



**HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES AND HELPING IN  
ORGANIZATIONS:  
A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

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4 **A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**  
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8 **ABSTRACT**  
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10 This paper proposes linkages between human resource (HR) practices and individual  
11 helping behavior. HR practices are expected to influence the nature of relationships and the  
12 character of helping within organizations. We suggest certain sets of HR practices promote  
13 relational climates that vary in terms of the depth of relationships formed between individuals.  
14 By considering the correspondence between practices and their respective relational climates, a  
15 better understanding of expectations and outcomes associated with helping can emerge.  
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4 At the heart of theoretical and empirical work on helping behavior in organizations is the  
5 notion that organizations often depend on such behaviors to deal with non-routine aspects of  
6 work. Helping behavior has been investigated under various guises (e.g., Flynn, 2006; LePine &  
7 Van Dyne, 2001; Settoon & Mossholder, 2002), all of which involve cooperative support and  
8 assistance for individuals in need. It is a robust predictor of group and organizational  
9 performance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000), and has become more important  
10 in light of movement toward greater employee involvement (e.g., Morgan & Zeffane, 2003),  
11 interactive work structures (e.g., Frenkel & Sanders, 2007), and the development of social capital  
12 within organizations (e.g., Adler & Kwon, 2002). As helping behavior involves an agentic  
13 process through which individuals positively affect others, much organizational research has  
14 sought to identify its critical dispositional and situational antecedents. Less work has been  
15 devoted toward establishing broader mechanisms organizations can use to harness these  
16 antecedents (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). Thus, although current research offers  
17 guidance regarding individual level influences on helping behavior, it is less informative as to  
18 how organizations should promote and integrate helping behavior among employees.  
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35 In this paper, we propose a template that uses strategic human resource (HR) practices as  
36 the conceptual mechanism for integrating helping behavior within organizations. Our basic  
37 premise is that by establishing conceptual linkages between HR practices and forms of employee  
38 helping behaviors, a more coherent understanding of how helping behavior may be facilitated is  
39 possible. Strategic HR scholars (e.g., Collins & Smith, 2006) have argued that through  
40 appropriate HR practices, organizations can influence employee behaviors and establish social  
41 capital as a potential source of competitive advantage (e.g., Evans & Davis, 2005). However, HR  
42 practices most often have been examined in the aggregate and in connection with firm level  
43 outcomes rather than individual level behaviors like helping. Although such work provides a  
44 conceptual basis for considering helping behavior, it is less useful in uncovering intervening  
45 mechanisms and processes that characterize and encourage helping. Indeed, Gerhart (2005)  
46 suggested strategic HR researchers need to focus more attention on the individual, rather than the  
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4 firm, level and address HR's influence on employee relationships. Similarly, Becker and Huselid  
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6 (2006) argued research must begin emphasizing the implementation of HR practices and  
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8 differentiating among practices directed toward specific employees.  
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10 A meso level approach (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005) is used in this  
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12 paper to reveal points of congruency between bundles of HR practices and the types of helping  
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14 behaviors they may encourage. This approach emphasizes helping exchanges within specified  
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16 types of relational climates associated with HR practices. *Relational climate* refers to employee  
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18 perceptions and appraisals of policies, practices, and behaviors that foster and support  
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20 interpersonal relationships and exchanges among employees. We suggest varying relational  
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22 climates may be found in organizations, as has been the case for other facet-specific climates like  
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24 service, safety, and ethics (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009). For example, employees may feel  
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26 encouraged to form close ties in one organization, whereas in another they may develop  
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28 relationships that are guarded and tenuous.  
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31 Because helping is inherently relational, understanding salient features of the socio-  
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33 cognitive environment surrounding helping behavior could provide insights regarding its  
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35 facilitation. Penner et al. (2005) suggested that conceptualizing prosocial behaviors within  
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37 relational climates may make more apparent how facets of helping differ, depending on the  
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39 climate in which individual relationships are formed. Employing tenets of relational models  
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41 theory (Fiske, 1992), we first describe a range of relational climates that vary in terms of the  
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43 antecedents and enactment of helping. We then argue, in line with structuration theory (Giddens,  
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45 1984), that HR practices may be delineated in ways such that certain HR practice bundles could  
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47 be expected to encourage and sustain certain relational climates. Finally, for each relational  
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49 climate, we offer propositions regarding fundamental characteristics of helping behavior likely to  
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51 emerge.  
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### 53 **INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND HR PRACTICES**

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55 The decision to help is affected by a stream of evaluations that flow from relationships  
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57 (Ames, Flynn, & Weber, 2004) and influence present and future helping exchanges (Deckop,  
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4 Cirka, & Andersson, 2003). Individuals determine the relevance of their helping behavior in part  
5 based on the problems and resolution opportunities afforded by their interpersonal  
6 circumstances. As antecedents of helping, relational variables show promise for explaining  
7 significant incremental variance over traditional predictors (Venkataramani & Dalal, 2007). This  
8 suggests that managers seeking to influence the frequency and magnitude of helping exchanges  
9 in the organization should be aware of the broader relational climates in which their employees  
10 work. We offer that a principal means by which managers affect the relational climate of the  
11 organization is through the application of appropriate HR practices. Empirical support for this  
12 notion has begun to surface. For example, Collins and Smith (2006) have shown that HR  
13 practices emphasizing employee commitment were positively related with climates for trust,  
14 cooperation, and knowledge sharing across a sample of high technology firms. Elsewhere,  
15 Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, and Takeuchi (2007) noted that HR practices congruent with high  
16 involvement work systems promoted employee perceptions of a social exchange relationship  
17 with the organization, which should boost the level of help exchanged between employees.  
18 Finally, Sun, Aryee, and Law (2007) found high performance HR practices were positively  
19 correlated with firm-level service-oriented citizenship behavior, and suggested that such  
20 behavior should be accompanied by norms that encourage helping exchanges among  
21 organization members.

### 22 **A Range of Relational Climates**

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24 The first step in linking HR practices and helping behavior is to differentiate relational  
25 climates in which certain forms of helping behavior are likely found. Resolving the dilemma of  
26 whether to extend help and its appropriate form depends on the socio-cognitive context in which  
27 the need for help arises. We propose that relational models theory (Fiske, 1992) provides a  
28 means of distinguishing such contexts. This theory posits four distinct relational forms – *market*  
29 *pricing*, *equality matching*, *communal sharing*, and *authority ranking*. Examined within a  
30 number of disciplines, these forms describe interpersonal activities such as how people  
31 understand and motivate each other in their relationships (Fiske & Haslam, 2005). Because our  
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4 focus is on help exchanged between individuals of similar hierarchical status, and authority  
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6 ranking addresses exchanges between partners of differing power status, we excluded this form  
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8 from consideration. The relational forms comprise varying fundamental attitudes, perceptions,  
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10 expectations, and behaviors that individuals share regarding interpersonal relations, and as such,  
11  
12 can be viewed broadly as representing distinguishable relational climates. For present purposes,  
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14 we use market pricing, equality matching, and communal sharing in reference to specific types of  
15  
16 relational climates. We posit that prototypical kinds of helping behavior will be associated with  
17  
18 these relational climates. Relationship qualities associated with market pricing, equality  
19  
20 matching, and communal sharing relational climates are now briefly characterized.

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22 Relationships occurring in a market pricing climate are predicated largely on means-ends  
23  
24 considerations, lasting as long as both parties derive instrumental benefits. Consistent with game-  
25  
26 theoretic perspectives, individuals in market pricing climates are guided by a desire to make the  
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28 most of personal resources by comparing alternatives and engaging in relationships that appear  
29  
30 to offer the best cost-benefit ratio (Murnighan, 1994). Merit is the primary means by which  
31  
32 status is achieved. Thus, interpersonal access in market pricing contexts is open to all competent  
33  
34 participants. The decision to help may have more to do with self-interest than friendship or moral  
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36 responsibility, and may tacitly convey an impression that the help-giver is more capable than  
37  
38 others and is willing to share these capabilities (Bolino, 1999; Rioux & Penner, 2001).

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40 In equality matching climates, relationships are founded on egalitarianism and turn  
41  
42 taking. Imbalances between partners are undesirable, so matching the others' contributions over  
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44 time is a cardinal principle. Such relationships reflect social exchange theory notions that  
45  
46 gestures of goodwill will be reciprocated over time (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), and thus  
47  
48 have ramifications for future exchanges. Relations in equality matching climates concern direct  
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50 and indirect needs of exchange partners, and are judged in social and economic terms. In  
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52 organizations, behaviors such as providing support or sharing knowledge are ideal wares for  
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54 exchange because they can be readily extended or withheld. Individuals seek evenhanded  
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4 resolutions of task-related and interpersonal problems, and attach importance to reciprocity in  
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6 relationships (Buunk, Doosje, Jans, & Hopstaken, 1993; Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994).  
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8 Relationships in a communal sharing climate are based on the concept of equivalence and  
9  
10 marked by a sense of solidarity. Group members focus on commonalities and blur individual  
11  
12 distinctions in interactions over time. The personal welfare of the other party is considered  
13  
14 significant and underlies the basis for exchanges. Thus, individuals tend to be committed to  
15  
16 ensuring others' well-being and are responsive to others' needs as a matter of course, even if this  
17  
18 is at the expense of their personal goals. For employees in communal sharing climates, helping is  
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20 a by-product of high quality relations (Anderson & Williams, 1996), affiliative feelings  
21  
22 (McAllister, 1995) and empathic concern (Settoon & Mossholder, 2002).  
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### 24 **HR Practices as Helping Behavior Structures**

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27 Connecting firm and individual level variables is necessary to examine the effects of  
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29 strategic HR practices on helping behavior, and Giddens' (1984) structuration theory is a viable  
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31 means for doing so. Scholars have begun to use this theory in positing how structural features of  
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33 an organization are intertwined with employee actions (e.g., Dutton, Worline, Frost, & Lilius,  
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35 2006; Perlow, Gittell, & Katz, 2004; Toh, Morgeson, & Campion, 2008). Structuration involves  
36  
37 the process by which a social system is sustained through members' use of policies, rules, and  
38  
39 resources, which act as "structures" that provide recipes for action taken by organization  
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41 members. Employees rely partly on structures to operate effectively. Within different social  
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43 systems, particular modes of social action may be viewed positively or negatively, which signals  
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45 action appropriateness. Over time, structural properties of the social system are maintained only  
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47 if the behaviors potentiated by the available action recipes are mobilized.  
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49  
50 Through the lens of structuration theory, HR practice bundles can be viewed as coherent  
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52 social structures. Toh et al. (2008) have noted that HR practices can transform the broader  
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54 context for behavior in organizations, and then subsequently be affected by this transformation.  
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56 Thus, it is reasonable to posit that differing HR practices will tend to mobilize different forms of  
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58 helping behavior in organizations because they affect an emergent relational climate and  
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4 engender interactions that are appropriate therein. Cumulative episodes of particular forms of  
5 helping would, in turn, reinforce the very structures (i.e., sets of predominant HR practices) from  
6 which they arose. Over time, employees come to understand what helping behaviors are  
7 reasonable given the HR practices and relational climate in which they operate.  
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12 Because there has been some difficulty in developing a comprehensive taxonomy to  
13 account for the many variations in HR practices, Lepak, Bartol, and Erhardt (2005) suggested  
14 focusing on the purpose of HR practices rather than the practices per se. Using this notion as a  
15 guide, we examined the HR literature to determine how extant categorizations of practices might  
16 correspond with the relational perspective of helping behavior. Two contrasting alternatives have  
17 been widely discussed: compliance-based practices that feature short-term, individual exchange  
18 relations and commitment-based practices that feature mutual, long-term relations (e.g., Arthur,  
19 1994; Collins & Smith, 2006; Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997; Zacharatos, Barling, &  
20 Iverson, 2005). Although an HR structure lying between these two extremes has not been  
21 formally identified, Lepak and Snell (1999) have discussed a collaboration-based configuration  
22 as a viable middle ground between compliance- and commitment-based HR practices. This  
23 configuration emphasizes primary investment in relationships (versus individuals) as well as  
24 cooperation and knowledge sharing. It facilitates employee exchanges of information and  
25 assistance, resulting in both individual and synergistic benefits.  
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41 We maintain that across organizations, the predominant form of helping behavior will  
42 correspond with a relational climate supported by a particular set of HR practices. As explained  
43 below, helping behavior associated with compliance-based HR practices is likely to take on  
44 characteristics encouraged by a market pricing climate. With collaborative-based HR practices,  
45 helping should be marked by features that flourish in an equality matching relational climate.  
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50 And finally, commitment-based HR practices are most likely to sustain a communal sharing  
51 climate, thus helping behavior linked with such practices should bear attributes of communal  
52 sharing relationships. The overarching argument is when helping exchanges are aligned with the  
53 appropriate relational climates, relationships that are mutually beneficial to employees and  
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4 organizations involved should occur. Misalignment of behaviors and the climates could have the  
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6 opposite effect, and lead to less beneficial exchanges and outcomes for the organization.  
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8 To organize our discussion, we focused on four categories of strategic HR practices:  
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10 selection and staffing, training and development, work design features, and reward and appraisal  
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12 systems. Although all possible HR practices are not discussed, these are ones that would  
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14 certainly be expected to influence the relational climate of the organization in which employees  
15  
16 operate. Furthermore, these practices have been considered by others as central HR concerns  
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18 (e.g., Arthur, 1994; Beltrán-Martín, Roca-Puig, Escrig-Tena, & Bou-Llusar, 2008; Combs, Liu,  
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20 Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Paré & Tremblay, 2007; Toh et al., 2008). Table 1 displays HR practices  
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22 and the relational climates with which they are posited to correspond.  
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27 Insert Table 1 here  
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31 As will be clearer when connections between HR practices and relational climates are  
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33 elaborated below, the general nature of employees' helping interactions could be expected to  
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35 vary across the climates. We suggest these differences should correspond with distinct motives  
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37 for helping, which are amplified by norms that influence how employees gauge fairness in  
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39 exchanges of help. Because helping exposes employees to real as well as perceived risks,  
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41 mechanisms that increase the confidence one party has in the other increases the sustainability of  
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43 relationships that are established. Trust development is one such mechanism (Malhotra, 2004),  
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45 making it critical for successful helping exchanges. Thus, types of trust and accompanying  
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47 identity orientations expected to emerge in the relational climates are also discussed.  
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## 49 **COMPLIANCE-BASED HR STRUCTURES AND HELPING WITHIN MARKET** 50 51 **PRICING CLIMATES** 52

53 Compliance-based HR practices are generally described as having the goal of decreasing  
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55 costs and increasing efficiency (Arthur, 1994; Tsui et al., 1997, Zacharatos, Barling, & Iverson,  
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57 2005), and are characterized by the use of well-defined work rules and operating procedures, and  
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4 a focus on measurable output criteria. Tsui et al. (1997) described compliance-based structures as  
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6 emphasizing economic transactions in which organizations offer short-term inducements in  
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8 return for specified contributions from individual employees.  
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10 Typical selection practices emphasize technical competence rather than individual  
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12 person-organization fit. With an emphasis on efficient access to human capital, there is greater  
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14 dependence on hiring from external sources and using non-standard employees (e.g., part-time or  
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16 temporary workers) to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Reliance on  
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18 external labor markets also may reduce the overall level of perceived employment security  
19  
20 within the organization. In combination, such practices result in fewer opportunities for  
21  
22 employees to develop long-term work relationships. They also discourage close social interaction  
23  
24 and increase the likelihood that a market pricing climate would flourish. Stamper and Van Dyne  
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26 (2001) found that part-time employees engaged in fewer helping behaviors than did their full-  
27  
28 time counterparts. This finding was attributed to fewer social inducements being available to  
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30 part-time workers, which tended to focus their interest on gaining tangible rewards from the  
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32 organization. Similarly, Broschak and Davis-Blake (2006) found that the proportion of non-  
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34 standard employees in a work group was negatively associated with the amount of helping  
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36 exhibited by standard and non-standard employees alike. The presence of non-standard workers  
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38 can heighten competition for mobility opportunities and impose unwanted responsibilities (e.g.,  
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40 standard employees training non-standard workers). This may exacerbate equity concerns and  
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42 promote instrumental behavior typical of market pricing climates.  
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45 Compliance-based training and development will tend to emphasize technical over social  
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47 competence. If present at all, mentoring programs would involve control and efficiency  
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49 considerations (e.g., see Evans, 1984), and focus on skills and abilities related to task  
50  
51 accomplishment. Organizations likely would buy needed skills in the external market, turning to  
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53 in-house development only when the preferred alternative is not available (e.g., in a tight labor  
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55 market). As such, employee contributions and value will be interpreted largely within a human  
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57 capital framework (Lepak & Snell, 1999), and their KSAs may even be viewed as commodities.  
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4 The emphasis on technical competence can protect against unsuccessful helping attempts. This is  
5 important because incompetent help would decrease the perceived utility of exchanges when  
6 recipients recognize their problems are not being resolved. Because requesting assistance in a  
7 market pricing climate could be interpreted by others in the organization as indicating a lack of  
8 self-reliance or ability (Anderson & Williams, 1996), discreetly extended help protects the  
9 recipient from harmful perceptions and provides an indication that conditional confidence  
10 expressed in the other party is not misplaced (Abrams, Cross, Lesser, & Levin, 2003).  
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18 Compliance-based work design practices that may encourage market pricing climates  
19 include designing work to be independent (i.e., as opposed to interdependent), clearly defined,  
20 and highly prescribed, such that employees have less autonomy or process involvement in the  
21 organization. When work primarily requires task independence, workers will tend to perceive  
22 less of a need to help one another. For example, Van der Vegt and Van de Vliert (2005) found  
23 that peer-rated helping decreased under conditions of low task interdependence. Also, when  
24 work tasks are relatively prescribed, employees need to share knowledge with others less often  
25 and can accomplish goals on their own. Likewise, where the predominant production technology  
26 does not encourage cooperative efforts (cf. Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997) or the  
27 organizational culture emphasizes competition, individuals will use relative comparisons as  
28 standards when judging the value of helping.  
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41 Compliance-based structures tend to be characterized by greater pay dispersion because  
42 of an emphasis on quantifiable differences in employee outputs. This could create interpersonal  
43 competition for rewards (Shaw, Gupta, & Delery, 2002) and increase expectations that helping  
44 behavior lead to goal accomplishment. Indeed, Kang, Morris, and Snell (1997) argued that  
45 because there are few social inducements for in-kind reciprocity in such structures, helping is  
46 less likely to emerge unless explicitly rewarded. Thus, if a compliance-based organization  
47 wanted to encourage helping behavior, it might use formal rewards to do so. Supporting this  
48 idea, Podsakoff, Bommer, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie's (2006) meta-analysis showed that  
49 contingent reward behavior by leaders is positively related to employee altruism. Reliance on  
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4 explicit rewards for helping behavior is consistent with a minimalist logic likely to be adopted by  
5 help-givers in market pricing climates (Bacharach et al., 2000). That is, help givers will attempt  
6 to satisfy others' needs at a low cost and only in direct exchange for some benefit to themselves.  
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10 Finally, in compliance-based structures, performance feedback will be more evaluative  
11 than developmental, and it will emphasize technical competence over social fit. This emphasis  
12 reinforces employees' desires to avoid appearing incapable and the need for discretion when help  
13 is sought. Employee goals established in the appraisal process are likely to be assigned and will  
14 tend to focus on measurable outcomes concerning individual rather than group accomplishment  
15 (Connelley & Folger, 2004). Such goals are also likely to be characterized more as performance  
16 rather than learning goals. Performance goals focus on outcomes rather than information sharing  
17 and knowledge acquisition (Seijts & Latham, 2005), and they may foster competitive social  
18 comparison (Heslin, 2005). As such, performance goals may constrain non-instrumental  
19 exchanges that otherwise would stimulate eventual helping relationships. Thus, compliance-  
20 based appraisal practices are likely to lead to a climate that supports restricted types of helping.  
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### 32 **Helping Behavior and Compliance-Based HR Practices: Summary Propositions**

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35 Because relational climates encompass distinct forms of interpersonal relationships, we  
36 expect helping behavior found in a relational climate stimulated by compliance-based HR  
37 practices will vary from those associated with other sets of HR practices. To better convey  
38 potential differences, we briefly describe helping behavior prototypical of market pricing  
39 climates. For this purpose we use dimensions central to interpersonal relationships, and in turn  
40 offer broad propositions regarding them.  
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47 An undercurrent of self-concern will not necessarily constrain prosocial behavior, but  
48 does mean that it will be motivated by work attitudes, career issues, and job considerations of an  
49 instrumental nature (see e.g., De Dreu, 2006; Perlow & Weeks, 2002). The emphasis on  
50 technical competence and the importance of measurable outcomes in compliance-based  
51 structures likely will lead to help being exchanged primarily when it is discreet (e.g., expressly  
52 for use by the recipient) and utilitarian (e.g., a problem is sufficiently resolved). Such exchanges  
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4 will help sustain productive interpersonal relationships in market pricing climates because they  
5 fulfill minimal expectations for transient relationships (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). When  
6 exchange partners evaluate the utility of help received, each weighs the distribution of outcomes.  
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8 However, because equity is the norm by which fairness is evaluated in market pricing climates,  
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10 the relative ratio of inputs and outputs of each person is the key consideration rather than some  
11  
12 absolute amount. Close social interactions occur less because, on a daily basis, employees must  
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14 be concerned with their own rather than others' work goals and responsibilities. As such,  
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16 judgments about the fairness of help exchanged are likely to be tied to the event level (Gillespie  
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18 & Greenberg, 2005), meaning that each exchange event is assessed in terms of its instrumentality  
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20 to the help giver. We therefore posit that with compliance-based HR practices,  
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24        Proposition 1a: Helping behavior is motivated by self-interest and perceived  
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26 instrumentality.  
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28        Proposition 1b: Helping behavior is judged according to the norm of equity, and  
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30 evaluated as fair when input-output ratios of exchange partners are perceived as similar.  
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33        An uppermost concern of help givers in market pricing climates is receiving an  
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35 inadequate return on invested helping behavior. The benefits of receiving effective help are  
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37 obvious, but may place the beneficiary in a dependent position (Bamberger, 2009). Helping  
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39 coworkers can enhance personal and organizational status, but even successful help-givers may  
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41 become over-burdened with responsibilities. Failed helping attempts can be costly to the help-  
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43 giver in terms of personal embarrassment or decreased status. The lack of knowledge about  
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45 others and accurate a priori assessments of the costs and rewards of helping are difficult, making  
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47 relationships in market pricing climates less stable and more dependent on the outcomes of the  
48  
49 last exchange. Because of the tenuous nature of interpersonal interactions in this climate,  
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51 decisions to help will be based in part upon trust that is grounded in the direct benefits  
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53 anticipated from the relationship. The threat of sanctions for trust violations and promise of  
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55 rewards for expected behavior will be noticeable. Helping behavior that is reliable and sensitive  
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57 to its possible downsides may mitigate uneasiness about the risks involved (Sheppard &  
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4 Sherman, 1998). When expectations about help-givers' competence are validated, recipients will  
5 more likely view them as trustworthy. Such calculus-based trust (Lewicki, Tomlinson, &  
6 Gillespie, 2006) reduces the perceived risk of unfavorable returns from the helping relationship.  
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8 This form of trust should be considered fragile because generally it exists when parties have less  
9 history of interpersonal exchange. Ineffective helping behavior may erode calculus-based trust  
10 because of reduced recipient confidence in the help-giver's competence. Thus, in work climates  
11 influenced by compliance-based HR practices,

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19 Proposition 1c: A principal risk of helping behavior is an insufficient return on invested  
20 behavior.

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23 Proposition 1d: The type of trust most likely to develop between individuals who  
24 exchange helping behavior is calculus-based trust.

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26  
27 Broadly defined, identity is considered a self-referential description that informs  
28 individuals' sense of who they are in relation to others in surrounding collectives. It assists  
29 individuals with self-expression (enacting core values and beliefs), self-continuity (maintaining  
30 self across time), and self-knowledge (accessing self with a particular context) (Ashforth,  
31 Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Identity orientation is particularly pertinent for understanding helping  
32 in our three focal relational climates, as it reflects not only individuals' own values and goals, but  
33 also their perceived roles in connection with specific or generalized others around them (Alpert,  
34 Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000). Social identity can influence behavior exhibited on behalf of one's  
35 group, and be especially salient for extrarole behaviors like helping (Blader & Tyler, 2009).  
36  
37 Given the motives, risks, and type of trust described in connection with a market pricing climate,  
38 it is likely that employees will assume a personal identity orientation (Flynn, 2005). Individuals  
39 with this orientation view their relationships in self-other terms, emphasize self-interest, and  
40 prefer to participate in negotiated exchanges to determine parity in giving and receiving help.  
41  
42 They also base feelings of self-worth on evaluations of their own characteristics in comparison to  
43 others. Therefore, in work contexts influenced by compliance-based HR practices,

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4 Proposition 1e: The type of identity orientation most likely to be held by individuals is a  
5 personal identity orientation.  
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## 8 **COLLABORATIVE-BASED HR STRUCTURES AND HELPING WITHIN EQUALITY** 9 10 **MATCHING CLIMATES**

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12 As noted, an intermediate HR structure lying between the compliance- and commitment-  
13 based approaches has not been formally identified. However, Lepak and Snell's (1999)  
14 collaborative configuration integrates relationally salient elements from both. We thus draw from  
15 and expand their description of collaborative practices, focusing on arrangements that are  
16 internal to a single organization. Two key features of this structure are (1) investment in  
17 effectively functioning relationships as well as the individuals comprising them, and (2) an  
18 emphasis on cooperation and knowledge sharing among employees. Although practices  
19 associated with this structure use pre-determined policies and procedures to arrange work  
20 activities, they allow for flexible work design in producing valued outcomes. Organizational  
21 workflow and social systems accentuate interconnections between employees and promote  
22 exchanges of information and assistance to facilitate work flexibility. As such, employee  
23 exchanges encompass both relational and instrumental concerns, a mix common in equality  
24 matching climates.  
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39 Collaborative-based selection practices emphasize both technical and social criteria.  
40 When both are weighed in the selection process, employees can be more effective because they  
41 are more likely to possess KSAs needed for problem-solving as well as social skills required in  
42 offering and delivering assistance. When employees understand their work efforts affect those of  
43 others in accomplishing organizational goals, they can relate in more heedful ways and are more  
44 able and likely to provide help (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005).  
45 Cooperative exchanges are facilitated by hiring employees who fit or can adapt to a social  
46 system that turns on personal interaction. For example, Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2005) found  
47 better fit with the general pace of the social environment at work was associated with greater  
48 helping. Finally, employees who are interconnected with others in the organization tend to be  
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4 more embedded and less likely to leave the organization (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, &  
5 Erez, 2001). This means collaborative-based selection practices will promote longer-term  
6 employment and greater development of internal labor markets than compliance-based ones.  
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10 Collaborative-based training and development practices likewise stimulate the  
11 development of human and social capital. Socialization processes that communicate social  
12 support and encourage embeddedness in the organization (e.g., collective and investiture tactics  
13 – Allen, 2006) implicitly introduce newcomers to the importance of social interaction.  
14 Traditional development and mentoring programs would be in place, but practices recognizing  
15 the importance of organizational learning (Borgatti & Cross, 2003) and social networks (Higgins  
16 & Kram, 2001) would also exist because both are inherent in collaborative-based structures.  
17 Informal networks may form which stimulate organizational learning between employees within  
18 and across formal organizational divisions. The potential for informal coworker or lateral  
19 mentoring (Raabe & Beehr, 2003) is obviously greater in such climates. Social exchanges not  
20 only allow for the delivery of requisite task information, but also embed employees in networks  
21 where help is more readily and reliably exchanged. Training programs focused on relationship  
22 building and integrating employees from different functions or departments may offer means to  
23 explicitly develop such networks (Lawler, 1996).  
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39 An underlying purpose of selection as well as training and development practices in  
40 collaborative-based structures is the development of social capital. Broadly stated, social capital  
41 refers to resources embedded in a social structure that can be accessed to mobilize organizational  
42 action (Leana & Van Buren, 1999). Employees learn that their KSAs facilitate task  
43 accomplishment and that relationships permit them to benefit from and share KSAs with other  
44 employees. In short, collaborative HR practices emphasize the blending of technical competence  
45 and social fit through social exchange processes that are hallmarks of equality matching climates.  
46 Employees may develop cognitive social capital, that is, a shared language and common  
47 perspective on their work (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). This makes employees' behavior more  
48 consistent and predictable, allowing for adaptation, task coordination, and a greater likelihood of  
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4 future effective helping (Bolino, Turnley, & Bloodgood, 2002). Exemplars of such behavior  
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6 were found by Bacharach et al. (2000), who observed that providers weighed the appropriateness  
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8 of continuing help against recipients' responses to help previously offered. By efficiently  
9  
10 investing their efforts, help providers could be more confident their help would be on target.

11  
12 Collaborative-based work structure and design practices – particularly those that create  
13  
14 task interdependencies among employees – are congruent with equality matching climates. We  
15  
16 argue that such practices allow employees to become familiar with others' needs and problems,  
17  
18 and stimulate helping that benefits direct exchange partners as well as others connected through  
19  
20 task interdependencies (see e.g., Van der Veegt & Van de Vliert, 2005). Interpersonal exposure to  
21  
22 interdependencies affords more frequent opportunities to exchange help, and some research has  
23  
24 found greater task interdependency can result in more helping (e.g., Allen, Sargent, & Bradley,  
25  
26 2003; DeJong, Van der Veegt, & Molleman, 2007). Work design characteristics that signal  
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28 linkages among employees, such as reciprocal work flows, feedback from others, and social  
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30 support (e.g., Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007), as well as structural features such as  
31  
32 social network size (Anderson, 2008), have been increasingly associated with positive work  
33  
34 outcomes. More specifically, researchers have found that interconnectedness indicators, such as  
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36 network centrality (Settoon & Mossholder, 2002) and friendship ties (Bowler & Brass, 2006) are  
37  
38 positively associated with interpersonal helping behavior.

39  
40 Collaborative-based structures may include explicit rewards for helping as one way of  
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42 managing interdependencies among employees with commensurate KSAs, and as a means of  
43  
44 encouraging the goal-oriented cooperation that is characteristic of equality matching climates.  
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46 Thus, as is the case in market pricing climates, helping may involve formal monetary rewards.  
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48 Unlike market pricing climates, however, the rewards are as likely to be used to stimulate  
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50 employees' awareness that their successes as individuals are yoked to those of others in the  
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52 organization. As such, pay ranges are apt to be more compressed in collaborative-based  
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54 structures, so as not to discourage cooperative behaviors. Also, competency-based pay plans may  
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4 also be more likely because, when properly structured, they acknowledge the importance of  
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6 knowledge growth and maintenance within a relational healthy organization (Ford, 2001).  
7

8 Performance feedback in collaborative-based structures will contain both evaluative and  
9  
10 developmental elements. Work efforts will be partly linked through shared tasks and goals, thus  
11  
12 performance appraisals will recognize not only how employees perform their own assignments,  
13  
14 but also how well they facilitate and cooperate with others' performance efforts. This allows for  
15  
16 deeper consideration of behavioral contributions (e.g., helping) that impact the work of others'.  
17  
18 Because effort and goal attainment involve interdependencies, assigning credit for performance  
19  
20 outcomes is more complex in equality matching climates. To mitigate assessment difficulties  
21  
22 arising from this complexity, greater emphasis is placed on impartiality and equality in appraisal  
23  
24 procedures (Connelley & Folger, 2004). Also, relational characteristics that contribute to a  
25  
26 climate of cooperation between employees, such as communication and interpersonal skills, may  
27  
28 be accorded greater weight. Given the emphasis on information sharing and knowledge  
29  
30 acquisition, learning goals (Seijts & Latham, 2005) are likely to emerge as part of the appraisal  
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32 process.  
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### 34 **Helping Behavior and Collaborative-Based HR Practices: Summary Propositions**

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37 Helping behavior found in a climate stimulated by collaborative-based HR practices will  
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39 vary from that found in alternative relational climates. We briefly describe helping behavior  
40  
41 prototypical of equality matching climates using the same characteristics used to describe  
42  
43 helping in market pricing climates.  
44

45 Influenced by social exchange tenets, work relationships are more enduring in  
46  
47 collaborative-based structures than in compliance-based structures. Reciprocity is the most  
48  
49 widely recognized form of social exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), compelling  
50  
51 employees to be mindful of both the long-term obligations and immediate effects of helping acts.  
52  
53 The motivation to provide help involves relational benefits (e.g., social support) as well as  
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55 instrumental ones (e.g., knowledge and advice). However, the preeminence of reciprocity  
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57 diminishes the self-interested bargaining associated with market pricing climates, and instead  
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4 emphasizes that the actions of one person are tied with another's actions in the long run (Molm,  
5 2003). Maintaining balanced exchanges is important, allowing involved parties to better manage  
6 relational indebtedness incurred during exchange cycles. Because reciprocity is integral to  
7 equality matching climates, the justice norm by which employees evaluate the fairness of their  
8 exchange relationships is equality of input (Fiske, 1992). As employees determine they are fairly  
9 treated in helping exchanges with others, they develop fairness perceptions about particular  
10 partners that influence future exchanges. Thus, judgments about fairness are likely to be tied to  
11 the entity level (Gillespie & Greenberg, 2005) rather than event level as in market pricing  
12 climates. Favorable fairness impressions lead to continuing exchanges of help, whereas  
13 unfavorable impressions do not. We therefore posit that with collaborative-based HR practices,

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25 Proposition 2a: Helping behavior is motivated by in-kind reciprocity and maintained by  
26 balanced exchanges in long-term relationships.

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29 Proposition 2b: Helping behavior is judged according to the norm of equality, and  
30 evaluated as fair to the degree that there is equality in exchange partners' inputs.

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33 Too great or too small of a response to another's help can induce feelings of over-  
34 obligation or short-changing, respectively. Moreover, even when a response is well gauged, too  
35 great of a time lag in delivery will render it ineffective. Thus, common hazards in an equality  
36 matching climate are unbalanced reciprocity and poor coordination. Well-designed  
37 interdependencies can reduce the perceived risk of poor coordination by creating more  
38 predictable and consistent contexts for helping (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). Greater certainty  
39 created by collaborative-based selection and training and development practices also creates  
40 situations in which exchange partners can anticipate one another's needs, thereby facilitating  
41 knowledge-based trust (Lewicki et al., 2006). Because this type of trust is based on  
42 understanding others and their behaviors, it is best developed through regular communication  
43 flowing through multiple exchanges. Gradually, the basis for trust shifts from outcome-based  
44 evidence provided by the content of exchanges, as commonly found in market pricing climates,  
45 to knowledge of help-givers' integrity. Those whose help has met desired requisites develop  
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4 positive reputations, which can magnify the potential for positive helping exchanges in the future  
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6 (Johnson, Erez, Kiker, & Motowidlo, 2002; Lewicki et al., 2006). Thus, in work climates shaped  
7  
8 by collaborative-based HR practices,  
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10        Proposition 2c: Principal risks of helping behavior are unbalanced reciprocity and poor  
11  
12 coordination.  
13

14        Proposition 2d: The type of trust most likely to develop between individuals who  
15  
16 exchange helping behavior is knowledge-based trust.  
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18        Knowledge-based trust is congruent with a relational identity orientation because this  
19  
20 orientation emphasizes the fulfillment of role appropriate behavior (Flynn, 2005). In equality  
21  
22 matching climates, there is an aversion to explicitly negotiating the amount and timing of help to  
23  
24 be exchanged. Instead, individuals are expected to be responsive to others, even if the value and  
25  
26 timing of helping returned is undetermined. Such behavior satisfies both self- and other-oriented  
27  
28 needs, which in correct proportions promotes reciprocity in exchanges between helping partners.  
29  
30 Therefore, in work contexts influenced by collaborative-based HR practices,  
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33        Proposition 2e: The type of identity orientation most likely to be held by individuals is a  
34  
35 relational identity orientation.  
36

### 37        **COMMITMENT-BASED HR STRUCTURES AND HELPING WITHIN COMMUNAL** 38 39        **SHARING CLIMATES** 40

41        Commitment-based HR structures fall at the opposite end of the continuum from  
42  
43 compliance-based structures. Arthur (1994) described them as creating psychological links  
44  
45 between the organization and its employees, and as characterized by high levels of employee  
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47 involvement, training in group problem-solving, and team-oriented socialization and job design.  
48  
49 HR structures consistent with Arthur's conceptualization have been oft described in the literature  
50  
51 (e.g., Lepak & Snell, 1999; Tsui et al., 1997). Such structures feature employer inducements  
52  
53 emphasizing employees' well-being, and as a matter of course, employees engage in behaviors  
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55 (e.g., helping) that go beyond their specified job tasks. Relationships are open-ended and lead to  
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57 feelings of mutual investment among organizational members in which they experience  
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4 commitment to the organization and other employees. The notion of mutual investment among  
5 employees is consistent with helping in a communal sharing climate, as exemplified by  
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7 Bacharach et al.'s (2000) maximalist support providers who extended the utmost help while  
8  
9 disregarding repercussions to themselves.  
10

11  
12 Commitment-based selection practices create a commonality of beliefs and values among  
13 employees and engender prosocial motives for helping. Efforts are made to selectively attract  
14 employees who can meet broad work demands, and whose values support an obligation and  
15  
16 willingness to work in concert with other employees (Hom et al., 2009). In emphasizing values  
17  
18 fit, organizations may make a trade-off between traditional job performance and affect-oriented  
19  
20 work outcomes like well-being, commitment, and helping-related behavior (Arthur, Bell,  
21  
22 Villado, & Doverspike, 2006). However, because such outcomes support cooperative and team  
23  
24 behaviors routinely required within communal sharing climates, performance in the organization  
25  
26 on the whole should not suffer. In their review, Dudley and Cortina (2008) identified a number  
27  
28 of knowledge and skill components associated with helping behavior. As the worth of these  
29  
30 skills becomes established, we suspect the less malleable of these skills will be targeted for  
31  
32 selection whereas more malleable skills would be subject to training and development efforts.  
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37 In communal sharing climates, organizations generally mandate a range of team and  
38 organization responsibilities, which increases employees' interconnectedness and requires they  
39 learn interpersonal and teamwork skills (Hom et al., 2009). Commitment-based training and  
40 development practices aim to adapt newcomers to a climate having widespread norms for  
41 helping in both task and social realms. Acceptance of such norms facilitates helping behavior in  
42 group-oriented contexts (Ng & Van Dyne, 2005). The close ties engendered through shared  
43 experiences build group social capital and can prove valuable within groups and the broader  
44 organization (Oh, Labianca, & Chung, 2006). Traditional mentoring programs would be  
45 available, but include an emphasis on relational mentoring (Ragins & Verbos, 2007) to impart  
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47 empathy and other social proficiencies. Interpersonal skills, such as listening intently to others or  
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4 taking time to talk with a coworker having personal problems, engender an increased sensitivity  
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6 to others.  
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8 Work design within a commitment-based HR context features greater interdependence  
9 and involvement than in compliance- or even collaborative-based structures. Communal sharing  
10 climates comprise shared communication and dense, multiplexed task and social networks in  
11  
12 which employees must integrate their interests with those of the work unit. The close  
13  
14 relationships experienced bring instrumental (e.g., task-relevant) and expressive (e.g., emotional  
15  
16 support) benefits (Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004). Common design practices may include  
17  
18 reliance on teams (including self-managed teams), relatively flat hierarchical structures, and  
19  
20 participative decision-making. Team-based designs induce employees to develop a shared  
21  
22 understanding of critical work behaviors, enabling them to assist with task requirements before  
23  
24 help is formally requested (Marks, Zaccaro, & Mathieu, 2001). Helping behavior in such  
25  
26 situations may benefit the work group and not just the individual help recipient (LePine & Van  
27  
28 Dyne, 2001). For example, “backing up” other team members has been shown to be valuable  
29  
30 when synergies are gained and members are mutually invested in the group (Porter, Hollenbeck,  
31  
32 Ilgen, Ellis, West, & Moon, 2003), as would be expected in communal sharing climates.  
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37 As with compliance-based HR structures, appraisal and reward practices act to reinforce  
38  
39 desired work design outcomes. In commitment-based systems, however, there is also an  
40  
41 emphasis on processes (e.g., interdependence, high involvement) that are likely to facilitate  
42  
43 affect-oriented outcomes (e.g., citizenship behaviors, attachment) typically associated with  
44  
45 commitment-based organizations (London, 2007; Paré & Tremblay, 2007). Performance  
46  
47 appraisal is likely to include an ample developmental component through which general  
48  
49 expectations for helping are conveyed and the importance of interpersonal skills is emphasized  
50  
51 (Reilly & McGourty, 1998). Because of high involvement components in the design of work,  
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53 appraisal also may include a collective component and goals established during the appraisal  
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55 process may be participatively set by individuals or groups.  
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4 In commitment-based structures, formal incentives for helping behavior tend to be group-  
5 oriented but can be individual-oriented when individual activities improve conditions for the  
6 group. In their study of helping patterns in three joint ventures, Perlow et al. (2004) found that  
7 rewarding team members for helping whoever needed it reinforced patterns of generalized  
8 helping among all team members. Elsewhere, Harrison, Price, Gavin, and Florey (2002) found  
9 that stronger team reward contingencies positively influenced cooperative interactions among  
10 team members. Because informal rewards such as recognition and praise can boost levels of  
11 affect and thereby encourage helping behavior, they may be used frequently. At the same time,  
12 compensation plans can play a role in encouraging the kind of helping associated with communal  
13 sharing climates. Two compensation practices that may be particularly relevant are paying  
14 above-market wages and limiting pay dispersion. Researchers have noted that higher wage  
15 benchmarks may add to the embedding effects of strong social bonds (Evans & Davis, 2005;  
16 Hom et al., 2009). Regarding pay dispersion, several researchers (e.g., Brown, Sturman, &  
17 Simmering, 2003; Shaw et al., 2002) have argued and found compressed pay structures can  
18 reinforce work interdependence and contribute to employee cohesiveness.

### 34 **Helping Behavior and Commitment-Based HR Practices: Summary Propositions**

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37 Helping behavior prototypical of communal sharing climates is now described, using the  
38 same characteristics employed in describing helping in the other two relational climates. Helping  
39 stimulated by commitment-based HR practices will vary from that found in a market pricing and  
40 equality matching climates.  
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45 In communal sharing climates, the welfare of the other party is paramount. Because  
46 individuals care about the well-being of group members, their mindfulness of others' needs  
47 reinforces tendencies to extend help to them. The generalized congruency among employees  
48 increases the likelihood that prosocial motives will evoke helping and relationships will be  
49 maintained for their own sake (Rioux & Penner, 2001). Moreover, giving help can also lead  
50 employees to further value the welfare of those to whom help has been given (Batson, Eklund,  
51 Chermok, Hoyt, & Ortiz, 2007; Grant, Dutton, & Rosso, 2008). Positive emotions flowing from  
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4 exchanges tend to be attributed to the dense web of relationships rather than specific parties  
5 involved (Lawler, 2001), which means help may also be extended partly due to affect levels  
6 within the collective group. Because resources exchanged during episodes of helping are  
7 considered shared and available to individual employees or the group as a whole, fairness is  
8 judged by how well needs for help are collectively met for a generalized recipient (Connelley &  
9 Folger, 2004). In communal sharing climates, strong relationship fairness entails the experience  
10 of belonging, an absence of conflict, a sense of stability, and desire for frequent interaction  
11 (Gillespie & Greenberg, 2005). We therefore offer that with commitment-based HR practices,

20  
21 Proposition 3a: Helping behavior is motivated by prosocial values and affective bonds  
22 with relational partners.  
23

24 Proposition 3b: Helping behavior is judged by a need-based norm, and evaluated as fair  
25 to the degree that the needs of a generalized recipient are met.  
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28  
29 Helping behavior within communal sharing climates is imbued with empathy and  
30 foresight (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). Empathy develops as relational partners make  
31 assumptions about each others' needs based on previous interactions. With time, employees may  
32 develop more accurate person perceptions that allow them to better anticipate each other's needs  
33 (Davis, 1994). However, in close relationships, emotions may sometimes lead employees to feel  
34 they know the wants and needs of others, which could increase the risks of misreading others'  
35 feelings (e.g., empathic inaccuracy – Ickes, 1993) and misanticipating others' needs. These risks  
36 may be mitigated somewhat by employee confidence that such actions are unintentional. The  
37 mutual understanding gained from stable relationships among employees with shared beliefs and  
38 values fosters identification-based trust (Lewicki et al., 2006), which can instill a high level of  
39 unstated confidence among relational partners. Multiple motives (e.g., elicitive, compensatory,  
40 moralistic) underlie identification-based trust, making it overdetermined (Kramer, Brewer, &  
41 Hanna, 1996) and resilient. Thus, in work climates influenced commitment-based HR practices,

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53 Proposition 3c: Principal risks of helping behavior are empathic inaccuracy and the  
54 misanticipation of another's needs.  
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4 Proposition 3d: The type of trust most likely to develop among individuals who exchange  
5 helping behavior is identification-based trust.  
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8 This form of trust comforts individuals during exchanges, perhaps because it supports  
9 the formation of a collective identity orientation (Flynn, 2005) that facilitates helping behavior  
10 directed toward the generalized group. When employees' social environment is consistent with  
11 their own self-identities, a state of identity confirmation may exist. Milton and Westphal (2005)  
12 found mutual cooperation is greater when identity confirmation is relatively high and there is  
13 reciprocation among employees. The shared identification that is typical of a communal sharing  
14 context is thus central to understanding the character of helping found there. Obligations to  
15 reciprocate are implicit and parties may experience shared responsibility for the success of help  
16 giving, even though providers and recipients are objectively separate. Therefore, in work  
17 contexts influenced by commitment-based HR practices,  
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28 Proposition 3e: The type of identity orientation most likely to be held by individuals is a  
29 collective identity orientation.  
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## 32 **DISCUSSION**

33 Perhaps because of its inherently interpersonal nature, much organizational research  
34 involving helping behavior has been limited to the individual level of analysis. As HR managers  
35 commonly contend with issues requiring multilevel consideration (e.g., Takeuchi, Chen, &  
36 Lepak, 2009), taking only an individual level approach to understanding helping behavior with  
37 organizations is somewhat limited. Attempting to integrate both organizational and individual  
38 influences, we developed a conceptual framework identifying three sets of strategic HR  
39 practices, a relational climate supported by each particular set, and the form of helping behavior  
40 expected to emerge in each climate. Propositions characterizing the emergent helping behavior  
41 were offered, and Table 2 summarizes key characteristics of helping supported by specific  
42 relational climates.  
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The proposed framework offers a novel means of understanding the potential interplay between helping behavior and HR practices. Considering how HR practices affect broader relational climates may allow managers to positively influence employees' expectations regarding the nature of both task and interpersonal exchange dynamics occurring in the organization. Such consideration is consistent with arguments made by scholars that shared employee perceptions and attributions concerning HR practices precede employee attitudinal and behavioral reactions (e.g., Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Nishii, Lepak, & Schneider, 2008). While respecting this perspective, we suggest organizations may better utilize such research by creating greater coherence between employee helping behaviors and the meso level HR practices that may influence them. In essence, we argue that the character of help can be shaped by what HR managers do, and offer propositions that highlight how helping may differ across relational climates. Such information may inform managers of subtle constraints associated with forms of helping and assist them in avoiding mismatches between types of helping behavior and relational climates.

The arguments presented here have relevance for the "black box" problem involving HR practices and organizational performance outcomes (cf., Becker & Huselid, 2006). One approach to understanding how HR practices are translated into organizational outcomes is the behavioral perspective (Jackson & Schuler, 1995), which holds that practices generate the employee behaviors required for an organization to achieve certain aspects of performance. Scholars have highlighted two unresolved issues, however, that limit the behavioral perspective's ability to explain how HR practices affect outcomes. First, there is the ongoing dilemma of which practices should be included in overall systems of HR (e.g., Becker & Gerhart, 1996). By specifying HR practices that are generally agreed upon as core to employee behavior and also likely to influence relational climates and associated helping behavior, we attempted to partly

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4 address the first issue. Second, it has been suggested HR researchers be more explicit regarding  
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6 the kind of performance they are predicting (e.g., Lepak & Shaw, 2008). Organizational  
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8 citizenship behavior (OCB), of which helping is a major component, has sometimes been  
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10 proposed as a mediating construct between practices and firm performance. Unfortunately, little  
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12 attention has been given to how specific HR practices affect helping. The same has been noted  
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14 regarding specific connections between climate and OCB/helping (Schneider, Ehrhart, Mayer,  
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16 Saltz, & Niles-Jolly, 2005). The proposed framework suggests how certain qualities of HR  
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18 practices and emergent relational climates support three forms of helping, partly addressing this  
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20 second issue.  
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### 22 **Implications and Future Research**

23  
24 We have portrayed helping behavior as a proactive element that can increase  
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26 organizations' flexibility to meet competitive demands. In essence, flexibility gives organizations  
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28 more dynamic capacity to address changing environmental conditions (Beltran-Martin, Roca-  
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30 Puig, Escrig-Tena, & Bou-Llugar, 2008). One aspect of flexibility subject to influence by HR  
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32 practices, skills flexibility, concerns human assets that can be drawn upon to meet specific needs  
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34 (Wright & Snell, 1998). Another aspect of flexibility, behavioral flexibility, concerns broader  
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36 adaptive processes that can be mobilized to meet unspecified future needs and involves  
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38 employees' learning to apply appropriate discretionary efforts. Because helping behavior is often  
39  
40 discretionary, we suggest that it represents a critical means of building behavioral flexibility in  
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42 organizations. Wright and Snell (1998) described behavioral flexibility as partly emerging  
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44 through scripts which employees gain knowledge of during workplace interactions. Our  
45  
46 framework describes the tenor of three potential helping "scripts" that may develop depending  
47  
48 on the relational climate. A greater awareness of differences among relational climates may  
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50 allow for insights into processes by which flexibility is mobilized.  
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54 As reflected in Table 2, it is important to recognize that the character of helping prevalent  
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56 in an organization may be dependent on the particular relational climate. An implication of this  
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58 recognition is that encouraging more helping in general is not necessarily better. When  
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4 implementing new HR practices to increase workforce behavioral flexibility, managers should  
5 consider the form of helping behavior that is most congruent with particular strategic objectives.  
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implementing new HR practices to increase workforce behavioral flexibility, managers should consider the form of helping behavior that is most congruent with particular strategic objectives. Bhattacharya, Gibson, and Doty (2005) found that flexibility in the exchange of requisite skills was associated with cost efficiencies at the firm level. Where there is strategic value in efficiently completing cyclical tasks, it may be more appropriate to implement practices that encourage helping that fits with a market pricing climate. Practices that lead to the development of human capital assets would better fit in this climate, as helping would involve short-term calculative exchanges leading to identifiable task outputs. In instances where there is strategic value in creating broader forms of flexibility (see, e.g., Beltran-Martin et al., 2008), practices congruent with an equality matching climate might be more appropriate. Helping in these climates would emphasize the behavioral flexibility that is needed for knowledge sharing and sensemaking in turbulent work environments.

Organizations should be aware that institutional pressures may shape the potential for congruence between predominant HR practices and likely types of employee helping exchanges. For example, assistance and cooperation among employees in social service organizations could take on a different form than in financial service organizations. Because interpersonal support and care are a hallmark of their missions, social work or health care organizations may find that HR practices supportive of helping associated with communal sharing climates would enable greater employee effectiveness. The relational architecture (Grant, 2007) of work performed in such organizations is such that close ties and empathic concern may facilitate the delivery of services required to benefit clients and customers. In contrast, organizations that operate in environments marked by employee striving in the midst of competitive forces (e.g., financial services) may find that a market pricing climate is more appropriate for framing employee expectations regarding the nature of helping behavior.

Researchers have noted the importance of aligning HR practices so that they work effectively together in an organization. Internally aligning practices facilitates commonalities in understanding across different organizational functions and units (Werbel & DeMarie, 2005).

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4 For similar reasons, we underscore the importance of communicating and implementing various  
5 practices in a coherent manner vis-à-vis relational climates. Perlow et al. (2004) noted that  
6 differences in reward systems were associated with distinctive patterns of helping, and certain  
7 helping-reward system configurations may be further reinforced by broader institutional  
8 conditions. Practices may not only be directly associated with emergent relational climates, but  
9 they may interact in ways that enhance or dilute another's effects. For example, in organizations  
10 where socialization and training protocols emphasize individual competencies, it would be  
11 counterproductive to use a team-oriented incentive system to determine the distribution of  
12 rewards. Employees would begin their organization tenure learning that instrumental help (i.e.,  
13 market pricing climate) is paramount only to discover after experiencing a few performance  
14 appraisal cycles that such behavior is not rewarded and incurs social costs from coworkers who  
15 have developed behavior norms reflecting interpersonal sharing and concern (i.e., communal  
16 sharing climate). If managers want to increase the chances that employees will develop similar  
17 expectations regarding helping exchanges, they will need to first enact relationally consistent  
18 bundles of HR practices and then determine through employee feedback and observation whether  
19 the practices accomplish targeted relational effects.  
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37 Broader processes that strengthen the effect of HR practices on climate generally (cf.  
38 Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) could be used to assist in implementing practices coherently. Evidence  
39 has accrued in the climate literature that managers may act as climate engineers (e.g., Naumann  
40 & Bennett, 2000), and that it is important for managers to behave in ways that demonstrate  
41 preferred climate characteristics (Schneider et al., 2005). Thus, the roles that managers play in  
42 establishing focal relational processes should be underscored. With regard to relational climates,  
43 managers may affect climate directly by adhering to the strategic focus of the selected HR  
44 practices and insuring coherence in implementation. For example, managers implementing a  
45 commitment-based HR practice bundle should insure that work design, rewards, and appraisal  
46 practices signal the importance of shared/team activities. Managers may also influence climate  
47 indirectly through role modeling and demonstrating competencies reflective of the preferred  
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4 climate. For example, managers employing a collaborative-based HR practice bundle should use  
5 opportunities to share knowledge and distribute information in routine interactions with  
6 employees. In both formal and informal interactions with employees, it is important for  
7 managers to operate in ways consonant with the relational bent of the practices being  
8 administered. This could increase their relational prototypicality and social identity salience (van  
9 Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), according managers greater influence in shaping patterns of  
10 employee helping behavior toward congruence with the particular relational climate.  
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18 Although suggesting that particular relational climates would tend to be propagated by  
19 certain sets of HR practices, we recognize there are obstacles to this happening. In this vein, it  
20 has been documented that disconnects can occur between intended HR practices and actual  
21 practices as experienced by employees (M. Lengnick-Hall, C. Lengnick-Hall, Andrade, & Drake,  
22 2009; Liao, Toya, Lepak, & Hong, 2009; Nishii et al., 2008). With regard to relational climates,  
23 managers may unintentionally promote varying practices across departments or plants, or realize  
24 that diverse relational requirements are present across units and require suitably different  
25 practices be brought to bear. Managers might also wish to encourage one relational climate  
26 among core employees and another among support employees (Lepak & Snell, 2002). Because  
27 helping behavior has been infrequently examined in connection with HR practices, the challenge  
28 of implementing relationally coherent practices should be addressed in future research.  
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41 Complicating the issue of coherent implementation, managers must deal with top down  
42 as well as bottom up dynamics that may influence what is viewed as viable help in each of the  
43 three relational climates. In organizations where market pricing relational forces are active, top  
44 down dynamics may exert more influence on helping behavior. Managers could more easily  
45 structure work relationships because task goals are, in comparison to other relational climates,  
46 better known. Management influence will not necessarily lessen the amount of cooperation and  
47 assistance that occurs, but the significance of such helping behavior and the auspices under  
48 which it occurs would derive more directly from top management preferences and expectations  
49 (Frenkel & Sanders, 2007). In organizations marked by lateral networks, project teams, and self-  
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4 managed groups, bottom up dynamics would be expected to become more prevalent in  
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6 determining the character of helping. Because of greater interdependencies, employees would  
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8 likely engage in more prosocial sensemaking (Grant et al., 2008) regarding their identities and  
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10 relations with other employees. Conceivably then, bottom up dynamics could influence  
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12 managers to adjust HR practices to accommodate emergent social interactions. Recent research  
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14 suggests bundles of HR practices are adopted to fit ongoing social, structural, and managerial  
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16 processes (Toh et al., 2008), which is consistent with the broader notion of structuration  
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18 (Giddens, 1984). Researchers have examined HR flexibility in regard to firm level performance  
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20 (e.g., Beltrán-Martín et al. 2008), but the idea of adjusting to relationally driven phenomena like  
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22 helping behavior has not been broached.  
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25         Recognizing the likely character of helping within their units, managers can encourage  
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27 behaviors that maintain balance within helping exchanges in specific relational climates. Balance  
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29 can be important, as individuals who strike an even balance in helping exchanges tend to be seen  
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31 as productive and accorded positive social status (Flynn, 2003). Arguments presented here  
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33 suggest managers should attempt to discern their units' relational climate, and acquaint  
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35 employees with the respective risks that helping exchanges entail. Our framework could also be  
36  
37 useful to managers in reducing interpersonal obstacles to helping within their units. Employees  
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39 who need help tend to underestimate the likelihood of receiving it (Flynn & Lake, 2008).  
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41 Counseling employees about the interpersonal risks and ways of mitigating them may assist in  
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43 the development of helping relationships appropriate to particular relational climates. Such  
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45 discussions may simultaneously legitimize help-seeking by employees and encourage suitable  
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47 help-giving responses (Bamberger, 2009). Recent research suggests that when helping is viewed  
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49 as normatively acceptable, employees are less reticent to seek help (Hofmann, Lei, & Grant,  
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51 2009). Facilitating employees' sensemaking regarding help appropriate in particular relational  
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53 climates could reduce their hesitancy to both seek and give help.  
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56         Our framework may encourage greater emphasis on an overlooked intersection of the  
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58 micro- and macro-oriented HR practice literatures. Micro approaches have tended to focus on the  
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4 effects of single practices (e.g., rewards) as judged against the criterion of in-role task  
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6 performance. Although in-role performance is obviously important, the greater flexibility desired  
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8 by many organizations suggests a need for more fluid, discretionary forms of performance as  
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10 well (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). It is clear that employees' work behaviors extend beyond those  
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12 specified in job descriptions, but how HR practices can shape such behaviors has been  
13  
14 infrequently addressed. Our thesis is that managers contemplate the broader effects of HR  
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16 practices on employee flexibility and cooperation in contributing to organizations' success.  
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18 Doing so might require assessing HR practices (e.g., recruitment, selection, training, and  
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20 evaluation practices) not only in terms of in-role performance, but behaviors (cooperation,  
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22 helping, knowledge sharing) that contribute to organizational performance indirectly through the  
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24 development of broader social capital.  
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## 26 **Conclusion**

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28 We have argued that researchers should begin to consider connections between HR  
29  
30 practices and helping behavior, with the idea that bringing about a coherency between the two  
31  
32 will become more important in future organizations. It is important that organizations understand  
33  
34 the processes that ultimately lead employees to exchange help over time. Whereas in the short-  
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36 term helping behaviors have consequences for interpersonal relationships, in the long run they  
37  
38 may well have consequences for the organization as a whole. Research has shown that helping  
39  
40 behavior is associated with an array of positive interpersonal outcomes, but broader  
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42 organizational implications such as greater flexibility or coordination have not as yet been  
43  
44 documented. Hopefully, the framework presented here will stimulate future research on meso  
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46 level connections between strategic HR and helping behavior, and promote the growth of viable  
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48 relational climates with organizations.  
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**TABLE 1**  
**HR Practices and Emergent Relational Climates**

Specific Practices	Compliance-based	Collaborative-based	Commitment-based
Staffing	External labor markets Use of part-time, temporary, non-standard employees Emphasis on technical selection criteria	External & internal labor markets Long-term employment Emphasis on technical and social selection criteria	Internal labor markets Long-term employment Emphasis on social selection criteria
Training/development	Individual competencies Human capital	Individual & social competencies Human & 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	Individual-based For quantifiable task outcomes Dispersed pay structures	Individual & group-based rewards For task and social outcomes Compressed pay structures	Team-based rewards Shared outcomes Compressed pay structures
Appraisal Emphasis	Evaluative	Evaluative & developmental	Evaluative & group developmental
<b>Emergent Relational Climate</b>	<b>Market Pricing</b>	<b>Equality Matching</b>	<b>Communal Sharing</b>

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**TABLE 2**  
**Relational Climates and Helping Behavior Characteristics**

	<b>Market Pricing</b>	<b>Equality Matching</b>	<b>Communal Sharing</b>
<b>Motivation for exchange</b>	Self-interests	In-kind reciprocity Knowledge sharing	Social and emotional bonds Prosocial values
<b>Justice norm</b>	Equity	Equality	Need-based
<b>Perceived risks</b>	Insufficient return on invested behavior	Poor coordination Unbalanced reciprocation	Misanticipation of others' needs Empathic inaccuracy
<b>Type of trust established</b>	Calculus-based	Knowledge-based	Identity-based
<b>Identity orientation</b>	Personal	Relational	Collective