Making Sense of (Mis)Matched Frames of Reference:
A Dynamic Cognitive Theory of (In)stability in HR Practices

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Abstract

By returning to an old insight that frames of reference influence action, we theorize that actors' frames influence their desired HR practices, and these practices will be stable if managers and employees share similar frames. When actors' frames are mismatched, however, HR practices can violate employee expectations and trigger a sensemaking process, potentially leading to framing contests and conflict. We hypothesize predicted patterns of conflict and expected outcomes depending on the nature of the frames mismatch. Allowing for frames mismatch uniquely highlights the importance of recognizing managers' and employees' frames for understanding HR outcomes and conflicts observed in practice.

It has long been acknowledged that individuals hold different frames of reference about the employment relationship (Fox 1966, 1974). However, research applying frame analysis to the employment relationship has primarily focused on identifying and labeling different frames of reference (Budd and Bhave 2008; Heery 2016; Godard 2017; Cradden 2018), using contrasting frames to understand alternative perspectives on central employment relations issues (Bray, Budd, and Macneil 2020; Budd and Bhave 2008; Heery 2016; Kaufman 2016), and establishing an empirical basis for the existence of different frames, particularly among managers (Geare, Edgar, and McAndrew 2006; Geare et al. 2014; Godard 1997). In this paper, we return to the classic employment relations literature in emphasizing frames of reference as a basis for action (Thelen and Withall 1949; Fox 1966; 1974; but also Cradden 2018).

Cognitive frames and framing processes are also seen as a basis for action in management and organizational research on decision-making, strategy, organizational change, social movements, and institutions (Cornelissen and Werner 2014). At a general level, frames are mental models, but a variety of specific definitions have been used, and the focus of frames research differs across levels of analysis. For instance, micro level framing research has mostly examined "the priming and activation of knowledge schemas and how these guide individual perceptions, inferences, and actions in context" (Cornelissen and Werner 2014: 183). Meso-(organizational-) level research focuses on how actors engage in strategic framing contests, primarily through communication and discourse, to mobilize other actors toward their own objectives (e.g., Kaplan 2008). And macro-level research has largely followed the neo-institutional tradition of describing how "broader cultural templates of understanding…become institutionalized and provide…rules for appropriate behaviors in particular social settings" (Cornelissen and Werner 2014: 183; Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012).

We incorporate these ideas into employment relations research by positing that frames of reference have a cognitive influence on the behavior of employment relations actors. Note that actors can hold frames relating to many issues. We focus here on frames relating to the nature of the employment relationship (see Budd and Bhave 2008), and how these employment relationship frames can guide action and influence conflict surrounding human resources (HR) approaches, policies, and practices. While frame analysis has been applied in different organizational contexts outside of the employment relations literature, there is very little research that applies frame analysis to HR practices. Some organizational studies have noted that founders hold "particular culturally accepted logics or blueprints" that impact "how employment relations should be structured" (Baron, Hannon, and Burton 2001: 961; Baron, Burton, and Hannan 1996), but we believe that frame analysis can be usefully extended to build a deeper understanding of the dynamics of HR practices and employment relationship outcomes. Specifically, we use frame analysis to develop a dynamic cognitive theory of employee sensemaking of HR practices. The sensemaking process can lead to employee support or rejection of these same practices, with the potential for employment relationship conflict. We then propose that the origins of different HR policies and practices and employment relationship conflict are at least partially embedded in different employment relations actors' (mis)matched frames of reference about the employment relationship, and subsequent "contests" in which managers and employees engage over the frames that should determine HR practices.

Our paper uniquely contributes to the employment relations literature by incorporating cultural-cognitive and discursive elements into what has to date been a predominantly deterministic structural understanding of the origins of HR practices and sources of conflict in the employment relationship. We fully recognize that important contextual and structural factors

influence the adoption of, and sometimes employee resistance to, HR policies and practices. Our contribution theorizes that frames and framing practices are also important, and work in tandem with contextual and structural factors to determine HR practices and outcomes. This is similar to Hauptmeier's (2012) illustration of the importance of actor ideology in shaping employment relations practices across Spanish automakers. More generally, our approach complements recent employment relations scholarship emphasizing the importance of ideas and discourse (Hauptmeier and Heery 2014; McLaughlin and Wright 2018; Preminger 2020), though we uniquely emphasize the cognitive foundations of these ideas and discourse as embedded in actors (mis)matched frames on the employment relationship. The resulting framework can better explain the variation in HR policies and practices that we observe in practice; provides an avenue for understanding how competing organizations in the same industry can have very different HR strategies; yields a new categorization of HR practices: effective, underutilized, or causing recurring, antagonistic conflict; and illustrates the richness of a (mis)matched frames theoretical approach that could be usefully applied elsewhere in employment relations.

Our paper also makes a unique contribution to the broader management and organizations literature, where frame analysis has not been systematically applied to a study of the employment relationship. This is significant since some theorists have described organizations as a "nexus of employment contracts" (Foss 2010: 218). We also see our paper as complementing the literature on HR philosophy and signals by adding managerial and worker frames on the employment relationship to the set of factors that shape HR philosophy and influence how signals are received by actors, thus influencing whether there is a strong HR culture with shared perceptions among actors (Bowen and Ostroff 2004; Kellner et al. 2016).

FRAMES, SENSEMAKING, AND A DYNAMIC COGNITIVE MODEL

The lenses through which actors perceive, understand, and react to the world around them have been labeled "cognitive frames" (Goffman 1974; Kaplan 2008; Walsh 1995), "frames of reference" (Fox 1966; Budd and Bhave 2008), or simply "frames." These terms are generally interchangeable, and synonyms for mental models, schemas, or scripts that bound the characteristics of the situations and problems actors perceive, and ultimately shape the actions that they believe are appropriate. We distinguish frames from ideology by seeing the former as mental maps used for perception, evaluation, and understanding while the latter focuses on advocacy and justification such that a frame "is how one sees the world; an ideology is how one wants others to see the world" (Budd and Bhave 2008: 94).[1]

The cognitive discussion of "frames of reference" in employment relations scholarship, while limited, can be traced back to Thelen and Withall (1949: 159) who note that "each person perceives and interprets events by means of a conceptual structure of generalizations or contexts, postulates about what is essential, assumptions about what is possible, and ideas about what will work effectively" and that "this conceptual structure constitutes the frame of reference of that person." Fox (1966: 2; 1974) proposes that one's frame of reference "determines judgement, which in turn determines subsequent behavior." Frames have received substantially more attention in the meso strategic management and organizational literatures than in employment relations theory and research.[2] In these former literatures, cognitive frames have been proposed

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[1] There is a fine line between frames and ideology, for instance, frames may become ideologies when they are mobilized in framing contests. Framing processes and framing contests are discussed later in the paper.

[2] Frames of reference are also important in macro scholarship on institutional logics which are seen as "frames of reference that condition actors' choices for sensemaking, the vocabulary they use to motivate action, and their sense of self and identity" (Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury 2012: 2).

to shape how organizational systems are structured (Ranson, Hinings, and Greenwood 1980) and how organizational actors behave (Cornelissen and Werner 2014; Weber and Mayer 2014). For instance, Barr, Stimpert, and Huff (1992) compare leaders in two organizations in the same industry and demonstrate how leaders' mental models about industry conditions and technological opportunities explained differences in strategic change and resource deployment across the two organizations. As the digital camera market emerged, Benner and Tripsas (2012) document how photography companies, consumer electronics companies, and computing companies started with distinct cognitive frames based on their own industries, and these frames led to differing beliefs about what consumers would value, and therefore resulted in different types of product features. Litrico and David (2017) show how airlines, airports, and suppliers interpreted challenges posed by civil aviation noise and emissions through six frames (regulatory compliance, image management, economic burden, operational efficiency, systemic efficiency, and technological innovation) and, in turn, how these frames contributed to differing responses that led to different actions.

Frames often operate on a subconscious level, but the literature on sensemaking argues that when an individual is confronted with something unexpected or contrary to their expectations, they engage in a sensemaking process that involves explicitly thinking about what's going on and what they should do about it (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005). In this way, sensemaking involves noticing aberrant things and drawing on resources to give them meaning, leading to answers to the question of "now what?" (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005). This may result in a recognition that one's frame differs from another's, and to get others to conform to one's own expectations and preferences, one may engage in framing contests (Snow et al. 1986: Benford and Snow 2000) and deploy frame alignment strategies (Gray, Purdy,

and Ansari 2015; Kaplan 2008). Consequently, to understand when individuals will undertake

collective action, for example, it "is not merely the presence or absence of grievances, but the

manner in which grievances are interpreted and the generation and diffusion of those

interpretations" (Snow et al. 1986: 466).

Implicit in models of sensemaking, framing contests, and frame alignment is that

different actors may have divergent frames. Central to our contribution is an explicit

consideration of what happens when employees confront a manager's frame of reference on the

employment relationship. Figure 1 provides a conceptual illustration of the dynamic cognitive

model we develop for the interaction between employment relations actors' frames, sensemaking

and framing processes, and employment relationship outcomes. We start with the approach to

managing employees being determined by both the contextual environment and managerial

frames on the employment relationship. Employees then experience the HR practices associated

with the chosen approach, which either match their expectations or create dissonance.

Sensemaking, frame activation, conflict, and framing contests—as portrayed in the shaded

portion of Figure 1—are then modeled as only occurring if employees' experiences with the HR

practices do not match their expectations.

The key steps and relationships in this model are explained throughout the remainder of

this paper, and we start by describing the different frames of reference actors may possess in the

next section. Before proceeding, however, there are two issues to address. One, we are

intentionally flexible in how we specify the level at which managerial frames shape HR

approaches, policies, and practices. Some policies might reflect a strong, organization-wide

frame, which could result from top-down dictates or the fact that managers share the same frame

because of socialization and selection. In such cases, the managerial frame is also an

organizational frame. But for other HR policies within the organization, or in other organizations, individual managers might have more authority to set policies, or at least influence the implementation of HR practices, in which case the relevant managerial frame is that of a particular manager. Indeed, Kehoe and Han (2020) outline a number of ways in which managers shape employees' experience with HR practices, leading to variation in HR practices within organizations. An identity-conscious approach to theorizing also recognizes that workers of different identities have unique experiences (Lee and Tapia, forthcoming). The dynamics we propose in this paper, then, can occur at various levels of an organization, including within subunits of organizations with centralized HR approaches, and even among employees within the same subunits. Two, in considering the likelihood of (mis)matched frames between workers and managers, we recognize that there are many factors that push toward congruence rather than mismatch. Workers are not randomly assigned to organizations; rather, they apply for and accept certain jobs, perhaps based on fit, and they can quit when HR policies do not match their expectations. Many organizations use various socialization mechanisms to influence employee fit (Wanberg 2012), and employees can adapt their expectations to how they are being treated (Wrzesniewski et al. 2013). Nevertheless, mismatch can also occur for various reasons, including limited job opportunities for applicants, selection decisions that overlook fit or prioritize diversity, the inconsistent application of HR policies, new organizational leaders, and other shocks that change manager or employee frames.[3] We do not assert that mismatch is more common than alignment; rather, we submit that the possibility of mismatch should not be

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[3] Liao et al. (2009) found that managers and employees within the same organization had significantly different perspectives on the nature of that organization's HR system. In an ethnographic study, Iverson (2020) identified mismatched meanings of work as a source of friction between managers and employees.

overlooked as an organizational phenomenon and explanation for employment relationship actors' conflict over HR practices.

FOUR FRAMES OF REFERENCE ON THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

In contemporary scholarship, the most developed classifications of different frames of reference for the employment relationship have been put forward by Heery (2016), Budd and Bhave (2019), and Godard (2017) consisting of three, four, and five-part frameworks, respectively. While there are many similarities between these approaches, the four-perspective framework of Budd and Bhave (2019) provides a solid foundation for theorizing the cognitive roots of different types of HR policies and practices.[4] The four frames of reference we use are the neoliberal-egoist, critical, unitarist, and pluralist.

The neoliberal-egoist frame is derived from neoclassical economic thought and rests on a set of assumptions that employers, managers and employees are rational agents pursuing their self-interest (hence, "egoism") in economic markets that approximate ideal competitive conditions. As labor markets are generally believed to be competitive, they are embraced as the primary driver of the employment relationship. This is reinforced by viewing labor as a commodity that only differs from other commodities in its tendency to find the avoidance of full work effort to be in its self-interest. Under these assumptions, the neoliberal-egoist frame sees employees and employers (and managers as employers' agents) engaging in voluntary, mutually-beneficial economic transactions that involve buying and selling units of labor based on what the

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[4] Compared to the four-part framework we use, Heery (2016) focuses on three frames by combining the neoliberal-egoist and unitarist frames which disguises important differences in these two frames that have unique predictions for HR practices. Godard's (2017) intent is to develop perspectives on macro-level governance of the employment relationship, which leads to distinct pluralist and liberal reformist perspectives, but this distinction is unnecessary for our application because the within-organization implications are very similar.

labor market will allow. In this way, the neoliberal-egoist perspective assumes that HR policies and practices largely respond to what the market dictates. Moreover, this thinking embodies the neoliberal, laissez-faire assumption that competitive markets and free choice result in fair outcomes because abuses are prevented by the ability to freely exit the relationship. Through this lens, it is also the case that labor unions and government legislation (beyond the establishment and enforcement of property rights and contracts) are viewed as interfering with the ideal operation of competitive markets by restricting employers' and employees' ability to freely contract with each other on terms of their own choosing.

At the other end of the spectrum is the critical frame of reference, which reflects radical, heterodox scholarship and perspectives in sociology, economics, and industrial relations. An important feature of critical perspectives is that the employment relationship is seen as one piece of a larger socio-political-economic system through which elites are able to reproduce their dominance, albeit with some accommodation of the interests of the weaker party in order to foster the compliance and "coerced consent" of organizational actors (Godard 2017). Marxist and related perspectives focus on unequal power relations between workers and organizations whereas feminist and critical race perspectives focus on unequal power relations across gender and race (Lee and Tapia forthcoming). There are also intersectionality approaches that emphasize multiple combinations of difference (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Lee and Tapia forthcoming), and discursive approaches that emphasize the importance of language, discourse, and identity-construction in determining power imbalances (Alvesson, Ashcraft, and Thomas 2008). In contrast to the neoliberal-egoist frame, the critical frame rejects the belief that labor is a commodity and assumes employers/managers and employees (or members of other identity groups) do not act as equals in labor markets and in society more generally. As such,

conflicts of interests and unequal power dynamics between competing groups are fundamental assumptions embedded in the critical frame.

In between the neoliberal-egoist and critical frames of reference are the unitarist frame that softens the self-interested and transactional assumptions of the former, and the pluralist frame that relaxes the deep-seated structural and antagonistic assumptions about conflict of the latter. In the unitarist frame of reference, a key assumption is that employers and employees share a unity of all of their interests. When there is conflict in the neoliberal-egoist frame, employers and employees seek alternative partners with whom to consummate self-interested trades. In the unitarist frame, employment relationship conflict triggers managerial policies and practices that align organizational and employee interests. As the unitarist frame of reference is rooted in scholarship in industrial/organizational psychology, organizational behavior, and human resource management viewing employees as social-psychological actors, employee interests are assumed to include satisfaction, self-esteem, reputation, and other psychological and social interests. Moreover, economic markets are believed to be imperfectly competitive so profit-maximizing managers can choose their strategies for pursuing their organizational goals rather than being strictly constrained by deterministic markets. Given the key "unity of interests" assumption, the optimal organizational strategies are those that align the interests of managers and employees, and this becomes a virtuous cycle. For example, unitarist thinking is that if jobs are designed to be fulfilling, this will be valued by employees, and the organization will benefit because these employees will be more productive.

Lastly, the pluralist frame of reference is similar to the critical frame in viewing employees as human beings entitled to key standards and rights consistent with human dignity and citizenship, and in the belief that imperfectly competitive labor markets are unable to

produce these standards. However, this frame stakes out a middle ground between the unitarist and critical perspectives by assuming employers and employees have a mixture of common and conflicting interests—that is, there are a plurality of interests in the employment relationship. Beliefs in the legitimacy of both managers' and employees' interests, even when they stand in opposition such as a clash between wages and profits, means that one should never consistently dominate the other. And, rejecting the neoliberal-egoist assumption of ideally-competitive labor markets means that institutional interventions may be necessary to better balance bargaining power inequalities and protect employees when employers and managers prioritize their own interests.

Managers' and employees' frames of references on the employment relationship are linked to complementary discussions of perspectives on the nature of work and why we work. Specifically, the neoliberal-egoist frame goes hand-in-hand with a focus on material aspects of work, the unitarist frame is associated with a psychological view of work as identity and fulfillment, the pluralist frame views work as a citizenship activity that should respect democratic decision-making in the workplace as a basic human right, and the critical frame embraces views of work and work relations as embedded in power relations (Budd 2011). *Proposition 1: Employment relationship actors hold a set of beliefs and assumptions about work and the structural nature of the employment relationship that can be usefully classified into one of the following four frames: neoliberal-egoist, critical, unitarist, and pluralist.*

MANAGERS' FRAMES AND THE ORIGINS OF HR PRACTICES

We propose that the frames of managers and other organizational leaders affect how they design and implement HR policies and practices (top left portion of Figure 1). For instance, while not using the "frames" terminology, Baron, Burton, and Hannan (1996) document the

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connection between a company's founder's views of employee attachment, the control and coordination of work, and the most important criteria when selecting employees on the one hand, and the adoption of certain HR practices on the other. Greenwood and Van Buren (2017) show the importance of the particular frame of unitarism for causing and giving legitimacy to certain management policies.

Numerous typologies have been constructed to help classify archetypical HR systems that reflect bundles of HR practices for coordinating and/or controlling the behavior of employment relationship actors (Kaufman 2013; Kaufman and Miller 2015). These typologies are also instructive for thinking about consistent classes of HR practices at a managerial or work group level. One classification that has been widely cited in employment relations research outlines four patterns: low wage, HRM, Japanese-oriented, and joint team-based (Katz and Darbishire 2000). In the strategic HR management literature, Lepak and Snell (1999) identify four HR configurations (commitment, market-based, compliance, and collaborative) that cluster across groups within firms, differentiated by cross-classifying the strategic value and uniqueness of employees.

Katz and Darbishire (2000) and Lepak and Snell (1999), as well as numerous other scholars, have proposed and documented variation in HR systems across organizations and between occupation groups within the same organization based on the context, structural environment, and/or characteristics of employees and occupational groups (Kaufman and Miller 2011; Schmidt, Pohler, and Willness 2018; Tsui et al. 1997). But what about cognitive foundations pertaining to assumptions managers make about the nature of the employment relationship? There is only limited research explicitly connecting managerial beliefs, assumptions or cognition to particular HR practices, and this tends to focus on dualisms. Purcell

(1987), for example, maps different management approaches as individualistic or collectivist and

correlates this with HR practices. Adopting Fox's (1966) perspective that actors' employment

assumptions are either unitary or pluralist, Geare, Edgar, and McAndrew (2006) found an

empirical relationship between manager espousal of a unitarist frame of reference and the use of

high commitment approach. We significantly extend this literature by considering a richer,

broader typology of four key frames of reference that might implicitly or explicitly guide

managers in configuring an organization's HR policies and practices. This can occur at various

levels, ranging from the organizational level in which an overall HR approach is centrally

established, down to specific work groups as individual managers exercise the many ways in

which they can influence the implementation and administration of HR policies (Kehoe and Han

2020).

Table 1 shows the archetypical approach and representative HR policies and practices

expected to follow from different managerial frames of reference.[5] For instance, a neoliberal-

egoist frame of reference provides a cognitive foundation for a transactional approach

characterized by spot-market exchanges focused mostly on extrinsic rewards for employees, with

the expectation that a long-term relationship will only endure if the benefits to both parties

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[5] Other typologies of HR practices also map to the assumptions identified in the four frames of reference, but with some overlap. In the Katz and Darbishire (2000) typology, the low wage pattern is characterized by the assumptions embedded in the neoliberal-egoist frame, the Japanese-oriented and HRM patterns are characterized by the assumptions embedded in the unitarist frame, and the joint team-based model is characterized by the assumptions embedded in the pluralist frame. The market-based and compliance HR configurations discussed in the Lepak and Snell (1999) typology are consistent with a set of assumptions from a neoliberal-egoist frame, and the unitarist frame is fairly consistent with both the commitment and collaborative HR configurations in the Lepak and Snell framework. The cases where multiple patterns map to a single frame are a reminder that frames are not solely determinative of HR practices. The typology we create more clearly delineates the distinct classes of HR practices as divided by competing frames, abstracting away from the confounding influence of other factors.

continue to exceed the value of their respective alternatives. With a strong eye toward market competitiveness, compensation is either expected to be what the market will bear or aggressively performance-based.

A unitarist frame of reference, in contrast, provides the basis for a commitment-focused approach characterized by high HR investments in employees to foster employee loyalty. Expected HR policies include the standard array of advanced or strategic policies covering selection, rewards, training and development, performance management, employee involvement, and communication. High performance, high-road or high-commitment HR practices are common manifestations of the unitarist paradigm—these approaches are implemented by managers, often with employees' interests in mind, by adopting HR policies and practices aimed at satisfying and aligning both organizational and employee needs.

As terms and conditions of employment in both the transactional and commitment approaches are determined unilaterally by management, these two approaches are often collapsed in employment relations scholarship as "hard" and "soft" variants of managerialism (or, high vs. low road approaches). Recognizing the distinct cognitive foundations of HR practices as embedded in managers' frames provides an important way for appreciating and theorizing the distinctiveness of these two approaches, and for developing a better understanding of why organizations may differ in their choices between high- vs. low-road HR practices.

In a pluralist frame of reference, management recognizes the sometimes conflicting, yet legitimate, interests of employees, which provides the cognitive foundation for a management philosophy that pursues the balancing of these interests—we label this an accommodative HR approach. Such an approach is characterized by HR practices and mechanisms that give employees opportunities to have meaningful input into workplace decisions, allows for

distributive and more adversarial bargaining to occur, and encourages the parties to find compromises acceptable to both sides when interests are not aligned. Compared to the largely unilateral nature of the transactional and commitment archetypes, the pluralist approach recognizes the value of at least some degree of bilateralism in determining terms and conditions of employment. Pluralists also embrace the importance of formal employment institutions such as labor unions and labor legislation to supplement high-commitment HR strategies for managing the workforce.

In each of these cases, our predictions rest on a consideration of what type of HR approach for managing employees would emerge based on the manager's frame of reference (as portrayed in the top left portion of Figure 1). There are numerous, well-recognized examples of organizations with neoliberal-egoist (e.g., Wal-Mart, Uber), unitarist (e.g., Costco, Delta Airlines), and pluralist (Southwest Airlines, Ford) HR approaches. But is it also possible for a manager to have a critical frame? The critical frame of reference sees the employment relationship as a deeply unequal one rooted in socio-political-economic dominance by an elite group, such as capital. A manager that holds this view could exploit this by acting only in the organization's interest without regard for employee well-being or interests, dismissing employee welfare as something employees are responsible for improving (for example by pursuing a university degree to enhance their human capital and increase their wages), and not as the responsibility of the organization. Such a manager would actually be a neoliberal-egoist, and would provide market-driven, take-it-or-leave terms and conditions of employment.

So if we theorize a critical manager then, it would need to be different from this take-it-or-leave it, laissez-faire perspective. Specifically, imagine a business owner who sees the employment relationship through a critical frame of reference that is concerned with inequalities

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that disadvantage employees rather than being dismissive of them. From a critical frame of reference, addressing these inequalities requires structural changes (rather than the adoption of institutions to balance interests as in the pluralist frame). We theorize these "reformist critical" managers as seeking to create a different, perhaps non-capitalist, non-hierarchical organizational form or alternative employment model that is characterized by a relatively equal distribution of resources and shared authority over decision-making between managers and employees. We label this a cooperative approach where "cooperative" indicates worker-owned cooperatives (e.g., Mondragon) and other multi-stakeholder organizational governance forms (e.g., Stocksy); it should not be confused with unitarist views of manager-employee cooperation. The resulting approach will be one characterized by practices that provide employees with decision-making rights over the full spectrum of organizational and employment issues.

Proposition 2: Managers' frames of reference will affect their approach to HR policies and practices such that a neoliberal-egoist manager will adopt practices consistent with a transactional approach, a unitarist manager with a commitment approach, a pluralist manager with an accommodative approach, and a reformist critical manager with a cooperative approach. See Table 1 for some representative HR policies and practices consistent with each of these approaches.

EMPLOYEES' FRAMES AND SENSEMAKING

Next, consider employees in the organization, and recall the dynamic model presented in Figure 1. While employees are not typically responsible for the design and implementation of HR policies and practices, their role in the acceptance and effectiveness of HR practices should not be overlooked. Specifically, employees have unique identities (Lee and Tapia forthcoming), agency over their reactions, and they engage with managers in the social construction of meaning

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about these HR policies and practices (Sonenshein 2010). Employees experience particular HR practices (top right in Figure 1), and if these policies and practices are contrary to what employees expect based on their own frames of reference, it may prompt them to engage in a sensemaking process to give meaning to these experiences (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005) (right side of Figure 1). A sensemaking process occurs when individuals in organizations "work to understand issues or events that are novel, ambiguous, confusing, or in some other way violate expectations" (Maitlis and Christianson 2014: 57), and this process may cue or activate the saliency of their own frame as they seek to make "retrospective sense of what occurs" (Weick 1993: 635).

A sensemaking process by employees can lead to a recognition that their frames differ from that which underlies the HR practices they are experiencing (bottom left in Figure 1). As such, frames within organizations can be "a potential locus of contestation" (Kaplan 2008: 730), as actors with conflicting frames engage in framing contests as an outcome of the sensemaking process. Moreover, framing contests may lead to additional sensemaking processes as actors work to encourage others to adopt their own frames. So when organizational actors have conflicting cognitive frames on the employment relationship, framing contests may result (left side of Figure 1). With respect to HR practices, part of these framing contests will be accommodation and conflict among managers and employees over these practices. Either reactively or proactively, managers can use framing tools such as mass e-mail communications or HR training and information sessions to influence employees' interpretation of the HR practices. This may improve the consistency and clarity of the signals employees receive about desired behaviors (e.g., the "strength" of the HR system: Bowen and Ostroff 2004), and alter employees' frames in ways that may result in congruent manager-employee frames. When

sensemaking and frame alignment processes are successful (Benford and Snow 2000; Kaplan 2008), or are unnecessary because practices do not violate employees' expectations due to selection, socialization, or indifference, then we expect stability in HR practices. But when actors' frames are mismatched and actors' sensemaking processes fail to construct an acceptable rationale for the violation of expectations, there will be an increased likelihood of recurring conflict over HR practices.

No research to date has focused on how the frames of reference of employees influence HR policies and practices. However, a substantial amount of research analyzes how employees perceive the HR policies and practices of their employing organizations (e.g., Schmidt, Pohler, and Willness 2018; Tsui et al. 1997) and examines the strategies and tactics unions use to shape HR policies and practices (Verma 2007). These studies suggest that at least in some cases, employees may not agree with the HR policies and practices that exist within the organization. We propose that the foundations of this disagreement may be partly due to a mismatch between the frames of employees and managers. Iverson (2020) found that mismatched meanings of work created tension between workers and managers in a single work site. More generally, theory and research in organizational behavior on person-organization fit (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson 2005) and competing values (Cameron and Quinn 2011) has established the importance of employee perceptions that their values are compatible with those of the organization. Perceived fit has been shown to be an important indicator of work attitudes, turnover, and job performance (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson 2005); however, "fit" usually measures an employee's perceived fit with the required job skills, organizational culture, or environmental and socially responsible values (Jones, Willness, and Madey 2014).

We extend this work by proposing that shared manager and employee assumptions and beliefs regarding the structural nature of the employment relationship will also have implications for sensemaking processes and employment relationship outcomes. Based on direct experience with the practices managers adopt to coordinate and/or monitor employee behavior, employees will accept these HR practices if they fit with their own pre-existing or socialized beliefs and assumptions about the employment relationship, but might experience cognitive dissonance if these practices clash with their expectations of the appropriate HR practices based on their own cognitive frame.

Proposition 3: Employees' frames of reference will shape their responses to HR policies and practices. When employees' frames match with managers' frames, there will be stability in HR practices. When employees' frames do not match with managers' frames, there will be greater potential for recurring conflict in the employment relationship.

MISMATCHED FRAMES: OFF-DIAGONAL HR PRACTICES AND OUTCOMES

In previous sections we theorized the origins of HR practices by identifying how managers' cognitive frames on the employment relationship undergird alternative approaches to managing the employment relationship. We proposed that the particular cognitive frame(s) of an organization's managers and leaders influences the adoption and implementation of certain HR policies and practices. Importantly, we further proposed that the archetypical employment approaches and representative HR practices summarized in Table 1 are predicted to emerge, be more stable, and cause less conflict when managers' frames match the frames of the employees. In such cases, a shared cognitive frame is likely to lead to and be reinforced by a particular set of "taken-for-granted" structures, expectations, meanings, practices, and behaviors. These "taken-for-granted" cognitive frames are arguably institutions themselves (Weber and Glynn 2006),

which may manifest as "ideal" HR systems/configurations/archetypes or even logics at the organizational level (Fox 1974; Katz and Darbishire 2000) and/or within specific groups of employees (Schmidt, Pohler and Willness 2018). That is, while frames are individual constructs, they can be shared and/or contested through practices, rules, discourse, and interactions among employment relationship actors (Weber and Mayer 2014). Shared frames might even map onto macro "institutional logics" (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012) associated with national industrial relations systems (Hall and Soskice 2001).

Where actors share congruent frames of reference, the frame may not even be salient to the actors, and the employment relationship will be characterized by minimal conflict over HR practices, and high levels of actor satisfaction with HR practices and possibly even outcomes. But in practice, we observe numerous situations where managers and employees clash over HR practices and where employment approaches deviate from the ideal archetypes. Mismatched frames help us understand these situations.

Theorization about mismatched actor frames and conflict within the employment relationship requires incorporating the more dynamic and interactive elements of sensemaking and framing processes, and to do this requires a recognition of employee agency. Like managers, employees have frames of reference on the employment relationship, and are not uniformly passive vessels who reflexively acquiesce to the organization's HR policies and practices.

In practice, matches might be more frequent than mismatches due to managers' ability to recruit and select employees who share their frames, employee apathy, and the potential for actors' frames to adapt through socialization and discursive processes (e.g., framing contests) within organizations in which employees are often at a power disadvantage. Nevertheless, mismatches can occur for a variety of reasons, such as recruitment and selection that overlooks

this aspect of fit or prioritizes diversity, inconsistent application of HR policies across an organization, changing employee frames due to being exposed to new perspectives, new organizational leaders bringing in a different frame, or generational change (Hauptmeier 2012; Kehoe and Han 2020). Organizations (Greenwood et al. 2011) and professions (Currie and Spyridonidis 2016) are complex institutions that confront multiple logics from varying sources, which means that it is overly simplistic to assume uniform frames of references across managers and employees within the organization.[6] Indeed, in a study of employees in two banks, Chreim (2006) shows that employees can either appropriate or align themselves with their managers' frames regarding technology, but sometimes will engage in framing contests or open resistance. This research suggests that managers and employees co-construct and negotiate frames of reference through their discursive and social interactions (Cornelissen and Werner 2014).

So while Table 1 summarizes what we expect to emerge when managers' and employees' frames are in alignment, we need an interactional approach to theorize likely outcomes when managers and employees do not share the same frame of reference—that is, when there are mismatched frames of reference. We therefore present 4x4 matrices that allow managers (columns) and employees (rows) to have their own frames of reference on the employment relationship. Table 2 expands Table 1 by presenting the HR practices that are predicted based on each combination of interaction between different manager and employee frames of reference. The diagonals reflect matched frames of reference and have the same expectations in practices and outcomes as were presented in Table 1.

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[6] This harkens back to Fox's (1974: 260) observation that "the enterprise is seen not as a unitary structure but as a coalition of individuals and groups with their own aspirations and perceptions which they naturally see as valid and which they seek to express in action if such is required."

HR Practices

Of particular interest in Table 2 are the off-diagonals that indicate the likely HR practices when there are mismatched frames between actors. Consider the first column in which a manager has a neoliberal-egoist frame of reference. Based on this frame, we expect a manager to favor market-based, low-investment HR practices, but if employees have a pluralist or critical frame (rows 3 and 4) we expect them to demand more voice and authority, possibly through a union or direct ownership/involvement in governance. Thus, a neoliberal-egoist manager is likely to also use union suppression tactics such as firing union supporters. When the employees have neoliberal-egoist or unitarist frames, they are unlikely to see a need for independent employee voice so managers' union and voice suppression tactics would be unnecessary.

In column 2 of Table 2, a unitarist manager implements high-commitment human resources policies, but when employees are focused on getting the best deal possible for themselves (row 1), these high-commitment policies are likely to be underused or abused. When pluralist or critical employees seek greater voice, such as through unions, a unitarist manager is predicted to respond with union substitution strategies such as non-union voice mechanisms (rows 3 and 4). A pluralist manager (column 3) is predicted to provide consultation and voice mechanisms to employees, but neoliberal-egoist employees are predicted to lack engagement with these mechanisms that do not serve their interests, so we predict that these mechanisms would be under-utilized (row 1). When employees have a unitarist frame of reference, we hypothesize that they will be satisfied with pluralist manager-provided voice mechanisms and employee involvement opportunities (row 2), whereas when employees have pluralist or critical frames (rows 3-4), they may seek greater co-determination and/or other structural sources of power.

Lastly, the expected practices when a manager has a reformist critical perspective are presented in column 4 of Table 2. Recall that a reformist critical manager is hypothesized to favor policies that share resources and authority over decision-making with employees. Self-interested neoliberal-egoist employees are predicted to use these policies for their own self-gain (row 1) while unitarist employees are predicted to use these policies more for work-related issues than to determine terms and conditions of employment (row 2). When employees possess pluralist and critical frames, in contrast, their interest in greater self-determination over terms and conditions of employment is predicted to result in greater involvement and utilization of the reformist critical manager's cooperative decision-making processes (rows 3-4).

Proposition 4: Mismatched employee and manager frames will lead to different HR practices than those found in the archetypical employment approaches along the diagonals. See Table 2 for representative predictions of these HR practices according to the nature of each mismatch.

HR Outcomes

Table 3 presents a similar 4x4 matrix with a focus on expected outcomes rather than expected practices. Again, the diagonals represent matched frames situations which reflect congruent manager-employee beliefs and assumptions about the employment relationship. These cells represent the outcomes we would predict from the archetypical employment approaches: mutual acceptance of market-based terms and conditions (neoliberal-egoist), committed and loyal employees in high-investment approaches (unitarist), voice mechanisms and protections for employees and/or enduring bargaining relationships with independent labor unions and/or works councils (pluralist), or employee-owners engaged in business and job-related decision-making while sharing relatively equally in the distribution of organizational surplus with employers and managers (reformist critical). We predict that these matches will be relatively stable (as long as

the actors' underlying frames of reference are stable, ceteris paribus) and not marked by either manifest or latent conflict over these practices. Other forms of conflict may occur, such as interpersonal conflict or bargaining disputes over specific terms and conditions of employment, but not systemic conflict over the configuration of HR policies and practices, as embedded in mismatched frames of reference over the structural nature of the employment relationship.

Perhaps more importantly, an appreciation of the off-diagonals in Table 3 is needed to be able to fully understand the diversity of situations observed in practice that go beyond archetypical approaches to managing the employment relationship. While mismatched frames situations (the off-diagonals) might also persist, we predict that there will be continuing patterns of conflict over HR practices, and this contestation makes these HR situations less stable than when frames are aligned. When a manager has a neoliberal-egoist frame (column 1), we hypothesize that conflicts will arise with employees who have alternative frames, whether in the form of an employee desire for greater engagement and communication (unitarist), voice over terms and conditions of employment (pluralist), or involvement in governance and strategy (critical). We further predict that critical employees will be more militant than pluralist employees, so the level of labor-management conflict will be greater in that case as well. For instance, this might be where the most intense union busting campaigns are witnessed. In all three cases (unitarist, pluralist, and critical employees), however, conflict over HR practices stems from employees wanting more than the manager feels is warranted to provide. At the opposite end of the spectrum, we expect conflict to arise when employees are mismatched with a reformist critical manager (column 4) because the manager expects employees to engage in higher levels of participation and decision-making than they desire. When employees have a neoliberal-egoist frame, they are likely to behave opportunistically by taking advantage of a

manager that is overly concerned about employee well-being, issues around income inequality and racial and gender inclusion, and structural imbalances of power in the economy and broader society.

For both unitarist (column 2) and pluralist (column 3) managers, we expect that conflict will arise in two ways: in some mismatched combinations, managers will desire more engagement or participation than employees want to provide, in other mismatched combinations employees will want more voice than managers prefer to provide. More specifically, neoliberal-egoist employees are unlikely to fully engage with a unitarist manager's high-commitment human resources practices, and may opportunistically abuse them (for example, by using autonomy or flex-work to shirk); similar predictions emerge for a lack of neoliberal-egoist employee participation in a pluralist manager's voice and consultation programs. This mismatch in frames could manifest in manager frustration with a lack of employee loyalty, engagement, and participation.

In contrast to manager frustration in some mismatched situations, mismatched frames are predicted to result in conflict when pluralist and critical employees desire greater levels of independent voice (e.g., unions) than a unitarist manager believes is necessary. We further posit that critical employees are more likely to be suspicious of unitarist managers, and form more militant unions even when managers are pluralists. Conflict is thus predicted to be more intense between neoliberal-egoist or unitarist managers and critical employees than in other nearby combinations.

Putting all of this together reinforces a unique contribution of theorizing actors' (mis)matched frames: helping understand not only situations where employees want more than what managers are giving (mismatches below the diagonal in Tables 2 and 3), but also the

reverse situation in which HR policies and practices do not resonate with (some part of) the workforce leaving managers frustrated at a lack of engagement or involvement (mismatches above the diagonal). Furthermore, this approach can help understand varying levels of employment relationship conflict. Mismatches furthest from the diagonals in Tables 2 and 3 represent the biggest clashes in cognitive frames, and are likely to have the strongest conflicts in practice.

Not all HR practices subject to mismatched frames will necessarily lead to high levels of antagonistic conflict. For instance, in cases where the frames of reference between reformist-critical and pluralist managers and egoist and unitarist employees are mismatched, employees will be satisfied with the HR investments the manager makes in its workforce. Employees will also be more or less satisfied with the level of concern their managers exhibit about their goals and interests, and the provision of opportunities for greater involvement in decision-making. However, mismatches of these types may still cause some dissonance between managerial objectives and employee actions as opportunities for voice may be underutilized by employees. In the case of unionized firms, the relationship between the manager and the union will be professional as the manager recognizes that the union has a legitimate right to bargain on behalf of employees (pluralist frame) and the reformist critical manager may even proactively assert that unions are necessary institutions that mitigate the structural imbalance of power between managers and employees. However, employees will not exhibit as much loyalty, commitment, and identification with the organization as managers may seek to obtain.

Proposition 5: Employees' and managers' mismatched frames will lead to different types of conflict over HR policies and practices. For instance, employees may expect greater HR investments and/or decision-making control than managers are willing to provide or managers

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will be frustrated as employees under-utilize HR investments and/or decision-making opportunities. See Table 3 for representative predictions of HR outcomes based on the nature of the mismatch.

Proposition 6: Conflict over HR policies and practices will be increasingly antagonistic the greater the mismatch below the diagonal in Tables 2 and 3.

COGNITIVE, STRUCTURAL, AND POWER CONSIDERATIONS IN FRAMING PROCESSES

We have proposed that managers' and employees' matched frames of reference about the structural nature of the employment relationship manifest as ideal archetypes or approaches to the employment relationship consistent with the shared frame, and this consistency results in minimal conflict over HR approaches (top half of Figure 1). We also proposed that most of the mismatched combinations of frames of reference will result in less stable arrangements that are subject to conflict and contestation between the actors as they attempt to either persuade others to adopt their frame and/or mobilize others to change the current HR policies and practices (bottom shaded half of Figure 1).

When employees perceive a mismatch (usually activated by a dissonance between their expected HR practices as rooted in their frame of reference and the actual HR practices they experience, reflecting the frame of reference of the manager), the literature on sensemaking suggests they will seek to understand this dissonance (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005). In other words, frames become more salient to actors when they perceive an inconsistency between their normative and empirical frame of reference (i.e., how they believe the HR system should operate and how they experience it to operate), which motivates them to want to make sense of and possibly change the situation. Actors engage in a sensemaking process with others in relation

to both their own and others' frames, and are motivated to engage in both discursive and material activities that encourage others to adopt their frame (e.g., Kaplan 2008). For example, when faced with an employee desiring union representation, a unitarist manager may attempt to shift the employee's thinking to see the employment relationship as characterized by a unity of interests, and thus to perceive unions as unnecessary. If frames become aligned, then there is no longer a mismatch and we predict that a potential conflict would subside (that is, a movement toward the diagonals in Tables 2 and 3). Or in some cases, employees might instead leave the organization to find a better fit elsewhere, or be forced out because of this lack of cognitive congruency.

We expect conflict to be a function of the extent to which there is a shared consensus about the appropriate frame within a group of actors, and also social identification or solidarity within the group. Shared frames and social identification are likely to be greater among managers than employees because there are usually more employees than managers in the firm, and thus greater likelihood of heterogeneity. Moreover, different employees are often subject to different HR practices within the same firm depending on their strategic value and uniqueness (Schmidt, Pohler, and Willness 2018), and thus some employees may be more or less likely to perceive a mismatch between their own frame and the manager's frame than other employees. We would also expect to observe more consistency and shared frames within the groups of different actors in unionized workplaces, and also more conflict if frames of reference are mismatched in unionized firms, due to the communication strategies of union leaders as well as the greater class solidarity and bargaining power unionized employees often enjoy relative to non-union employees (Pohler and Luchak 2015).

Proposition 7: Conflict will be greater when managers' and employees' frames are mismatched, and the majority of the individuals within each group share the same frame with a high level of solidarity within each group.

When clashing actors have strong cognitive frames and prefer to stay than to leave, these actors will be even more motivated to persuade other actors to change their frame. As we have proposed, conflict is a likely outcome of this mismatch as actors engage in framing contests—the strategic use of framing in social interactions to win over others to support their own interests (Kaplan 2008). To serve an organization's desire for stable HR policies and practices that lead to consistent expectations and behaviors (Baron, Hannan, and Burton 2001), we expect managers to regularly use discursive practices to obtain/maintain employees' acceptance of their frame of reference on the employment relationship as part of reinforcing a broader organizational logic that is viewed as legitimate, and/or remove employees who do not adapt. Thus, even when frame mismatches and conflicts occur, they may be short-lived. If these discursive (and coercive) processes are successful, mismatched frames may not be observed very frequently in practice.

The outcomes of framing contests will be determined by the relative power of the different actors to impose their particular frame onto other actors, which may contribute to whether conflict is outwardly visible, or remains latent. In the language of the literature on discursive institutionalism, these outcomes will depend on both an actor's power through ideas ("the capacity of actors to persuade other actors to accept and adopt their views through the use of ideational elements") and an actor's power over ideas ("the imposition of ideas and the power to resist the inclusion of alternative ideas") (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016: 318). The former might depend on power rooted in role legitimacy, charisma, and expertise while the latter involves coercive power tied to each party's ability to leverage structural sources of power to

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force their particular cognitive frames on others (e.g., through class-based collective action or formal institutions such as employment laws and unions).

Proposition 8: The outcomes of framing contests will depend on the relative power of the different employment relationship actors to impose their frame of reference on other actors.

CONCLUSION

We combine the frames of reference literature in employment relations with the sensemaking and framing literatures in management and sociology to construct a framing perspective on HR practices and systems. The result is a proposed conceptual framework and dynamic cognitive model in which HR practices and outcomes are embedded in employees' and managers' (mis)matched frames of reference about the structural nature of the employment relationship and the meaning assigned to HR practices that managers and employees jointly construct through sensemaking and framing processes. By being explicit about the cognitive importance of employment relationship frames of reference, our paper makes several contributions to employment and HR systems research and the broader organizational literature on frames.

Previous HR systems research has focused on archetypes—bundles or clusters of HR practices within organizations that are structurally determined, internally consistent, relatively stable over time, and documented across contexts. We proposed that archetypical HR approaches emerge, and importantly, are more stable over time and result in less conflict, if managers and employees share a similar frame of reference. In this case, both sets of actors will be operating within a system that they find consistent with their beliefs and assumptions about the employment relationship. Where the actors share a similar frame of reference, the HR policies

and practices will be acceptable to the actors. For starters, then, the literature on HR systems needs to factor in the importance of cognitive frames.

Moreover, our framework on the microfoundations of HR practices as embedded in actors' (mis)matched frames of reference allows for the development of a broader and more nuanced set of HR policies and practices that better matches the variation we observe in practice. Enriching the dominant paradigms that emphasize environmental and structural determinants of HR practices by integrating this with manager and employee cognition and incorporating cultural-cognitive and discursive elements provides an avenue for understanding how competing organizations in the same industry can have very different HR strategies (Harvey and Turnbull 2010; Hauptmeier 2012). We theorize that frames and framing practices are important, and work in tandem with contextual and structural factors to determine HR practices and employment relationship outcomes. And, by linking the conflict and (in)stability of HR practices to the underlying (mis)matched frames of reference of employment relationship actors, we provide a theoretical basis for a deeper understanding of the origins of HR approaches, policies and practices that go beyond "ideal" HR archetypes or systems. We also see this as complementing the literature on HR philosophy and signals by adding managerial and worker frames on the employment relationship to the set of factors that shape HR philosophy and influence how signals are received, thus impacting whether there is a strong HR culture with shared perceptions.

Our framework also contributes to the broader management and organizational frames literature by exploring a context that has received relatively little attention: the employment relationship. By focusing on this unique context, we are able to connect the HR systems literature to the micro frames of reference of employment relations actors and framing contests

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between actors to provide greater insights on why certain HR systems emerge and remain stable, and why some employment relationships may be subject to ongoing conflict. This includes an explanation not only for conflict that stems from employees wanting more, but also for manager frustration rooted in a lack of employee commitment, loyalty, and participation. In this way, we propose a new categorization of HR practices: effective, underutilized, or causing recurring, antagonistic conflict. An examination of the cognitive foundations of the employment relationship also allows for a more direct consideration of how class solidarity and structural power differences will affect how framing contests unfold in organizations when managers and employees possess mismatched frames.

Adopting a cognitive frames approach to understanding the employment relationship complements emerging employment relations research on ideas, but our approach uniquely reveals new opportunities to research framing and discursive contests within organizations and to understand old conflicts in a new light. For example, scholarship on managerial resistance to unionization has generally focused on the implications for labor costs and labor control. But a framing perspective also leads to the possibility that managers seek to avoid unionization because a union makes it harder for managers to impose their desired cognitive frame on employees. As a second example, by recognizing that an individual's cognitive frames are shaped by their identities and past experiences, a framing approach can support Lee and Tapia's (forthcoming) call for identity-conscious analyses in employment relations. By illustrating the applicability and usefulness of frame analysis to the employment relationship, we hope to inspire others to extend it.

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TABLE 1
Frames of Reference, Archetypical HR Approaches and
Representative HR Practices

Frame of Reference	Archetypical HR Approach	Representative HR Practices
Neoliberal-Egoist	**Transactional** • Cost-driven • Market-based • Little investment in employees and HR	• Market-driven compensation or aggressive performance schemes • Minimal benefits • Authoritarian power structures • Onerous scheduling • Contingent work
Unitarist	**Commitment** • Paternalistic HR practices • Intrinsic rewards and growth opportunities • Win-win, strategic investments in employees and HR	• Careful selection procedures • Training and career progression opportunities • Market-leading compensation and benefits • Work-related decision-making authority (individual and team) • Performance management • Extensive communication and information sharing
Pluralist	**Accommodative** • Policies to balance organizational and worker interests • Meaningful, autonomous worker voice	• Job ladders • Seniority rights • Negotiated terms and conditions of employment • Labor unions and/or works councils
Reformist Critical	**Cooperative** • Equal distribution of decision-making authority and resources	• Employee ownership and shared governance • Work- and conditions-related decision-making authority

TABLE 2:
Representative HR Approaches and Practices Resulting From (Mis)Matched Frames

		Manager Frame of Reference			
		Neoliberal-Egoist	*Unitarist*	*Pluralist*	*Reformist Critical*
Employee Frame of Reference	*Neoliberal-Egoist*	**Transactional** Market-based, low-investment policies and procedures.	High-commitment policies that are unfulfilled and underutilized, or are abused by employees.	Under-used consultation and voice vehicles.	Policies giving employees decision-making authority that are unused or abused.
	Unitarist	Market-based, low-investment policies and procedures.	**Commitment** High-commitment strategic HR policies.	Consultation and voice vehicles.	Policies giving employees decision-making authority but only work-related mechanisms are used.
	Pluralist	Market-based, low-investment policies and procedures with aggressive union suppression tactics.	High-commitment strategic HR policies with union substitution approaches including voice mechanisms.	**Accommodative** Consultation and bargaining vehicles. Independent institutions of worker voice.	Policies giving employees decision-making authority over work and employment conditions are used.
	Critical	Market-based, low-investment policies and procedures with aggressive union suppression tactics.	High-commitment strategic HR policies with union substitution approaches including voice mechanisms.	Consultation and bargaining vehicles. Independent institutions of worker voice.	**Cooperative** Governance practices and/or policies giving employees decision-making authority are used.

TABLE 3:
Representative Outcomes of (Mis)Matched Frames of Reference

		Manager Frame of Reference			
		Neoliberal-Egoist	*Unitarist*	*Pluralist*	*Reformist Critical*
Employee Frame of Reference	*Neoliberal-Egoist*	Both sides focused on self-interest. Acceptance through consensual contracts. Look elsewhere rather than clash.	Managers seek commitment through policies to secure worker loyalty/ organizational identification; frustrated by lack of employee commitment.	Low employee interest in consultation and participation; managers frustrated by lack of employee involvement.	Managers seek to create inclusive and progressive environment; conflict arises as employees act opportunistically.
	Unitarist	Conflict arises as manager desires to minimize costs and employees desire greater investment and commitment.	Win-win strategic, investments in employees satisfy both sides. High loyalty. Minimal ER conflict.	Employees happy with opportunities for involvement and "high-road" HR practices. High loyalty. Minimal conflict.	Employees happy with opportunities for involvement and "high-road" HR practices. High loyalty. Minimal conflict.
	Pluralist	Conflict arises as manager may adopt more aggressive union suppression tactics, strategies to minimize costs; employees desire greater investment, commitment and voice.	Manager adopts more extensive union substitution approaches with voice mechanisms to secure employee loyalty and identification with organization. Conflict if inadequate voice.	Both sides accept respect for own and others' interests. Bargaining conflict over specific terms but not relationship.	Employees' receive extensive investments and their desire for active involvement in decision-making welcomed by the manager. Minimal conflict.
	Critical	Intense conflict arises due to manager monitoring and employee sabotage.	Conflict present as employees perceive "high-road" HR policies as union substitution strategies or managerial strategies to gain "coercive consent".	Conflict occurs because employees more likely to form militant unions and/or engage in active "policing" of the manager.	Equal distribution of decision-making authority and resources satisfy all. Minimal ER conflict.

FIGURE 1: A Dynamic Cognitive Model of (Mis)Matched Frames