conceptual linkages between HR systems and employee helping could enhance our understanding of how helping can be facilitated in varying cir-

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cumstances. Scholars have argued that through appropriate HR systems, organizations can influence employees' actions and can build social capital as a potential source of competitive advantage (e.g., Collins & Smith, 2006; Evans & Davis, 2005). Unfortunately, HR systems have been examined most often in connection with firm-level outcomes rather than individual-level behaviors like helping. Because HR system effects frequently are described as occurring through individual-level variables, researchers have suggested a need to better understand HR systems' influence on employees and the relationships formed among them (Becker & Huselid, 2006).

We describe three archetypal HR systems that influence employees' relationships with one another and use a mesolevel approach (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005) to link HR systems with employee helping behavior. Key in this approach is recognizing the intermediate sociocognitive environments that stem from HR systems and support conceptually distinct forms of interpersonal relationships among employees. Such environments, which we label *relational climates*, influence how helping emerges and is sustained. We offer propositions regarding dimensions that support helping within particular HR systems and their associated relational climates. After highlighting practice configurations emblematic of specific HR systems, we characterize the nature and prevalence of helping anticipated within them.

HR SYSTEMS AND RELATIONAL CLIMATES

The decision to help is affected by a stream of evaluations flowing from relationships (Ames, Flynn, & Weber, 2004) and influencing 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 suggest that HR systems are a principal means by which managers affect relational climates and that empirical support for this notion has begun to surface. Collins and Smith (2006) showed that HR practices emphasizing employee commitment were positively re-

lated to 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 that 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) determined that high-performance HR practices were positively correlated with firm-level service-oriented citizenship behavior, and they argued that such behavior affects 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. Compliance and commitment systems represent two widely discussed archetypes with distinct objectives. We use the term *archetype* in recognition that these are ideal systems that organizations can enact to varying degrees. In compliance systems employees are treated as externally motivated and benefiting from appreciable monitoring and control (Boxall & Macky, 2009; Walton, 1985). Well-specified rules and procedures are seen as necessary for obtaining employee adherence to organizational goals. Moreover, employees are considered an expense to be minimized by reducing direct labor costs and improving efficiency (Arthur, 1994). Although researchers initially viewed compliance systems as less viable than the alternatives, these systems might be suitable under certain circumstances, such as when employees' skills have little firm specificity or equivalent labor is widely available (Lepak & Snell, 1999).

In contrast, in commitment systems value is placed on employee well-being and employees are assumed capable and intrinsically motivated (Boxall & Macky, 2009; Lepak, Taylor, Tekleab, Marrone, & Cohen, 2007; Walton, 1985). Psychological links are forged between the organization and employees, minimizing the need for extensive control mechanisms and giving employees discretion to act in ways favorable to the collective (Arthur, 1994). The resultant mutual commitment between the organization and employees means the distinction between

self and others becomes blurred, for employee actions are oriented toward advancing and receiving benefit from the organization as a collective whole. Although sometimes discussed as preferable to other alternatives, Lepak and Snell (1999) suggested that commitment systems are most appropriate strategically when employees have knowledge and firm-specific skills that are not readily available in the external labor market.

In addition to these two alternatives, Lepak and Snell (1999) discussed a collaborative HR system in which the organization protects against employee opportunism by incorporating vestiges of instrumental tactics while simultaneously seeking cooperation with employees. Walton (1985) similarly described a transitional approach that is neither as market driven nor control focused as a compliance system, nor is it as broadly mutual as a commitment system. Building on these precedents, we conceptualize collaborative systems as those where cooperative, goal-oriented relationships between the organization and employees are viewed as necessary for organizational success. The organization requires specific employee contributions that cannot be fully realized without employees' willing acceptance of organizational goals, which is unlikely to be achieved through rules and control measures alone. Although both collaborative and commitment systems entail aspects of interdependence, trust, and information sharing, the blurring of boundaries between self and others found in the latter system does not occur in the former. Rather, collaborative relationships resemble partnerships or alliances in which employee identities remain distinct.

The unique characteristics of the three archetypes suggest they can be differentiated by distinct design components as well. Using Lepak and Snell (1999) as a guide, we define each HR system in terms of elements supporting and reinforcing a characteristic employment relationship and employment mode. As described in greater detail below, employment relationship refers to whether the implied psychological contract between the organization and employees is transactional, balanced, or relational (see Rousseau, 1995). Employment mode describes 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 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 is a function of the two system elements (i.e., employment relationship and employment mode) and practices enacted to operationalize them. HR practices have been discussed as having signaling influences on employees' psychological contracts with organizations (e.g., Rousseau, 1995), and a recent literature review concluded that HR practices substantially determine such contracts (Suazo, Martinez, & Sandoval, 2009). Importantly, researchers have suggested that in evaluating psychological contracts, employees rely on information from coworkers (Ho & Levesque, 2005). There is also theoretical support for the idea that HR systems directly affect employees' sense-making about their relationships with one another (e.g., Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ferris et al., 1998). For example, Frenkel and Sanders (2007) proposed that employee control systems reflecting employer-employee social partnerships should carry over to employee-employee relationships, and they found that such a system positively influenced coworker helping.

Our premise is that a given relational climate will emerge when an HR system more closely resembles one of the three HR system archetypes, as would be the case when system elements—employment relationship and mode—and HR practices were coherently implemented (cf. Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). 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. As explained below, a compliance HR system is likely to engender a market pricing climate. With a collaborative 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.

Relational Climates: Schema and Dimensions

Researchers have argued that HR systems can influence employee climate perceptions (e.g., Zacharatos, Barling, & Iverson, 2005) by symbolically framing (Rousseau, 1995) and directly communicating (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) key or-

ganizational values and behaviors. Others have noted that 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). Interestingly, scholars emphasize the collective social effects of HR systems but have said little about their influence on relationships that develop among employees operating at similar levels in the organization. Although some have recently moved in this direction by investigating HR system 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.

When dealing with a facet-specific organizational climate (e.g., service climate), scholars have noted that it is important to highlight what is unique about the climate and to focus on the behavior fundamental to it (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 HR system, operational policies and procedures could encourage employees to develop close or more tenuous ties. We suggest that 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) that 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 as enacting climates supportive of varying levels of interdependency and mutuality, qualities 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 explain the effects of such contexts on important organizational outcomes. Given that our focus is on *relational cli-*

mate, we believe his framework provides a viable means for substantively differentiating among particular relational climates and, in turn, understanding connections between HR systems and helping behavior. 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 helping and relationships between individuals of similar hierarchical status, and because authority ranking concerns partners differing in power status, we excluded this form from consideration here.

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

Relational models theory provides the broad foundation for conceptualizing relational behavior within distinct climates. We further delineate relational climates using dimensions identified as exerting a critical influence on helping in relationships, which is consistent with a problem-centered approach to studying relational phenomena (Bigley & Pearce, 1998). Thus, we reviewed several research domains relevant to helping in organizations, seeking to identify critical actionable dimensions rather than an exhaustive list. Among the substantive areas we reviewed were social capital (e.g., Bolino, Turnley, & Bloodgood, 2002; Nahapiet &

Ghoshal, 1998), psychological contracts (e.g., Rousseau, 1995, 2004), interpersonal relations (e.g., Penner et al., 2005; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003), interpersonal helping (e.g., Flynn, 2006; Settoon & Mossholder, 2002), and relational capital (e.g., Blatt, 2009).

Dimensions we identified as fundamental concerns were (1) the motivation for exchanges in the relationship, (2) justice norms by which exchange fairness is weighed, (3) risks that potentially undermine the relationship, and (4) the basis for trust between parties. Briefly, underlying the genesis of helping exchanges are distinct motives guiding employees' entrance into relationships (e.g., Flynn, 2006; Rioux & Penner, 2001). Because 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, & Schaefer, 2007). Helping exposes employees to real as well as perceived risks (e.g., Sheppard & Sherman, 1998), so mechanisms that strengthen 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 four dimensions and how they should differ across the three relational climates.

Below we discuss the characteristic employment relationships and modes of the three HR systems and their associated relational climates in greater depth. Helping is expected to be initiated and sustained differently within the climates, and we offer propositions involving the dimensions central to interpersonal relation-

ships to express these differences. Finally, we discuss configurations of operational HR practices to illustrate their connections with helping behavior. As part of this discussion, we offer additional propositions regarding the relative prevalence and type of help accompanying these practices and climates.

COMPLIANCE HR SYSTEMS: EFFECTING HELPING THROUGH A MARKET PRICING CLIMATE

Proponents of a compliance system hold that employees are extrinsically motivated commodities, and they seek to establish control and efficiency in deploying the workforce (Walton, 1985). Because in this type of system necessary human capital is assumed available in the marketplace, there is little incentive to pursue enduring employment relationships. The implied employment relationship (i.e., psychological contract) is transactional, involving short-term relationships marked by economic inducements for prescribed contributions (Rousseau, 1995). The obligations of both the organization and employees are narrow and well defined (Tsui et al., 1997). Viewing employees as commodities leads to an employment mode in which the organization generally hires or contracts for services externally. With an emphasis on efficient access to human capital, there is greater acceptance of nonstandard (e.g., part-time or contingent) employees as a means to obtain requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Consequently, there is less organizational incentive to develop employees internally.

TABLE 1
Motivation and Sustenance of Helping Behavior

Relational Climate and Associated Dimensions	Market Pricing	Equality Matching	Communal Sharing
Motivation for exchange	Self-interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-kind reciprocity ● Knowledge sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Affective and emotional bonds ● Shared social values
Justice norm	Equity	Equality	Need based
Perceived risks	Insufficient return on invested behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poor coordination ● Unbalanced reciprocation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Misanticipation of others' needs ● Empathic inaccuracy
Type of trust established	Calculus based	Knowledge based	Identity based

Motivation and Sustenance Propositions

A compliance HR system implies organization-employee links that are short term, transactional in nature, and characterized by minimal investment. We propose that compliance HR systems will lead to a relational climate in which employees perceive relationships as useful only to the extent personal benefits accrue from them and in which focal inputs and outcomes can be sufficiently monitored. This creates an implicit level of interpersonal reserve among employees, limiting relational depth. Workplace exchanges can take on a halting quality, with relational partners assessing whether efforts exerted are worth the 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). Thus, we argue that a compliance HR system will signal a market pricing climate, and employees will expect helping to be initiated and sustained accordingly.

An undercurrent of self-concern implies helping behavior will be motivated by work attitudes, job considerations, and career issues of an instrumental nature (e.g., see De Dreu, 2006, and Perlow & Weeks, 2002). Help most likely will be exchanged when it is discreet (e.g., expressly for the recipient) and utilitarian (e.g., a problem is resolved). Such exchanges sustain productive interpersonal relationships in market pricing climates because they fulfill minimal expectations for transient relationships (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). When relational 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 instead of an absolute amount. Close social interactions occur less often because employees must be concerned with their own work goals and responsibilities rather than those of others. As such, judgments about the fairness of help exchanged are likely to be tied to the event level (Gillespie & Greenberg, 2005), meaning each exchange event will be assessed in terms of its instrumentality to the help-giver.

Proposition 1a: In a compliance HR system, helping behavior is motivated

by self-interest and perceived instrumentality.

Proposition 1b: In a compliance HR system, helping behavior is judged according to the norm of equity and is 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 adequate 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). Accurate a priori assessments of the costs and rewards of helping are difficult, making relationships in market pricing climates more dependent on the outcomes of the last exchange. Because of the tenuous nature of interpersonal interactions, decisions to help will be based in part on trust that is grounded in the direct benefits anticipated from the relationship. The threat of sanctions for trust violations and the 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 it generally exists when parties have less history of interpersonal exchange and it can be eroded by ineffective helping behavior.

Proposition 1c: In a compliance HR system, helping behavior will be perceived as more risky as the possibility of an insufficient return on invested behavior increases.

Proposition 1d: In a compliance HR system, 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

As scholars have noted, it is often instructive to examine in more operational terms how employee behaviors might be affected by the broader HR system (e.g., Wright & Boswell, 2002). Therefore, we exemplify how helping could be affected by the tenor of practices in a compliance HR system and associated market pricing climate. In organizationally viable interpersonal relationships, a mix of task-relevant and interpersonal obligations is considered (Zohar & Tenne-Gazit, 2008). Therefore, one practical consideration is whether helping will be directed toward task- or person-focused needs. It is also reasonable to expect that HR systems might constrain or amplify the overall prevalence of helping among employees. We thus offer propositions regarding the prevalence and type of helping most likely in a compliance HR system.

For purposes of illustration, we discuss practice categories considered by many as central HR concerns: selection and staffing, training and development, work design features, and reward and appraisal systems (e.g., see Arthur,

1994; Beltrán-Martín et al., 2008; Toh, Morgeson, & Campion, 2008). Table 2 displays these practices, along with corresponding HR system components and relational climates. There likely are multiple configurations by which an HR system can be realized and through which a particular relational climate emerges. Although we do not discuss all configuration possibilities, the one illustrated would be expected to influence the nature and prevalence of employee helping.

Because human resources in compliance HR systems tend to be acquired externally and with transactional relationships in mind, typical selection practices emphasize technical competencies rather than social ones (Koch & McGrath, 1996). The weight given to technical competence and the higher likelihood of nonstandard workers (e.g., part-time, contract) in compliance systems could reduce helping overall in the workforce. Stamper and Van Dyne (2001) found that part-time employees engaged in fewer helping behaviors than did their full-time counterparts. Additionally, because of the emphasis on efficient access to work-ready human capital in compliance HR systems, there is less concern for

TABLE 2
HR Systems, Relational Climates, and Example Practice Configurations

HR System Element	Compliance Based/ Market Pricing	Collaborative Based/ Equality Matching	Commitment Based/ Communal Sharing
Employment mode	External	External and internal	Internal
Employment relationship	Transactional, short term	Balanced, short and long term	Relational, long term
<i>Example practice configurations</i>			
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emphasis on technical selection criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emphasis on technical then social selection criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emphasis on technical and social selection criteria together
Training/development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual competencies ● Human capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual and social competencies ● Cognitive social capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shared competencies ● Relational social capital
Work design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work independence ● Low involvement ● Structural barriers to interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reciprocal interdependence ● Moderate involvement ● Integrated lateral networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mutual interdependence ● High involvement ● Dense networks, teams
Rewards and appraisal emphasis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual based ● For quantifiable task outcomes ● Dispersed pay structures ● Evaluative appraisal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual and group based ● For task and social outcomes ● Compressed pay structures ● Evaluative and developmental appraisal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group based ● For shared outcomes ● Compressed pay structures ● Evaluative and group developmental appraisal

training and development (Snell & Dean, 1992). Organizations turn to in-house development only when the needed KSAs are not available in the external labor market, decreasing the likelihood that formal socialization mechanisms will be present to foster helping tendencies.

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

The emphasis on specified contributions implies compliance compensation practices will emphasize greater pay dispersion and quantified employee outputs, creating interpersonal competition for rewards (Shaw, Gupta, & Delery, 2002). Results-based rewards should direct employees toward their own specific work responsibilities and task 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 noninstrumental exchanges that might stimulate eventual helping relationships. Consistent with the less interdependent 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, will 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, em-

ployees' 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. In view of the summative influence of these practices, we posit the following.

Proposition 1e: In a compliance HR system and market pricing climate, helping behavior will occur less frequently than in collaborative or commitment HR systems.

Proposition 1f: In a compliance HR system and market pricing climate, helping behavior will be more task focused than person focused.

COLLABORATIVE HR SYSTEMS: EFFECTING HELPING THROUGH AN EQUALITY MATCHING CLIMATE

Collaborative HR systems involve organization-employee partnerships in which contributions are elicited from those whose competencies and knowledge are recognized as important resources for accomplishing organizational goals. Such systems entail employment relationships that reflect a balanced psychological contract with 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. Accordingly, the organization might seek largely transactional, but less transitional, relationships with nonstandard employees. An example would be contract employees who work on-site for the organization over an extended period and who are encouraged 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 that such relationships will end should conditions require it. The relationships in these examples suggest more durable arrangements than those likely in a compliance system.

The employment mode in a collaborative HR system also involves a balance of elements, facilitating cooperative interactions among employees who pursue task goals in partnership

with each other and the organization. The organization can exercise an external employment mode in acquiring individual competencies, as happens in compliance HR systems. Additionally, however, an internal mode can be followed whereby employee development transpires within the organization. Although a mixed employment mode might seem inconsistent with a collaborative 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 compliance systems, collaborative systems give rise to greater employee interdependence within the organization.

Motivation and Sustenance Propositions

Organizational approaches to managing employees in collaborative 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 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 complex or ambiguous 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, collaborative HR systems are likely to stimulate equality matching climates, which are characterized by shared feelings of social obligation and turn-taking in exchanges.

Work relationships in equality matching climates turn on expectations of reciprocity, perhaps the most widely recognized form of social exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This compels employees to be mindful of both the immediate effects and longer-term obligations of helping acts. The motivation to provide help involves relational benefits (e.g., social support) as well as instrumental benefits (e.g., knowledge and advice). However, the preeminence of reciprocity diminishes the self-interested bargaining associated with market pricing cli-

mates and, instead, emphasizes that one person's actions are tied to another's over time (Molm, 2003). Maintaining balanced exchanges allows 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). When employees determine that they have been treated well in specific 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.

Proposition 2a: In a collaborative HR system, helping behavior is motivated by in-kind reciprocity and is maintained by balanced exchanges in relationships.

Proposition 2b: In a collaborative HR system, helping behavior is judged according to the norm of equality and is evaluated as fair to the degree that there is parity in exchange partners' inputs.

Too great or too small of a response to another's help can induce feelings of overobligation or short-changing, respectively. Even when a response is well gauged, a longer than normal time lag in delivery can 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). The marked certainty afforded by more durable relationships also creates conditions in which exchange partners foresee each other'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 repeated exchanges. Grad-

ually, the basis for trust shifts from outcome-based evidence provided by the content of exchanges, as commonly found in market pricing climates, to assuredness regarding help-givers' integrity. Those whose help has met desired requisites develop positive reputations, magnifying the potential for future helping exchanges (Johnson, Erez, Kiker, & Motowidlo, 2002; Lewicki et al., 2006).

Proposition 2c: In a collaborative HR system, helping behavior will be perceived as more risky as the possibility of unbalanced reciprocity and poor coordination increases.

Proposition 2d: In a collaborative HR system, the type of trust most likely to develop between individuals who exchange helping behavior is knowledge-based trust.

Collaborative HR Practices: Prevalence and Focus of Helping

Because collaborative employment relationships involve social cooperation with a goal-focused orientation, 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 collaborative HR system. When technical and social criteria are both weighed in the selection process, employees will possess problem-solving competencies and the social skills to use them. 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 will 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 that training encouraging interpersonal interaction should lead to a denser social net-

work and increase the likelihood of helping-related behaviors in the organization.

Work design practices that acknowledge task interdependencies and reciprocal work flows among employees (e.g., Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007) will be apparent in collaborative HR systems. Research has shown that greater task interdependency can result in more helping (e.g., DeJong, Van der Vegt, & Molleman, 2007). 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 (Venkataramani & Dalal, 2007). When task interdependency is higher, some research suggests that yoking potential rewards to cooperation with coworkers will positively affect performance (Wageman & Baker, 1997). Collaborative systems are likely to incorporate formal and informal rewards for helping in order to manage employee interdependencies. Compressed pay ranges will help encourage collaborative behaviors (Pfeffer & Langton, 1993). In attempting to administer incentive distributions, evenhanded 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 collaborative 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. When 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 behaviors (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005). Considering the cumulative effect of these practices, we suggest the following.

Proposition 2e: In a collaborative HR system and equality matching climate, helping behavior will occur

more frequently than in a compliance HR system.

Proposition 2f: In a collaborative HR system and equality matching climate, helping behavior will be less task focused and more person focused than in a compliance HR system.

COMMITMENT HR SYSTEMS: EFFECTING HELPING THROUGH A COMMUNAL SHARING CLIMATE

In a commitment system, employees and the organization are viewed as having high regard for one another. The goal of this system is to elevate employee performance by bolstering collective commitment. The generalized mutualism developed 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 the 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 often relies on internal labor markets and training as the means of developing employee capabilities and fostering affective outcomes.

Motivation and Sustenance Propositions

In commitment HR systems, managing employees is predicated on developing secure, unconstrained relationships. 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 goal striving, while elevating the status of those with whom the goal is accomplished. We argue, therefore, that commitment HR systems will produce communal sharing climates characterized by feelings of solidarity and

blurred self-other distinctions—much as occurs among family or clan members (Ouchi, 1980). This notion also implies that 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. 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 they have extended help (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 because of 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 generalized others (Connelley & Folger, 2004). In communal sharing climates, fairness in relationships entails the experience of belonging, an absence of conflict, and a desire for frequent interaction (Gillespie & Greenberg, 2005).

Proposition 3a: In a commitment HR system, helping behavior is motivated by prosocial values and affective bonds with relational partners.

Proposition 3b: In a commitment HR system, helping behavior is judged by a need-based norm and is 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, which develops as relational partners make assumptions about each other's needs based on previous interactions (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). With time, employees develop more accurate person perceptions that allow them to better anticipate those needs (Davis, 1994). In close relationships, however, emotions can sometimes lead employ-

ees to feel they know what others want, which could increase the risk of misreading others' feelings (e.g., reduced empathic accuracy; Ickes, 1993) and misanticipating their needs. This risk is mitigated somewhat by employee beliefs 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 difficult to erode.

Proposition 3c: In a commitment HR system, helping behavior will be perceived as more risky as the possibility of empathic inaccuracy and misanticipation of needs increases.

Proposition 3d: In a commitment HR system, 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

The practices, system elements, and relational climate expected for a commitment HR system are displayed in Table 2. The emphasis on employee relationships in commitment systems makes selection practices important for creating commonalities in employees' prosocial beliefs and values. Efforts will be made to attract employees who can meet broad work demands and whose values support a willingness to work in concert with others (Hom et al., 2009). Likewise, an internal employment mode focused on social development and long-term potential suggests that extensive training and development will be offered, including 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 their understanding of others (e.g., Heaney, Price, & Rafferty, 1995). Traditional mentoring programs will be expanded to include 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, Weinberg, Bennett, & Miller, 2008). Communal sharing climates comprise dense, multiplex social networks in which employees must integrate their interests with those of the work unit. The close relationships experienced generate 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 to back up other team members when help is needed (Porter et al., 2003).

In commitment systems, incentives promote social behaviors like knowledge sharing, peer support, and helping. 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 and more frequent returns for cooperative behavior. 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 are likely to include an ample developmental component through which expectations about positive social interactions are emphasized (Reilly & McGourty, 1998). Appraisals might also include a collective component, with some goals participatively set by individuals or groups (London, 2007).

The configuration of these 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. Practices that increase employees' interconnectedness and require them to learn interpersonal

and teamwork skills instill social norms for helping and facilitate helping in group-oriented contexts (Ng & Van Dyne, 2005). Weighing the collective effect of these practices, we thus offer the following.

Proposition 3e: In a commitment HR system and communal sharing climate, helping behavior will occur more frequently than in compliance or collaborative HR systems.

Proposition 3f: In a commitment HR system and communal sharing climate, helping behavior will be less task focused and more person focused than in compliance or collaborative HR systems.

DISCUSSION

Perhaps because of its inherently interpersonal nature, much organizational research involving helping behavior has focused at the individual level. Because 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 limiting. Attempting to integrate both organizational and individual components, we have 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 have 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 that it offers a new means of understanding the potential interplay between HR systems and helping behavior. Considering how HR systems affect broader relational climates can allow organizations to positively influence employees' expectations regarding the nature of both task and interpersonal exchange dynamics occurring in the workplace. We have underscored the role of relational climate as an intermediary between the three HR systems and helping, and we have mapped out the dimensions it comprises. This climate construct has

not been formally recognized in the management literature. Such consideration, however, is consistent with arguments that shared employee perceptions and attributions about 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 we suggest how helping might be facilitated within particular relational climates. Such information could inform managers of subtle features associated with helping stimulated by differing HR systems.

By offering insights into HR system influences on helping behavior, the proposed framework also contributes to our understanding of how organizations can become more adaptive via their human resources. With the assistance of others, employees can modify their KSAs to deal with workplace contingencies and change. Initiatives to increase organizational flexibility are sometimes unsuccessful because organizations emphasize restructuring or technology and ignore the role that employees play. Wright and Snell (1998) identified an overlooked adaptive component—behavioral flexibility—that involves employees' learning to apply appropriate discretionary efforts. They also noted that behavioral flexibility emerges partly through scripts in which employees gain knowledge from workplace interactions. Helping involves discretionary behavior, and the differing helping "scripts" embedded within the three proposed relational climates depict such interactions. Thus, our framework suggests employees' helping behavior should contribute to building organizational flexibility and underscores their importance in attaining it.

A final contribution is that our propositions are pertinent to 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), there remains a need to explicitly consider the effects of HR systems on individual-level helping. Our framework suggests how aspects of HR systems and emergent relational climates encourage helping, partly addressing this issue. Moreover, it is consistent with a "context theorizing" approach advanced by Bamberger (2008),

which encourages researchers to identify phenomena typically associated with different levels and to substantively specify how they can be linked. Focusing on connections between macro (i.e., HR systems, relational climates) and micro (i.e., helping behavior) phenomena, the present framework could compel researchers to conceptualize helping as stemming from more than situational necessities or serendipitous opportunities.

Implications and Future Research

Our proposed framework has practical implications for practicing managers who want to enhance helping in their organizations. A key implication is that actions 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 affects 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 relational climate. For example, managing helping among employees in social service organizations would require different emphases than it would in financial service organizations. Because interpersonal support and care are hallmarks of their missions, social service and health care organizations might find that commitment-based practices supportive of helping in communal sharing climates enable greater employee effectiveness. The relational architecture of work performed in these organizations is such that close coordination and empathic concern enhance the delivery of services required to benefit clients and customers (Gittell et al., 2008; Grant, 2007). In contrast, organizations might find that a compliance HR system and accompanying market pricing climate are more appropriate 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 occurs less frequently when compliance HR systems are enacted than when collaborative or commitment systems are enacted, we nonetheless expect some helping to take place in all three archetypal systems. This assumes, however, sufficient coherence among the policies and prac-

tices operationalizing the particular HR system. Applying HR system components so they 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 conflicting messages about expected employee behaviors (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). For example, if employees are selected for their technical competence and participate in skills training but subsequently are rewarded for group-based goal accomplishment, confusion about the types of relationships to form with others (i.e., market pricing versus communal sharing) could surface. Under such conditions ambiguity would be manifested regarding appropriate helping behavior.

Future work should consider potential management difficulties caused by different HR systems and climates existing for different sets of employees in the 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 (Perlow et al., 2004), but little research has addressed difficulties arising across different cultures or climates within the same organization.

Some have argued that the significance of implementing particular HR practices is less important than their net effect on the particular climate needed to achieve strategic objectives (e.g., Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Although we exemplified the archetypal HR systems using a set of common practices, it should be noted that differing practice configurations could be used to stimulate helping, as long as they generate behavioral expectations consistent with the targeted relational climate. Managers wanting to increase the chances that employees will de-

velop similar expectations regarding helping exchanges should adhere to the strategic focus of the selected HR system and ensure coherence in implementing specific practices (Schneider, Ehrhart, Mayer, Saltz, & Niles-Jolly, 2005; Zohar & Tenne-Gazit, 2008). For example, managers implementing a commitment HR system should be mindful that work design, rewards, and appraisal practices signal the importance of shared/team activities. Managers can also influence climate indirectly through role modeling and through 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.

Although we suggest that particular relational climates and attendant helping behaviors tend to be propagated by certain sets of HR practices, there are obstacles to this. First, disconnects can occur between the implementation of intended HR practices and the practices as experienced by employees (Liao, Toya, Lepak, & Hong, 2009; Nishii et al., 2008). Second, even when practices are implemented as intended, helping could be disproportionately constrained in compliance HR systems. Compliance systems emphasize efficiencies in producing and rewarding task outcomes, even while propagating instrumental helping. In some cases pay-for-performance practices can reduce helping-related behaviors like OCB (e.g., Deckop, Mangel, & Cirka, 1999). Deckop et al. (2003) also noted that how much help is received (or withheld) by employees might determine future levels of help-giving. If HR practices constrain helping behavior enough to reach a negative tipping point, the act of withholding help could transform into more active counterproductive work behavior (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Spector & Fox, 2010). Finally, regardless of the HR systems in place, certain managerial types might stymie the development of helping behavior. For example, managers whose styles could be described as toxic (Frost, 2004) or narcissistic (Maccoby, 2000) would not likely be concerned with viable relational climates 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. Researchers recognize that managerial assumptions and actions can be important influences on climates and behaviors since they determine how practices are enacted at the employee level (Tesluk, Vance, & Mathieu, 1999). Especially in organizations where market pricing relational forces are active, top-down dynamics might exert more influence on helping behavior. In such instances managers could more easily structure work relationships to supply helping opportunities because task goals are, in comparison to other relational climates, better known. It is possible that top-down forces are relevant in the other HR systems as well. For instance, Taylor, Levy, Boyacigiller, and Beechler (2008) found that the influences of organizational culture and commitment-oriented HR practices are filtered through top management team orientation. Regardless, top-down management influence will not necessarily lessen the amount of cooperation and assistance that occurs, but the auspices under which they occur will derive more directly from top management preferences and expectations (Frenkel & Sanders, 2007).

In organizations relying heavily on project teams and self-managed groups, bottom-up dynamics would be expected to have greater influence in determining the character of helping. Because of greater interdependencies, employees would likely engage in more helping-oriented sensemaking regarding relations with other employees (Grant et al., 2008). Conceivably, bottom-up dynamics could even influence managers to adjust HR practices to accommodate emergent social interactions. Some research suggests bundles of HR practices are adopted to fit ongoing social and managerial processes (Toh et al., 2008; Truss, 2001). This notion is consistent with the concept of structuration (Giddens, 1984), in which interaction patterns among employees are shaped by formal organizational structures and, in turn, reinforce or alter these structures over time. Although there is scant empirical evidence that relational climate and helping interactions could influence an entire HR system, researchers have found that patterns of helping can affect HR practices (e.g., rewards and compensation) contained within such systems (Perlow et al., 2004). Learning how to shape HR practices so as to support interactions occurring in relational cli-

mates could allow organizations to formally augment effective helping routines employees have developed on their own.

Our arguments imply that managers should attempt to discern their units' relational climate and acquaint employees with the respective risks that helping exchanges entail. After diagnosing forces underlying helping in their units, managers could then actively encourage helping or reduce interpersonal obstacles to it. 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 could 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 understood as normatively acceptable, employees are less reticent to seek help (Hofmann, Lei, & Grant, 2009).

Conclusion

We propose that more emphasis be placed on an overlooked intersection of the micro- and macro-oriented HR systems literature. We have argued that researchers should begin to consider connections among HR systems, relational climates, and helping behavior, with the idea that strategically harnessing helping will become more critical to organizations in the future. It is important for organizations to understand 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 will promote greater understanding of the chal-

lenge of cultivating viable relational climates in organizations.

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