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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

A SHIFT TOWARDS "STRATEGIC CHOICE"? ...

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ABSTRACT

Whatever, we call industrial relations a field of study or a discipline, many authors since Dunlop's Industrial Relations Systems (1958), have tried to develop models and theories in order to integrate the different aspects of this phenomenon. Although, they are not unanimous in defining and describing what should characterize it, the literature shows different and interesting approaches that may be usefully consulted understanding industrial relations. Facing that <theoretical reality> many scholars such as Dabscheck, Gospel, Kirkbride, Blain and Gennard, Walker, Schienstock, Admas, Hameed and Young to mention some of these, have tried to develop an adequate framework which could be used to classify models and theories in industrial relations.

With two different continuums frequently used in the social sciences, the authors of this article try to identify the main paradigms applied to industrial relations. The graphic No. 2 of this article illustrates the different paradigms frequently used by social scientists.

After having reviewed the different industrial relations theories and models, the authors, using the paradigms found in the social sciences literature, situate them on the two continuums shown in graphic No. 3 of the article.

That exercise brings the authors to the following conclusion: The functionalist approach is the one which regroups the majority of scholars interested in publishing about industrial relations theories.

As shown in graphic No. 3, the system approach is the one under which most of the industrial relation theoreticians are found. Although the interactionist approach did not attract so far many authors, it is the newest one which takes into account the strategic analysis in conjunction with industrial relations.

Some of the conclusions

1. There is no one industrial relations theory unanimously accepted by the authors interested in that field of study;
2. Industrial relations in terms of definition, has recently moved from a field of study mainly concerned in collective bargaining and conflict solving mechanisms to the strategies of human resources management;
3. Industrial relations theories are mainly conceptual. There are only few tentatives to operationalize them;
4. Industrial relations theories so far, are not sophisticated enough to generate it's own methodology.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article vise à regrouper et à classer les principales théories en relations industrielles, à partir de l'approche de Burrell et Morgan, concernant les grands paradigmes en sciences sociales et les différentes écoles de pensée greffées à ces paradigmes. Un tel exercice permet, dans une certaine mesure, de mieux situer les diverses théories de relations industrielles dans le contexte des sciences sociales. Cet exercice permet de conclure que:

1. Le paradigme fonctionnaliste est celui qui regroupe la majorité des théoriciens en sciences sociales et en relations industrielles. Sous ce paradigme, on retrouve les écoles de pensée qui s'appliquent aux relations industrielles et qui sont libellées comme suit: l'objectivisme, la théorie du système social incluant le structuro-fonctionnalisme et l'approche systémique, le pluralisme, et finalement l'interactionnisme.
2. Il est actuellement très difficile de déceler chez les divers auteurs qui s'intéressent aux relations industrielles, une vision ou théorie qui leur est commune. On note qu'à l'instar des autres disciplines des sciences sociales, il existe diverses façons, qui sont mutuellement exclusives, d'entrevoir le monde social et la vie des organisations. Chaque approche ou école de pensée à l'intérieur de chacun des paradigmes a des forces et des faiblesses aux fins d'analyse d'une situation propre aux relations industrielles.

Mentionnons que cette vision <pluraliste> des théories de relations industrielles, bien qu'à première vue confuse, peut s'avérer une richesse sur le plan intellectuel aux fins de l'avancement des connaissances dans le domaine. En effet, en conjuguant les avantages des diverses théories, cela nous permettra de mieux connaître et comprendre les multiples facettes du monde des relations industrielles et ceci, à partir des différents cadres d'analyse.

Par contre, certains milieux académiques se sont centrés sur une approche ou école de pensée afin de promouvoir la recherche et l'enseignement des relations industrielles. C'est le cas, par exemple, de l'Université du Minnesota avec l'approche systémique (modèle Minnesota) ou de l'Université de Warwick avec le pluralisme et le structuralisme radical.

3. Quant au contenu des théories de relations industrielles, mentionnons que l'intérêt des auteurs a cheminé des <mécanismes de règlement de conflits>, de la <négociation collective> et de la <création-administration de règles>, vers les problèmes du marché du travail et surtout, vers la gestion des ressources humaines et les initiatives managériales en matière d'organisation du travail.
4. Le conflit et le consensus (participation-coopération) ne sont pas hermétiquement reliés respectivement au structuralisme radical et au fonctionnalisme. Chacune des écoles de pensée traite de ces deux éléments avec une emphase particulière, sans nécessairement se cacher derrière les

mythes traditionnels du conflit structurel et de la théorie du grand soir de Marx ou encore du mariage à l'eau de rose.

5. Des recherches et découvertes récentes en sciences sociales et en relations industrielles remettent en cause le déterminisme à outrance des forces de l'environnement sur la vie des organisations, ce qui a eu pour effet de se tourner davantage sur le volontarisme et la marge discrétionnaire qui se posent aux acteurs pour faire des choix guidant les actions. Cette approche interactionniste que certains appellent <théorie des choix stratégiques> canalise les énergies vers une approche ponctuelle et contingente de la stratégie des acteurs. Cette vague semble du moins déferler beaucoup plus sur les théories en gestion des ressources humaines que sur les théories de <relations industrielles> proprement dites.

6. Dans le cadre retenu pour les fins de cet article, il s'avère difficile, sur le plan scientifique, de faire une évaluation comparative et une critique des théories appartenant à un paradigme en fonction de celles que l'on retrouve sous un autre paradigme. Ainsi, il est difficilement acceptable, par exemple, qu'un <systemiste> critique les travaux de Hyman ou de Braverman par le biais d'un cadre reposant sur les postulats du paradigme fonctionnaliste. L'inverse est également vrai. Une telle analyse comparative des théories, mais en fonction de leur potentiel explicatif et prédictif s'avérerait importante si on veut que les relations industrielles gagnent en crédibilité dans le milieu académique et surtout dans celui de la pratique.

7. Finalement, rappelons que les tentatives d'explication de la réalité propre aux relations industrielles ne sont pas encore assez articulées pour que l'on puisse y greffer une ou des méthodologies particulières. Les sciences <exactes> devront encore fournir les éléments méthodologiques nécessaires à l'investigation des problèmes du monde du travail.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: A SHIFT TOWARDS "STRATEGIC CHOICE"? . . .

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Recently, considerable attention has been devoted to industrial relations. However, although the academic literature in the field has mushroomed since 1970, many authors (Adams, 1988; Kochan, Mitchell and Dyer 1982) have concluded that, in terms of the development of theories and concepts to shape the discipline, little progress has been made.

Although this conclusion reflects an unfortunate reality, when analysing articles offered by succeeding writers to integrate the different aspects of industrial relations, one nevertheless detects some interesting trends.

Using a model (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) often found in the social sciences (Audet and Larouche, 1988), the aim of this article is to chart out the different patterns (defined in terms of objects and analytical approaches) applied to industrial relations to determine whether there are significant shifts among patterns commonly used in the field.

More specifically, the first part of the article is devoted to identify the main constructs (paradigms) applicable to those sciences. The second part describes the dominant constructs (approaches) used in industrial relations. Then, the main industrial relations meanings (objects) are examined. The next part of this paper reviews the significant analytical patterns (approaches and objects) and the use of those

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patterns by industrial relations theorists before 1980 and after 1980. Finally, conclusions about the weight of both the older and the more recent analytical patterns applied to industrial relations are offered.

1. A SOCIAL SCIENCES MODEL

Burrell and Morgan referred to above (1979), propose that social theories, to which industrial relations belongs, can usefully be conceived in terms of four (4) key constructs (paradigms)² based upon different sets of assumptions about two different 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 vs. radical change continuum. Regulation is concerned with the explanation of society in terms of its underlying unity and cohesiveness and the need for regulation in human affairs.

Radical change however, is mainly concerned with the explanations of the deepseated structural conflict, the modes of domination and structural contradiction which its theorists see as characterizing modern society. It is preoccupied with man's struggle for emancipation from structures which limit and stunt his potential; its theorists tend to dwell on the issue of man's deprivation, both material and psychic; it is concerned with potential rather than actuality, with alternatives to the status quo.

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).

Analyzing the nature of social science, two sets of assumptions are identified: objective and subjective.

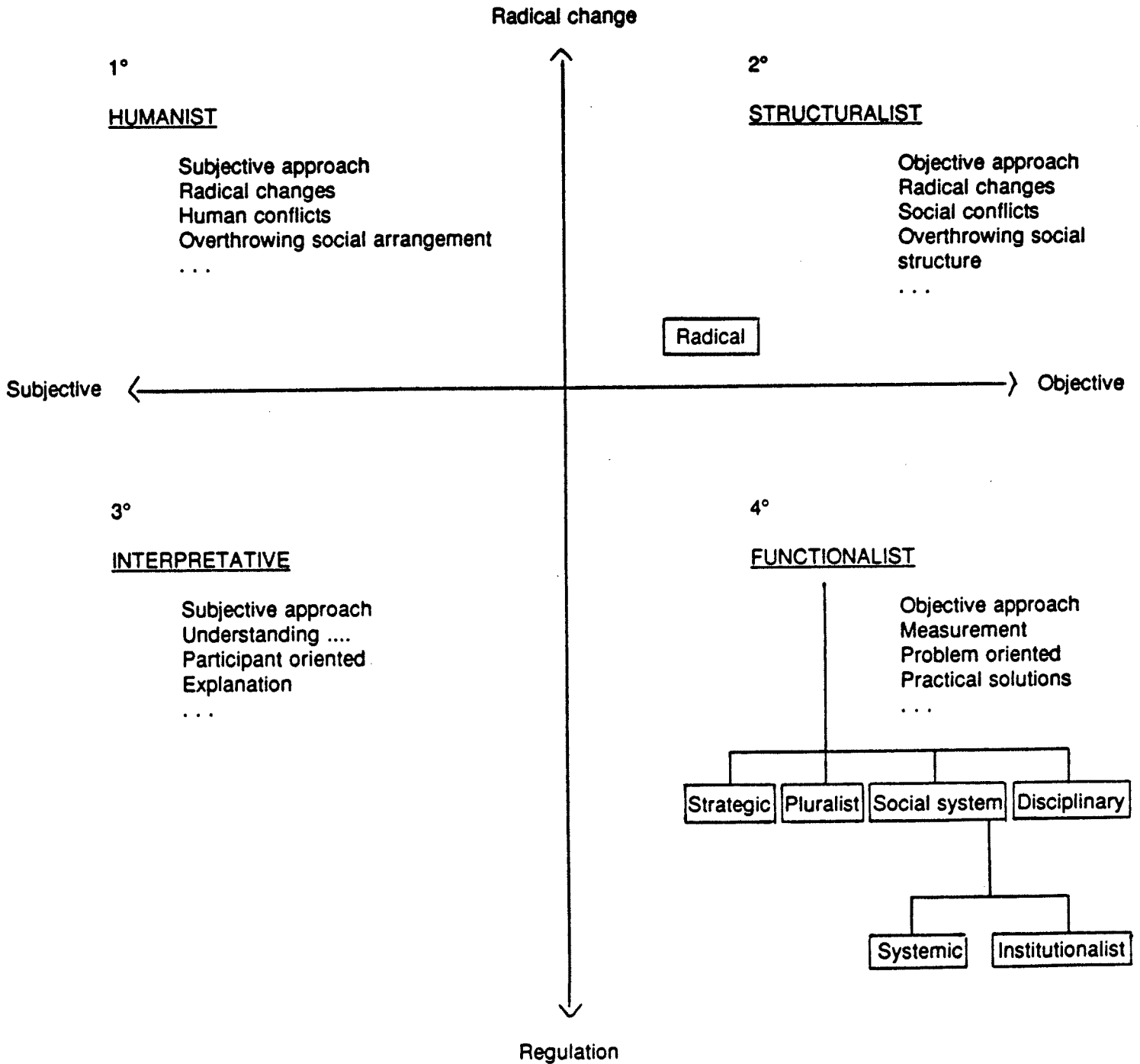
On one hand, the objective dimension treats the social world as if it were a hard, external, objective reality. Here scientific endeavour is likely to focus upon an analysis of relationships and regularities among the various elements which comprise society. The primary concern, therefore, is the identification and definition of these 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 identification of underlying themes. This perspective expresses itself most forcefully in a search for universal laws which explain and govern the reality which is being observed.

On the other hand, the alternative view of the social world stresses the importance of the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the society, focusing upon different issues and approaching them in different ways. Its main concern is with the way the individual creates, modifies, and interprets the world in which he or she is placed. In extreme cases the emphasis is on the explanation and understanding of what is unique and particular to the individual rather than on what is general or universal. In methodological terms this approach emphasizes the relativistic nature of the social world to such an extent that the approach may be perceived as "anti-scientific" so far as the usual ground rules of the natural sciences are concerned.

The relationship between the two (2) dimensions described above, allows the authors to develop a coherent model which yields four (4) different constructs (paradigms): 1) humanist; 2) structuralist; 3) interpretive; 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 a radical change approach from a subjective standpoint. This construct emphasizes the importance of overthrowing the limitation of existing social arrangements. One of the most basic notions underlying the whole of this concept is that the consciousness of man is dominated by the ideological superstructures with which he interacts and which drive him into alienation or "false consciousness," which inhibits true human fulfillment. This construct, then, seeks to oppose what it sees as the inhumanity of society by placing central emphasis on human consciousness.

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 men from the social structures in which they live is seen as forthcoming. The structuralists concentrate upon structural relationships within a realistic social world. They emphasize that radical change is built into the very nature and structure of contemporary society, and they seek 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 the problems on the level of subjective experience. It focuses on explanation within the realm of the individual consciousness, on subjectivity within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action. Those who accept this perception, are concerned with understanding the essence of the everyday world. Their analytical framework, is underwritten by an involvement with 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 problemsolving approach and concerned with providing practical solutions to practical problems. It emphasizes the importance of understanding

order, equilibrium, and stability in society, and how these may be maintained, especially as they bear on effective regulation and control of social affairs.

2. THE BURRELL AND MORGAN'S PARADIGMS AND THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Burrell and Morgan stress that "most organization theorists, industrial sociologists, psychologists and industrial relation 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

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 categories³, we suggest they be identified as follows:

2.1.1 Disciplinary (multi or pluri) approach.

2.1.2 Institutional approach.

2.1.3 Systemic approach.

2.1.4 Pluralist approach.

2.1.5 Strategic approach.

³ 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.

2.1.1 Disciplinary 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, etc. This approach was originally developed to integrate those disciplines and build a new theory, one which would have characterized industrial relations. Unfortunately the interdisciplinary efforts at theory building did not progress significantly. 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 and breakdown of the conventional knowledge barriers was never realized.

2.1.2 Institutional Approach

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

2.1.3 Systemic Approach

The concept of system has been defined by many in such fields as biology, physics, psychology, sociology, etc. 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

systemic 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 the 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 all be affected by certain output.

Users of this approach first try to build a model which integrates the main components of industrial relations, and second they attempt 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 their 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 – i.e. the worker is forced into complying with management's directive.

This framework applies to both procedural and substantive issues within organizations. Conflicts 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 authoritarian 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 respecting which any solutions must involve some degree of compromise.

2.1.5 Strategic Approach

The strategic approach originated from doubts expressed over the ability of the systemic 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 systemic framework, but with incorporating into the latter a new dimension of strategic choice.

With increasing regularity strategic choice is used as an approach in both economics and organizational research. 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.

2.2.1 Radical Approach

The radical approach 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.

3. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (OBJECTS)

The different approaches used by industrial relations writers are not applied to the same aspects of the field, or even the same object. Reviewing their articles, it is possible to identify six (6) broad definitions of what constitutes "the reality" of industrial relations phenomena. These objects are listed as follow:

- 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 (based on both dimensions labour relations and human resources management).
- 3.6 Human resources management.

3.1 Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining

Authors of this group maintain that industrial relations includes 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 should focus on protective labour legislation and union organization. They share the basic assumption that conflict of interest does not 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 Rules-Making Process

This is how Dunlop characterized the 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 government. The environmental constraints were technology, market, and budget. 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 the 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 relationship (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 the conflict over the structures of industrial labour 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 Henneman 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, etc. 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.

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 as he enters the labour market till he leaves it. As many writers recognize, their definition of the discipline does not include the relationship between the labour organization and management.

For these writers industrial relations should be concerned with the managerial aspects of the individual as he earns monetary and non-monetary rewards, develops a work-oriented perception and motivation, communicates and participates in the structure and processes of formal and informal groups at work, abides by the work regulations imposed both by management and by government, and receives 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 exercise was to determine whether there were patterns which characterized industrial relations literature and, if so, what those patterns were. What follows is a description of current analytical patterns and their characteristics in terms of approaches and objects as 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 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.

To realize that "enterprise", 155 theoretical articles, chapters of books and other material (between 1897 and 1988) significantly focusing on "what industrial relations is...", were analysed and categorized in accordance with the significant analytical patterns identified above.

5. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: THE SIGNIFICANT PATTERNS...

5.1 Disciplinary Approach: Labour Relations and Collective Bargaining

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 advocated that industrial relations be defined in terms of employment relationship, 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.

Although the same analytical approach was used by others, they considered industrial relations in terms of employment relationships. (Barbash 1986; Dion, 1986; Hale, 1986; and Hebert, 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 a 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 system 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 Anderson, 1979; Anderson and Gunderson, 1982; Bélanger, Petit and Bergeron, 1983; Bemmels and Zaidi, 1986; Blain and Gennard, 1970; Boivin, 1987; 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 Amstrong, 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 as soon as one examines the range of issues treated by different authors using different approaches.

Because our review of literature covers an important period of time (From Webb 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 2).

TABLE 2**ANALYTICAL PATTERNS USED BY INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS****THEORISTS BEFORE 1980 AND AFTER 1980**
(N = 155)

BEFORE 1980				AFTER 1980			
RANK	PATTERN	N	%	RANK	PATTERN	N	%
1°	Systemic - Rules	19	23.0	1°	Strategic - Human Resources Management	14	18.0
					Systemic - Employment relations	12	17.0
					Systemic - Rules	11	15.2
					Radical - Power Conflict	10	14.0
2°	Disciplinary - Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining	12	17.0	2°	Institutional - Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining	6	8.2
					Institutional - Employment Relations	4	5.5
					Systemic - Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining	4	5.5
					Disciplinary - Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining	4	5.5
					Disciplinary - Employment Relations	4	5.5
3°	Radical - Power conflict	10	12.0	3°	Systemic - Human Resources Management	2	3.0
					Pluralist - Rules	1	1.3
					Pluralist - Resolution of Conflict	1	1.3
4°	Systemic - Employment Relations	8	9.5				
	Institutional - Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining	8	9.5				
	Pluralist - Rules	7	8.3				
	Systemic - 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				
	Systemic - Conflict Resolution	2	2.2				
	Systemic - Human Resources Management	1	1.1				
TOTAL:		82	100.0			73	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 rooted in the regulation dimension 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. This perspective is highly pragmatic and concerned with understanding society in a way which generates "useful" knowledge.

Again at the risk of over simplification, we have been able to identify shifts in the industrial relations patterns between the two periods. The "system approach-rules" pattern still enjoys the greatest attention from industrial relations writers. The "strategic approach-human resources management" pattern, almost non-existent before 1980, is now becoming popular among industrial relations authors, as an attractive way to analyse the discipline.

As Dimmock and Sethi (1986) explain, "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, as we have tried to show, 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". The reviewed literature indicated that the systemic type of analysis was also closely connected to the employment relationships object, as used to define the field of industrial relationship.

The "radical-power conflict" pattern enjoyed the attention of a group of scholars interested in studying industrial relations in the framework of the structuralist construct. These persons did (and still do) consider industrial relations as a discipline which requires a macro or societal point of view in which theory of unionism or union democracy can develop into a concept of social control, exploitation, and radical class consciousness (with the ultimate goal of eliminating capitalism).

The "disciplinary approach-labour relations and collective bargaining" pattern appears to be losing ground in terms of scholarly interest.

As previously shown in table 2, even though industrial relations defined in terms of labour relations and collective bargaining is still a concept of interest, for the intermediate run management is likely to be the prime mover (Strauss, 1984). This construct, according to Kuhn (1970), seems no longer to provide adequate explanations for the phenomena it addresses (Kochan, McKersie and Capelli, 1984). Strauss (1984) asserts that the practice of industrial relations is undergoing fundamental change at many levels. Kochan (1986) go further, argues Capelli, to suggest that current theories are inadequate for describing and explaining new developments. Indeed, there is already some evidence that the research paradigm has begun to change in response to the need for better explanation (Capelli, 1985).

In short, whereas industrial relations is defined in terms of employment relationship which includes both labour relations and human resources management, the approach applied to that content increasingly approximates the strategic one.

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