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THE PSYCHOLOGIZATION OF EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS, ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP, AND THE OB TURN

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Abstract

As part of this journal's provocation series, Godard (2014) criticized the psychologization of HRM and expressed concern with the psychologization of employment relations. This article uses four explicit frames of reference on the employment relationship to further explicate Godard's concern with the distancing of the field from questions about the structural nature of the employment relationship. This discussion is then extended to consider the magnifying implications of the turn within the field toward organizational behavior (OB) research. Ultimately, the complexity of work and employment means that the field needs to be vigilant in embracing broadly multidisciplinary and multi-perspective approaches rather than letting the field become excessively unitary.

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In an intentionally provocative article, John Godard (2014) argued that the field of human resource management (HRM) has become increasingly dominated by psychological theorizing and scholarship. Furthermore, this "psychologization of HRM" contributes to a higher-level "psychologization of employment relations" as the former coincides with a decline in the field of industrial relations. As a traditional industrial relations scholar who champions a pluralist model of the employment relationship (Budd, 2004) and the importance of labor relations within HRM instruction and practice (Budd, 2018), I share some of Godard's concerns with the psychologization of employment relations as I will expand upon in this commentary.

Troth and Guest (this issue) counter Godard (2014) by documenting the important contributions of psychological-based research to the understanding and practice of HRM. Kaufman (this issue) provides a detailed critique of Troth and Guest, but we all readily agree that psychological approaches have long made important contributions to this domain. I am not taking issue with this. However, Troth and Guest's call for HRM researchers to add multidisciplinary perspectives falls short of what I believe is needed: re-crafting an inclusive field that embraces not only scholarship but also scholars from diverse perspectives. And the source of the problem is more complicated than Troth and Guest's claim that other disciplines "have failed to offer relevant insights."

Work and employment are very complicated subjects that can only be understood through rich, diverse multidisciplinary approaches to understanding a broad range of concepts, behaviors, practices, levels of analysis, outcomes, and institutions whose importance might only be apparent from particular perspectives. In other words, we need a multi-perspective field that not only brings together diverse scholarship, but also scholars. This has been part of the field's tradition (Kaufman, 2003). As just one example, the University of Minnesota's Industrial Relations Center (now, Center for Human Resources and Labor Studies) and its

degree programs in what was originally called “industrial relations” (now “human resources and industrial relations”) have combined economic, psychological, and industrial relations scholars and scholarship. The complexity of work and employment means that we need to continue to embrace multiple approaches rather than letting this distinctiveness become excessively unitary. Moreover, meaning comes through difference (Littlejohn & Domenici, 2007). So students need to be presented with multiple perspectives, even if the goal is only a deeper understanding of one perspective. Consequently, when any approach crowds out others, we need to be concerned, and this is what appears to be happening with the psychologization of employment relations.

There might be many theoretical and methodological dimensions for thinking about what it would mean for a field to embrace diverse scholarship and for students to be confronted with multiple perspectives. My commentary is focused on just one dimension: modeling the structural nature of the employment relationship. In this context, diversity means alternative conceptualizations of the employer-employee dynamic, including the nature of their interests and the extent to which they are distinct and in conflict, the sources and nature of power, and the role of markets, managers, and institutions in shaping this dynamic. A narrow field would be one that limits itself to effectively one conceptualization whereas a broad field would recognize this as an important construct that can be theorized in contrasting ways that are important to consider. Inherent in my approach are the following premises: the employment relationship is a core subject (Kaufman, 2010), alternative models of the employment relationship serve as a key differentiator across schools of thought that address work and employment (Budd & Bhave, 2019), and therefore, this is central to thinking about the boundaries of the field. This approach, then, makes perspectives on the employment relationship rather than academic disciplines the central issue when considering the contours of the field.

With that in mind, the springboard for my commentary is Godard's (2014, p. 7) concern that "the growing psychologisation of employment relations means that there is less and less possibility for actually understanding these relations." In other words, attention is being pulled away from conceptualizing the nature of the employment relationship. In the spirit of the provocation series, I will argue that this particular problem is perhaps even worse than Godard conveys because it is magnified by the turn away from HRM toward organizational behavior (OB) among many scholars and business schools, at least in North America. This is a shift away from seeking to understand formal organizational policies like selection and compensation systems toward an emphasis on analyzing interpersonal and leadership dynamics, accompanied by similar changes in curriculum away from HRM to leadership and OB. I argue that this pulls scholarship further away from seeing the nature of the employment relationship as a central construct, which then makes it difficult to recognize the need for alternative perspectives, thus marginalizing the importance of industrial relations. Again, this should not be read as a critique of OB, which brings important insights; rather, it's a call to not let this crowd out alternative approaches. To understand these arguments, I will sketch four key frames of reference on the employment relationship and then turn to the implications of these trends. But first, a note on nomenclature might be useful.

What Field Are We Talking About, and Who's Included?

In the next section, I will argue that perspectives on the structural relationship between organizations and their employees can be usefully summarized by four schools of thought: neoliberal egoist, unitarist, pluralist, and critical. When I call for an inclusive field, what I mean is a big tent in which all of these perspectives are included because each is seen as contributing valuable understandings to important dimensions of the employment relationship, not only in research but also in curricular coverage. If we go back far enough in history, this would have been called "industrial relations" (Kaufman, 2004; Yoder et al., 1958). Today, some use

"employment relations" as an umbrella term for a broad field while others use "HRM" in this way. Thus, to be concerned with the psychologicalisation of employment relations or HRM is to be troubled by a narrowing of visions of the field which marginalize, if not exclude, some of the traditional schools of thought and the perspectives they bring.

Note that in this approach to thinking about a broad field, I emphasize perspectives on the nature of employment relationship more than disciplines per se. There is a significant degree of overlap between the two, with work and organizational psychology (equivalently, industrial-organizational psychology) mostly closely associated with unitarism; mainstream economics with neoliberal egoism; institutional economics, sociology, and law with pluralism; and critical sociology and heterodox economics with criticalism. There are certainly exceptions to these generalizations, and, of course, there are other theoretical and methodological differences across and within areas that I am not claiming to capture. While those differences are important for other issues, they are not central to the perspective that I will present here that sees differing views on the structural nature of the employment relationship as key. If we embrace multiple perspectives on the employment relationship, we will have a multidisciplinary field, and my arguments revolve around the former rather than the latter. In this comment, I also distinguish between HRM and OB scholarship, but in my approach this is not a disciplinary distinction—psychological-based research(ers) and research(ers) rooted in other disciplines can contribute to both approaches. Rather, I see HRM as concerned with micro- and macro- policies and systems for managing people while OB is concerned with individual and team behavior as shaped by affect, culture, and interpersonal dynamics rather than formal policies.

Employment Relationship Frames of Reference

Not every piece of scholarship on work, workers, or employment-related issues requires a model of the employment relationship that specifies the structural nature of the relationship

between a worker and their employer. We can analyze, for example, the effect of leader behaviors on follower well-being, or the validity of employee selection methods, or the empirical relationship between labor unions and productivity without confronting the nature of the employment relationship. While incorporating a model of the employment relationship could often usefully inform the relevant theorizing, it is always the case that when we attach value judgements to a set of results or provide implications for what leaders, policymakers, or others should do, then we are implicitly drawing on a model of the employment relationship that prioritizes certain objectives or outcomes and that makes assumptions about the nature of power between workers and employers.

Consequently, it is important to explicitly consider alternative perspectives on the nature of the employment relationship. Four alternative perspectives (frames of reference) are useful: the neoliberal egoist, unitarist, pluralist, and critical employment relationships (Budd & Bhave, 2019; Kaufman, 2016). Each frame embodies a set of assumptions regarding employment relationship objectives, human behavior, the structural context including the (in)equality of labor markets, and the (in)compatibility of employees' and employers' interests. Note carefully that this is focused on the dynamic between workers on the one side and their employers as institutions on the other; it is not intended to capture the relationship among workers or the interpersonal relationship among leaders and subordinates beyond the former as an agent of the corporation. Moreover, these are admittedly stylized and simplified presentations of sophisticated schools of thought, but they are useful for capturing key differences. For more details and citations, see Budd and Bhave (2019).

The neoliberal egoist frame of reference embodies a set of assumptions that employers and employees are rational agents pursuing their self-interest (hence, "egoist") in economic markets that approach ideally-competitive conditions. These ideally-competitive labor markets are embraced as the main driver of the employment relationship such that in the neoliberal

egoist employment relationship, employees and employers engage in voluntary, mutually-beneficial transactions to buy and sell units of productive labor based on what the market will bear (Boyer & Smith, 2001). Power is seen in market-based terms, and conflicts are resolved by the invisible hand of the market which is seen as neutral and fair. In the academy, this paradigm is rooted in mainstream neoclassical economic thought, and is the basis for neoliberalism in public discourse.

As a polar opposite perspective, a critical frame of reference assumes that the employment relationship consists of sharply-antagonistic conflicts of interests among unequal groups such that markets, other institutions, and discourse are viewed as intentionally constructed by a dominant group in order to maintain their superiority (Heery, 2016; Thompson & Newsome, 2004). Different strains within the critical school of thought emphasize particular divides (e.g., class, gender, race) but they share the assumptions regarding fundamental conflicts of interests, unequal power dynamics, and non-neutral institutions and discourse. Academically, the critical frame is most closely associated with Marxist, radical, heterodox, feminist, and critical race scholarship in sociology, economics, and industrial relations.

In between the neoliberal egoist and critical models of the employment relationship are the unitarist and pluralist frames of reference. The pluralist frame rejects the central neoliberal egoist assumption of ideally-competitive markets but does not go as far as the critical model in seeing employment relationship conflict as deep–seated structural antagonism. Rather, the pluralist model derives its name from embracing a plurality of interests in the employment relationship—that is, employers and employees are assumed to have a mixture of common and conflicting interests all of which are legitimate (Ackers, 2014; Heery, 2016). As such, unitarism is contained within pluralism. But a key distinction is that pluralism sees employers' and employees' interests as legitimate even when they clash. This means that one group's interests should never consistently dominate the other; instead, a balance should be sought. Because

labor markets are seen as imperfect, markets will not achieve this balance; because organizations have their own unique goals, this balance will also not be achieved by relying on managerial self-interest, or even goodwill. In the academy, pluralist theorizing is most likely found in industrial relations and institutionalist labor economics, and sometimes also within sociology and law.

Lastly, the unitarist perspective relaxes the self-interested and transactional emphases of the neoliberal egoist model, but in contrast to the pluralist perspective, it assumes that employers and employees share a unity of (largely) all of their interests (hence "unitarist") such that mutuality is key (Boxall, 2013). From a unitarist perspective, then, employment relationship conflict is not healthy and should prompt organizations to improve their managerial policies and methods to align everyone's interests (which can be social-psychological as well as economic). Additionally, the unitarist model does not assume that economic markets are completely deterministic so employers have some degrees of freedom in selecting their strategies for pursuing their goals.

Psychological theorizing plays a prominent role in the unitarist paradigm, so scholars in industrial/organizational (I-O) psychology, HRM, and OB are generally placed in this camp (at least by industrial relations scholars). This is not to imply that these scholars do not care about worker well-being (quite the contrary; see Troth & Guest, this issue). But when an OB definition of employee voice includes the requirement that it have "the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning" (Morrison, 2011, p. 375), industrial relations scholars see this as unifying employer and employee interests, if not systematically prioritizing employer interests, and as a dismissal of employees' legitimate interests in justice, or even self-determination (not to mention seeing this as an affront to a century of industrial relations scholarship on voice). As a second example, mindfulness is now a significant area of research in OB covering a wide range of individual and team outcomes (Good et al., 2016). This has a

unitarist orientation in seeking improvements in workers' psychological health in ways that do not harm the organization by avoiding more fundamental changes in the nature of work and in power relations. As a third example, the mainstream HRM literature on employee onboarding and socialization largely treats this as a win-win situation in which better onboarding benefits workers and organizations alike, rather than seeing this through a lens of structural power differences in which socialization is seen as a coercive way to achieve normative control that benefits organizations over employees (Grugulis, Dundon, & Wilkinson, 2000). In each of these examples, note the centrality of assumptions about the structural nature of the employment relationship, even if implicit, in causing starkly different approaches to the issue being analyzed.

I also do not mean to imply that behavioral scholars overlook conflict or power differentials in the workplace (again, quite the contrary; see De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008; Tepper, Simon, & Park, 2017). But from the perspective of critical or pluralist scholars, scholarship in I-O psychology, HRM, and OB appears to primarily see conflict and power differentials as interpersonal phenomena to the exclusion of the consideration of structural imbalances of power rooted in labor markets and institutions.

These four models are summarized in Figure 1. The entries immediately above the horizontal axes indicate the scope of the interests of the employment relationship actors that are emphasized in each frame of reference. Interests in the neoliberal egoist frame of reference are assumed to be mostly economic in nature and more importantly are focused on the individual pursuit of self-interest. In the unitarist frame, the greatest attention is devoted to interests within an organization, including organizational and individual goals, as well as the goals of intermediate-level entities such as teams (Boxall, 2014). In the pluralist and critical frames of reference, employees are seen as human beings entitled to key standards and rights consistent with human dignity and citizenship in and out of the workplace, so these schools are

concerned with individual, organizational, and societal level interests.[1] The entries immediately below the horizontal axes summarize the nature of employment relationship conflict that is emphasized in each frame of reference. In the neoliberal egoist model, employment relationship conflict is market-based. In the pluralist and critical models, a structural conflict of interest between employers and employees is a central feature (albeit of a different nature across different perspectives) whereas the unitarist model does not subscribe to an important structural conflict of interest as an inherent part of the employment relationship.

<insert Figure 1 near here>

We can use these four frames of reference to understand alternative perspectives on central issues within our fields, such as HRM, labor unions, and diversity (Budd, 2018; Budd & Bhave, 2019; Heery, 2016), and students often find this a particularly valuable framework because meaning comes from understanding differences. Of particular relevance to my commentary is the implication for how to improve an under-performing employment relationship (at an individual, organizational, or societal level), or what would have been called "labor problems" a century ago (Kaufman, 1993, 2010). To someone who subscribes to the neoliberal egoist model, labor problems would be traced to ill-functioning labor markets so the solution is to address market failures and improve market functioning. The unitarist model, in contrast, sees labor problems as indicative of managerial or organizational failures, and the solution is well-designed HRM policies and managerial practices to align interests between employers and employees. To someone who subscribes to the pluralist model, markets and managers cannot be relied upon to solve all labor problems, so institutional interventions that improve the balance of power in the employment relationship also need to be considered as an

[1] Again, this is not to imply that unitarist scholars are unconcerned with dignity and well-being. But pluralist and critical thought generally includes material as well as psychological elements (e.g., a living wage) while also elevating these to rights such that society should be structured to provide them.

option where needed. The critical model implies that deep structural changes are needed to drastically alter power relations in and out of the workplace. Note further that the neoliberal egoist model underlies market-based, transactional approaches to HRM (Lazear, 1995), the unitarist frame is the intellectual basis for high-road HRM strategies (Marchington et al., 2016), and the pluralist frame underpins an industrial relations public policy agenda that supports labor unions (e.g., the National Labor Relations Act) and provides for minimum wages and other protective labor standards (Befort and Budd, 2009) as a complement to high-road HRM strategies.

Questioning the Nature of the Employment Relationship, and the OB Turn

Returning to Godard's (2014, p. 7) claim that "the growing psychologisation of employment relations means that there is less and less possibility for actually understanding these relations," it is useful to start with his fuller explanation:

> The problems of motivation and control, and the dysfunctions to which they may give rise, tend to be attributed to individual or interpersonal phenomena that can be avoided through careful selection and training/socialisation procedures if not more directly through 'performance management'. Often, the assumption is not that these practices and innovations are flawed, or that it is the institutional design of the employment relation that is the problem, but rather that they are just not being implemented properly (p. 7).

Encapsulated here is the difference between a unitarist approach on the one hand, and the pluralist/critical approaches on the other. When there is an under-performing employment relationship, the latter look to the structural nature of the employment relationship whereas in the former, the capitalist employment relationship need not be the problem. Rather, the problem might simply be poorly-designed or implemented policies and practices. So the psychologization of employment relations makes it less likely that anyone will question the structural nature of the employment relationship. But remember, understanding the structural nature of the employment relationship is deemed to be fundamental in all strains of industrial relations scholarship. So the psychologization of employment relations is a significant problem

for industrial relations scholars, and, by extension through the eyes of these same scholars, for workers and society, too.

In the spirit of this journal's provocation series, I submit that this particular problem is worse than Godard conveys. To see this, we need to distinguish between an HRM approach and an OB approach. When I say "HRM approach," I really mean a non-transactional, unitarist-based, high-road HRM approach. An HRM approach uses organizational policies and practices to align employee-employer interests to boost performance, often intellectually rooted in psychologically-based theorizing. In this paradigm, problems of subpar performance are assumed to reflect poorly-designed policies or flawed implementation. Sometimes the blame might be ascribed to employees (e.g., the organization selected the wrong kind of individual), but there is at least the scope for questioning whether the policies were appropriately designed. Which means that there is some scope (even if limited—see Kaufman, this issue) for questioning the underlying, structural nature of the employment relationship, and relatedly, the fit between policies and the external environment (Kim & Ployhart, 2018).

But increasingly within academia, at least in North America, I assert that this HRM approach is being supplanted by an OB approach that seeks to understand interpersonal dynamics rather than organizational policies and practices. So if pressed to attribute or remediate the source of subpar performance or other negative outcomes, the natural result is to largely point to interpersonal dysfunction among co-workers, between a worker and her manager, and the like (Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2016; Salas et al, 2015). These can certainly be important—and should be valued more by researchers in industrial relations—but my point is more about what this excludes rather than what it includes. Specifically, with an interpersonal focus, there is less consideration of formal, organizational HRM policies such as selection systems or compensation plans. So with the OB turn, there is even less of a chance that the structural nature of the employment relationship will be considered. With respect to

Figure 1, the OB turn starts from the unitarism position in the lower left corner and pushes even further to the left—further away from the focus on structural inequalities in the schools of thought on the right side of the figure. It is common to highlight a difference in levels of analysis (Kochan et al., 2019)—for example, with OB being more micro and meso, industrial relations being more organizational and extra-institutional, and HRM being somewhere in between. Figure 1 reveals that these differences are more fundamental than differing levels of analysis.

As a brief aside, Troth and Guest (this issue) reject criticisms of HRM that equate it to neoliberalism. Figure 1 illustrates why I agree with this rejection. Unilateralism is not unitarism. Admittedly, unitarism can have an element of unilateralism because even high-commitment HRM policies can be implemented with little employee input. But truly unitarist HRM practices are designed with the objective of benefitting employees and their organization through high-commitment policies that create win-win interest alignment.[2] A low-road employer that unilaterally slashes wages or benefits simply because it can is exercising a very different kind of unilateralism—a kind that does not warrant the label "unitarism." Rather, this is rooted in self-interest based on what the market will allow. In other words, low-road, command-and-control, marketized HRM should be associated with neoliberal egoism, not unitarism. That neoliberalism has undermined industrial relations ideas and practices is clear, but it also provides an intellectual as well as practical challenge to unitarist HRM.

[2] This rests on a strong assumption about the largely overlapping nature of employer and employee interests. If this assumption is false, unitarism becomes a kind of unilateral, faux unitarism where employee interests are defined by the organization (Kaufman, this issue). More generally, those who conceptualize the employment relationship in non-unitarist ways are critical of unitarist HRM because of differing interests and power (e.g., Thompson, 2011).

Differences in Key Outcomes

Digging deeper, the psychologization of employment relations also implicitly focuses attention on certain outcomes and objectives of the employment relationship, especially economic performance and psychological well-being, while lessening the attention on what industrial relations traditionally sees as central. For example, in the industrial relations tradition, equity and voice are key objectives rooted in human dignity and citizenship, even when they fail to enhance employee or organizational performance (Budd, 2004). Low pay or a lack of employee voice, for example, are always problematic in industrial relations thought, but perhaps not in HRM and OB as long as employees are satisfied and productive.

And industrial relations scholarship looks to the structural nature of the employment relationship as at least partly responsible for these problematic outcomes. So the psychologization of employment relations makes it less likely that the nature of the employment relationship will be questioned not only because when there are problems, the blame will be placed on specific policies or individuals (this is Godard's point), but also because the scope of important objectives and outcomes is different. This is reflected in Figure 1 with the different interests attached to different frames of reference.

What Can Be Done?

Conveniently, I have not left myself much space to tackle the difficult issue of what should be done. Troth and Guest (this issue) are presumably not alone in believing that "the problem lies with the failure of those working within different conceptual and research paradigms to offer sufficient ground-breaking advances in HRM theory and research to shape the research agenda." In other words, the psychologicalization of employment relations is seen as a reflection of the industrial relations camp's failure to remain vibrant and useful. I cannot fully rebut this here, but it should be recognized that pluralist and critical industrial relations scholarship continues to incorporate new theorizing and issues, such as identity, discourse,

contingent work, and financialization, while incorporating econometric and qualitative methodological advances. This is not meant to make industrial relations blameless, however. American industrial relations scholars, in particular, can do a better job of returning to the field's broad roots by re-engaging with core HRM issues, and further introspection by industrial relations scholars might reveal other needed shifts. But ultimately the problem is more complicated than allegations of simply failing to offer sufficient new insights. A ground-breaking advance or critique pertaining to, for example, constructs, relationships, or institutions that are not of interest to editors and referees because implicit assumptions about work and the employment relationship point in different directions is a tough sell—a tough sell that is compounded by different methodologies and other norms.

More fundamentally, it should not be a surprise that industrial relations scholars see this as an institutional issue rather than one of individual choice and and/or a free marketplace of ideas. To me, the essential issue is what journals are considered worthy of tenure and top rewards, especially in business schools if we focus on the North American situation. An over-reliance on what I see as narrow journal lists like that which underlies, for example, the UT-Dallas business school rankings, is a big threat to the continued viability of industrial relations (and perhaps macro HRM, too) in the United States. These are choices that leaders in privileged positions are making, and they have consequences. HRM and OB scholars can help promote a "big tent" of scholarship by advocating for the recognition of top industrial relations journals on par with top management journals, while industrial relations scholars need to continue to make sure that their top journals continue to publish rigorous, relevant contributions.

Taking things to the next level, to promote an inclusive approach to understanding work and employment-related issues, we would be well-served by recognizing top journals (and conferences) across multiple areas, hiring junior faculty that reflect these diverse areas, and offering courses that serve our students by equipping them to understand a wide range of work-

related issues from a rich set of alternative perspectives. This could be complemented by journal special issues and occasional multidisciplinary conferences to bring diverse scholars and perspectives together. There are many areas of overlapping concerns where behavioral and institutional scholarship can improve each other, with trust, conflict, and voice being just three overlapping constructs (Kochan et al., 2019). But while scholarship that better incorporates a variety of perspectives, theories, and levels of analysis is important, I submit that, at least in the United States, we need to consider what is rewarded and who is hired.

Moreover, if the psychologicalization and OB trends have, to date, been most pronounced in the United States, then we should look comparatively to better understand the possible influence of various institutional factors that are shaping the trajectories of our fields. My impression is that while many American industrial relations scholars have traditionally been often located in free-standing units or in economics departments, non-American industrial relations scholars have been more likely to be in business schools. Perhaps this underlies greater splintering in the United States compared to Britain, Australia, and New Zealand where industrial relations and HRM have remained more integrated. Independently or relatedly, perhaps there are business school accreditation differences that have influenced curriculum and thus hiring. And British industrial relations has a stronger critical tradition, at least since the 1970s, than American industrial relations which has long been dominated by pluralism. Pluralism includes unitarism and therefore, going all the way back to Commons (1919), can see high-road HRM as a complement to institutional intervention.

Over the last several decades, however, it appears that American industrial relations scholars have largely focused their attention on unions and labor market regulation, perhaps because this was the unique angle they filled. Where there has been continuing attention to HRM, it is primarily focused on macro-HRM performance issues (Appelbaum & Batt, 1994; Kaufman, 2012) and on intersections between HRM and unions (Kochan, Katz, & McKersie,

1986; Pohler & Luchak, 2014). Except for grievance handling, micro-HRM subjects like selection, mentorship programs, and performance management have seemingly been left to others as part of a complementary project (as witnessed in multidisciplinary degree programs that used to be called "industrial relations" and now have a variety of names). This might be one reason why U.S. industrial relations has come to be equated to the study of labor unions when it really is, or should be, about much more, while also splintering the field.[3] Critical perspectives, in contrast, are more directly hostile to the unitarist assumption, and labor process theory confronts micro-HRM issues. Ironically, then, British industrial relations scholars have been more active in directly engaging with HRM scholarship and practices rather than leaving it to others (Collings, Wood & Szamosi, 2009; Dundon & Rafferty, 2018; Thompson, 2003). With that said, does an apparently increased focus on U.S.-journals in non-U.S. business schools portend a replication of the North American experience with psychologicalization elsewhere?

Conclusion

In the Center for Human Resources and Labor Studies at the University of Minnesota, which is part of a major U.S. business school, most of my colleagues are OB scholars. I have nothing but respect for the scholarship and the teaching done by them and others in the HRM and OB fields. Of course, we have different focal interests as well as methodological and conceptual tendencies, but I see that as a big plus, not as a problem. There are innumerable examples where our research has been enriched by interacting with others outside of our usual paradigms. For any given topic, I try to take an approach of "what can we learn from each perspective?" rather than seeing this as a contest to determine which perspective is correct. So I am not taking issue with HRM or OB scholarship per se. The problem, as I see it, is not with

[3] For a deeper look at the splintering of the field in the United States, see Kaufman (1993, 2004), where the latter also includes extensive international comparisons.

psychological-based research, but with psychologization as a trend that can lead to largely unitary perspectives (with apologies for the intentional pun) becoming the sole approach to understanding the very complex world of work and employment relationships.

Strikes and protests around the world on International Women's Day, the successes of movements such as Fight for $15, and Google employees worldwide walking out to protest its handling of sexual harassment clearly show that collective action to advance worker interests remains an important part of the employment relationship. Pluralist and critical industrial relations perspectives focus attention on power relations between employers and employees as shaped by the allocation of resources and rights in modern capitalist societies. It is typically through industrial relations scholarship and coursework, then, that one confronts—or should confront: 1) worker collective action, 2) public policies and institutions whose need is rooted in structural power imbalances not commonly recognized in the HRM, OB, and neoliberal approaches, and 3) alternative models of the employment relationship (and even potentially, alternative models for society's organization of production). Industrial relations perspectives are therefore critically important for understanding employment relations and need to remain a meaningful part of the field; thus, the concern with the psychologization of employment relations. The tent, house, or whatever metaphor we are using for a broad field on work and employment needs to be large enough to include diverse intellectual paradigms, adherents to different paradigms need to respect and learn from others, and the degree programs we offer need to educate students in diverse ways of thinking. This requires more than multi-disciplinary scholarship or interchange; it also depends on institutional decisions that result in practices and policies that support an inclusive, multi-perspective field.

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Figure 1:
Employment Relationship (ER) Frames of Reference