

## **Alternative Models of Industrial Relations Graduate Programs in Canadian and U.S. Universities**

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### Article abstract

The authors present the debate over whether or not industrial relations constitutes a discipline, and then discuss some of the implications of this debate for the development of industrial relations teaching units and curriculum content. Alternative organizational approaches to graduate-level study of industrial relations in Canada and the United States are broadly characterized as « sovereign Discipline » and « dependent field » models. The authors posit that the teaching model used is a direct reflection of whether or not the field of industrial relations is recognized as a sufficiently independent field of inquiry. Finally, the authors consider some of the factors influencing changes in program content and offer some implications of these factors for the future study of industrial relation.

# *Alternative Models of Industrial Relations Graduate Programs in Canadian and U.S. Universities*

Richard P. Chaykowski  
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*The authors present the debate over whether or not industrial relations constitutes a discipline, and then discuss some of the implications of this debate for the development of industrial relations teaching units and curriculum content. Alternative organizational approaches to graduate-level study of industrial relations in Canada and the United States are broadly characterized as "sovereign discipline" and "dependent field" models. The authors posit that the teaching model used is a direct reflection of whether or not the field of industrial relations is recognized as a sufficiently independent field of inquiry. Finally, the authors consider some of the factors influencing changes in program content and offer some implications of these factors for the future study of industrial relations.*

## ENTERING INTO THE PEDAGOGICAL QUAGMIRE

Promoting the concept of a "model" for teaching industrial relations is itself both risky and provocative, on a number of grounds. First, and perhaps foremost, there remains considerable debate regarding what constitutes

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“industrial relations” as a field or discipline (Boivin 1992; Meltz 1992; Hébert, Jain, and Meltz 1988a; Laffer 1974). Secondly, there are a wide range of university units within which industrial relations is taught, and each unit, with its alternative disciplinary underpinnings, can bring a unique philosophy and perspective to the study of industrial relations (Lewin 1991; Hébert, Jain, and Meltz 1988b; Meltz 1992). These factors have had a considerable influence both on the types of university arrangements within which industrial relations curricula are delivered and on the substance of the teaching curricula itself.

This paper builds directly on the work of Boivin (1992) and Meltz (1992) on the issue of industrial relations as a discipline by exploring the implications of this debate for graduate curricula. First, we present the debate over whether or not industrial relations constitutes a discipline, and then discuss some of the implications of the outcome of this debate for the development of industrial relations teaching units and curriculum content. Second, we wish to broadly characterize the alternative organizational approaches to graduate-level study of industrial relations in Canada and the United States and discuss some of the factors giving rise to the wide variety of programs observed in both countries. We follow Boivin (1992) in not considering undergraduate labour studies programs. We further concentrate our discussion on graduate teaching programs, whereas Boivin (1992) includes undergraduate teaching programs. Finally, we consider some of the factors influencing changes in program content and discuss the implications of these for the future study of and instruction in industrial relations.

## **THE “DISCIPLINE DEBATE” IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

Following Adams (1983: 510), the term “industrial relations” will be taken to refer to the study of all aspects of the employment relationship. Traditionally, the study of industrial relations in North America has recognized the inherent importance of employees, employers, and their organizations, and the broader public, as represented by government(s), jurisprudence, and mass media. Thus, we follow also Meltz (1992) by including both labour relations (or collective bargaining) and human resources management, in addition to labour history, organizational behaviour, statistical methods, labour economics, and labour law in our contemporary concept of industrial relations.

It is important to the current study of industrial relations that the inherent importance of the social, economic and political aspects of the employment relationship was recognized early on by social science scholars with varied disciplinary interests. Consequently, the systematic study of the employment relationship is routinely undertaken in a wide variety of academic disciplines (e.g.,

political studies, history, economics, psychology, sociology, law, management).

This characteristic of the study of industrial relations is important because, today, there remains considerable debate over the issue of whether industrial relations is best taught through the systematic "application" of the theory and empirical methods of such already established fields, or whether industrial relations is properly recognized as a field or "discipline" in its own right (Boivin 1992; Meltz 1992; Hébert, Jain, and Meltz 1988b; Schienstock 1981; Laffer 1974). The resolution of this issue is, of course, intrinsically related to the issue of whether the extant *corpus* of theory and supporting empirical research in industrial relations defines a significantly *distinct* domain of enquiry (Laffer 1974).<sup>1</sup>

These alternative views are critical to understanding the practical issue of why we continue to observe both free-standing industrial relations departments offering full degree programs of study as well as "areas of specialty" in industrial relations offered through non-industrial relations degree programs. For example, the latter case typically occurs in faculties of management (business).

Most business schools offer courses or fields of concentration in industrial relations and human resource management — often through the Master of Business Administration degree. Similarly, departments of economics, psychology, sociology, history, or law, typically offer courses related to some aspect of the employment relationship. It is reasonable to expect that such departments will offer courses related to industrial relations from the established theoretical and methodological (e.g., empirical) perspectives of the discipline, and that such courses will focus on subject matter relevant to the particular discipline. Conversely, free-standing units may be expected, all else equal, to more explicitly adopt what may be referred to as an "interdisciplinary" (Adams 1983; Laffer 1974) or "pluridisciplinary" (Laffer 1974) approach in the context of a broader objective of more extensive studies of industrial relations.

How scholars view the "discipline" issue is therefore likely to be a critical factor in determining whether the study of industrial relations is undertaken as an application of existing, longer-established disciplines, within the functional structure of those units, or rather as an "independent" discipline and thereby provided its own functional unit. For example, Boivin's (1992:

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<sup>1</sup> Several commentators, notably Noah Meltz and Donald Carter, have pointed out that a corpus of theory may be a *sufficient* but not a *necessary* condition for defining a domain of enquiry. For example, many fields of enquiry are applied. The relevant defining characteristic may then be the *distinctness* of the domain of enquiry.

224) observation that separate departments of industrial relations and economics were simultaneously established at Laval in 1943 suggests that at Laval, industrial relations represents a distinct discipline. The industrial relations teaching curricula we observe is therefore partly the outgrowth of how various institutions have dealt with the "discipline" issue.

Recognizing that we observe a wide variety of institutional arrangements in the teaching of industrial relations in North America, the alternative teaching and research arrangements may usefully be organized into two paradigms: the sovereign discipline model and the dependent field model. We offer these two broad models with the caveat that many industrial relations "units" do not match either model precisely.<sup>2</sup> For example, how one chooses to weight various characteristics of units may affect the classification.

### **The Sovereign Discipline Model**

The sovereign discipline model may be defined as the study and teaching of industrial relations as a distinct domain of inquiry in free-standing units. Such units would typically have tenure-based faculty appointments within the unit, and would offer separate degrees in industrial relations. The number of programs in either Canada or the United States which satisfy these criteria is small (refer to Table 1 and Table 2 for examples).

Furthermore, it should be noted that very few of these programs are operating on this model in a pure sense; in most of these units, a number of the faculty are cross-appointed in other units or departments (e.g., schools of business, departments of economics, sociology, etc.). While the programs identified with a sovereign discipline model in Tables 1 and 2 are intended as illustrative, the total number of such programs is nonetheless limited. In Canada, a major candidate for designation as a sovereign industrial relations unit would be Laval, while in the United States a leading candidate would be Cornell.

The major benefit of independent academic industrial relations units is that they offer the prospect of bringing together a critical mass of scholars whose primary research and teaching interests are dedicated to the study of the employment relationship. In turn, such programs are expected to attract students with a similar focus. Taken together, the opportunities afforded by this arrangement are expected to advance the field along several dimensions:

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<sup>2</sup> For example, it has been suggested that the graduate programs at the University of Toronto and Queen's University may best be described as "sovereignty association" models: while both teaching units are independent, they also rely both on affiliated faculty whose appointments are with other departments as well as on courses offered by other units. However, we note that with regard to industrial relations teaching units, this model is not distinctly Canadian.

... there are likely to be more advances in industrial relations theory if there are substantially more faculty members whose total academic commitment is to a department of industrial relations. Second ... the number of courses in industrial relations will be far greater if there are separate departments of IR. (Meltz 1992: 202)

TABLE 1  
Examples of Alternative Canadian Graduate School Models

<i>Sovereign Discipline Model</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Degree</i>
Université Laval <sup>1</sup>	Department of Industrial Relations	MA, PhD
Université de Montréal <sup>1</sup>	School of Industrial Relations	MSc PhD
Université du Québec à Hull <sup>1</sup>	Program in Industrial Relations	MSc
Queen's University <sup>1</sup>	School of Industrial Relations	MIR
University of Toronto <sup>1,3</sup>	Centre for Industrial Relations	MIR, PhD
<i>Dependent Field Model</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Degree</i>
University of British Columbia <sup>2</sup>	Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration	MSc
McMaster University <sup>2</sup>	Faculty of Business (Department of Personnel and Industrial Relations)	MBA, PhD
York University <sup>1</sup>	Faculty of Administrative Studies	MBA, PhD
University of Manitoba <sup>1</sup>	Faculty of Management (Department of Business Administration)	MBA
University of Saskatchewan <sup>1</sup>	College of Commerce (Department of Industrial Relations)	MBA
École des Hautes Études Commerciales <sup>2</sup>	Program in Human Resources Management	MBA, MSc
Université de Sherbrooke <sup>2</sup>	Program in Management of Human Productivity	MSc

Notes: 1. Graduate program in industrial relations.  
2. Graduate program in human resources management and personnel.  
3. The Centre at the University of Toronto technically fails the faculty appointment criterion associated with sovereignty.

Source: Peterson's Guide Inc. 1992. *Peterson's Annual Guide to Graduate Study*. Princeton, N.J.

### The Dependent Field Model

The dependent field model may be defined as the study and teaching of aspects of the employment relationship in units whose primary focus is an

TABLE 2  
Examples of Alternative United States Graduate School Models

<i>Sovereign Discipline Model</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Degree</i>
Cornell University	School of Industrial and Labour Relations	MILR MS PhD
Michigan State University	School of Labour and Industrial Relations	MLIR PhD
University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign)	Institute of Labour and Industrial Relations	MA PhD
<i>Dependent Field Model</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Degree</i>
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Sloan School of Management (Industrial Relations Section)	MBA PhD
University of California, Los Angeles	Anderson Graduate School of Management	MBA PhD
University of Iowa	College of Business Administration (Department of Industrial Relations and HR)	MA PhD

*Note:* Examples of each classification scheme are based on Begin (1988: 468).

*Sources:* Peterson's Guide Inc. 1992. *Peterson's Annual Guide to Graduate Study*. Princeton, N.J. and Meltz, Noah. 1992. "Why Are There Few Academic Industrial Relations Departments?" *Theories, Research and Teaching in International Industrial Relations*. J. Barbash and N. Meltz, eds. Lewinston, NY: The Edwin Mellon Press.

established discipline other than industrial relations. Such units may have tenure-based faculty appointments dedicated to industrial relations, but the number of such appointments would be limited and the faculty may be expected to conduct research and teach in areas other than industrial relations. These programs may offer separate degrees with a field or major area of concentration in industrial relations. The number of programs in either Canada or the United States which satisfy these criteria is large, and are typically found in the broader management science area. Table 1 and Table 2 provide examples of this model.

In considering the unit as a whole, it is intended to bring together a critical mass of scholars whose primary research and teaching interests are not necessarily dedicated to the study of the employment relationship. Similarly, such programs are expected to attract students with a primary focus or interest other than industrial relations. Consequently, relative to the free-standing

units, the opportunities afforded by this arrangement to advance the field are expected to be fewer.

## A COMPARISON OF CANADIAN AND UNITED STATES MODELS

As noted in the preceding section, few North American industrial relations units match the pure sovereignty model. However, in comparing Canada and the United States, the development of free-standing industrial relations units in Canadian universities has been impressive in Québec, but less than sufficient in the rest of Canada. It is difficult to suggest an appropriate basis for comparing the number of such units (e.g., units per capita versus units per number of universities); nonetheless, the size of major free-standing units in Canada, in terms of both faculty and number of students, suggests that perhaps only Québec is on a par with major United States institutions.

In contrast, the number of units matching the dependent unit model in the United States far exceeds the number of such units in Canada. The underlying reason is likely due to a scale effect (in terms of the number of post-secondary institutions), particularly since such units are typically associated with management science units.

Two striking similarities between the Canadian and American experiences remain: first, the aggregate number of free-standing units remains small; and second, the variance in "home-bases" for dependent units remains high. That is, in practice, many industrial relations "sections" or "units" operate within related departments or faculties.

As examples, the industrial relations section at the Sloan School of Management at MIT, the Industrial Relations and Human Resources department in the College of Business Administration at the University of Iowa, and the Department of Personnel and Industrial Relations in the Faculty of Business at McMaster University offer many characteristics which allow them to *approximate* the sovereignty model, but nonetheless match the dependent field model. In contrast, the Princeton Industrial Relations Section is clearly a dependent unit. It offers no degree program in industrial relations. Rather, it functions as a unit of the economics department, has a critical mass of labour economists active in research, and attracts graduate students whose major interest is labour economics.

However, as sub-units of management science programs or an economics department, these examples of industrial relations sections (inherently) have no mandate to form a sufficient critical mass of scholars dedicated primarily to the broader study of industrial relations or to attract students whose primary scholarly interests are centred on industrial relations. Moreover, as Boivin



(1992:226) points out, the industrial relations curriculum content of programs in business administration programs generally do not include all of the key dimensions of the study of the employment relationship.

What accounts for this spectrum of outcomes? The reasons already cited include: the underdevelopment of a theoretical underpinning for the field that would sustain recognition of independent status; and the parallel studies of various aspects of the employment relationship in different established disciplines. Such reasons have suggested to some scholars that industrial relations is best studied with a multi-disciplinary approach, or primarily from the perspective of a single established discipline. This view works against the establishment of independent industrial relations units and ties the teaching curricula to that of the established discipline. These outcomes appear to be reasonably consistent across Canada and the United States.

### Canadian and United States Teaching Curricula

The first issue we wish to raise is whether the teaching curricula of industrial relations programs systematically differ between Canada and the United States. The second issue is whether programs associated with a sovereignty model systematically differ from programs based in disciplines other than industrial relations. While there is no published data that permits a direct test of these questions, there is data concerning the types of industrial relations courses required in graduate programs.

Based on a survey of Master's level degree programs in Industrial Relations (IR) and Human Resources (HR) in the United States, Wheeler (1989: Table 1, 448) finds that over 75% of the programs offered required courses in labour relations or collective bargaining, human resources management, and labour economics, while many programs (over 50%) also required organizational behaviour and labour law. However, Wheeler also finds that relative to IR Master's programs, the emphasis on human resources is greater in Master's programs in HR, and that the converse also tends to be the case. These results are expected.

The emphasis on labour relations/collective bargaining, human resources management, and labour economics, also appears to be the norm in Canadian industrial relations programs. For example, the Master's degree programs at Queen's University and the University of Toronto both require courses in each of these areas. In addition, programs in Canada and the United States may also require courses in empirical methods, labour law and industrial relations theory. The MIR program at Queen's University requires a course in labour law, but the University of Toronto program does not.

Taken together, the core curricula appear to be relatively similar across Canada and the United States at the Master's level. Importantly, we expect that in programs that match the dependent field model, the teaching curricula will be tied to that of the established discipline. For example, Lewin's (1989) survey of the industrial relations content of United States MBA programs suggests that although the course content can vary substantially, industrial relations is not emphasized as a core area. Further, we expect MBA programs to emphasize the management (human resources) dimension, economics departments the labour economics dimension, and so forth. This issue of the status of the relative emphasis of Canadian IR teaching programs is an area with which the Canadian Industrial Relations Association may wish to concern itself.

With regard to PhD programs, the course availability, content and requirements are highly variable. Two comments help to explain this observation. First, the total number of PhD programs in free-standing industrial relations programs in North America is small.<sup>3</sup> Second, the curricula may have as much to do with the complement-size and composition of faculty in the unit, which may vary greatly, as with the structure of graduate school rules regarding course requirements and comprehensive examinations.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL MODELS FOR THE FUTURE STUDY AND TEACHING OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

The argument forwarded most recently by Meltz (1992) — that the establishment of free-standing industrial relations units will further the development (research and teaching) of industrial relations — presupposes that industrial relations is appropriately viewed as a discipline, or at the least as a field of substantial importance in its own right. However, as Adams (1983: 526) has noted, most programs of study in industrial relations do not yet fulfil the promise of an integrated course of study, largely because they remain a “confederacy of competing paradigms.” According to Adams (1983), there is no unifying framework that draws together a common ground among the labour market, political, management, and institutional schools. However, it may well be argued that this is a formidable challenge for a domain of enquiry such as industrial relations, which is dedicated to occupying something of a “middle” ground among social science perspectives.

Indeed, to the extent that some subset of the domain of industrial relations is taught as part of a related and existing field, the theoretical inconsistencies noted by Adams (1983), can be avoided. That is, given the limited

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<sup>3</sup> There are approximately 10 PhD programs, but the count may be greater or lesser depending upon the definition of industrial relations and free-standing used.

development of theory and empirical research in industrial relations, it is reasonable that scholars have recognized the value of maintaining industrial relations studies as a part of management science, economics, history, etc., in order to base teaching on established theoretical underpinnings. In such units, the result will necessarily be industrial relations studies dominated by the perspectives of the units in which the curriculum resides. These issues appear to be common across Canada and the United States.

In the long run, we would expect that an increase in the number of independent industrial relations units, and a reduction in the variance in programs, would be observed as the study of industrial relations develops a sufficient theoretical and empirical *corpus* to gain broader recognition as a discipline.<sup>4</sup>

There is certainly one major emerging development that promises to alter the character of programs that match both the sovereignty and dependency models. The emerging importance of human resource management and personnel in firms, and the commensurate decline of unions, has been associated with the transformation of United States industrial relations over the past decade (Kochan, Katz, and McKersie 1986). In turn, there is a growing recognition that this transformation has shifted scholarly interest toward human resources management, and increased marketplace demand for expertise in this area of the employment relationship; the result has been a shift in emphasis in teaching curricula toward human resource management in the United States (Lewin 1991; Begin 1988; Francke 1988).<sup>5</sup>

It is impossible to raise the issue of the emerging importance of human resource management in industrial relations curricula without simultaneously comparing management science and labour studies to industrial relations. For example, throughout this paper, "schools of business" and "faculties of management" have been referred to as if they represented an established discipline. The study of management science is interdisciplinary and arguably lacks a unifying body of theory and supporting empirical research, and yet the same "discipline debate" that hounds industrial relations scholars does not seem to disturb management scholars. Furthermore, the sovereign discipline model is quite accepted and indeed appears to be the successful model for the teaching and study of management science.

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4 This point puts aside the practical but critically important issue of internal political and competitive considerations in the decision to dedicate resources to new areas of enquiry in university institutions.

5 By the early 1990s, it would appear that there has been a shift in interest and emphasis toward human resource management in teaching curricula in industrial relations programs, but it is not yet clear whether there has been a similar shift in research interest and activity. For example, as unions decline in North America, research may begin to concentrate on international labour relations.

It is difficult to explain why the sovereign discipline model should have emerged as the preferred model for the teaching and study of management science, while no clear consensus has yet emerged for the teaching and study of industrial relations, even though both fields are described as multidisciplinary and lacking a unifying paradigm. Sociological theories of institutionalism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Tolbert and Zucker, 1983) and resource dependence (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) suggest some hypotheses. One hypothesis is that schools of business, as a result of their pro-management stance, have greater access to the financial and information resources located in private organizations. This fact enables schools of business to establish themselves as independent units within universities. Scholars in the field of industrial relations, by virtue of their attempts to remain neutral or present a more balanced view of labour-management conflicts and debates, do not have access to large amounts of money or data, and therefore it has been more difficult to establish independent units in industrial relations.

Another hypothesis is that the emergence of independent units is essentially the outgrowth of political processes. Thus, in essentially anti-union environments, only independent schools of business will emerge, whereas in environments that are more accepting of labour organizations, or more concerned with the rights of employees, one might observe more independent schools of industrial relations and perhaps labour studies, in addition to schools of business. Therefore, the decline of unions in the U.S. might be an indication of union animus and consequently predict the future decline of the sovereign teaching model in industrial relations in the U.S.

Clearly, the Canadian system of industrial relations, although undergoing substantial changes, has not been transformed in the ways experienced in the United States (Chaykowski and Verma 1992). While there is no systematic evidence on this matter, it appears that interest in human resources management has been heightened in Canada, but that it has not yet wrought substantive changes in industrial relations curricula. Thus, given the likelihood that unionism will remain an important feature of Canadian society, the prospect is for the content of Canadian and American industrial relations curricula to undergo some divergence in the coming decade. Consequently, identifying the pressures on teaching curricula in Canadian industrial relations and examining the ways in which these pressures effect change in curriculum content is an important area worthy of systematic study.

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### *Différents modèles de relations industrielles dans les programmes d'études graduées au Canada et aux États-Unis*

Adams (1983) définit le terme *relations industrielles* comme étant l'étude de l'ensemble des éléments de la relation d'emploi affectant les employés, les employeurs et leur organisation, la population et le gouvernement, la jurisprudence ainsi que les médias de masse. Cette conception moderne des relations industrielles comprend les relations du travail, la gestion des ressources humaines de même que l'histoire du travail, le comportement organisationnel, la statistique, l'économie du travail et le droit du travail (Meltz 1992).

Il y a de nombreuses facettes à la relation d'emploi (sociale, économique et politique) et, conséquemment, elle fait l'objet d'étude systématique de la part de plusieurs disciplines (e.g., la science politique, l'histoire, la psychologie, la sociologie, le droit et la gestion). Cette caractéristique des relations industrielles est particulièrement importante du fait que l'on s'interroge de nos jours si les relations industrielles devraient s'enseigner en recourant systématiquement aux théories et aux méthodes de recherche développées par les disciplines déjà existantes ou encore en les considérant comme une véritable discipline (Boivin 1992; Meltz 1992; Hébert, Jain et Meltz 1988b; Schienstock 1981; Laffer 1974). Ces différentes visions sont préliminaires à l'examen et à la compréhension de la coexistence de départements indépendants, offrant des programmes d'études complets, avec des champs de spécialités en relations industrielles offerts dans le cadre de d'autres programmes (i.e., par les facultés d'administration).

Les approches organisationnelles relatives aux programmes d'études graduées au Canada et aux États-Unis peuvent se résumer à deux modèles, l'un disciplinaire et l'autre dépendant. Dans le premier cas, on considère l'enseignement et la recherche en relations industrielles comme un domaine distinct, dans des unités indépendantes, tandis que dans le second, l'enseignement et la recherche des éléments de la relation

d'emploi sont abordés dans des unités dont l'intérêt premier est une discipline établie, autre que les relations industrielles.

Peu d'unités de relations industrielles en Amérique du Nord suivent parfaitement le modèle disciplinaire. Néanmoins, dans une comparaison canado-américaine, on constate que l'émergence de ces unités a été impressionnante au Québec, et moins que suffisante dans le reste du Canada. Le nombre d'unités correspondant au modèle dépendant est, par contre, beaucoup plus grand aux États-Unis qu'au Canada. Un effet d'échelle expliquerait cette différence, surtout que de telles unités sont souvent rattachées aux écoles d'administration.

Deux similitudes sont frappantes entre le Canada et les États-Unis. D'abord, le nombre cumulé d'unités universitaires assimilables au modèle disciplinaire est faible ; ensuite, la variance des unités faisant parties des autres disciplines est élevée. Ces résultats sont attribuables à la fois au sous-développement d'un cadre théorique propre aux relations industrielles, pouvant contribuer à renforcer son statut de discipline indépendante, et aux études parallèles menées par les différentes disciplines sur la relation d'emploi.

À partir d'une enquête portant sur les programmes de maîtrise en relations industrielles et en ressources humaines aux États-Unis, Wheeler (1989 : Tableau 1, 448) a observé que plus de 75 % des programmes offraient des cours en relations du travail, en gestion des ressources humaines et en économie du travail. Il a également constaté que l'accent sur les ressources humaines est plus grand dans les programmes de maîtrise en ressources humaines que dans ceux en relations industrielles et que les programmes canadiens de maîtrise en relations industrielles mettent aussi l'accent sur les relations du travail, la gestion des ressources humaines et l'économie du travail. Dans l'ensemble, les programmes de maîtrise au Canada et aux États-Unis offrent des blocs de cours obligatoires relativement semblables.

Depuis les dix dernières années, l'importance grandissante de la gestion des ressources humaines dans les entreprises, combinée au déclin du syndicalisme, a transformé les relations industrielles aux États-Unis (Kochan, Katz et McKersie 1986). Ceci a déplacé les centres d'intérêts universitaires vers les ressources humaines et a fait augmenter la demande de travail pour des experts dans cet aspect de la relation d'emploi. Aux États-Unis, le changement se constate par le nombre plus élevé de cours en gestion des ressources humaines offerts dans les programmes de maîtrise en relations industrielles (Lewin 1991 ; Begin 1988 ; Francke 1988).

On ne peut aborder la question de la croissance de la gestion des ressources humaines au sein des programmes de relations industrielles sans, du même coup, comparer les relations industrielles aux sciences administratives. Bien que cet article a, jusqu'à maintenant, pu sembler considérer les sciences de l'administration comme une discipline établie, il n'en reste pas moins qu'elles sont, au même titre que les relations industrielles, interdisciplinaires et qu'elles manquent de cohésion théorique et de support empirique. Malgré ces observations, le débat qui entoure les relations industrielles comme discipline ne se tient pas dans les écoles et les facultés d'administration. Qui plus est, le modèle disciplinaire semble y être accepté et adopté pour l'enseignement et la recherche. Il est difficile d'expliquer, d'une part, pourquoi le modèle disciplinaire

est devenu prépondérant dans l'étude et la recherche en sciences de l'administration et, d'autre part, pourquoi aucun consensus à ce sujet n'a été atteint en relations industrielles. Pourtant, ces deux domaines sont multidisciplinaires et tous les deux manquent de paradigme unificateur. Les théories sociologiques de l'institutionnalisme (DiMaggio et Powell 1983 ; Meyer et Rowan 1927 ; Tolbert et Zucker 1983) et de la dépendance de ressource (Pfeffer et Salancik 1978) peuvent suggérer quelques hypothèses.

Malgré les changements d'importance identifiés précédemment, le système canadien de relations industrielles n'a pas connu les mêmes transformations que celui des États-Unis (Chaykowski et Verma 1992). Même si nous n'avons pas de preuve, il semble que la gestion des ressources humaines ait gagné en importance au Canada, mais les programmes d'enseignement en relations industrielles n'ont guère changé. En effet, étant donné que le syndicalisme reste une caractéristique importante de la société canadienne, il faut s'attendre à ce que les programmes américains se distinguent davantage des programmes canadiens au cours de la prochaine décennie. Conséquemment, l'identification des pressions exercées sur les programmes d'enseignement en relations industrielles au Canada et l'analyse de leurs influences sur les cours offerts sont des points qui mériteraient de faire l'objet d'études systématiques.

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