Chapter 5

Performance and Ethics of Human Resource Management
Performance and Ethics of Human Resource Management

The evidence for systematic effects of combinations of HRM practices on organisational performance is not overwhelming. Mueller claims that "the stronger evidence seems to suggest that we do not know about the link between HRM on the one hand, and improved business performance on the other hand".

Also Dyer & Reeves claimed, regarding the contribution of human resource strategies to organizational effectiveness, that:

"At this juncture, then, it seems that the strategic human resource management bandwagon, notwithstanding its conceptual allure, is barrelling along on a rather fragile empirical undercarriage".

For example, Arthur's high performance employment system, which he termed a "commitment" system, specifies a low emphasis on variable pay, whereas the high performance employment systems defined by Huselid and MacDuffie have strong emphases on variable pay. Another example would be HR strategies
organizational performance, HRM systems, and other potential variables. "Without intervening variables, one is hard pressed both to explain how HRM influences firm performance and to rule out an alternative explanation for an observed HR-firm performance link such as reverse causation".

HRM might be important but we do not yet have much evidence of/agreement on anything generalizable in terms of what aspects of HRM that would be critical and in particular how such aspects would have an influence. The mainstream idea of HRM necessitates evidence of performance effects. Without this, the idea will have a much more fragile ground to stand on. The difficulty of providing such evidence (at some level of abstraction), backed up by convincing theoretical arguments, is a curious predicament as it may seem almost obvious that the - way organizations treat and utilize their workforce should have consequences.

Becker and Huselid plausibly argued that analyses:

"focusing on just part of the HRM system risk overstating the effects of those individual policies by capturing part of the larger HRM system effects".

**HRM as a Set of Practices**

Huselid and Huselid and Becker have done a series of studies utilizing more or less the same basic approach, building upon and developing it in subsequent studies. Huselid, in terms of a sample including a wide range of organizations in the United States, studied the relationship between two indexes of HRM practices on employee turnover, productivity and financial performance. The 'employee skills and organizational
structures'-index but not the 'employee motivation'-index was significantly related to employee turnover. Entered separately, both indexes were significantly related to productivity.

In relation to a measure of gross rate of return on capital (GRATE) only the index for 'employee skills and organizational structures' was significant. Huselid reported evidence of mediation effects of employee turnover and productivity on financial performance. Huselid refers to the - criteria for mediation effects provided by Baron and Kenny. However, according to these criteria Huselid was in fact only able to establish one very weak mediation effect. With reference to employee turnover, the 'employee motivation'-index was not significant. With reference to productivity, the 'employee skills and organizational structures'-index was not significant.

Huselid also performed some calculations of the practical significance of the HRM practices. The results of Huselid are described by Becker and Huselid as demonstrating the effects of shifts in HRM practices. However, we have to remember that such "shifts" refer to what is measured. The variation in the independent variables are not related to the content of HRM practices per se but rather to the extent of application throughout the organizations of a set of formally identified practices. Thus Huselid does not analyze the effects of the extent to which variation in the content of employment practices or employment approaches can explain outcomes.

The analytical focus is thus somewhat different than that of some of the other studies reviewed here. But to the extent that we can approve of the methodological aspects of Huselid's analyses, they do give some
indication of the possibility that the wider in the organizations certain formally defined HRM practices are applied, the better the outcome in terms of certain financial results will be.

Huselid and Becker consider some methodological problems related to research on HRM-performance links. They used statistical techniques on panel survey data to test whether there might be lagged effects and/or a heterogeneity bias in their cross chapteral analyses, in particular in Huselid.

Becker and Huselid used a similar sample, similar respondents and kinds of measures as the earlier studies by Huselid and Huselid and Becker. However, they further broadened the HRM system measure. In addition they included more explicit measures of external fit which we will return to below. Becker and Huselid argue that

"[R]eplicating the HRM system - firm performance relationship with a different measure in a different time period is important support for these prior empirical results".

Becker and Huselid also mention that the effect of the HRM system variable falls by about 40% when taking into account their Implementation Alignment measure. They argue that

"[t]his is not astonishing given the substantial correlation between the HRM System and Implementation Alignment variables. This suggests that in prior research part of the positive effects of the HRM system on firm performance may have reflected the aspects of other organizational policies that leveraged the influence of the HRM system". By "other organizational policies" they refer to the items included in their Implementation Alignment index.
Becker and Huselid conclude that

"we found a uniformly consistent support for a strong positive relationship between the presence of a HPWS and firm performance...the point estimates were economically meaningful [and]...consistent with earlier work that has examined the HRM system-firm performance relationship".

Youndt et al. first reported a support for a link between a "human-capital-enhancing HR system" and performance in terms of employee productivity, customer alignment, and equipment efficiency. However, based on later analyses they argued that this evidence was misleading. These universal effects seemed to have been produced by the large effects of interactions between a human-capital-enhancing HRM system and a quality strategy for all of the outcome variables. This raises some general doubts as to the existing evidence for the universalistic hypothesis where such an additional analysis has not been performed.

Youndt et al.'s conclusion is that

"the apparent main [universalistic] effect of human-capital-enhancing HR on performance is predominately a function of the performance enhancements obtained when firms link human-capital-enhancing HR - systems with a quality manufacturing strategy". The effect of some of the individual HRM practices were insignificant might be interpreted in at least three ways. It may simply indicate multicollinerity problems. However, the correlations do not indicate such problems.

Delery and Doty's results could thus be interpreted as an indication that some formally identified practices are more difficult to implement in a meaningful and effective manner than other. This would indicate a need to study implementations and receptions of the HRM practices.
Their results may also indicate that some individual practices included are simply irrelevant or at least individually insufficient to explain variation in organizational performance.

Delery and Doty themselves, however, offer theoretical justifications for the plausibility of their conclusions that the degree to which results oriented performance appraisals, profit sharing and - a policy of employment security are practiced (visavi a specific job) explain a considerable part of the variance in organizational performance among the sampled banks. Delaney and Huselid reported support for the effect of HRM practices on organizational performance in their study of profit and non-profit organizations from a nationwide sample in the United States. Their measures of performance were perceptual measures related to a multifaceted index of non-financial performance and a somewhat less complex measure of more financially related performance (the items for the latter were marketing performance, profitability, sales growth and market share).

Some of their measures of HRM practices were substantially compromised by the externally provided data-base used in the study (in particular the measure of employee participation and employment security). Their analyses included analyses of the effects of individual HRM practices which we will not consider due to the above mentioned biases such analyses are likely to involve. The inclusion of all the HRM practices resulted in only training, staffing selectivity and incentive compensation being significant in several models.

When all the HRM practices were included, the additional variance explained in either performance
variable in any model was lower than in the study by Delery and Doty. This is to be expected since Delaney and Huselid included some more control variables. We may note that none of the significant HRM practices in Delaney and Huselid belonged to the same categories as the ones found to be universally significant by Delery and Doty.

Delaney and Huselid themselves conclude that their results

"suggest that progressive HRM practices, including selectivity in staffing, training, and incentive compensation, are positively related to perceptual measures of organizational performance".

Arthur reported support for the general effectiveness in terms of higher organizational labour efficiency, lower scrap rates and employee turnover of a HR commitment approach (as compared to a HR control approach) related to maintenance - and production workers of steel "minimills" in the United States. The employee turnover measure in Arthur did not distinguish between voluntary and involuntary turnover. The theoretical hypothesis of an influence of HRM on employee turnover would arguably refer specifically to involuntary turnover.

Although a commitment approach should also be correlated with lower involuntary turnover, it should lead to lower voluntary turnover. Arthur was consequent in testing only differences in mean turnover between organizations utilizing the two HR systems. His results supported the fact that employee turnover was significantly lower in organizations employing a commitment HRM system. However, in these analyses no control variables were thus included. Regression analyses gave some support for the fact that a commitment HRM
approach "is significantly related to both fewer labour hours per tons and lower scrap rates". However, the overall regression model for scrap rate is not significant and "the significance of the human resource system variable in this model must [thus] be treated with some caution".

Arthur also found support for the fact that a "negative relationship between turnover and manufacturing performance...[was] higher in commitment human resource systems than in control systems". Although nowhere explicitly described by Arthur, he apparently only utilized a continuous index of all the HRM practices in his regression analyses thus not really testing differences between clusters. The advantage of actually using distinct clusters of HRM systems in testing the effect of HRM practices would be that the effects of HRM might not be linear.

Testing distinct systems provides evidence as to distinct effects of more clearly distinguished approaches. A methodology of analyzing different relationships between dependent variables and clusters of HRM systems should ideally be combined with analysis of the effect of simple variation in one continuous HRM system variable. Differences in results between such analyses would provide interesting information. Further, as Arthur does not provide any form of financial performance outcomes the study cannot present evidence as to whether the increased efficiency, lower scrap rates- and employee turnover were achieved in an economically effective way.

Ichniowski et al, based on a sample of homogeneous steel productions lines reported support for the positive effects on productivity and quality of increasing degrees
of soft HRM related sophistication in the application of sets of internally aligned HRM practices. Ichniowski et al. used four groups or classes of their total set of HRM practices. The latter were justified both by prior research and their empirical sample. Their measures of the HRM practices were dummy variables related to questions of whether certain types of practices are applied or not.

Ichniowski et al.'s conclusion that "innovative HRM systems raise worker productivity" is after all inferred (albeit with an impressive list of controls) from the increased uptime in production lines with more innovative HRM practices. There are no direct measures of either employee productivity or employee attitudes. Ichniowski et al. conclude that

"systems of innovative HRM practices [in the steel finishing lines] have large effects on production workers' performance, while changes in individual employment practices have little or no effect".

Becker and Huselid develop a measure which essentially captures the proportion of HRM practices which have been relatively (arbitrarily defined) widely - applied in the organizations as measured by the original HRM System variables. As Becker and Huselid partly acknowledge this approach does not really capture any meaningful and explicit idea of overall internal coherence. Nevertheless, Becker and Huselid analyzed the effect of two forms of their conceptualization of internal coherence. Their results indicate that internal fit among the HRM System items has a larger effect than the simple average of the HRM System items whereas internal fit among the Implementation Alignment items has a smaller effect than the simple average of these items. Both dimensions of internal fit are reported to have significant effects on performance.
They conclude that their results provide evidence for the fact "that internal fit within the HRM system is more important to firm performance than internal fit within the supporting organizational logic".

Delaney and Huselid attempted two different ways to test the effect of internal integration. One was through a scale indicating the number of practices for which each firm was above the median in the sample. This variable provided no evidence of an effect. Not even attempts to increase the sophistication of this measure resulted in evidence of such an effect. They also attempted several partial interaction effects between sets of two HRM practices. These analyses provided no evidence of an effect. Multicollinearity among the different interactions precluded inclusion of several interactions in one and the same model.

**HRM as Strategic Integration**

MacDuffie's studied a world wide sample of automotive assembly plants and put considerable effort into developing contextually relevant measures of HRM practices, performance outcomes and control variables. His HRM questions were mostly "tied to shopfloor activities at the plant level". His outcome measures consisted of contextually well justified forms of quality (defects per vehicle) and labour productivity. His hypotheses concerned independent variables in terms of a production organization system as well as its constituents in terms of a flexible/mass production strategy, worksystems and HRM policies.

The results show that the regression coefficients for the overall additive production organization index with
reference to the outcomes of both productivity and quality are substantially higher than for any of the individual independent variables (constituting the production organization system) alone. This is indicative evidence for an effect of strategic fit or the organizational logic as MacDuffie calls it. The differences in explained variances are small with reference to productivity but large with reference to quality.

With reference to the quality outcome there is a considerable difference both in the regression coefficient for, and the variance explained by, the production organization system variable compared to the universalistic HRM terms. Thus, in particular for the quality outcome we might draw the conclusion that the explanatory power of an aligned organizational logic is considerably greater than that of the two sets of universalistic HRM practices.

MacDuffie himself draws the following conclusions:

"Overall, the evidence strongly supports the hypothesis that assembly plants using flexible production systems, which bundle human resource practices into a system that is integrated with production/business strategy, outperform plants using more traditional mass production systems in both productivity and quality. These results provide the strongest statistical evidence to date of a positive relationship between innovative human resource practices and economic performance."

Huselid found scattered and somewhat inconsistent support for an effect of external alignment. Here some measures of strategic HRM and strategic fit even indicated a negative effect on performance. As with the measures of internal fit in Huselid the results indicate the importance of developing conceptually well argued
measures. Also Huselid concludes that he found "little evidence for external fit".

Becker and Huselid developed a complex variable to measure external coherence in terms of the average perceived effectiveness of the individual HRM practices, a somewhat diverse set of behaviors and processes related to the HR department and top management. The perceptions were related to the HRM managers in the organizations. Some of the items related to specific HRM practices concerned how effectively the practices enhanced business performance whereas some of these items referred to how effectively the organizations dealt with more specific issues related to these practices.

In this way Becker and Huselid tried to take into consideration the "organizational logic". Becker and Huselid do not explicitly comment much on the results related external fit alone. They draw more on the results of a cluster analysis incorporating both internal and external complementarities to which we shall return in the next chapter on HRM holism.

However, it seems puzzling that Becker and Huselid's HRM System index has a larger effect on organizational performance than their Implementation Alignment index. This is not puzzling due to any a priori argument that strategic fit should have greater influence on organizational performance than any HRM system per se. Rather, the result is puzzling because the items in the Implementation Alignment index (largely) refer specifically to how effective the different HRM practices in the organizations are. Either the index seem to suffer from low construct validity, meaning that it does not really measure what it purports to measure, or something else is suspicious in the analysis.
Youndt et al. reported some support for the overall explanatory power of different forms of strategic fit with reference to their performance outcomes of manufacturing facilities. More specifically a cost strategy-administrative HRM system index interaction was positively related to their organizational performance variable "equipment efficiency". A delivery flexibility strategy-administrative HR system index interaction was positively related to performance in terms of "customer alignment". Finally, a quality strategy-human-capital-enhancing HR system index interaction was positively related to all the performance variables, "customer alignment", "equipment efficiency" and "employee productivity".

To some extent the results thus confirm a true contingency hypothesis in indicating that positive effects can be achieved by different combinations of strategy and HR systems. However, the beta coefficients were generally much stronger for the quality strategy - human-capital-enhancing HR system interactions. Thus, taken together their results suggest that the largest and broadest effects of HRM are achieved under such circumstances.

Further, similar caveats and interpretations as mentioned regarding Delery and Doty's evidence for the effect of the universalistic set of HRM practices (above) might be considered.

1) In particular, the high individual interaction effect related to career opportunities and an innovation strategy might be interpreted as indicating a reverse causation. Such an interpretation would argue that the better the performance of the organizations, the more innovative strategies they pursue. The more
innovative strategies they pursue the better will the internal career opportunities be.

The interaction effect would then indicate that the internal career opportunities will be increasingly better, the more innovative strategies the organizations pursue and the better they perform. However, this interpretation seems not to be justified since the main effect of an innovation strategy seems to have been negative or insignificant.

(2) Also the main effect of internal career opportunities appears to be insignificant. Thus it would also seem unjustified to argue that the better the organizations do financially, the more career opportunities there are and to the extent that the organizations are also pursue an innovation strategy, it further increases the career opportunities.

(3) Thus it could seem that there is a true interaction effect such that the higher innovation strategy an organization pursues, the more the internal career opportunities will affect performance.

(4) Thus, this interpretation would indicate that the performance of the organization does not directly influence career opportunities. It is only organizations which do well financially and focus on innovative strategy which also offer better career opportunities.

Delery and Doty tested a configurational hypothesis in terms of a fit defined as the closeness of the organization's employment system to the one ideal type employment system "that was most appropriate for the ideal strategic type most similar to the organization's strategy". This definition and operationalization was
based on developments of Miles and Snow's theory of generic strategies. This is really a test of internal alignment combined with external alignment. However, they received no support for this.

They also tested a configurational fit hypothesis related to a continuum of combinations of hybrid employment systems and hybrid strategies. They received no support for this either. The difference between these two tests was that in the latter also the strategy variable was allowed to vary on a continuum and the ideal employment system variable was calculated on the basis of a fit with such a continuum variable. In effect they tested the hypothesis that the similarity in, on the one hand the proportional deviation from one of two polar opposite ideal type employment systems, and on the other hand a corresponding proportional deviation from one of two polar opposite ideal type strategies should predict performance.

After all, we have to allow for the possibility that correctly conceptualized maximally effective HRM systems do not have a sufficient influence on organizational performance. Becker an Huselid reported support for an internally and externally integrated configuration of High Performance Work Systems in their multi-industry sample. In addition to their separate analyses of external and internal fit, Becker and Huselid went on to perform a cluster analyses through which they were able to identify four different clusters, measured by the scores on the items in both the Implementation Alignment and HRM System indexes. In this way they arguably explored the effects of internal and external alignment in combination.
Becker and Huselid claim that in their cluster analysis "[f]irms are sorted into groups that use a common mix or bundle of HRM practices". But we still have to remember that this "common mix or bundle" refers to what has been measured. On the one hand the variation captured is related to how extensively the organizations on average have adopted different sets of the HRM practices identified by Becker and Huselid's operationalizations. On the other hand the variation captured is related to how effective HRM managers on average perceive the utilized.

HRM practices to be in addition to the perceived degree of existence of certain behaviors and processes related to the top management and the HR department. The operationalizations of the relevant HRM phenomena are not easy to develop in a satisfactory manner.

Becker and Huselid themselves conclude that "the cluster analysis results strongly supported our hypothesis that the performance effects of HRM are attributable, in part, to complementarities within the HRM system, as well as the "fit" with a supporting - organizational logic. However, Guest and Conway identified HRM practices only in terms of whether they existed in the organizations or not. They then "classified responses as reflecting either high or low HRM policy priority by separating those above and below the median number of practices that employees reported".

Market Mechanisms

Keenoy recapitulates traditional concepts like 'collective bargaining', 'unions', 'personnel management', 'interests', 'employment protection', 'pluralism', 'conflict'. All of
these are obviously important concepts but pluralism, conflict and collective bargaining cannot be considered ends in themselves. The "movement" of HRM and the arguable positive potentials within it faces us researchers with the possibility, and in particular the need, to consider what might be alternatives or complementarities to the above characteristics and their consequences for individuals.

However, Keenoy sees little positive potential and points to a re-imagination of the "socioeconomic and organizational life to facilitate, promote and legitimize the purifying effects of the 'market mechanism' in all its various guises.

This ideological project(ion) is associated with a 'new' set of 'normal science' linguistic images relating to employment regulation (e.g. 'flexibility', 'deregulation', 'performance', 'quality', 'customer', 'individualism', 'commitment', 'non-union', 'competition')... Analytically, [the] "linguistic turn" has engendered a significant shift of emphasis. The employment relationship, having been a structural (pluralist) relationship is being reconstituted as an astructural (unitary) relationship. We have also seen a parallel shift of focus away from internal employer-employee relationships characterized by endemic competition...'people-management' is being re-imagined as (human) 'resource-management'. ".

The "ideological projection" mentioned by Keenoy above is clearly ideological in the sense that the current notions of global capitalism, competition and world trade are ideological. Given these, most of the above "linguistic images" connected to the ideal of HRM try to describe tools and phenomena which at least in some form seem to be of relevance in todays organizational world. The
ideas of employment security, employee development, satisfactory pay and benefits, better communication and appraisal discussions, employee influence and autonomy as well as the general idea of pursuing commitment also have another side than the one implied by Keenoy.

In so far as these ideals can be theoretically promoted and pursued in practice, they seem to fly in the face of the self-evidency or givenness of the extreme affirmation of the "purifying effects of the 'market mechanisms'" within the HRM movement. The way in which strategic soft HRM taken seriously is contradicting negative associations of the 'market mechanism' as a producer and distributor of employees is: It emphasizes a complex and integrated form of competence and motivational development within organizations, properties which cannot at least in any simple way be bought in the market.

Keenoy claims that given the

"ideological spin, there is no inconsistency in HRM embracing the logic of the market while - at the same time- 'valuing' its human resources. They are valued for their 'resourcefulness' (and what that costs) not their 'humaneness' (and what that might deserve). ".

Jacques argues that:

"[t]oday, managerialist writing has treated the human more or less solely as a capital 'resource', and failed to engage the hard questions of power and voice that are increasingly necessary in order to be even instrumentally effective as a profit producer. Similarly, but conversely, most critical writers reject out of hand the idea that the human be thought of as a capital resource. While this is admirable from a certain perspective, such romantic Humanism prevents engagement with the dominant language of
the workplace in which, like it or not, 'human capital' and 'human resources' are representations of the worker one must be able to deploy in order to interact with, and influence, the web of power relationships structuring the workplace".

In line with this we have tried to develop a conceptualization which at least to some extent lets us pursue the compatibility of the "humanistic" and the "human capital(istic)" points of views. In particular, the conceptualization is intended to be sensitive to the assumption that employee's engagement, influence and some other attitudes are "increasingly necessary [for organizations to consider] in order to be even instrumentally effective as a profit producer".

Some organizational contexts seem to offer more fruitful ground for strategic soft HRM to flourish. It seems important that researchers make an effort to develop models which capture any possible negative as well as positive empirically detectable consequences it might have in different contexts. To the extent that organizations practice soft HRM only at a verbal/rhetorical level, a proper conceptualization of HRM should detect consequences of this.

Also Guest and Hoque argue that,

"we should be developing frameworks and dimensions which allow us to study aspects of employment relations and human resource management without distinctive reference to the union issue".

However, in line with Keenoy, Guest also claims that

"[In wider society, in some respects the conditions are being recreated which led to the growth of trade unionism a century ago]."
Guest refers to the UK but his point has arguably greater generalizability. Also Hancock argues that

"[I]f one thing seems to have increasingly come under threat from [the] 'new style managerialism', it is the contract of employment...[This contract] appears to have become increasingly undermined as the legal/rational foundation of social relations within contemporary work organization..."

Even where it could be argued that some form of organizational citizenship may be emerging based upon a new from of contractual relationship...it is more likely to revolve around an elite core of employees at the expense of a relatively disenfranchised periphery, with this largely female, low-skilled and part-time labour force left unable to exercise choice or freedom of participation within this brave new organizational lifeworld".

There should evidently be a proper legal context which defends employees against abuses and more or less extraordinary events. At present, this is not a problem to the same extent in the Nordic countries as it perhaps is e.g. in the USA. A proper balance of freedom and legal requirements in this area is a difficult issue. It will remain outside the present thesis. HRM and in particular strategic soft HRM concerns mutual benefits of investing much more in employees than any such legal requirements are likely to dictate.

With reference to HRM, Keenoy goes on to claim that

"...when managers 'rightsise' the organization, it is, by definition, an entirely 'positive' act in tune with 'the market'."

Here we are faced with rhetorical arguments from an opponent to HRM about 'rightsizing' being a 'positive' act through and through without taking any context into
consideration. It is rhetorically implied that continuous layoffs would have positive effects on long-term commitments of employees and supporting serious efforts to build a competent human resource. Keenoy's argument (consciously) conceals or downplays the argument that in the long run the humaness and resourcefulness are at least to some extent dependent on each other.

This is of course the debatable assumption that strategic soft HRM embodies. This idea still needs to be critically developed and tested in different contexts. That would increase the chances for well justified beliefs concerning these issues. The assumption is of course more likely to be true in contexts of knowledge intensive organizations where the "human resources" have more bargaining power. In other contexts labour unions could well take up the themes of (strategic) soft HRM.

However, such efforts would arguably in todays world gain considerable momentum only to the extent that empirical research can convincingly show positive individual as well as organizational effects of something like strategic soft HRM. Humanity is still only learning, increasingly on a global scale, to cope with an accelerated capitalism. There is an increasingly inevitable truth in the claim that employees are part of "perilous journey" where no-one is "safe". What it inevitably means is that human beings (again in western industrialized societies) are more widely in danger of being treated as resources which can be disposed of when ineffective.

These increased pressures are arguably less the fault of HRM and more one of the questionable consequences of global capitalism. At least Marx's romantic idea of non-exploitation has arguably to be given up. This idea, i.e.
"The assimilation of social labour to the model of autonomous activity in the sense of creative self-realization could derive a certain plausibility at most from the romantically transfigured prototype of handicraft activity..."

As we see it, the problem with Marx's more general idea of exploitation (related to surplus value) is the very evaluation of the value of the work done by different categories of stakeholders. This problem arises as soon as we acknowledge that the world is not a simple world of (generalizable) equally productive active workers and passive capitalists and that it is very difficult to fix the value of any labour to the amount or some fixed notion of qualitative aspects of input in a system of production.

The problem is also complicated by the fact that how we distribute any generated capital seems, as an empirical fact, to affect the vitality and (material) well-being of societies in complicated and still insufficiently known ways. The difficulty of determining the value of different types of input by different stakeholders is of course solved in more or less capitalistic societies by treating it as largely a function of supply and demand, albeit still in a complex combination with different political decision making processes.

Disregarding explicitly marxist ideas about exploitation, the idea of (strategic soft) HRM is of course not a development away from the more straightforward idea of exploitation in terms of 'getting the most out of employees'. Rather it seems to be (as people management arguably always has been) an attempt to alter the conditions under which such exploitation takes place. HRM is intra-organizationally trying to increase the value of the workforce supply. Whether HRM ameliorates the conditions of exploitation and/or merely intensifies them is a debatable question.
However, to criticize HRM per se for intensifying work, we argue, would seem to be to bark under a small branch of the right tree. Depending on the kind of HRM, it could also be to bark under the wrong tree. Although there certainly seems to be a complex interaction, it seems to us to be the capitalistic system which largely drives employee management forward.

If we distance the possibility of non-exploitation in the above more straightforward sense, then the question of exploitation can be approached (at the manifest level) as an empirical phenomenon. It can be viewed as empirical in the sense of how employees react to rewards, influence, competence, employment security etc "under the rule of HRM".

That it is not an empirical phenomenon in an 'empiricist' atheoretical sense is evident in terms of the common accusation that "bourgeois studies..., in accepting the face value of workers' responses to surveys and interviews, disregard their conditioning by the underlying 'objective' structure of productions relations".

It is evidently such conditioning which different critical social constructivist accounts of social phenomena try to come to grips with. However, there are intensified methodological problems (but a priori no impossibilities) in justifying any accounts along the lines of "false consciousness". Such attempts have to explain away or (re)manipulate large parts of the manifest empirical world, instead of relying on it as providing empirical data. The general problem seems, however, still to be the pragmatically plausible available alternatives for organizing societies.

Both the problem of taking employees' perceptions for granted and the question of a differentiation between
employees with different bargaining power are well described by Hancock. He offers an eloquent critical interpretation of a "new style management" along the following lines:

[the new style managerialism or 'clan' model] subsumes the individual within an artificially imposed and instrumentally oriented collectivity, which is itself premised upon an artificial and narrowly constructed concept of ancestral or familiar duty...

[the] priority placed upon 'symbolic means' as the key to the cohesion of organizational life suggests the apparent decline of the legal/rational basis of authority which, as Weber noted, is so characteristic of a modern and, implicitly, democratic society...it increasingly appears plausible that organizational employees are being re-absorbed within what is indeed a haze of medieval-like symbolic mysticism...

the requirements of flexible, technology-driven organizations have produced the need for a neo-feudal version of the (male) vassal class [in the form of core employees], with incentives such as company health care, housing and profit sharing schemes, and even a 'job for life' as implied by 'promises' of no voluntary redundancies, increasingly resembling the efforts of feudal lords to ensure the loyalty of their key vassals through the bestowing of honours and, later, life-long fiefdoms...Driven by...instrumental imperatives, [the new style management]...seeks to manipulate individual subjectivity as a means of continually engineering what are now viewed as prerequisite levels of 'normative consent' within the (post)modern work-force...what is at stake here...is a new state of dependency".

This is one of the bleak pictures of the context of HRM which receives further relevance in terms of the arguments offered by Bauman. Although HRM, as we
have defined it, is not identical to this 'symbolic management' it would probably be painted by much the same brush by Hancock. As we argue, the means of 'symbolic level' managerialism are not in themselves reproachable, it is the ends of this managerialism which are in question. These difficulties in turn are due to the current apparent lack of viable politically and socially plausible alternative theoretical landscapes which could offer a counter-force to global capitalism.

The ends of 'the new style managerialism' and those in general dictated by the competitive struggle should however have to comply with some reasonable ethics. To the extent that Hancock's description is even close to being wright, this is a clear challenge. Conditioning by some form of symbolic communication is inevitable in any social action and it is a technique which organizations, and HRM in particular, are involved in deep up to their necks.

Capitalism (in some form) promises a relatively better future for all. Despite its recent "victory" more and more people arguably tend to have become sensitized to the precarious and perilous nature of it. Even without marxist arguments, the utopian character of capitalism would seem to have vanished, to all but some of its most forceful protagonists. The normative dispute with reference to what is left of capitalism's promise (and alterations of this and alternative promises) is likely to continue despite some rather speculative claims as to the end of history.

The most serious problem for the HRM discourse might slowly arise from a cultural-existential critique inspired e.g. by Foucault concerning the ways in which characteristics of modern business society in various
ways constitute us as human beings and/or the broader history of such constitution. Future public discussion, experiment, experience and critical interrogations will or can only help to decide upon the extent to which this "way of life" is existentially and/or culturally desirable and/or optional relative to what sacrifices. This seems ultimately to be an issue for democracy to decide, albeit with the help of critical thinking and interrogations. Foucault's notion of power/knowledge does nothing in terms of grounding one critique or another.

Power/knowledge is (increasingly) everywhere but has to some extent always been there. There can be interesting things to say about its working during different time periods. But as there are good reasons to give up the idea of an essence of man/woman as well as an essence of anything else, there is no way of opposing some power/knowledge structures without further arguments. These questions will be ethical-political-pragmatical. They have to be broadly contextual and consider a complicated array of consequences of different "choices".

Mitroff has argued that:

"choices for the future cannot be deduced from economic data or from abstract measures of organizational functioning".

"The ethical justification of the market rests on the value we place on autonomous individualism - the right of the individual to freely exercise choices as long as those choices do not prevent others from exercising similar rights" (Legge, 1999, p. 260).

This very statement includes the whole complexity of the (abstract) network(s) in which "autonomous individuals" are embedded. Individuals can arguably never be "free to pursue the satisfaction of their own preferences, to have
projects of their own that define their own identity and humanity" within organizations compelled to compete in a capitalistic system. The extent to which individuals can do this outside organizations or by choosing alternative organizations in whose activities they take part is arguably one sign of a civilized society.

Within any organization this freedom is necessarily limited. The idea of strategic soft HRM is that increasing this freedom within any organization and its constraints can be beneficial to both employees and organizations. It may be that it enforces (some) individuals to develop "a workaholic lifestyle before collapsing into 'burnt out'". This is an empirical proposition for which there is some evidence and which research should pursue.

However, it is not a priori impossible that, given a set of contemporary exogenous influences on the pace of work, strategic soft HRM might in fact reduce the amount of stress. Knights and McCabe sensibly argue that:

"despite considerable changes, OI's [organizational innovations] remain both a condition for, and a location for, the exercise of organizational power relations".

There is a complicated picture to be painted of the active political influence tactics of both managers and employees in addition to the subjectivation "tactics" of the more diffused and abstract system of power/knowledge.

When Townley argues that

"the depiction of competencies produces an essentialism, a template of what is desirable behavior", we must not conflate philosophical questions of essence with empirical questions of focus.
Templates of competencies are moving empirical frameworks and need not reflect any "essentialism" at all. Townley's analysis would have gained interest if she had also studied moral values (implicit or explicit) involved in any complementary recommendations or practice. As it stands Townley's argument only says that we have to look at human behavior in a holistic fashion. Thus, in so far as Townley says that competencies per se are not the only thing which matters she points to an important matter. She argues that we need to engage in "an analysis of the power effects of practices, their implications for instilling proximity and distance and their implications for the 'humanity' they create".

There will be a continuous need to do this but the moral issue of proximity and distance concerns much larger questions than the question of HRM. Her analysis of HRM's relation to Nietzsche's "pathos for distance" is adequate to the extent that we are producing ethically indifferent or autonomous vulgar high performance robots. There is nothing in the HRM movement per se which dictates this but it may nevertheless promote it.

One could arguably also largely condemn much of HRM as incorporating such a "heteronomization of morality". However, to some extent, in so far as morality is a social phenomenon, such heteronomization is inevitable, but should not involve the (complete) loss of integrity and other positive moral attributes. As Bos notes, vocabularies] and influence people's discretion with respect to rules, because this enables them to control the organization. In this sense, we may well share Bauman's rather 'agonistic'... view of organizations, but we need not share his pessimism with respect to the outcome of the struggle". 
What this problematic minimally indicates is the importance of the "conversation of mankind" in order not to forget among other things "the truth about certain very important matters, like whom one can kill when". These questions relate to the social nurturing of integrity and tolerance as well as e.g. individuals possibilities to realize positive moral attributes without committing 'suicide' with reference to their employability. "Most people are simply not...autonomous heroes".

Many things are related to this issue, among other things probably some kind of welfare state in order to reduce any employee dependencies on particular organizations. But as Bauman tries to show, modernity and modern bureaucratic organization also incorporates dangers. It is clear that many genres of expression in the conversation of mankind are important. Novels and films, but also critical writing in general, can examine "the ethical trials and temptations that a competitive industrial order always puts in the way of those who want to become its forceful protagonists".

Organizational design and HRM can be used both for morally acceptable and unacceptable purposes. Bauman's argument is that in large modern bureaucratic organizations (and societies) there are increased latent possibilities of immoral behavior. We might argue that as organizational scientists we should try to find a way of creating theories which are sensible to all the potential bad consequences. This is an old moral dilemma which arguably does not have simple solutions.

Bos cites Bauman's argument that the Holocaust was:

"fully in keeping with everything we know about our civilization, its guiding spirit, its priorities, its immanent vision of the world".
Bauman's main points with reference to this possibility is related to the sociological aspects of moral behavior and in particular the morally debilitating force of the combination of authority and the social production of distance. But he admits that he is a long way from offering a "social theory of moral behavior". In short, Bauman presented a challenging analysis of the fragility of our "civilized societies" posing far reaching questions for the global society. However, to the extent that we do not conclude that trying to get anything to function effectively leads to Holocaust, we probably have to continue on all fronts, increasing both effectiveness and ethical sensibility.

We need theoretical arguments, quantitative and qualitative empirical studies in many different forms, including: "Genealogical Analysis..., "Contextualized Theorizing and Re-reading..., "Contextualized Story telling..., Writing (in) the Margins". Human resource management does to a limited set of aspects of organizations and employees' conscious perceptions, which are also always in a larger sense more or less societally constituted.

How HRM functions in this world as we want to try to test empirically whether HRM even in what has been argued to be the most favorable of circumstances can live up to its rhetorics. But in addition, when properly developed, something like our conceptualization could be used to critically explore such investments as well as the rhetorics of the HRM discourse in circumstances which a priori appear less favorable.

Keenoy argues, with a certain degree of irony, that

"it is reported that control has given way to empowerment, supervision has been replaced with
teamwork, participation breeds involvement while alienation is being overcome through financial participation".

Keenoy does not offer any references here but it is no doubt highly debatable to argue that this has taken place to any large extent. The degree to which organizations, in particular organizations having more freedom to choose, have adopted progressive soft HRM related practices seems in fact far from being overwhelming.

"What was thought to be potentially good, the ideal of the HRM-oriented non-union [new] establishment where the interests of the staff were taken seriously, has now become bad or, to the extent that it is a deliberate exploitation of a weak, non-union workforce, even ugly".

But if so much as small steps in the direction suggested in the "reports" refered to by Keenoy can be detected, it seems important for researchers to stand back from the intellectual barricades in order to critically study their possible positive effects for both sides of traditional conflict, employees and employers. Again, if such effects can be detected it might encourage organizations to further pursue them.

Related to the "win-win" perspective Keenoy has argued that empirically HRM practices "are never 'hard' or 'soft': despite appearances, they are always both 'hard' and 'soft" ...and refers to a claim made by Peters that Hewlett-Packard, "having provided employment security, empowered employees to take any problem to supervision (and expect to be listened to), provided a safe and equable working environment, given employees individual performance targets and individual pay rates - in short, having given employees all the support necessary for them to perform at the level required by the
company - then, there are 'no excuses if something goes wrong'.

There is a rhetorical misconception of soft HRM in Keenoys argumentation. Soft HRM can never imply that organizations would not put any pressure on employees nor that organizations are nice places to idly dwell in. Neither does it of course imply that there should be "no excuses". We argue that conceptually soft HRM has to be compatible with a 'performance imperative': This seems to us to be the postulated and hypothesized content of (strategic) soft HRM.

However, it is a both theoretically and empirically complicated question to what extent (strategic) soft HRM is practiced and in fact has positive effects both from the point of view of employees and employers. Even if we attempt to decenter conflict there is no unproblematic, given, "normal-scientific" language for us to adopt.

Keenoy argues that

"[i]n observing, the privileged observer interprets the phenomena in terms of his/her preferred frame of reference. Therefore what is 'seen' [is] an interpretation of the perceived projection".

To the extent that this is true it is of course as true of any research and any research methodologies. Keenoy goes on,

"the observed is also implicated in the observer and, in so far as we act in response to our perceptions, we actively constitute and (re)create HRMism".

This is not necessarily so. As researchers we should always, in a "Popperian spirit", act critically on our interpretations and perceptions, and those of others. This is as true for quantitative as it is for qualitative research
methodologies. Somewhat peculiarly Daft and Lewin argue that "Normal science is concerned with internal validity, experimental rigor, planning, control of confounding variables, and to a lesser extent with external validity. Understanding the phenomenon beforehand makes for clean, tidy research, but the actual knowledge return will be incremental.

However, if normal science means that we can be more or less convinced that we have the right vocabulary for a certain subfield, we do not think that there is room for any normal science in any subfield of organization science. But this does not mean that we therefore have to be revolutionary. Rather, there should be something well established and largely agreed upon before the term revolutionary is even applicable. We would argue that although there are more or less well established uses of certain vocabularies and methodologies in subfields of organization science, these cannot be characterized as normal science.

All organizational scientists are still more or less grouping for relevant concepts, definitions, constructs and operationalizations. This is no state of affairs characteristic of normal science. It seems that when arguing that "the field of organization science has prematurely settled into a normal science mindset", Daft and Lewin equate a hypothetico-deductive approach and a quantitative methodology with "normal science". However, to the extent that we interpret them as claiming only that we are in great need of qualitative studies, and both corroborative quantitative and critical qualitative studies concerning the (external) validity of any concepts used in quantitative research, we can agree with them.
The problems of knowing "just what consequences...statements do and do not have" in social science are of course tremendous. Obviously, apart from all the conceptual problems related to research on HRM, there is a lot going on in many organizations which seems ill suited for a strategic soft HRM approach. What HRM researchers working within empirical social science can do is to try to design studies which test as specific versions of existing or developed models of/arguments about HRM as possible in order to determine what properties of HRM practices can be empirically identified and what consequences they might tend to have.

**HRM and Management Professionals**

According to Gratton, the role of human resource management and human resource professionals is:

- to play an active part in the process;
- to act as a facilitator;
- to encourage participation of all team members in the brainstorming and visioning sessions;
- to act as an advocate for employees to ensure that their voice and concerns are heard;
- to bring the skills of systemic thinking to mapping the relationships, and to have the breadth of business experience lead the analysis of the map (it is critical that the human resource professional understands how the core people processes work and is familiar with the other levers);
- to ensure that the plans for behavioural changes are given sufficient time and resources to take place;
HRD professionals seek to contribute to the welfare of those with whom they interact professionally. In their professional actions, they weigh the welfare and rights of their clients. When conflicts occur among professionals' obligations or concerns, they attempt to resolve these conflicts and to perform their roles in a responsible fashion that avoids or minimizes harm. They are sensitive to real and ascribed differences in power between themselves and others, and they do not exploit or mislead other people during or following their professional relationships.

HRD professionals are aware of their professional responsibilities to the community, the society, in which they work and live, and the planet. They work to minimize adverse affects on individuals, groups, organizations, societies, and the environment. They understand that a healthy economy, healthy organizations, and a healthy ecosystem are intricately interconnected. They apply and make public their knowledge of learning and performance in order to contribute to human welfare.

They are concerned about and work to mitigate the causes of human suffering. When undertaking research, they strive to advance human welfare, human development, and a sustainable future. They try to avoid misuse of their work. They comply with the law and encourage the development of laws and social policy that serve the interests of their clients, the public, society, and the environment. They are encouraged to contribute a portion of their professional time to enhance societal, organizational, human, and environmental development for little or no personal gain or advantage.
HRD professionals provide services, teach, and conduct research only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, or appropriate professional experience. They also provide services, teach, or conduct research involving new areas or new techniques only after first undertaking appropriate study, training, supervision, and/or consultation with persons who are competent in those areas or techniques.

In those emerging areas in which generally recognized standards for preparatory training do not yet exist, HRD professionals nevertheless take reasonable steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients, students, research participants, and others from harm. HRD professionals maintain a reasonable level of awareness of current research and professional information in their fields of activity and undertake ongoing efforts to maintain competence in the skills they use.

HRD professionals rely on research and professionally derived knowledge when making research or professional judgments or when engaging in scholarly or professional endeavors. When HRD professionals provide services to an individual, a group, or an organization, they make available appropriate information beforehand about the nature of such services and, later, appropriate information on results and conclusions.

If HRD professionals will be precluded by law or by organizational roles from providing such information to particular individuals or groups, they so inform those individuals or groups at the outset of the service. Where differences of age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin,
religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status significantly affect the work of HRD professionals as related to particular individuals or groups, HRD professionals obtain the training, experience, consultation, or supervision necessary to ensure the competence of their services, or they make appropriate referrals.

In their work-related activities, HRD professionals respect the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from their own. In their work-related activities, HRD professionals do not engage in unfair discrimination based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by law. HRD professionals do not exploit persons over whom they have supervisory, evaluative, or other authority such as students, supervisees, employees, research participants, and clients.

HRD professionals do not engage in sexual relationships with students or supervisees in training over whom the HRD professional has evaluative or direct authority, because such relationships are too likely to impair judgment or to be exploitative. HRD professionals do not engage in sexual harassment. HRD professionals accord sexual-harassment complainants and respondents' dignity and respect. They do not knowingly engage in behavior that, based on factors such as a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status, is harassing or demeaning to the persons with whom they interact in their work.

If HRD professionals learn of misuse or misrepresentation of their work, they take reasonable
steps to correct or minimize the misuse or misrepresentation. In many communities and situations, it may not be reasonable or feasible for HRD professionals to avoid social or other nonprofessional contacts with persons such as clients, students, supervisees, or research participants. They must always be sensitive to the potential harmful effects of such contacts on their work and on those persons with whom they deal.

An HRD professional refrains from entering into or promising a personal, research, professional, financial, or other relationship with such persons in the following situations:

(1) when the relationship might impair the HRD professional's objectivity;

(2) when it might interfere with the effective performance of his or her function; or

(3) when it might harm or exploit the other party.

Likewise, whenever feasible, an HRD professional refrains from taking on professional or research obligations when preexisting relationships would create a risk of such harm. With appropriate consent and subject to other relevant considerations, including applicable law and contractual obligations, HRD professionals arrange for appropriate consultations and referrals based principally on the best interests of their clients.

When appropriate, HRD professionals cooperate with other professionals in order to serve their clients effectively and appropriately. The referral practices of HRD professionals are consistent with the law. When agreeing to provide services to a person or entity at the request of a third party, the HRD professional, at the
outset of the service, clarifies to the extent feasible the nature of the relationship with each party. This clarification includes the professional’s role (such as organizational consultant, trainer, or evaluator), the probable uses of the services provided or the information obtained, and the fact that there may be limits to confidentiality.

If there is a foreseeable risk of being called upon to perform conflicting roles because of the involvement of a third party, the HRD professional clarifies the nature and direction of his or her responsibilities, keeps all parties appropriately informed as matters develop, and resolves the situation in accordance with these Standards. HRD professionals delegate to their employees, supervisors, and research assistants only those responsibilities that such persons can reasonably be expected to perform competently on the basis of their education, training, or experience, either independently or with appropriately provided supervision.

HRD professionals provide proper training and supervision to their employees or supervisees and take reasonable steps to see that such persons perform services responsibly, competently, and ethically. If institutional policies, procedures, or practices prevent fulfillment of this obligation, HRD professionals attempt to modify their role or to correct the situation to the extent feasible. HRD professionals appropriately document their professional and research work in order to facilitate the provision of services later by them or by other professionals, to ensure accountability, and to meet other requirements of institutions or the law.

When HRD professionals have reason to believe that records of their professional services will be used in legal
proceedings involving recipients of or participants in their work, they have a responsibility to create and maintain documentation in the kind of detail and quality that would be consistent with reasonable scrutiny in an adjudicative forum. HRD professionals create, maintain, disseminate, store, retain, and dispose of records and data relating to their research, practice, and other work in accordance with the law and in a manner that permits compliance with the requirements of these Standards.

As early as is feasible in a professional or research relationship, the HRD professional and the client reach an agreement specifying the compensation and the billing arrangements. HRD professionals do not exploit recipients of services or payers with respect to fees. HRD professionals' fee practices are consistent with the law. HRD professionals do not misrepresent their fees. In their reports to payers for services or to sources of research funding, HRD professionals accurately state the nature of the research or service provided, the fees or charges, and, where applicable, the identity of the provider and the findings.

When an HRD professional pays, receives payment from, or divides fees with another professional other than in an employer-employee relationship, the payment to each is based on the services (consultative, administrative, or other) provided. HRD professionals' reports and statements are based on information and techniques that are sufficient to provide appropriate substantiation for their findings. HRD professional's design, conduct, and report research and evaluation in accordance with recognized standards of research competence and ethics. They keep themselves well informed in both their own and competing paradigms, where those paradigms are relevant to their research, and
they continually evaluate the criteria of adequacy by which research is judged.

HRD professionals plan their research to minimize the possibility of misleading results. HRD professionals consult with institutional review boards and use committees, peer consultations, and other avenues to consider the ethical acceptability of their research. HRD professionals take reasonable steps to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects and other persons affected by the research. HRD professionals who develop and conduct research with tests and other assessment techniques use research procedures and current professional knowledge for test and research design, standardization, validation, reduction or elimination of bias, and recommendations for use.

HRD professionals attempt to identify situations in which particular assessment techniques or norms may be applicable or may require adjustment in administration or interpretation because of factors such as individuals' gender, age, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status. They are careful to interfere with the participants or milieu from which data are collected only in a manner that is warranted by an appropriate research design and that is consistent with research investigation.

HRD professionals conduct research competently and with due concern for the dignity and welfare of the participants. Researchers and assistants are permitted to perform only those tasks for which they are trained and prepared. HRD professionals consult those with expertise concerning any diverse population under investigation or that is most likely to be affected. HRD professionals plan and conduct research in a manner consistent with federal
and state laws and regulations, as well as with professional standards governing the conduct of research, particularly those standards governing research with human subjects.

HRD professionals obtain from host institutions or organizations appropriate approval prior to conducting research, and they provide accurate information about their research proposals. They conduct the research in accordance with the approved research protocol. When obtaining research participants' informed consent, HRD professionals use language that is reasonably understandable to the participants, and professionals then document the informed consent.

HRD professionals inform participants of the nature of the research; they inform participants that they are free to participate or to decline to participate or to withdraw from research; they explain the foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing; they inform participants of significant factors that may be expected to influence their willingness to participate (such as risks, discomfort, adverse effects, or limitations on confidentiality). When HRD professionals conduct research with students or subordinates, they take special care to protect the prospective participants from adverse consequences of declining or withdrawing from participation.

When research participation is an educational course requirement or an opportunity for extra credit, the prospective participant is given the choice of equitable alternative activities. HRD professionals obtain informed consent from research participants prior to filming or recording them in any form, unless the research involves simply naturalistic observations in public places and it is not anticipated that the recording will be used in a manner that could cause personal identification or harm.
HRD professionals inform research participants of any anticipated sharing or further use of personally identifiable research data and of the possibility of unanticipated future uses. HRD professionals provide a prompt opportunity for participants to obtain information about the nature, results, and conclusions of the research and attempt to correct any misconceptions that participants may have.

HRD professionals take reasonable measures to honor all commitments they have made to research participants. When offering professional services as an inducement to obtain research participants, HRD professionals make clear the nature of the services as well as the risks, obligations, and limitations. HRD professionals do not coerce participation in research projects by offering excessive or inappropriate inducements.

HRD professionals do not conduct a study involving deceptions unless they have determined that the use of deceptive techniques is justified by the study's prospective research, educational or applied value and that equally effective alternative procedures (without deception) are not feasible. HRD professionals never deceive research participants about significant aspects that would affect their willingness to participate, such as unpleasant emotional experiences, discomfort, or physical risk.

Any other deception that is an integral feature of the design and conduct of an experiment must be explained to participants as early as feasible, preferably at the conclusion of their participation, but no later than the conclusion of the research. When interpreting research and evaluation results, including computer-generated
results, HRD professionals take into account the factors that reduce the accuracy of interpretations. They indicate any significant reservations they have about the accuracy or limitation of their interpretations.

Unless the nature of the relationship is clearly explained in advance to the person being assessed and precludes an explanation of results (as in some organizational consulting or preemployment screening), HRD professionals ensure that an explanation of the results is provided in language that is reasonably understandable to the person assessed. Regardless of whether the scoring and interpretation are done by the professional, by assistants, or by automated or other outside services, professionals take reasonable steps to ensure that an appropriate explanation of results is given.

HRD professionals retain responsibility for the appropriate application, interpretation, and use of instruments, whether they score and interpret such tests themselves or use automated or other services. HRD professionals do not make recommendations based on data that is outdated or obsolete for the current purpose. HRD professionals comply with these Standards in public statements relating to their professional services, products, or publications or to the field of human resource development.

Public statements include, but are not limited to, paid or unpaid advertising, brochures, printed matter, directory listings, personal resumes or curricula vitae, interviews or comments for use in media, communications via computer technology, statements in legal proceedings, lectures and public oral presentations, and published materials.
An HRD professional who engages others to create or place public statements that promote his or her professional practice, products, or services retains professional responsibility for such statements. In addition, HRD professionals make reasonable efforts to prevent others whom they do not control (such as publishers, sponsors, organizational clients, and representatives of the print or broadcast media) from making deceptive statements concerning human resource development practice or professional activities.

If HRD professionals learn that others have made deceptive statements about their work, HRD professionals make reasonable efforts to correct such statements. HRD professionals do not compensate employees of press, radio, television, or other communication media in return for publicity in a news item. A paid advertisement related to the HRD professional’s activities must be identified as such, unless that is already apparent from the context. HRD professionals claim as credentials for their work only those degrees that were earned from an accredited educational institution.

When HRD professionals provide advice or comment by means of public lectures, demonstrations, radio or television programs, prerecorded tapes, printed articles, mailed material, or other media, they take reasonable precautions to ensure that

(1) the statements are based on appropriate human resource development literature and practice,

(2) the statements are otherwise consistent with these Standards, and

(3) the recipients of the information are not encouraged to infer that a relationship has been established with them personally.
HRD professionals do not fabricate data or falsify results in their publications. If HRD professionals discover significant errors in their published data, they take reasonable steps to correct such errors with a correction, retraction, erratum, or other appropriate publication means. HRD professionals do not present substantial portions or elements of another's work or data as their own, even if the other work or data source is cited occasionally.

HRD professionals take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed or to which they have contributed. Principal authorship and other publication credits accurately reflect the relative professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status. For example, mere possession of an institutional position, such as department chair, does not necessarily justify authorship credit.

HRD professionals discuss with persons and organizations with whom they establish a professional relationship (1) the relevant limitations on confidentiality, including limitations, where applicable, in organizational consulting, and (2) the foreseeable uses of the information generated through their services. Unless it is not feasible or is contra-indicated, the discussion of confidentiality occurs at the outset of the relationship and thereafter as new circumstances may warrant.

HRD professionals have a primary obligation and take reasonable precautions to respect the confidentiality rights of those with whom they work or consult, recognizing that confidentiality may be established by law, institutional rules, or professional relationships. In order to minimize intrusions on privacy, HRD
professionals include in written and oral reports, consultations, and the like only that information germane to the purpose for which the communication is made.

HRD professionals discuss confidential information obtained in consulting relationships or evaluative data concerning clients or students only for appropriate professional purposes and only with persons clearly concerned with such matters. HRD professionals maintain appropriate confidentiality in creating, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing of records under their control, whether these are written, automated, or in any other medium. They maintain and dispose of records in accordance with law and in a manner that permits compliance with the requirements of these Standards.

HRD professionals make plans in advance so that confidentiality of records and of data considered confidential is protected in the event of an HRD professional’s death, incapacity, or withdrawal from the position or consulting practice. Recognizing that ownership of records and data is governed by legal principles, HRD professionals take reasonable and lawful steps so that records and data remain available to the extent needed to serve the best interests of individual and organizational clients, students, or appropriate others.

HRD professionals disclose confidential information without the consent of the individual or organization only as mandated by law or where permitted by law for a valid purpose, such as (1) to obtain appropriate professional consultations, (2) to protect the individual or organization from harm, or (3) to obtain payment for services, in which instance disclosure is limited to the minimum that is necessary to achieve the purpose.
HRD professionals also may disclose confidential information with the appropriate consent of the individual or organizational client (or of another legally authorized person on behalf of the client). When consulting with colleagues, (1) HRD professionals do not share confidential information that reasonably could lead to the identification of a client, student, or other person or organization with whom they have a confidential relationship, unless they have obtained the prior consent of the person or organization or they cannot avoid the disclosure, and (2) they share information only to the extent necessary to achieve the purposes of the consultation.

If confidential information concerning recipients of the HRD professional’s services is to be entered into databases or systems of records available to persons whose access has not been consented to by the recipient, then HRD professionals use coding or other techniques to avoid the inclusion of personal identifiers. HRD professionals do not disclose in their writings, lectures, or other public media any confidential, personally identifiable information that concerns their individual or organizational clients or other recipients of their services and that was obtained during the course of their work, unless the person or organization has consented in writing or unless there is other ethical or legal authorization to do so.

Ordinarily, in such professional presentations, HRD professionals disguise confidential information concerning such persons or organizations so that they are not individually identifiable to others and so that discussions do not cause harm to subjects who might identify themselves in a different or later context. HRD
professionals must seek to ensure that their programs, or those in which they participate, are competently designed and developed, provide proper exchanges and experiences during implementation, meet the requirements of the objectives made by the program, and are accurately evaluated.

HRD professionals responsible for such programs seek to ensure that there is a current and accurate description of the program content, goals, and objectives and that the requirements for completion or implementation are clearly specified. This information must be made readily available to all interested parties. HRD professionals seek to ensure that statements concerning their course outlines or program objectives are accurate and not misleading, particularly regarding subject matter to be covered or final outcomes to be achieved.

Also, the basis for evaluation of progress, successful completion, or successful implementation is clearly identified to avoid false or deceptive statements. To the degree to which they exercise control, HRD professionals responsible for announcements, catalogs, brochures, advertisements, agendas, or proposed interventions that describe workshops, seminars, non-degree-granting programs, degree-granting programs, or proposed deliverables accurately describe the audience and the intended influence or effect on that audience. All fees involved also must be disclosed.

When teaching or training, HRD professionals recognize the power they hold over students, supervisees, and consultees. Therefore, they make reasonable efforts to avoid engaging in conduct that is personally demeaning or harassing, and they do not
engage in conduct that demonstrates a lack of respect for others. HRD professionals do not train or instruct individuals in the use of techniques or procedures that require certification, licensure, or expertise if those individuals lack the required prerequisite preparation.

HRD professionals establish proper processes to provide feedback about individual performance to students, supervisees, or consultees. HRD professionals base the evaluation of students, supervisees, or consultees on each individual's actual performance relevant to the expected requirements. HRD professionals have an obligation to be familiar with this document, other applicable standards, and the application of ethics to their profession. Lack of awareness or misunderstanding of an ethical standard is not itself an excuse for unethical conduct.

If informal resolution appears appropriate and if the intervention does not violate any human rights, attempts to resolve such violations should be made by bringing the issue to the attention of the individual involved. If a conflict arises between these Standards and organizational demands, the HRD professional should consult with a group of peers who will clarify the nature of the conflict, make known their commitment to these Standards, and, to the extent feasible, seek to resolve the conflict in a way that permits the fullest adherence to these Standards.

HRD professionals do not file or encourage others to file complaints that are frivolous and/or are intended to harm the person(s) involved rather than protect the public and the profession. HRD professionals cooperate in ethics investigations, proceedings, and the resulting activities of any professional organization involved with
performance improvement, training, instruction, or learning. In so doing, they make reasonable efforts to help resolve any issue in a violation of ethics. Failure to cooperate is itself an ethics violation.