

**BULLETIN 61, 1949: LABOR-
MANAGEMENT
RELATIONS: A RESEARCH
PLANNING MEMORANDUM**

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Bulletin 61, 1949: Labor-Management Relations: A Research Planning Memorandum by John G. Turnbull

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JOHN G. TURNBULL

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LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS
A Research Planning Memorandum

By
John G. Turnbull

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL
230 PARK AVENUE . . . NEW YORK 17

*Committee on
Labor Market Research*

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FOREWORD

RESEARCH and writing on industrial relations problems have expanded strikingly during the past decade. The number of university centers actively carrying on empirical studies has trebled, the number of private consulting and service agencies has grown even more rapidly, and practitioners in industry, in labor organizations, and in the government have become self-conscious to the point of augmenting greatly the literature produced year by year. The conventional boundaries of the field of labor economics developed in earlier decades have in considerable part disappeared through the collaborative or independent efforts of students drawn from psychology, sociology, anthropology and political science.

At this stage of expansion and re-examination it is not surprising to find a relatively high amount of disagreement rather than of agreement among research men and practitioners about theoretical principles and patterns of behavior. Within the past two or three years, however, the belief has grown that research has now advanced to the point at which greater agreement about the value of particular approaches and techniques should be possible. As a contribution to this end the Council's Committee on Labor Market Research encouraged John G. Turnbull, as a part of his staff service for the Council and the committee during 1947-49, to prepare a memorandum identifying and analyzing significant hypotheses advanced by students of industrial relations.

The survey of the literature of labor-management relations made by Mr. Turnbull showed that many pertinent and provocative generalizations, hypotheses, inferences, and questions have been developed or raised about factors which influence patterns of labor-management relations in one way or another, or which conversely are influenced by given relationships. Yet there came to light little or no material which dealt with

the validity of these propositions, or with problems involved in assessing and testing them. In its final form his report became an attempt to assemble certain of the more striking inferences and questions which have evolved, and to indicate that research can best be advanced if systematic efforts are made to put these propositions to test.

The author rather than the committee is responsible for the methodological treatment and the materials included or excluded in the bulletin. Members of the committee, however, counseled at length with Mr. Turnbull in the development of the manuscript. Its content was reviewed with other students in the labor field in the course of conferences sponsored by the committee at Princeton in February 1949 and at the University of Minnesota in May. The committee recognized that the selection or nonselection of hypotheses from specific writings might seem to imply distinctions which in fact were present neither in the thinking of the author nor in the judgment of the committee. The hypotheses selected were chosen solely in terms of their intrinsic significance or their illustrative value. It is the committee's hope that the document will serve to channel the interest of competent investigators into the tasks of reanalysis and verification which are suggested in the text.

The author has asked that acknowledgement be made of helpful suggestions contributed by Gerald W. Breese and Douglass V. Brown. Frederick H. Harbison and John W. McConnell, through their critical rejection of various aspects of the approach developed herein, caused the author to recast certain phases of his thinking. In addition he has asked that recognition be given to the invaluable critical assistance received from members of the committee and several associates on the staff of the Council.

PAUL WEBBINK

CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD by <i>Raul Webbink</i>	vii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. BACKGROUND FACTORS IN PATTERNS OF INTERACTION	8
III. PATTERNS OF INTERACTION AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES	57
IV. SOME FURTHER RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS	86
APPENDIX: NOTES ON METHODOLOGY	89
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	103
INDEX OF NAMES	109
INDEX OF SUBJECTS	111

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Research interests, projects, and publications in the field of labor-management relations have increased markedly in recent years. This memorandum considers briefly the present situation and its development, and then explores in some detail a research approach which may have certain values for future investigations.

Scope of the Memorandum

Labor-management relations, as the term is here used, includes the patterns of interaction of labor and management, the factors which condition those interactions, and the consequences of interaction patterns. In this context "interaction" implies a consideration of elements which bear upon the relationships of the parties to each other, rather than upon factors which more uniquely concern one or the other of the parties per se, although in many instances it is extremely difficult to specify particular limits. Attention is not primarily directed, for example, to problems involved in the selection of supervisors by a business enterprise or of shop stewards by a union. But where these matters may have interaction aspects—as in the effects of the ratio of stewards to foremen in communication or grievance processes—they fall within the confines of our discussion.

In addition to restrictions imposed by the use of this concept of interaction, a second limitation is found in the idea of "labor-management" relations. For purposes of the analysis to follow, these relationships are viewed largely in the sense of collective relations between managements and unions, rather than as between managements and individuals. The term col-