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THEORIZING INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS :
THE DOMINANCE OF LOGICAL POSITIVISM
AND THE SHIFT TO STRATEGIC CHOICE

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ABSTRACT

Using a model developed to classify and assess social scientific theories (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), the aim of this article is to chart patterns of industrial relations theorizing. The first part of the article reviews the Burrell and Morgan scheme with respect to its applicability to the social sciences generally. The second part describes a modified version of the model designed to classify theoretical contributions to industrial relations. The next part of the paper reviews the use of significant analytical patterns by industrial relations theorists before and after 1980.

Finally, conclusions about the weight of both older and more recent patterns of analysis applied to industrial relations are offered.

Theorizing Industrial Relations: The dominance of logical
positivism and the shift to strategic choice

by

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Michel Audet

Although industrial relations research has mushroomed in recent decades, many authors have argued that it is theoretically underdeveloped. There has, nevertheless, been a substantial amount of writing which may be classified as theoretical or at least conceptual in nature (Adams 1988). Using a model developed to classify and assess social scientific theories (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), the aim of this article is to chart patterns of industrial relations theorizing. The first part of the article reviews the Burrell and Morgan scheme with respect to its applicability to the social sciences generally. The second part describes a modified version of the model designed to classify theoretical contributions to industrial relations. The next part of the paper reviews the use of significant analytical patterns by industrial relations theorists before and after 1980. Finally, conclusions about the weight of both older and more recent patterns of analysis applied to industrial relations are offered.

A SOCIAL SCIENCES MODEL

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Burrell and Morgan (1979), propose that social theories, to which industrial relations belongs, may usefully be classified in terms of four key constructs or paradigms² based upon assumptions about two dimensions, the nature of society and the nature of social science. Investigating assumptions with regard to the nature of society, the authors discovered that most problems could be described in terms of a regulation versus radical change continuum. Regulation is concerned with the explanation of society in terms of its underlying unity and cohesiveness and the need for order in human affairs. Radical change, however, is mainly concerned with the explanations of deepseated structural conflict, modes of domination and structural contradictions which its theorists see as characterizing modern society. It is preoccupied with the struggle for emancipation from structures which limit and stunt potential; its theorists tend to dwell on the issue of deprivation, both material and psychic; it is concerned with potential rather than actuality, with alternatives to the status quo.

Analyzing the nature of social science, two additional perspectives are identified: objective and subjective. The objective dimension treats the social world as if it were a hard, external, objective reality. Scientific endeavour is likely to focus upon relationships and regularities among the various

² A paradigm is: A universally recognised scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners. "Paradigms", "problematics", "alternative realities", "frames of reference", "forms of life" and "universe of discourse" are all related conceptualisations although of course they are not synonymous (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

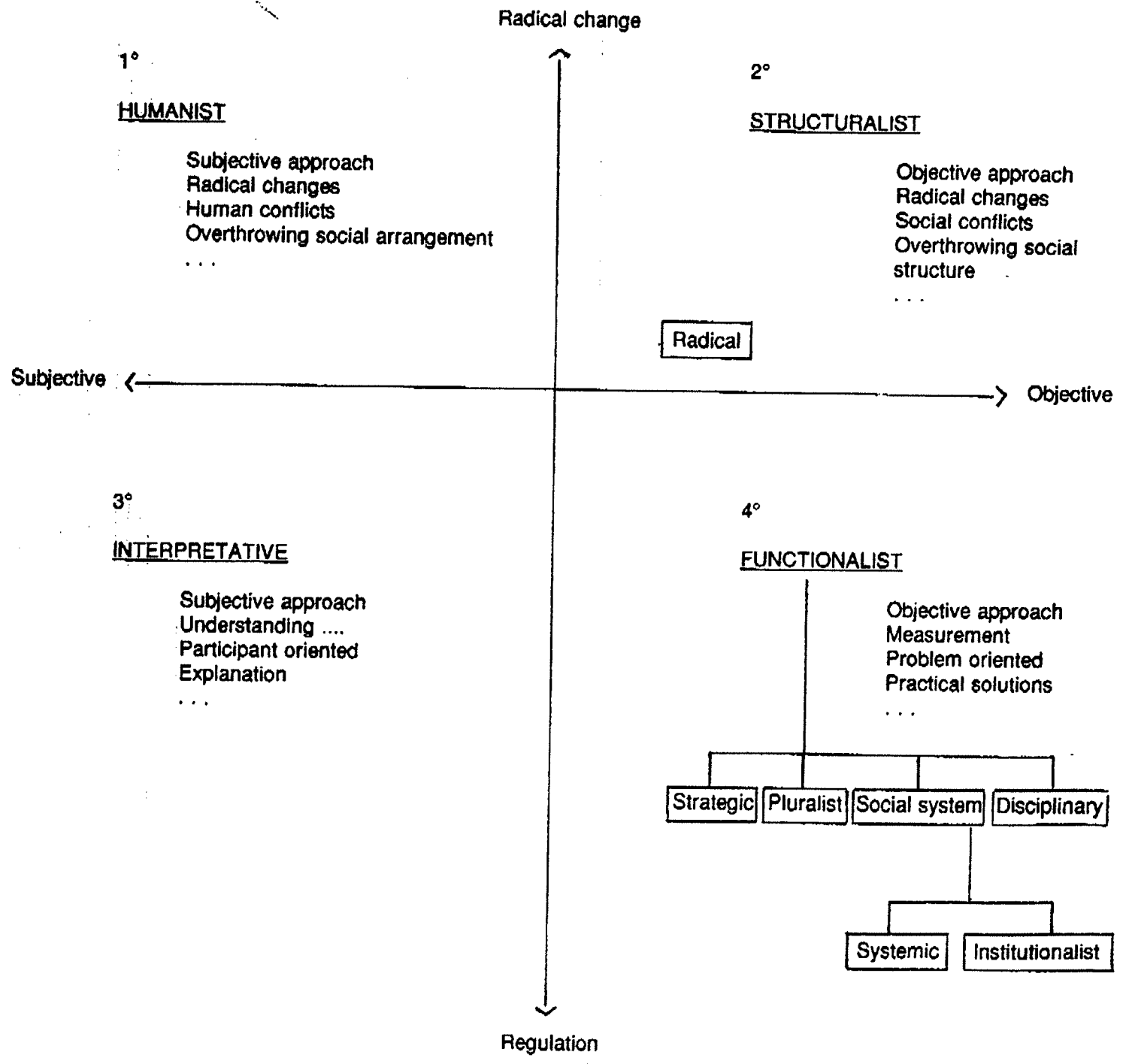
elements which comprise society. The primary concern, therefore, is the identification and definition of societal elements and the discovery of different ways to express the relationships among them. The important methodological issues are thus the concepts themselves and their measurement, and the discovery of underlying regularities. This perspective expresses itself most forcefully in a search for universal laws which explain and govern the reality which is being observed.

The alternative view of the social world stresses the importance of subjective experience in the creation of society. Its main concern is with the way people create, modify, and interpret the world in which they are placed (see the Godard chapter in this volume for additional discussion of this perspective). Emphasis is sometimes placed on the explanation and understanding of what is unique and particular rather than on what is general or universal. In methodological terms this approach stresses the relativistic nature of the social world. A fundamental proposition of those who follow this approach to the acquisition of knowledge is that humans are limited by their senses and instruments in knowing reality. Critics sometimes claim that, rather than being an alternative means of scientific inquiry as its supporters claim, it is instead the antithesis of science.

The relationship between the two dimensions described above, allows the authors to develop a coherent model which yields four different constructs (paradigms): 1) humanist; 2) structuralist;

3) interpretative; 4) functionalist. Table 1 provides an illustration of the links which exist between the dimensions used and the characteristics related by the four main paradigms above.

TABLE 1
PARADIGMS USED IN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL THEORY
(MAIN CHARACTERISTICS)



The humanist paradigm is defined by its concern to develop radical change from a subjective standpoint. This construct emphasizes the importance of challenging the limitations of existing social arrangements. One of the most basic notions underlying this concept is that the consciousness of man is dominated by ideological superstructures (typically learned unconsciously) with which he interacts with perceived objects. The ideological constructs often lead to "false consciousness," which inhibits true human fulfilment. This approach, then, seeks to reveal these false constructs in order to oppose what it sees as inhumane and unethical behaviour.

The structuralist paradigm focuses on the fact that contemporary society is characterized by fundamental conflicts which generate radical change through political and economic crises. It is through such conflicts and changes that the emancipation of individuals from the social structures in which they live is seen as forthcoming. This approach concentrates upon structural relationships within a realistic social world. It emphasizes that radical change is built into the very nature and structure of contemporary society, and seeks to provide explanations of the basic interrelationships within the context of total social formations.

The interpretative paradigm insists on understanding the world "as it is," which means understanding the fundamental nature of problems on the level of subjective experience. It focuses on

explanation within the realm of individual consciousness, on subjectivity within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action. Those who accept this conception, are concerned with understanding the essence of the everyday world. Their analytical framework aims at issues relating to the nature of the status quo, social order, consensus, social integration and cohesion, solidarity, and actuality.

Finally, the functionalist paradigm is characterized by a problem solving approach. It emphasizes the importance of understanding order, equilibrium, and stability in society, and how these are maintained, especially as they bear on effective regulation and control of social affairs.

2. BURRELL AND MORGAN'S PARADIGMS AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS³

Burrell and Morgan stress that "most organization theorists, industrial sociologists, psychologists and industrial relations theorists approach their object from within the bounds of the functionalist construct". They also point out that some authors approach their object from within the bounds of the structuralist concept.

2.1 The Functionalist Paradigm

³ For a discussion about paradigm see E. Guba, (1990).

Burrell and Morgan identified five (5) broad categories of functionalist defined in terms of analytical approaches. In order to give an industrial relations orientation to those categories⁴, we suggest they be identified as follows:

- 2.1.1 Disciplinary (multi or pluri) approach.
- 2.1.2 Institutional approach.
- 2.1.3 System approach.
- 2.1.4 Pluralist approach.
- 2.1.5 Strategic approach.

2.1.1 Disciplinary (multi or pluri) Approach

Those who use this approach in studying industrial relations, assume that labour problems are complexes which must be studied using the methodology of different disciplines such as sociology, law, psychology, economics, history, and so on. This approach was originally developed to integrate those disciplines and build a new theory, one which would have characterized industrial relations. Unfortunately interdisciplinary efforts at theory building did not progress very far. Today more often than not, we encounter the paradox of multidisciplinary approaches which apply one discipline at a time to any given industrial relations topic. The great hope that an industrial relations theory would emerge through synthesis

⁴ According to Burrell and Morgan, the functionalist concept (paradigm) focuses on four (4) categories of theories which are: 1) objectivism; 2) social system with structural functionalist and the systems theory; 3) the integrative theory and the 4) interactive theory.

and breakdown of the conventional knowledge barriers was never realized (see, e.g. Adams in this volume).

2.1.2 Institutional Approach

This approach focuses on documenting the history, origins and development of labour institutions (trade unions, employee's associations, and governmental labour agencies). Its practitioners offer detailed descriptions of labour institutions and the structures and operations which characterize them. As Kochan points out, they are also interested in describing the legal framework and the mechanism they use (such as collective bargaining, mediation) to solve problems. They do the same with current issues confronting practitioners and policy makers, working in the field of industrial relations. Such an approach is, of course, mainly inductive and normative.

2.1.3 System Approach

The concept of system has been defined by many in such fields as biology, physics, psychology, sociology, and so on as a set of components interacting within a boundary possessing the property of filtering both the kind and rate of flow into and out of the system (Peterson, 1971). Craig (1983), applying the system approach to industrial relations, explains that a system consists of four basic components: (1) internal inputs as summarized by the concepts of goals, values, power of the participants (actors) in the system,

which are conditioned by the flow of effects from environmental subsystems (external inputs); (2) the processes or complex of private and public activities for converting inputs into outputs; (3) the outputs, comprising the material, social and psychological rewards employees receive in rendering their services; and (4) a feedback loop through which the outputs flow directly into the industrial relations system itself and also into the environmental subsystem. The outputs which flow through the feedback loop can shape the subsequent goals, values and power of the actors in the industrial relations system as well as influence the actors in other environmental subsystems whose activities may be affected by certain outputs.

Users of this approach first try to build a model which integrates the main components of industrial relations, and to clarify the relationships which exist between the components (variables) of the system. To do so they often use disciplinary approaches (deductive or inductive, statistical, quantitative, etc.) which help them both to develop and test hypotheses.

2.1.4 Pluralist Approach

Under this approach, industrial relations is mainly concerned with the notion that employees and employers bring expectations to their work roles which are partially shaped by societal values, cultural heritage, and experience. Consequently, while workers bring a variety of their own needs and goals to the workplace, they

also accept (to varying degrees) the legitimacy of management's right to organize work and direct the workforce. In such a context, employee - employer relationships are characterized by power relations. Facing that reality, the pluralist approach suggests that there are plural interests in the economy which result in conflicts that need to be resolved within the context of organizations.

This framework applies to both procedural and substantive issues within organizations. Conflict of interest may arise not only over the objective conditions of employment but also over the means used to make decisions at the workplace. Whenever authority relations exist there is a potential for conflict, since differences over the scope and exercise of authority, power and control are bound to arise. Thus, this approach focuses on the fact that industrial relations problems must be studied by taking into account the dimension of opposing forces, and that solution must involve some degree of compromise.

2.1.5 Strategic Approach

The strategic approach originated from doubts expressed over the ability of the system approach to explain recent changes in the labour world of the United States (Dimmock and Sethi, 1986). By proposing this "new" approach, Kochan, McKersie and Cappelli (1984) were not concerned with presenting an entirely new theory of industrial relations or with totally rejecting the system

framework, but with incorporating into the latter a new dimension of strategic choice or an elaboration of the system approach (see, e.g. Meltz in this volume).

With increasing regularity strategic choice has been used in both economics and organizational theory. Although the literature offers various definitions of strategy, as used among game theorists the term stands for the concrete actions or rules for choosing actions in a conflict situation; for some, strategy is "high level" or "long term" planning, while for others it is only the broad gauging of issues of "mission" (Kochan et al., 1984). It deserves to be stated that at both the level of the firm and the level of labour management, the relationship between strategy and structure is dynamic and interactive (Gospel, 1983).

In short, to apply this approach one needs to be familiar with business strategy (decision-making) models which integrate product changes in response to changing consumer demand, capital, technology, labour, etc. (Dimmock and Sethi, 1986).

2.2 The Structuralist Paradigm

Many scholars study their object in the bounds of the structuralist paradigm which means they used a radical approach which maintains that a class struggle is inevitable because the means of production are controlled by the capitalist class. Of course, this way of thinking overlooks the flexibility of the

capitalist system, in which unions have acquired a consumptionist function which bolsters the economy, and therefore are regarded as positive institutions in society (Hameed, 1982). The methodologies used are drawn mainly from sociology, economics, politics and history. For the most part its descriptions are treated dialectically (Zeitlin, 1985).

3. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (OBJECTS)

The different approaches used by industrial relations writers are not applied to the same object. Reviewing the literature, it is possible to indentify six (6) broad definitions of what constitutes "the reality" of industrial relations phenomena. These objects are not totally mutually exclusive, nor are they exhaustive.

- 3.1 Labour relations and collective bargaining.
- 3.2 Rules and the rule-making process.
- 3.3 Resolution of conflict.
- 3.4 Power conflict.
- 3.5 Employment relationships (including both human resources management and labour relations).
- 3.6 Human resources management.

3.1 Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining

Authors of this group maintain that industrial relations include all relationships among organized labour, management, and

collective bargaining as compromised of different labour interests, such as unions, management, and the public. They believe industrial relations as a field of inquiry should focus on protective labour legislation and union organization. They share the basic assumption that conflict of interest does arise out of the nature of capitalism, but that the means for resolving it can come from within the capitalist system, through workers' organizations, union-employer accommodation, and periodic compromises (Kochan, 1980).

3.2 Rules and the Rule-Making Process

This is how Dunlop characterized industrial relations. He argued that the discipline was framed by four basic constructs: 1) actors, 2) environmental constraints, 3) ideology and 4) rules. Dunlop visualized three actors in the system: labour, management and governmental agencies. The environmental constraints were technology, market, budget and the locus of power in the broader social system. Ideology was a shared understanding among the actors. As its product this approach emphasized a set of procedural and substantive rules (Hameed, 1975). Some authors have modified Dunlop's definition of industrial relations. For example, Craig (1983) remarks that these rules are intended to allocate rewards to employees for their services and compensation for the conditions under which such services are rendered.

3.3 Resolution of Conflict

The conflict resolution school takes an essential element of industrial relations, bargaining, as a mechanism for the resolution of conflict. Although conflict between organized labour and management is inherent to the system, it is not regarded as irresolvable. Authors who espouse this point of view regard industrial relations as the study of labour conflict, but within a solvable framework.

3.4 Power Conflict

Conflict is the essence of industrial relations because industrialization generates stratifications which in turn generate tensions among the people stratified. Technology, scale, organization, efficiency, and uncertainty generate tensions of command and subordination, competitiveness, and exploitation at work as well as economic insecurity. Here industrial relations is mainly concerned with power relations (between capital and labor) and the struggle of labour and management to consolidate and strengthen their respective positions in order to influence the structure and working conditions of industrial labour. Here conflict is the key ingredient of industrial relations. This field of study investigates which power positions capital and labour hold in conflict over the structures of work and how far the organized working class has advanced in its struggle for the abolition of a condition which they, as wage-workers are obliged to accept as

dictated by others (Schienstock, 1981).

3.5 Employment Relationships

According to Heneman and Yoder (1965), industrial relations must study employment behavior and relationships at micro and macro levels, individuals and groups (unions), labour marketing, labour relations, personnel management, workers' participation in enterprise decision making, solution of labour conflicts, and so on. It is a discipline which studies human behaviour as a relationship among individuals, both formal and informal and between public and private groups which interact in a work-related environment to reach a compromise over the allocation of rewards (Hameed, 1975). As seen here industrial relations has two major components: labour relations and human resources management, (Boivin, 1989). Adams (1991), goes further by proposing that IR is about much more than labor relations and human resources management. As indicated by research reported in industrial relations publications, it is also about various labor market issues (unemployment, immigration, employment standards) which do not fit into either of those categories.

3.6 Human Resources Management

Some industrial relations writers believe their discipline should focus strictly on the management of human resources, which means all the managerial dimensions of the work pattern of an

individual. This definition of the discipline does not include all aspects of the relationship between organized labour and business but only those aspects relevant to enterprise management.

For these writers industrial relations should be concerned with managerial aspects of the individual as they earn monetary and non-monetary rewards, develop a work-oriented perception and motivation, communicate and participate in the structure and processes of formal and informal groups at work, abide by work regulations imposed both by management and government, and receive various work-related benefits such as unemployment and worker compensation and retraining allowances, and finally retirement benefits (Hameed, 1975).

4. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this section is to provide a description of current analytical patterns and their characteristics in terms of the approaches and objects defined above. Before proceeding with our exercise however, some points warrant further emphasis. First, the approaches we will apply to classify authors are based on broad categories which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The same author may appear in different categories; for example, many authors using the system approach to integrate results of research in industrial relations, also apply disciplinary methodology to study problems in industrial relations. Even if such authors have

been closely associated with one approach, we must recognize that they may also have been identified with another. Second, categorizing authors is always a risky enterprise. Some clearly express how they see industrial relations and what approach they think should be applied to study its various aspects. Others express their point of view less clearly, or are not yet at a point where they can articulate it. Finally, the same author may at different times express different perspectives on the meaning of industrial relations and the right approach to it.

An extensive review of the literature resulted in the identification of 158 theoretical articles, chapters of books and other material (between 1897 and 1988) which significantly focused on "what industrial relations is..." These articles were analysed and categorized in accordance with the analytical patterns identified above.

5. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: THE SIGNIFICANT PATTERNS...

5.1 Disciplinary Approach: Labour Relations and Collective Bargaining

The industrial relations literature reveals that authors who apply the disciplinary approach see industrial relations in terms of labour relations, collective bargaining, and other related topics. Among these writers are Bacharach and Lawler, 1980, 1981;

Barbash, 1979; Behrend, 1963; Chamberland 1951; Chamberland and Kuhn 1965; Commons, 1934; Derber, 1964, 1969; Farnham, 1979; Garbarino, 1966; Laffer, 1968, 1974; Palmer, 1983; Somers, 1969; Strauss and Feuille, 1978; and Winchester 1983.

With regard to this approach we have also identified a group of authors who advocate that industrial relations be defined in terms of employment relationships more broadly, including both labour relations and human resources management (Adams, 1983, 1988; Barbash, 1964; Capelli, 1985; Gosselin, 1967; Sen and Hameed, 1988; Shimmin and Singh, 1973; and Wheeler, 1985, 1986).

5.2 Institutionalist Approach: Labour Relations and Collective Bargaining

The great majority of industrial relations authors who applied the institutional approach to industrial relations illustrated it through the labour relations and collective bargaining framework. This, the predominant framework, was chosen by Allen, 1971; Barbash, 1988; Barkin, 1980; Clark, 1987; Caire, 1973; Deery and Plowman, 1985; Flanders and Clegg, 1954; Gill and Concannon, 1977; Hameed and Sen, 1987; Maurice and Sellier, 1979; Perlman 1928; Richardson, 1954; and Webb and Webb, 1897.

The same analytical approach was sometimes used by others who considered industrial relations in terms of employment relationships (Barbash 1986; Dion, 1986; Hale, 1986; and Hébert,

Jain and Meltz, 1988).

5.3 System Approach: Rules and Employment Relationship

The reviewed literature shows that the system approach was very frequently used (or at least mentioned) as the one which should be applied to industrial relations. As indicated by Schienstock (1981), this approach devotes most attention to how regulation of industrial relations involving employers, employees and governmental agencies is arrived at and how such regulation is adapted to the prevailing contextual situation. An impressive group of authors have applied the systems approach to industrial relations in the framework of the rules concept: Blyton, Dastmalchian, and Adamson, 1987; Cox, 1971; Craig, 1966, 1983, 1988; Crispo, 1978; Dabscheck, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1987; Dunlop, 1958, 1976; Fatchett, 1976; Geare, 1977; Goodman, 1975; Gunderson, 1988; Hameed, 1982; Jain, 1975; Jamieson, 1957; Krislow, 1987; Lumley, 1979; Margerison, 1969; Nayar, 1985; Poole, 1986; Purcell and Earl, 1977; Singh, 1976, 1978; Walker, 1969, 1976; and Wood, 1975, 1978.

Under the same approach, a second group of industrial relations authors (as important as the first) advocated that the key concept of industrial relations was employment relationships. These are Adams, 1991a, 1991b; Anderson, 1979; Anderson and Gunderson, 1982; Bélanger, Petit and Bergeron, 1983; Bemmels and Zaidi, 1986; Blain and Gennard, 1970; Boivin, 1987, 1989; Giles and

Murray, 1988; Hameed, 1975a, 1988; Hanlon, 1985; Henneman, 1965, 1967, 1968, 1969; Larouche and Deom, 1984; Owen and Finston, 1964; Parker and Scott, 1971; Peach, 1985; Shiron 1985; and Weiss, 1980.

Within this approach were distinguished a smaller, third group who regarded industrial relations as the domain of labour relations and collective bargaining. These are Beaumont and Harris 1988; Davidson, 1973; Dominguez, 1971; Gill, 1969; Hartman, 1973; Philips, 1981; and Thompson, 1988.

Finally, within the same approach, we encounter authors interested in studying industrial relations through the resolution of conflict (Croach, 1972; and Eldridge, 1968) and through human resources management (Dolan and Schuler, 1987; Gospel, 1983; and Peterson, 1971).

5.4 Pluralist Approach: Rules and Resolution of Conflict

Among those who applied the pluralist approach to study industrial relations, a first group have done so in the framework of the rules concept. These are authors like Bain and Clegg, 1974; Clegg, 1972, 1979; Flanders, 1968, 1970; and Kerr, 1955, 1960, 1986.

Another group of industrial relations theorists applied the same analytical approach to a different industrial relations content, the resolution of conflicts: Fox, 1966, 1976, 1971, 1974;

Hills, 1988; and Strauss 1977.

Finally, we find theorists who advocated this approach but defined industrial relations in terms of labour relations and collective bargaining: Clegg, 1975; and Kerr, 1978.

5.5 Strategic Approach: Human Resources Management

Scholars who advocate the strategic approach are mainly interested in seeing industrial relations in terms of human resources management. Although they do not deny employment relationship, based on labour relations and human resources management, as the key concept of industrial relations, they maintain that industrial relations theorists and practitioners should concentrate their energy on one of those two elements, i.e. human resources management.

The authors who adhere to this line of thought are Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Quinn Mills and Walton, 1984; Brewster and Connock, 1985; Dimmock and Sethi, 1986; Kochan, 1980; Kochan, Mackersie and Cappelli, 1984; Kochan and Barocci, 1985; Kochan, Mitchell and Dyer, 1982; Kochan, Katz and McKersie, 1986; Lewin, 1987; Reshef and Murray, 1988; Sethi and Dimmock, 1987; Strauss, 1984; Thurley and Wood, 1983; and Timberley, 1980.

5.6 Radical Approach: Power conflict

The radical approach is mainly concerned with a Marxian analysis, and its users claim that industrial relations must concentrate on the study of power conflict. Its supporters are Armstrong, Goodman and Hyman, 1981; Braverman, 1974; Bray, 1981; Burawoy, 1979; Frenkel, 1977; Friedman, 1977; Guille, 1984; Hyman, 1975a, 1975b, 1978, 1979; Kirbride, 1985; Korpi, 1979, 1981; Marsden, 1982; Oostermeyer, 1978; Shalev, 1980; Stark, 1980; Storey, 1983; and Strinati, 1982.

6. IMPORTANCE OF ANALYTICAL PATTERNS

The examination of a number of contemporary theoretical articles on the analysis of industrial relations, reveals a breadth of analytical patterns. This multiplicity becomes evident (Table 2) as soon as one examines the range of issues treated by different authors using different approaches. As shown in Table 2, the most used approach is the system one. Among the different objects authors maintain to characterized industrial relations, the most frequently used by authors are: 1) labor relations and collective bargaining, 2) rules and the rule-making process and 3) employment relationship.

Because our review of literature covers an important period of time (From the Webbs 1897 to Lewin 1987), we thought it would be worthwhile to look at the material from two (2) specific periods (before 1980 and after 1980), to determine whether the authors accorded the same importance to the proposed patterns (Table 3).

TABLE 2

ANALYTICAL PATTERNS USED BY INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS THEORISTS
(N = 158)

Approache Object	Disciplinary (multi or plury)	Institution	System	Pluralist	Strategic	Radical	TOTAL
Labour Relations and Collective Bargaining	17	13	7	2	----	----	39
Rules + Rule-making process	----	----	31	8	----	----	39
Resolutions/Conflict	----	----	2	6	----	----	8
Power conflict	----	----	----	----	----	19	19
Employment Relationship	9	4	23	----	----	----	36
Human Resources Management	----	----	3	----	14	----	17
TOTAL	26	17	66	16	14	19	158

TABLE 3**ANALYTICAL PATTERNS USED BY INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS****THEORISTS BEFORE 1980 AND AFTER 1980**

(N = 158)

BEFORE 1980				AFTER 1980			
RANK	PATTERN	N	%	RANK	PATTERN	N	%
1°	System - Rules	19	23.0	1°	System - Employment relations	15	19.7
					Strategic - Human Resources Management	14	18.4
					System - Rules	11	14.4
					Radical - Power Conflict	10	13.1
2°	Disciplinary - Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining	12	17.0	2°	Institutional - Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining	6	7.9
					Institutional - Employment Relations	4	5.3
					System - Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining	4	5.3
					Disciplinary - Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining	4	5.3
					Disciplinary - Employment Relations	4	5.3
3°	Radical - Power conflict	10	12.0	3°	System - Human Resources Management	2	2.6
					Pluralist - Rules	1	1.3
					Pluralist - Resolution of Conflict	1	1.3
4°	System - Employment Relations	8	9.5				
	Institutional - Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining	8	9.5				
	Pluralist - Rules	7	8.3				
	System - Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining	6	7.0				
	Pluralist - Conflict Resolution	5	6.0				
5°	Disciplinary - Employment Relations	2	2.2				
	Pluralist - Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining	2	2.2				
	System - Conflict Resolution	2	2.2				
	System - Human Resources Management	1	1.1				
TOTAL:		82	100.0			76	100.0

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has examined and evaluated through an analytical social sciences model (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), the different patterns (approaches and objects) which have framed the industrial relations discipline. We conclude that research in industrial relations has devoted and continues to devote greatest attention to the field within the context of the functionalist construct. This means that industrial relations is firmly focused on regulation and is used to approach subject matter from an objective point of view. This construct, according to Burrell and Morgan, is characterized by a concern for providing explanations of the status quo, social order, consensus, social integration, solidarity, need satisfaction, and actuality. It approaches these general concerns from a standpoint which tends to be both realist and positivist.

Within the functionalist category there are several separate, although overlapping, approaches to the study of industrial relations. For several decades industrial relations theorists were

concerned primarily with union-management relations and with collective bargaining. As a means of conceptualizing union-management relations, John Dunlop's IR Systems achieved dominance and it continues to satisfy a large number of adherents. More recently, however, its utility has been challenged.

Kochan and his colleagues from MIT (1984) found it to be deficient in that (according to their analysis which is challenged by Meltz in this volume) it compelled a focus on union-management relations and collective bargaining at the expense of other aspects of labour-management interaction. They found that much industrial relations decision-making in the United States had shifted from the collective bargaining arena to the top management level and to the shop-floor level in both unionized and non-unionized firms. To capture this change they made use of the concept of strategic choice. During the 1980s there was a significant shift within the functionalist category away from the application of the systems model to the use of the strategic choice framework and to the use of the concept of human resource management which more capably captured labour-management interaction at the point of production than did models which highlighted union-management relations.

The shift added vigor to a minority radical-structuralist approach in industrial relations. According to Dimmock and Sethi, "perhaps the most fundamental issue is whether the system theory has any continuing relevance as an explanatory vehicle. In so far that it rests on structural functionalist assumptions it is. . .

largely out of theoretical alignment with the necessary treatment of ideology and power in terms of strategic choice. Notions of systems maintenance appear inappropriate when applied to industrial relations in the face of managerial strategies." (p. 751).

One of the most remarkable finds of our research is the almost total void of subjectivist research on industrial relations. As reviewed by Godard (and briefly in the introductory essay by Adams) in this volume interpretational and humanist research has expanded significantly in the social sciences in recent years. To this point, however, it has made little or no impact on industrial relations.

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