

Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



Inside the Workplace: Findings from the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey, by Barbara KERSLEY, Carmen ALPIN, John FORTH, Alex BRYSON, Helen BEWLEY, Gill DIX and Sarah OXENBRIDGE, London: Routledge, 2006, 408 pp., ISBN-10: 0-4153-7812-5 and ISBN-13: 978-0-41-537812-3

Anthony M. Gould

Volume 62, numéro 1, hiver 2007

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/015804ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/015804ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (imprimé)

1703-8138 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Gould, A. M. (2007). Compte rendu de [*Inside the Workplace: Findings from the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey*, by Barbara KERSLEY, Carmen ALPIN, John FORTH, Alex BRYSON, Helen BEWLEY, Gill DIX and Sarah OXENBRIDGE, London: Routledge, 2006, 408 pp., ISBN-10: 0-4153-7812-5 and ISBN-13: 978-0-41-537812-3]. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 62(1), 178–180. <https://doi.org/10.7202/015804ar>

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concurrentielles qui s'exercent au niveau des industries et qui transcendent les frontières nationales (thèse des « divergences convergentes »). Le chapitre 6 présente les résultats de l'enquête menée auprès des gestionnaires seniors des services RH dans les sièges sociaux des grandes entreprises japonaises et américaines. Bien qu'elle révèle des différences importantes entre les gestionnaires des deux pays – en ce qui concerne spécialement les valeurs en lien direct avec la philosophie de la gouvernance d'entreprise (p. ex., la sauvegarde des emplois versus le prix de l'action) – l'enquête montre également une division entre les gestionnaires étatsuniens privilégiant les valeurs de l'ensemble des parties prenantes et ceux adoptant les valeurs des actionnaires, les seconds détenant une plus grande influence au sein des organisations a constaté l'auteur au passage. En fait, cette division correspond aux deux paradigmes contemporains principaux quant au rôle du gestionnaire de RH, soit le modèle des ressources (*resource-based model*) et celui du partenaire d'affaires (*business-partner model*).

Dans son chapitre de conclusion, Jacoby relève le caractère paradoxal de ses résultats qui supportent tour à tour la thèse de la convergence et celle de la

divergence. Alors que, tel que le prédit la première, les entreprises des deux pays évoluent de plus en plus vers le modèle du marché, les différences nationales subsistent et se creusent même en raison du rythme différent d'évolution, ce qui conforte plutôt la seconde thèse. En regard de ces résultats, la réponse de l'auteur à la question de départ est qu'il existe non pas une seule façon optimale d'organiser les institutions économiques mais plusieurs façons, différentes mais toutes aussi efficaces.

Ancré sur de solides assises théoriques et empiriques, le propos de ce livre apporte une réponse riche et nuancée à la question complexe des liens entre le système de gouvernance d'entreprise et les pratiques d'emploi dans un contexte de mondialisation. Il réjouira cependant ceux et celles qui recherchent des explications plus satisfaisantes que celles véhiculées, par exemple, par les idéologues de la convergence à tout crin. Ce livre s'adresse certainement aux chercheurs s'intéressant à la mondialisation et à ses effets sur les relations industrielles, mais également aux universitaires et praticiens préoccupés quant au futur de la GRH.

PATRICE JALETTE
Université de Montréal

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by Barbara KERSLEY, Carmen ALPIN, John FORTH, Alex BRYSON, Helen BEWLEY, Gill DIX and Sarah OXENBRIDGE, London: Routledge, 2006, 408 pp., ISBN-10: 0-4153-7812-5 and ISBN-13: 978-0-41-537812-3

This book presents research findings about the state of working life and employment relations in Great Britain. It is the fifth in a series and the culmination of several years of collaboration between UK government agencies. A multifaceted methodology is used to prepare WERs 2004. However, the substance of the approach uses employee

and employer surveys, sampling and statistical inference to draw conclusions about British workplaces.

In this critique, I do not give a detailed account of the methods used to produce WERs and resist stating what results are or may mean. Such efforts on my part would not do the book justice. They run the risk of trivializing

a detailed and particularly well thought through piece of work. However, in the book's first chapter there is an excellent discussion of technical considerations about the project's methods. In subsequent sections, a broad range of findings about work and employment are clearly presented, well analyzed and astutely placed in context. In my opinion, which is consistent with the views of many employment relations experts, WERs 2004 maintains a tradition of being the best reference available about aggregate trends in Great Britain's labour force and is far superior to alternatives.

In this review, I confine my remarks to consideration of what the WERs project offers the social sciences generally. As this latter comment suggests, I consider that the project's influence and relevance extend beyond the United Kingdom and the fields of employment relations and work sociology. The initiative embodies perseverance, faithful implementation of a research methodology and, ultimately, excellence in social investigation, the book being a tangible manifestation of these elements. The WERs concept, and the manner of its execution in 2004, gives us more than a comprehensive reference about employment relations. The book fulfils at least two other roles. It is an important example of best-practice for students of social science and early-career researchers. Also, it provides a source of inspiration for those seeking to generate interesting research questions or hypotheses about social phenomena.

The authors of WERS 2004 have accomplished three remarkable things. First, they have improved on earlier versions of the report. The wording of some survey items and the approach taken to analysis and interpretation of data has been enhanced with each successive edition. The original project was ambitious and, as is mostly the case in social research, its methods and

reporting format required some fine-tuning. However the current, 2004, *expose* is superb. It combines well-worded survey items, excellent data analysis, insightful interpretation and, in the final presentation, straightforward written expression. Second, the authors have been able to present an updated picture of working life in Britain. In this respect, many of the 2004 results can be compared with those obtained in previous surveys. Third, the scope of the project has been broadened to include consideration of emerging workplace trends; the impact of globalization and the new economy; and issues which were originally overlooked. Part of this expansion process has included increased emphasis on small workplaces and on gathering data about non-standard forms of employment. These augmentations are sophisticated and accompanied by thoughtful and well articulated rationale.

For those doing social research WERs (2004) is an example of best practice for several reasons. First, survey items are short and unambiguous. They illustrate the difference between a good result and an outstanding one. Their elegance emerges from extensive pre-testing and piloting; reminding us that, in matters of social enquiry, the last 20 percent of the benefit is the hardest won. The approach taken to sample selection and weighting of data is thoughtful and, frequently, minimalist. Where appropriate, results are left to speak for themselves and are presented accessibly and in context. Typically, analysis of data is kept under control. In this respect, it is inconspicuous, not overwhelming the reader or distracting from point(s) being made or a main conclusion. The interpretation of findings is insightful but conservative. Throughout the document, there is a sharp distinction between observation and inference. Readers are mostly presented with a *prima-facie* meaning and then invited to consider possible explanations and/or matters that

may enhance understanding. Sentences are short and concise. Typically a main point about a finding is presented up-front and efficiently unpacked in a coherent and direct manner. Throughout the book, there are many examples of findings being considered in light of other contemporary phenomena such as globalization or the impact of European Union legislation.

An important feature of WERs (2004) is that it entices readers to form hypotheses and/or formulate research questions. Upon first perusal, I found myself considering ways that variables may be correlated or how a relationship could change if certain elements were held constant. The book provides a framework for thinking about classes of connection between issues and gives readers scope to use results to pursue their own enquiries. One reason for its capacity to inspire creative thought about future research questions is the clarity of survey elements. The data which they elicit can effortlessly be borne in mind and considered as later findings are presented.

Modelos de producción en la maquila de exportación. La crisis del toyotismo precario,

sous la direction de Enrique DE LA GARZA TOLEDO, México: Plaza y Valdez, 420 p., 2006, ISBN : 970-722-448-7

Le secteur de la sous-traitance de produits d'exportation est sans nul doute l'un des secteurs d'activités les plus étudiés au Mexique, tant par des chercheurs nationaux qu'internationaux. De façon générale, les recherches disponibles actuellement utilisent surtout la méthodologie des études de cas, ce qui fournit une information abondante sur le sujet, mais ne permet pas de générer des connaissances suffisantes pour analyser les modèles de production présents dans les usines de ce secteur. L'objectif poursuivi dans ce volume vise à combler ce déficit d'information sur les modèles de production au sein des

Overall, the book's structure is logical and written to be interesting and thought provoking. It can be read from cover to cover or, because of its status as a reference, in a piecemeal manner. As was the case with earlier editions, WERs (2004) raises the standards bar for research in the social sciences. However, perhaps paradoxically, it can be understood without extensive training in statistics or research methods. In the last six months I have shown WERs (2004) to PhD students who have been grappling with survey design, data analysis or writing up of results chapters. They have informed me that they found examining the book helpful and, in some cases, the basis for a wholesale rethink of their research direction. Our challenge as readers of WERs (2004) is to continue to find ways of applying its wisdom. We should do this irrespective of where we live or how varied our research agendas may be.

ANTHONY M. GOULD
Université Laval

usines de sous-traitance d'exportation au Mexique en documentant différentes caractéristiques importantes des usines présentes dans ce secteur. Les variables privilégiées par les auteurs incluent notamment les différents niveaux de technologie, le type d'organisation du travail, les relations du travail et la qualification de la main-d'œuvre.

Cet ouvrage, sous la direction de Enrique de la Garza Toledo, présente les données colligées par plusieurs chercheuses et chercheurs dans les usines de sous-traitance de huit États du sud-est mexicain. Toutes les données ont été recueillies en même temps au premier