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CHAPTER 9

What's Next for Green Human Resource Management?

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INTRODUCTION

Scientists worldwide are voicing their alarm over the rapid changes in global environmental conditions (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021), and most of the world's national leaders agree that large-scale change is needed to address the environmental challenges we face. The latest scientific evidence is nothing less than "a code red for humanity. The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable", according to UN Secretary-General António Guterres (United Nations, 2021).

As we witness the world's slow response to environmental degradation and climate change, our moods and preoccupations are shaped by seeing the destruction caused by floods, forest fires, water shortages, and

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plastic debris that despoils our oceans and threatens marine life. Citizens worldwide consider global warming to be a serious issue. Yet businesses are responding at a dangerously slow pace (Slawinski et al., 2017). According to a worldwide survey of 2,422 businesses conducted in 2017, fewer than half of the firms represented ranked environmental sustainability as one of the most important concerns. Indeed, only 16 percent of firms had a board-level committee dedicated to dealing with any sustainability issue (McKinsey & Company, 2017). Even in firms striving to improve their environmental performance, success often materializes slowly, with noteworthy disparities between firms' formal statements and their environmental impact.

Until recently, human resource management (HRM) scholars and professionals have seldom actively participated in the change required to respond to the alarming destruction of earth's natural systems. During the past decade, however, HRM scholars have begun to examine how the effective use of so-called green HRM practices can contribute to the improved environmental performance of organizations. Together, the chapters in this volume provide evidence to support the assertion that green HRM practices are associated with many positive outcomes, including employees' pro-environment work behavior, commitment, and engagement, as well as the environmental and economic performance of firms (Carballo-Penela et al., this volume; Fawehinmi et al., this volume; Jabbour et al., this volume; Yong et al., this volume). As most chapters also note, there are many gaps in our knowledge base that future research should address, including studying green HRM in a much broader range of countries and industries, examining a broader array of specific and/or bundled HRM practices, improving our understanding of the role context plays in shaping green HRM phenomena, and providing evidence accumulated from a more diverse and robust set of methodologies. All of these gaps are worthy of attention and many are understood sufficiently well to generate new types of research.

INDIVIDUAL GREEN HRM PRACTICES, PRACTICE CLUSTERS, AND PRACTICE BUNDLES

Although substantial evidence supports the assumption that green HRM practices are associated with a variety of positive outcomes, our understanding of the role of specific green HRM practices is rather scarce (Carballo-Penela et al., this volume; Fawehinmi et al., this volume).

Scholars and managers alike often rely on intuition when drawing conclusions about the outcomes associated with the use of particular green HRM practices, but intuition is not an acceptable basis for making recommendations to managers and HRM professionals about how to proceed as they strive toward improved environmental sustainability. For example, when firms embrace environmental sustainability as an objective, green training seems to be one of the most commonly adopted green HRM practices (Obereder et al., this volume). But what types of training are most useful? Who should participate in such training? What objectives are most likely to be achieved through employee training? And which types of training and education are most effective for achieving specific outcomes?

Often green training objectives include raising employee awareness and changing employee behavior, but decades of research on the transfer of training from formal programs to use on the job indicate that ensuring training transfer requires supportive structural and interpersonal conditions (Holton & Baldwin, 2003; Tonh  user & B  ker, 2016). To be useful, green HRM scholarship should provide more detailed guidance about how to effectively design, implement, and evaluate various types of green training practices to ensure the needed structural and interpersonal conditions are in place. For example, rather than requiring lower level employees to attend a generic environmental education program, it might be more useful to use behavioral training to change the green behavior of managers and supervisors, who then serve as positive role models. The influence of positive role models can be more effective than making direct appeals and telling subordinates how to (not) behave (Kwan et al., 2015). Subtle behavioral nudges can be more effective than explicit mandates because they support employees' desires for autonomy and self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2015). If supervisory pressures are so great that employees feel their behavior is externally regulated, they might comply to the extent required and observed, but they are unlikely to voluntarily expend additional effort in order to generate creative greening ideas or encourage coworkers to engage in discretionary green workplace behavior. Although perhaps counter-intuitive, the mere behavior of a supportive leader can be more effective than authoritative demands (Eriksson et al., 2015). As these comments suggest, much more fine-grained studies are needed to guide the practice of green HRM.

Green recruitment and staffing practices are also examples of specific green HRM practices that require more research in order to provide

evidence-based advice to HRM practitioners. Logically, HRM professionals might assume that the attractiveness of an eco-friendly employer would be elevated for applicants with stronger pro-environment attitudes and values; therefore, they might target their recruitment efforts to audiences likely to share pro-environment attitudes and values, and/or they might assess environmental attitudes during the selection process. But there is substantial evidence that pro-environment attitudes do not predict actual behavior either on or off the job (e.g., see Andersson et al., 2005; Jackson et al., 2019; Lüft & Hahn, 2014; Norton et al., 2015), which suggests that screening for such attitudes may be a waste of money. On the other hand, green recruiting might be useful for hiring employees who can help their employer identify ways to improve the organization's greening efforts; or, perhaps such employees are more likely to be disappointed by the organization's greening efforts and thus leave the organization sooner, increasing employee turnover rates. Until more evidence is gathered, our scholarly findings provide too little detailed information about how to assess design, implement, and evaluate green recruiting and selection practices to achieve specific outcomes.

Likewise, additional research is needed to understand how combinations of HRM practices can be effectively clustered or bundled together.

As illustrated by Obereder et al. (this volume), a popular approach to identifying clusters of green HRM practices is based on the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework. Their comparative analysis of green HRM reporting suggests that organizations more often report using ability-enhancing green HRM practices and seldom report using motivation—or opportunity-enhancing green HRM practices. However, two shortcomings of the AMO framework as used by many HRM scholars are (a) it is based on untested assumptions about how specific practices influence the specified outcomes, and (b) it assumes that any particular practice is associated with only one outcome. For example, the AMO framework assumes that recruitment, selection, and training each influence the abilities of employees and do not influence employee motivation or opportunities. However, depending on the specific details of each of these practices, they may do more than increase employees' green abilities, for employees with improved abilities may also be more motivated and find more opportunities to use their newly acquired abilities. Acquiring new abilities might also shape their employability and longer-term career projections (Joshi, this volume). Furthermore, firms cannot be certain that employees' green abilities will improve if they design recruitment,

selection, and training practices that focus on attitudes and awareness rather than emphasizing green abilities. In order to provide organizations with guidance that is most likely to achieve the desired results—e.g., improved abilities, motivation, and/or opportunities—more research is needed to determine the specific design elements needed to increase the likelihood that adopting green HRM practices yield the desired outcomes.

To date, the evidence suggests that a complete bundle of green HRM practices (i.e., a green HRM system) can be effective. But adopting smaller clusters of green HRM practices might be more realistic for most organizations as they gradually modify their HRM practices. Practices can be clustered in many different ways, and the question of which practice clusters are most likely to influence abilities, motivation, and/or opportunities have not yet been empirically demonstrated. Theoretically, the AMO perspective asserts that behavioral change requires the simultaneous and complementary use of practices that enhance abilities and motivation and opportunities. In most research, however, each cluster of practices is examined independently. One reason for this might be that too few organizations have mature green HRM systems that incorporate all of the relevant green HRM practices.

In addition, the AMO framework prioritizes organizational objectives, reflecting its application by strategic HRM scholars interested in linking HRM practices to firm performance. Notably absent from AMO-specified practices are those that contribute to a firm's social performance in the community and those intended to improve employee health and safety (cf., Yong et al., this volume). Although such practices are not easily absorbed into the AMO framework, they are used by many organizations pursuing environmental sustainability. Thus, going forward new research that considers alternative and more expansive approaches to identifying and clustering green HRM practices might produce new insights.

TEMPORAL SEQUENCING FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF GHRM PRACTICES

Realistically, few organizations are able to simultaneously change all aspects of an entire HRM system. Instead, they are likely to begin enacting a few changes at a time and gradually roll out additional changes over an extended period of time. But the temporal sequence through which green HRM practices are (should be) aligned with environmental

objectives is a topic that has received very little empirical attention. A study of Brazilian firms with ISO 14001 certification revealed considerable variation in alignment between environmental management and green HRM (Jabbour et al., 2010) even in firms that had publicly declared their commitment to environmental sustainability. In some firms, human resource management practices such as job analysis, selection, performance evaluation, training, and compensation appeared to be unaffected by environmental management efforts. In other firms, the influence of environmental imperatives could be seen across all aspects of the HRM system. Between these two extremes are firms that are in the process of evolving toward a green HRM system, with some green HRM practices in place and others not yet being used.

Among the many green HRM practices organizations are likely to consider when they commit to improving environmental performance are incentives and rewards for achieving environmental goals. Yet the use of incentives and reward for green behavior or green performance seems to be less prevalent than green training (Carballo-Penela et al., this volume; Obereder et al., this volume), which raise the question of "Why?" When combined with appropriate metrics, incentives and rewards are often assumed to be powerful tools for establishing a clear "line of sight" that connects employees' self-interests with organizational interests. However, when implemented poorly, they can encourage employees to take shortcuts or other tricks to achieve short-term results while under-cutting long-term improvement. Incentives tied to environmental performance will not be immune to such abuse. Perhaps HRM professionals believe that the prevalence of such abuse can be reduced by delaying the use of green incentives and rewards until other elements of a green HRM system are in place. If so, which other green HRM practices are important to put in place early in the change process, and why? Empirical evidence that sheds light on the question of how best to sequence the adoption of green metrics, incentives, and rewards vis-à-vis other elements of a green HRM system would be especially useful for practitioners who might otherwise inadvertently encourage irresponsible employee behaviors that damage rather than improve environmental outcomes. For example, perhaps providing opportunities for experiential learning is an effective way to prime employees for subsequent formal training programs, followed by the use of green metrics for feedback only, before ultimately using green metrics when evaluating job performance or offering monetary incentives.

As the preceding comments suggest, green HRM systems are likely to evolve over time, but we know very little about how best to sequence the introduction of specific green HRM elements. More broadly, a consideration of temporal dynamics draws attention to the *processes* through which HRM systems come alive.

FROM STUDYING GREEN HRM CONTENT TO UNDERSTANDING GREEN HRM PROCESSES

To date, most green HRM studies have developed and tested hypotheses that specify how the content of HRM systems is related to organizational or individual outcomes. Like research in other management areas of interest, green HRM research typically relies on survey methodology, and many studies are one-shot cross-sectional investigations. In such studies, the focal question concerns the strength of relationships between green HRM practices (examined separately, as clusters, or as a complete bundle) and outcomes such as employee engagement pro-environment behavior or the environmental or economic performance of firms. Sufficient evidence has now been accumulated to indicate that green HRM practices can be beneficial for organizations pursuing environmental sustainability goals, but such evidence may be of limited value for practicing managers because it provides little guidance about the processes through which green HRM systems evolve. The result is a gap between thinking we know *what* to do but not know *how* to do it. That is, green HRM scholarship has emphasized the content of HRM systems without developing new knowledge about how to effectively and efficiently implement green HRM.

HRM practitioners cannot simply mandate the use of green HRM practices and install a green HRM system fully formed. They must tackle the challenge of interpreting the current situation, negotiate solutions that optimize results on a variety of criteria, monitor effectiveness, and be prepared to continually adjust and improve. Like scholars, practitioners form hypotheses about what is likely to work, but their hypotheses are often about processes for effecting change (Bartunek, 2008). Using their implicit mental maps, they identify potential partners and points of resistance, formulate communication and influence strategies to create the changes they believe will be acceptable as well as being effective, and often face initial failures that require them to retreat and try alternative approaches. Thus, green HRM investigations should produce practical

knowledge that HRM practitioners and other organizational members can apply to achieve improved environmental outcomes.

Contrary to the great concern of so many journal editors who are most eager to publish research that makes new and novel theoretical contributions, practicing managers need answers to questions about how to effectively create change. As organizations increasingly accept environmental sustainability as necessary for success, research is needed to address questions such as: Where in the organization (which functions, at what levels) and beyond (among external stakeholders) are HRM professionals most likely to find willing partners who readily understand the value of aligning HRM with environmental goals, and how can such willing partners be identified? What steps can be taken to establish productive conversations among partners to improve the degree of alignment across the many HRM practices, programs, philosophies, and processes comprising green HRM systems? What obstacles are HRM professionals likely to encounter as they try to achieve alignment, and how can these obstacles be managed?

In a recent effort to provide a framework for research that begins to address questions about the process of HRM greening, Ren and Jackson (2020) introduced the construct of HRM institutional entrepreneurship. Scholarship grounded in institutional theory has many variations (for excellent reviews, see Scott, 1987; Thornton et al., 2012; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996) and is now attracting some attention in the HRM field (Lewis et al., 2019). Central to institutional theory are the constructs of Institutions and institutional logics. Institutions are comprised of rules, norms, routines, and beliefs that enable coordinated action, while institutional logics are the organizing principles associated with the pursuit of goals and the means for achieving those goals (Reay & Hinings, 2009). Unlike formal strategies, institutional logics are often implicit and taken-for-granted; nevertheless, they have powerful influence on the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of organizational members.

Whereas early formulations of institutional theory emphasized the constraints that institutional logics placed on actors, institutional scholars now recognize that even while institutional pressures constrain actors, actors nevertheless can also exercise agency to achieve designed ends—that is, actors can reflect on existing institutional constraints and then use and even change them through their own actions (for a detailed discussion of these debates, see Cardinale, 2018). To do so effectively requires actors

to manage “contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time” (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 382). Known as paradoxes, such contradictions create tension and conflict, yet they also provide opportunities for actors to be entrepreneurial by taking actions to initiate and facilitate institutional change that creates value for the organization.

Using institutional theory as their foundation, Ren and Jackson (2020) described how the actions taken by HRM professionals acting alone or as a group can leverage their skills, knowledge, and social capital as well as their organizations' HRM system to promote a balanced approach to managing economic, social, and environmental (i.e., sustainable) organizational performance. At the heart of their discussion is the recognition that achieving sustainability is likely to require a major shift in an organization's institutional logics, including the HRM philosophy on which rests all elements of its HRM system.

For many organizations, the dominant HRM philosophy emphasizes the role of HRM systems as contributors to the economic performance of firms and too often neglects or undervalues other priorities, including environmental concerns. The emerging sustainability literature promotes an alternative new logic that imbues HRM professionals and systems with responsibility for renewing, regenerating, and reproducing resources needed for long-term survival (Ehnert et al., 2014; Hahn et al., 2018; Mariappanadar & Kramar, 2019). Making the shift from prioritizing the dominant logic of profit maximization to the balanced triple bottom line logic of sustainability or the more radical circular economy logic requires more than simply embracing new values; it involves entrepreneurial behavior. Although HRM professionals (or the HRM department in general) seldom view themselves as entrepreneurs, Ren and Jackson (2020) argued that HRM institutional entrepreneurship can contribute to achieving the changes involved in moving toward sustainability. Importantly, their framework adopts an expanded view of HRM activities to include the process of identifying opportunities, creating a new vision, leveraging resources, and re-institutionalizing new HRM activities—all taking place both within and outside their organization.

Individual agents can drive institutional change to some extent, but in large complex organizations, transforming the organization's HRM system to promote environmental sustainability requires large-scale change. Thus, in addition to the individual competencies needed for people in various HRM roles (see Mariappanadar & Kramar, 2019)

are organization-level capabilities to manage coordinated action among numerous internal and external stakeholders. For example, at Daimler, the German automobile company, being responsive to multiple stakeholders is an important capability that is facilitated by conducting an annual materiality analysis and holding a forum with stakeholders to discuss possible solutions to the issues identified. HRM professionals take the lead in coordinating the annual event, which involves conducting surveys of internal and external stakeholders to identify their key concerns and discussing how to address the concerns that are likely to have the greatest impact. Among the outcomes of this exercise are setting sustainability goals and developing plans for how to achieve them (see Deller et al., 2012).

To date, green HRM research has seldom focused on the processes involved in facilitating or hindering coordination among and between internal and external stakeholders. Yet recent trends indicate that some activists and NGOs are now targeting HRM practices and workplace conditions, providing opportunities for dialogue about how HRM professionals can promote environmental sustainability. By actively engaging with a wide variety of stakeholders, HRM professionals can learn to identify incompatibilities between their organization's institutional logics and the concerns of regulators, supply chain partners, and lobbying groups. Extending their reach beyond their organization's boundaries, HRM professionals can collaborate with peers to establish collective processes for monitoring employees' perceptions of the organization's environmental performance (e.g., see Biga et al., 2012; Jabbour et al., this volume) and establish goals for improvement. Working with supply chain partners to assist them in the design and implementation of green HRM practices, HRM professionals can contribute to their own organization's environmental sustainability while simultaneously promoting learning and development beyond their organizational boundaries. Working with community leaders, they can stimulate and facilitate discussions about their interdependencies and mutual concerns and build confidence in the feasibility of achieving environmental, social, and economic sustainability. For example, HRM professionals can organize the redistribution of surplus food from staff lunches and catered functions to community food banks while simultaneously nurturing conversations between the community and employees thereby exporting moral reasoning and bolstering peer persuasion (Maki & Raimi, 2017). Within their HRM professional communities, institutional entrepreneurs can promote broad-reaching change by forming or joining network groups of other HRM

professionals for the purpose of learning from each other's successes and failures. For example, Jabbour et al. (this volume) describe an initiative of the Brazilian Association for HRM professionals to address specific sustainability topics in their daily activities. If the Association also provides support for their members to exchange ideas and learn from each other, the longer-term outcome could be a change in HRM systems across entire industries or throughout the country (Oliveira, 2013).

This more expansive view of HRM institutional entrepreneurship has direct implications for the design and management of HRM systems, for it clarifies the importance of broad-based capacity building within networked relationships. For future green HRM research, one implication of this perspective is that assessing an organization's green HRM system should go beyond the current focus on the traditional HRM practices (training, staffing, compensation, etc.) to include assessing a complex web of collaboration and communication processes. In addition, when assessing the effectiveness of an organization's green HRM, new measures might be needed to assess the degree of learning and change among other organizations in the larger network of collaborators.

For most business organizations, addressing the environmental concerns of a multitude of external stakeholders is a requirement for long-term survival, and doing so often requires making substantial changes in how business is conducted. Through new research designed to understand HRM institutional entrepreneurship, green HRM scholars can produce practical knowledge for HRM professionals to use for promoting environmental sustainability. Such research must recognize the tensions that arise when an organization attempts to shift from a traditional, business-as-usual mode of operating to a newer triple-bottom-line approach to business. Together the varying perspectives of internal and external stakeholders expose HRM professionals to conflicts that are difficult to resolve. The example of Amazon illustrates the conflicts (Milman, 2020). Amazon's business activities have many environmental consequences due, for example, to its use of packaging and reliance of fossil fuel for their delivery systems. When concerned Amazon employees spoke out about the need for change, the company threatened to fire them and at the same time developed more restrictive policies governing employee voice. In the ensuing kerfuffle, several thousand Amazon employees signed an open letter to the CEO calling for concrete actions such as setting climate goals, canceling contracts with fossil fuel suppliers, and curtailing donations to politicians who deny the reality of environmental

threats. Amazon may eventually reap commercial benefits from this and similar incidents, as the company is gradually adopting more environmentally friendly policies, but it appears that companies such as Amazon need to find more effective approaches to working with their concerned employees.

Surely the expertise of HRM professionals should be useful in meeting such challenges, but more research is needed to improve our understanding of how effective HRM professionals deal with the inevitable tensions and paradoxes they encounter during the process of organizational greening. These include maintaining a strong sense of self while also showing humility; simultaneously staying in, and letting go of control; respecting the value of continuity even while promoting change; and pursuing responsible business practices for both moral and profit-enhancing (Waldman & Bowen, 2016). In addition to answering the technical question of which green HRM practices can be used to implement environmental sustainability strategies, future green HRM scholarship should shed light on the social processes through which organizations establish, modify, and discontinue specific green HRM philosophies, practices, programs, and processes comprising green HRM systems (Jackson et al., 2014).

UNDERSTANDING GREEN HRM IN CONTEXT

Many chapters in this volume acknowledge the importance of taking context into account when studying green HRM (Jabbour et al., this volume; Joshi et al., this volume; Obereder et al., this volume; Yong et al., this volume). One way to improve our understanding of the role of context is to examine it directly—that is to adopt a *comparative approach*. Within the green HRM literature, investigations examining the influence of cultures on green HRM practices have most often adopted the comparative approach to study country differences (e.g., Obereder et al., this volume). Much less attention has been paid to comparing how green HRM systems differ between industries or types of organizations (based on size or age) or how members of demographic groups (e.g., generational cohorts, religions, gender) respond to green HRM practices. For example, in Latin America, green HRM research has been conducted exclusively in the private sector; whether the results are generalizable to public sector organizations is unknown and unknowable due to the

lack of evidence available for making comparisons (Jabbour et al., this volume). In India, green HRM practices that are practical and effective for India's handicraft sector are not likely to be the same as those appropriate for the country's high tech sector; and within sectors, effective green HRM practices may differ depending on the size and traditions of those organizations (Joshi, this volume).

More surprising is that almost no green HRM scholarship takes into account differences in the physical environment or the specific environmental crises that are most salient in particular situations. For example, in some locations, sea level rise may be of greatest concern, while in other areas water shortages or deforestation or waste pollution might be of greatest concern (e.g., see Yong et al., this volume).

Different environmental concerns may, in combination with institutional pressures and cultural norms, have quite different implications for green human resource management. In locations where violent and unpredictable weather events create life-threatening crises, a top priority is to ensure the safety of people and property. For such situations, rapid communication processes, frequent safety training and drills, clearly defined roles regarding who directs employees during an emergency, an understanding of who has the most relevant expertise, employee compliance with behavioral commands, and employees' trust in their managers' concern for them as human beings may be especially important (see Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). For organizations facing more predictable and gradual environmental change, such as rising sea levels or concerns about future water shortages, more deliberative discussions and planning might be appropriate, along with the use of performance goals that target longer-term change, participatory decision-making, and greater reliance on voluntary green workplace behavior.

In addition to emphasizing the social and institutional aspects of situations while mostly ignoring the physical environment, comparative investigations often ignore the dynamic nature of behavior embedded within multi-layered social systems, suggesting the potential value of alternative approaches (e.g., Leung & Morris, 2015; Tung & Stahl, 2018). For example, the *culture-as-context approach* emphasizes the embedded nature of situations such that the salience of cultural values can magnify or lessen cultural influences (Husted & Allen, 2008; Oyserman & Lee, 2008). Thus, in a study of voluntary green workplace behavior involving 19 companies, Jackson et al. (2019) found that both group- and organization-level norms (cultures) influenced individual-level green

behaviors as well as their feelings of organizational self-esteem. That study found that normative influences were not simply additive—they interacted such that organizational norms modified the extent to which leader behavior and group norms influenced the behavior of individual employees. Similarly, an environment-as-context approach would take into consideration the possibility that the specific environmental concerns that are most salient to a business might alter the need for, and the effectiveness of, particular green HRM policies, practices, and processes and their relevance as well as how they are implemented for particular segments of the workforce, such as managers versus lower-level employees, factory workers versus those with direct customer contact, and so on (Joshi, this volume).

Research findings that are presented as if the phenomena under consideration can be understood without regard to context—that is, as if the phenomena are “context free”—is problematic for both advancing theory and practical utility. A more nuanced understanding of how contextual conditions can influence or shape the adoption of green HRM practices and the outcomes associated with green HRM practices may be needed before we are able to offer appropriate and useful advice to HRM professionals working in specific settings.

Contributing to the empirical gap in our understanding of contextual influences is the lack of strong cross-level or “meso” theories to guide integration of knowledge accumulated by “micro” and “macro” sustainability scholars. As Joshi (this volume) illustrated, combining use of the economic and psychological perspectives, provides for very rich discussion of greening processes among India’s handicraft workers. One theoretical perspective that green HRM scholars might find useful when formulating future investigations is normology (a.k.a., the normological perspective).

In a recent effort to develop an integrative model of culture to describe its influence on people’s judgments and behavior, Morris and colleagues used the term “normology” to refer to the “science of norms” (Morris et al., 2015). Relatedly, a recent review of evidence about the effectiveness of interventions for promoting pro-environmental behavior among private individuals (e.g., energy and pesticide use, recycling, littering, water conservation) used a “normological perspective” to understand why interventions that deployed or manipulated social norms effectively altered the targeted environmental behaviors (Farrow et al., 2017). Although research conducted by ecological economists and environmental psychologists typically studies environmental behavior occurring

outside the workplace, the normological perspective is equally relevant to workplace behavior.

Norms refer to regularities in behaviors and expectations shared among members of a social unit, including work groups, organizations, societies, and geographic regions. For example, personal norms are held by individuals, social norms are relevant to small work groups, and cultural norms guide interactions in large entities such as professions, organizations, industries, and countries. Because norms can be found in all social settings, the normological perspective provides a vocabulary and set of principles that are helpful for building multi-level conceptual understandings of green behavior at work (Farrow et al., 2017; Morris et al., 2015).

Besides differences in social referents, the normological perspective draws a distinction between descriptive (“actually do”) norms and injunctive (“should do”) norms. Descriptive norms refer to the actual behavior of a social referent, and injunctive norms refer to a social referent’s (dis)approval of particular behaviors. From shared observations of actual behavior, coworkers make inferences concerning which of their own behaviors are likely to elicit approval or disapproval (Morris et al., 2015)—that is, observations of the behavior of others lead to inferences about how one should behave. For example, when a work group leader engages in environmentally harmful behavior, subordinates are likely to conclude that the leader would tolerate group members doing the same thing, even if the organization’s mission statement espouses pro-environment values. Alternatively, even in the absence of an organization’s pro-environment declarations, a leader’s own pro-environment behavior may be imitated by subordinates who anticipate the leader’s approval of such behavior (see Jackson et al., 2019), even when it is not required as part of their formal duties.

Through norm-guided interpersonal dynamics, leaders can exert “soft” power, independent of their formal authority and the organization’s formal policies. An example of such soft power was described by an employee working at a construction site who was deeply impressed when his supervisor stopped work at the site when it became evident that dust from the site was creating a health hazard. The supervisor insisted that the company provide water sprinklers to reduce the dust, although he knew that doing so would increase the company’s costs (Xing & Starik, 2017); in doing so, he demonstrated his personal pro-environment values and signaled that he would likely approve of subordinates’ voluntary

pro-environment behaviors. For subordinates, using observed descriptive norms as guides to their own behavior is a cognitively efficient heuristic for estimating the likely material and emotional payoffs associated with particular behaviors (Bicchieri & Xiao, 2009). When employees align their own behavior with descriptive norms, descriptive norms can serve as the primary basis for injunctive norms.

Leaders are not alone in their ability to use soft power to promote green behavior; normative cues permeate the social milieu of daily work, and many employees care as much about gaining the approval of peers as well as leaders (e.g., see Kim et al., 2017). An employee's anecdote about what happened when the department's kettle for boiling water broke illustrates how lateral peer relationships matter. When the kettle broke, they ordered a new one through the purchasing department, but this caused a delay in the availability of clean water at the work site while they waited for the new kettle to arrive. Without the kettle, employees began bringing bottled water from home. One colleague who wanted to reduce that un-ecological behavior decided to bring a water kettle from home for the group to use, and set a visible pro-environment example for the entire group (Xing & Starik, 2017). In this example, as several group members began bringing water bottles from home without regard for their ecological footprint, they began to establish a descriptive group norm that was environmentally damaging; by bringing a kettle from home and stimulating discussion about the importance of environmentally friendly behaviors, a single group member could nudge the group toward eco-friendly norms.

As this example illustrates, formal HRM policies and practices are just one element of organizational life; informal interpersonal relationships also can shape employee green behavior and outcomes. Yet to date we have little understanding of the combined effects of the formal and informal elements of work life. On the one hand, green HRM practices such as green task forces and employee participation in hiring processes might be used to influence the frequency and nature of informal interactions among employees. On the other hand, informal interactions such as employee activism might stimulate changes in an organization's green HRM system. Ideally, the formal and informal elements of organizational life can be managed to create a dynamic virtuous cycle that supports an ongoing process of organization greening.

CONCLUSION: WHAT'S NEXT FOR GREEN HRM SCHOLARSHIP

As the chapters in this volume attest, the field of green HRM has seen rapid growth and expansion in recent years. The accumulating evidence seems to indicate that appropriately designed HRM practices and systems can produce positive outcomes for organizations. Yet, many organizations fail to produce the desired economic and/or environmental results. And circumstantial evidence also indicates that many employees are dissatisfied with the progress being made by their employers. As one small example, more than 1000 employees of McKinsey, the global consulting firm, signed an open letter to the firm's top partners calling for more action, including disclosing the carbon footprints of the firm's clients who spew carbon into the atmosphere, stating that "The climate crisis is the defining issue of our generation...Our positive impact in other realms will mean nothing if we do not act as our clients alter the earth irrevocably" (PressNewsAgency, 2021).

In the past, the apathy of some leaders accounted for organizations' slow progress against environmental goals. But as environmental pressures escalate, apathy is being replaced by alarm and the realization that action is needed. HRM scholars and practitioners can and should be proactive members of a concerned community of change agents who facilitate effective organizational and individual responses to our shared environmental crisis. But the complexity of business operations and human behavior make it difficult to conduct research that satisfies both scholarly criteria and the need for information that has practical utility. Faced with so much complexity, how should green HRM scholars proceed? It seems apparent that simply doing "more of the same" will not be sufficient.

One part of the solution might be for scholars to form collaborative networks and coordinate their research efforts. For example, members of a consortium might all agree to conduct their research on companies within a particular industry (e.g., hospitality, or heavy manufacturing, or health care, or government). By coordinating their activities, consortium partners can design projects that are mutually complementary and more efficiently produce information that is usable in a particular business sector. As another possibility, members of a consortium might agree to develop and use a standard approach to measuring green HRM practices and/or processing while studying a variety of different research questions. By coordinating their measurement strategies, consortium partners

could increase the feasibility of aggregating their results and/or make meaningful comparisons between studies with less concern about the confounding effects of different measurement methods. Such large-scale collaborations are rare among management scholars and can be quite challenging for participants, but when they endure over a sufficient length of time, they can provide knowledge that is valuable for the advancement of scholarly understanding as well as managerial application (e.g., see Brewster et al., 2018; House et al., 2004).

As noted in several chapters in this volume, green HRM scholarship is dominated by empirical research that relies heavily on cross-section surveys (for an exception, see Chaudhary & Firoz, this volume), with less use of interviews, longitudinal designs, and mixed methods. Furthermore, the green HRM literature is devoid of field experiments designed to rigorously test the hypothesized effects of green HRM practices or processes. Thus, another part of a future in which green HRM scholarship produces knowledge that is of greater practical use is for scholars and practitioners to collaborate in conducting robust field experiments designed to rigorously assess the outcomes associated with specific interventions (for methodological guidance, see Chatterji et al., 2016; Eden, 2017).

As Spicer et al. (2021) observed, the long-standing efforts of organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) have met with considerable difficulties in achieving their objectives. The path from stating principles to implementing desirable practices has been rough and frustrating. For HRM practitioners, evidence generated through field experiments that consider both the content of green HRM practices and the processes through which they are implemented offers several benefits. Perhaps most importantly, carefully designed experiments are recognized as a superior method for generating valid information, and are the dominant method in many scientific domains. In addition, controlled experimentation is a familiar and accepted business practice in organizations that have embraced the philosophy of continuous improvement. Likewise, field experiments are a familiar business practice in companies that invest heavily in advertising to consumers. In these examples, the goal of experimentation is to look ahead in anticipation of making changes that will affect the future and learn from and about the process through which change can be achieved (Spicer et al., 2021). Looking ahead to the next era of green

HRM scholarship, increased reliance on field experiments for the study of green HRM is an opportunity within reach and worthy of the extra effort required to succeed.

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