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Cooperation: Trying To Make It Work In America

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Cooperation

Trying To Make It Work In America

As we enter the 1990s, there can be little doubt that global and domestic nonunion competition have severely challenged traditional collective bargaining relationships in American industry. The market forces brought to bear on industry in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s have led to important strategic choices by employers and unions, some adversarial and some cooperative. These choices may depict, on one hand, what some observers have called nothing less than the “transformation of American industrial relations” (Kochan, Katz, and McKersie 1986), or what others, on the other hand, view as “nothing new under the sun” (Dunlop 1986). Whether one views ongoing changes as “nothing new” or “a transformation,” there are currently unprecedented widespread efforts at joint union-management activities designed to improve labor-management relations and company performance. Do these innovative joint activities, however, hallmark a shift away from historically adversarial relationships between unions and employers? Are industry and union leaders truly pioneering new and lasting partnerships, or are they merely going in circles, buying time and destined to return to a long tradition of adversarial relationships?

This study examines that fundamental question, although any definitive answer at this time would be premature. The purpose of the study is to explore issues regarding the decision to cooperate, the success of cooperative efforts, and the problems that undermine these efforts. The analyses presented are based on a variety of secondary data sources, as well as data from nationwide surveys of plant managers, their local union leader counterparts, and executives of companies parent to the plants sampled.

This first chapter reviews the existing literature and sets the stage for

the analyses that follow. Chapter 2 develops a general theoretical framework, which broadly guides the subsequent analyses. Chapter 3 describes companywide labor relations strategies that have recently emerged and examines why some parties have embarked on cooperative relations and why just as many have not. In addition, the objectives and structure of joint programs, as reported by a sample of plant managers and local union leaders, are described. Chapter 4 examines how effective these joint efforts have been and identifies factors that appear to enhance or diminish their effectiveness. Chapter 5 addresses the underlying problems arising in the joint decisionmaking process that undermine the potential success and longevity of cooperative efforts. Finally, how the parties can go about resolving, avoiding, or minimizing the costly effects of these key problems is addressed in chapter 6. In that final chapter, implications for the union movement are also assessed.

I have chosen to avoid reporting many of the statistical details of my analyses. My purpose in doing so is to reach out to a wide audience of local and national union leaders, plant managers and company executives, and various policy makers wrestling with the issues at hand in practical ways. Although this wider audience needs and seeks information and analyses that go beyond the wealth of reported case studies, reports, and testimonials, their interests are not in studying more academic methodological details and nuances of statistical modeling. Where I report the results of various statistical estimations, I have nevertheless adhered strictly to the results and hypothesized cause-effect relations. For readers especially interested in statistical details of the analyses, selected tables reporting the measurement and estimation of pertinent equations are provided in appendices to chapters 3 and 4. Nearly all the statistical estimations used in this study, furthermore, have been published recently or are in press in academic journals and hence available to the interested reader.

Review and Synthesis of the Literature

The literature on cooperation has grown rapidly in recent years, addressing both American and foreign experiences. Nearly all this

literature is founded on single company and union case studies, reports, and testimonials. Recognizing that a detailed review of the literature is far beyond the intended scope of this study and that my specific purpose is to examine American industry experiences, I restrict my review to first providing a note on the limited early American experiments and, second, to a general synthesis of the reported potential benefits, costs, and problems associated with American cooperative activities. The review is further restricted to cooperative efforts between union representatives and plant management that (a) are outside traditional contract negotiations and contract administration; (b) contain formalized mechanisms for input from union representatives and/or the employees they represent into management decisions; and (c) are intended to improve company performance at the plant, either through direct efforts aimed at improving productivity, quality, efficiency, etc., and/or through indirect efforts aimed at improving employee well-being, job satisfaction, and/or the labor-management relations climate.

Excluded, then, are cooperative problemsolving activities that might normally occur during the negotiation and the day-to-day administration of contracts. Although joint programs in health and safety, substance abuse, apprenticeship training, and many others can be seen as contributing to company performance and employee welfare, they are excluded from the present analysis. Their specific foci and restricted activities fall at the periphery of the present investigation and warrant separate analyses. Also excluded are joint activities undertaken outside the plant or company, such as involvement in industry or communitywide joint activities or instances where the parties seek in concert to obtain trade protection from foreign competitors.

Except for labor-management committees, most joint activities are structured to elicit shop-floor participation. These programs, moreover, are very similar in structure and activity, regardless of program title. They revolve around team or group activities in which hourly and salaried employees put their heads together on a fairly regular basis. Their charge is to identify problems and opportunities for improvements in the workplace and, in turn, to develop plans for resolving problems or making improvements. Quality of Work Life (QWL) or Employee

Involvement (EI) programs do not differ substantially from quality circles, work teams, or employee involvement associated with gainsharing arrangements. The programs all appear to tackle issues surrounding productivity, product quality, efficiency, etc., and employee concerns about the work environment, the climate of labor-management relations, and overall job security. Most of these programs also have steering committees involving union officials, most restrict activities to subjects not governed by the labor contract, most are voluntary, and most provide training for team members.

These structural similarities do not imply that there are no differences among the team-based programs. The differences, however, have less to do with structure and purpose and more to do with: (a) the intensity of activity (e.g., the proportion of employees engaged in the activity, frequency of group meetings, the amount of team member training, and the extent of other joint programs); (b) the degree of emphasis placed on selected performance-related factors (quality, productivity, absenteeism, etc.); (c) the amount of autonomy and decisionmaking authority granted to teams; (d) the degree of union leader input (both in the design and facilitation of programs); and (e) whether or not there are financial incentives, either tied directly (i.e. gainsharing) or indirectly (i.e. profit sharing and stock ownership) to employee participation.

In spite of an extensive literature addressing cooperation, there are only a few surveys that begin to document the extent to which cooperative activities have been undertaken. My 1986 nationwide survey of 350 relatively large unionized manufacturing plants (described in chapter 3) indicates that roughly 50 percent have established formalized joint programs of the kind described above. A 1983 Conference Board survey of approximately 400 large companies shows that 56 percent of unionized business units have established programs wherein “employees meet in small groups to discuss production and quality” (Kochan, McKersie, Chalykoff 1986). A 1983-1984 survey of approximately 350 unionized firms in Wisconsin shows that roughly 60 percent have established either shop-floor teams or joint committees (Voos 1987). A 1987 nationwide survey of approximately 150 unionized business units shows that about 50 percent have established “employee participation initiatives”

(Delaney, Ichniowski, and Lewin 1988). Although these various surveys are not fully comparable due to differences in sampling, response rates, and definitions of cooperative activities, they do encompass the most extensive efforts to date at documentation of cooperative efforts. Taken together, these surveys indicate that roughly half of unionized private sector establishments have embarked on cooperative efforts of the nature to be examined by this investigation.

The fact that cooperation between unions and employers is occurring is (in Dunlop's words) nothing new under the sun. Cooperative efforts to improve productivity and production standards were undertaken in the 1920s and afterwards, especially in the railroad, textile, and garment industries (Slichter 1941; Slichter, Healy, and Livernash 1960; Jacoby 1983). Pressured by the War Labor Board during WWII, unions and employers established thousands of joint productivity committees (de Schweinitz 1949). Throughout the post-WWII period, there also were a number of highly publicized but fairly isolated cooperative efforts undertaken; for example, by the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Tennessee Valley Trades and Labor Council, Rushton Coal Mine and the United Mine Workers, and Harmon International and the United Auto Workers (Slichter, Healy, and Livernash 1960; Cammann, Lawler, Ledford, and Seashore 1985). History shows, however, that case after case of these uncommon cooperative committee and team efforts were short-lived.

Even though American union-management cooperative efforts designed to improve company performance and labor-management relations are nothing new, the fact that these efforts are currently widespread is unprecedented. Were these efforts to become central and lasting institutional arrangements of successful collective bargaining relationships, then in the words of Kochan et al., American industrial relations would be transformed. For cooperative efforts to become lasting forms of partnership, however, it must ultimately be demonstrated that the gains to cooperation are greater than the costs and that the net gains at least match those derivable from more traditional or highly adversarial relationships.

There is a rich descriptive literature that identifies a wide range of

these potential benefits and costs to management, employees, and union leaders. The literature also identifies several general or recurring problems (e.g., insufficient trust and commitment) that appear to increase specific costs associated with cooperation. Except for discussing these general problems, the literature is largely silent, nonetheless, with respect to identifying salient factors that affect potential benefits and costs, and, consequently, affect the success of cooperative efforts. One of the primary purposes of the present study is to begin filling that void.

Potential Benefits and Costs of Cooperation

Potential benefits and costs associated with cooperation must be examined through the eyes of managers, bargaining unit employees, and union leaders. In synthesizing the literature, therefore, I attempt to distinguish potential benefits and costs as they may be realized by these three parties to cooperative activities. Because most of these potential benefits and costs are fairly self-explanatory, I avoid any lengthy discussion but provide interested readers with citations of reports in which richer descriptions and analyses can be found. The potential benefits and costs, as the reader will surely recognize, are sometimes extrinsic or pecuniary and sometimes intrinsic or nonpecuniary, some depict more tangible outcomes than others, and some outcomes are potential benefits to one or more parties but are potential costs to another.

Potential Benefits and Costs to Management

Potential Benefits: The potential benefits to management from plant-level cooperation reflect various dimensions of the labor costs and nonlabor cost components of production. Labor costs are potentially reduced by making the production process more efficient, increasing output per unit of labor, and reducing the cost of labor per unit of product produced. Increased product demand can be derived by improving product quality, giving greater attention to customer satisfaction, and dealing more effectively with customers. By searching out ways of eliminating unnecessary overhead expenditures, minimizing waste and rework, reducing materials costs and materials handling and inventory

costs, enhancing the utilization of capital equipment, and dealing more effectively with suppliers, nonlabor costs are potentially reduced. Also by minimizing unnecessary labor-management conflicts and problems and by resolving these more quickly and satisfactorily, associated lost productive time and inefficiencies are minimized. Last, cooperative efforts can potentially increase worker commitment to and identity with company goals, which lead to more aggressive efforts by employees and union leaders at being competitive and at improving workplace practices.

Drawing on the literature, the following potential benefits have been identified from a wide range and mix of cooperative efforts.

1. Increased Productivity and Efficiency

See Voos (1987); Schuster (1984, ch.6); Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton (1987, pp. 32-33); Rosenberg and Rosenstein (1980); Contino (1986); Boyle (1986); Douty (1975); Pearlstein (1988).

2. Improved Quality of Product and Service

See Camens (1986); Voos (1987); Boyle (1986); Katz, Kochan, and Gobeille (1983); Katz, Kochan, and Weber (1985); Smith (1986a).

3. Improved Customer Relations and Service

See McIntosh (1988).

4. Reduced Waste and Rework

See Boylston (1986); Katz, Kochan, and Gobeille (1983); Camens (1986).

5. Reduced Overhead, Materials Costs, and Material Handling Costs

See Dulworth (1985); Lazes and Costanza (1984).

6. Enhanced Supplier Service

See Roadley (1988); Cutcher-Gershenfeld (1988).

7. Improved Communications

8 Cooperation

See Driscoll (1980); Boyle (1986); Siegel and Weinberg (1982); U.S. Department of Labor (1982 and 1983); Smith (1988).

8. Improved Relationships Between Supervisors and Employees

See Fuller (1981); Boyle (1986); Burck (1981,a); Kochan, Katz and Mower (1984, pp. 134-138).

9. Reduced Grievances and Disciplinary Action

See Guest (1979); Watts (1982); U.S. Department of Labor (1982); Smith (1988b).

10. Stronger Identity and Commitment to Company Goals

See Boyle (1986); Goodman (1980); U.S. Department of Labor (1982); Walton (1985); Verma and McKersie (1987); Schuster (1989).

11. Reduced Absenteeism, Tardiness, and Turnover

See Guest (1979); Goodman (1980); Cammann, Lawler, Ledford, and Seashore (1984, p. 110); Goodman and Lawler (1979); Siegel and Weinberg (1982).

12. Increased Organizational Flexibility and Adaptability

See Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton (1987, p. 31); U.S. Department of Labor (1982 and 1983); Lawler and Drexler (1978).

Potential Costs: Organizational shifts from traditional and generally adversarial collective bargaining relationships and autocratic managerial practices (which left little room for employee or union leader participation in management decisions), demand substantial change in an organization's culture, values, and shared ideologies. These organizational shifts sometimes require sizable resources for reorientation and training of managers, supervisors, rank-and-file, and union representatives. The costs of change are not only financial but include non-pecuniary costs to many managers and supervisors in the form of perceived loss of authority, power, and status. Because of improvements in productivity and efficiency, furthermore, the perceived threat of job loss (attributable to shifting authority to employees) among managers

and supervisors is heightened. In response to these potential costs, managers and supervisors are less inclined than otherwise to genuinely embrace cooperation, which necessarily reduces some of the potential company benefits identified above. There is also testimony that committee and team-based meetings are often marked by wasted or generally unproductive time, limiting management's ability to react quickly or complete production schedules in a timely fashion. In addition, when important disputes arise, the parties sometimes make unwise compromises in the name of bolstering cooperation. In summary, the literature has addressed the following potential costs of cooperation to management.

1. Added Costs for Reorientation and Training of Managers, Employees, and Union Representatives

See Jick, McKersie, and Greenblaugh (1982); Lawler and Drexler (1978); Siegel and Weinberg (1982); U.S. Department of Labor (1982); Lee (1987).

2. Perceived Loss of Authority and Status

See Lawler and Drexler (1978); Guest (1979); Schlesinger and Walton (1977); Rosow (1979); Jacoby (1983); Siegel and Weinberg (1982); Rosow (1986).

3. Displacement or Loss of Employment for Middle-Managers and Supervisors

See Schlesinger and Walton (1977); Simmons and Mares (1985, ch. 13).

4. Wasted Time Spent in Meetings

See Cutcher-Gershenfeld (1988).

Potential Benefits and Costs to Employees

Potential Benefits: Unless joint activities yield financial rewards (e.g., in the form of gainsharing) and greater employment security, the potential benefits to bargaining unit employees are largely intrinsic, as derived from more harmonious working relations and higher quality of work-

lives. The literature highlights how employees derive these potential benefits by experiencing greater participation or involvement in their work, having more say in how work gets accomplished, and improving work conditions and environments. Assuming employees prefer more harmonious over less harmonious working relations, employees potentially benefit from fewer grievance disputes and quicker problem resolution. Last, cooperative relationships often provide employees enhanced dignity, self-esteem, and pride in their work. In summary, the literature identifies and addresses the following potential benefits to employees:

1. Increased Intrinsic Rewards from the Participation or Involvement Process

See Guest (1979); Goodman (1980); Work in America Institute, Inc. (1982, ch. 3); Parker (1985, ch. 2).

2. Greater Say in How Work Gets Accomplished

See Kochan, Katz and Mower (1984, ch. 4).

3. Improved Working Conditions

See U.S. Department of Labor (1983); Ruttenberg (1988).

4. Enhanced Financial Rewards From Gainsharing and Other Incentive Arrangements

See Schuster (1989, 1984, ch. 6); Cummings and Molloy (1977, ch. 21,22); Dulworth (1985); Pearlstein (1988); Ross and Ross (1986).

5. Improved Supervisor-Employee Relationships

See Burck (1981,a); Fuller (1981); Boyle (1986); Kochan, Katz, and Mower (1984, pp. 134-138).

6. Reduced Grievances and Quicker Resolution of Problems

See Burck (1981a); Kochan, Katz, and Mower (1984, pp. 134-138); Smith (1988b).

7. Heightened Dignity, Self-Esteem, and Pride in Work

See U.S. Department of Labor (1983); Work in America Institute, Inc. (1982, ch. 3); McIntosh (1988).

Potential Costs: In some cases management may be perceived as promoting cooperative activities as a guise for having employees simply work harder as opposed to working smarter, which leads to greater fatigue and stress. By helping invent ways to increase productivity and efficiency, some employees fear displacement or loss of employment for themselves or co-workers. Some employees, furthermore, apparently fear having to relinquish their secret work practices, which would eliminate personal advantages in completing tasks more efficiently than others or in receiving pay incentives. More skilled or senior employees dislike sharing unwanted tasks, which is frequently required by team efforts. There is, finally, anecdotal evidence that some employees shun unwanted peer pressure to be more or less involved in cooperative activities. In summary, the literature identifies the following potential costs of cooperation to employees:

1. Working Harder, Not Necessarily Smarter

See Oswald (1986); Simmons and Mares (1985, ch. 14).

2. Displacement or Loss of Employment From Increased Productivity and Efficiency

See Zager (1977); Schuster (1984, ch. 6); Simmons and Mares (1985, ch. 14); Work in America Institute, Inc. (1982, ch. 3) Camens (1986); Banks and Metzgar (1989).

3. Unwanted Peer Pressure to be Involved or Not Involved

See Spector (1986).

Potential Benefits and Costs to Unions

In weighing the potential benefits and costs of joint programs, union leaders estimate the value of joint programs in satisfying the needs and promoting the interests of (a) their members, (b) the union as an institution, and (c) themselves as leaders. The potential benefits and costs to employees described above, therefore, are weighed by union

leaders. The potential benefits and costs outlined below, on the other hand, are pertinent to the union as a viable institution and to the leaders who, it can be assumed, prefer to benefit rather than be hurt politically by engaging in and supporting joint activities.

Potential Benefits: By satisfying member interests that would not otherwise be possible to satisfy except through cooperation, union leaders potentially receive recognition from members. The key here is, of course, that members reap benefits from cooperation and that they recognize these benefits were gotten via union leader involvement in establishing or modifying cooperative activities and could not have been gotten via traditional collective bargaining. This recognition, however, is sometimes thwarted by managers failing to share recognition with union leaders for benefits obtained. Cooperation also potentially provides union leaders with greater knowledge of and input into management decisionmaking, which, in turn, allows the union leadership to make better informed decisions affecting the membership and the union as an institution. Cooperation, that is, potentially gives union leaders greater access to pertinent company information, earlier notification of pending organizational changes, and opportunities to persuade management to modify their decisions.

Cooperation, in addition, potentially leads to improved communication, which (everything else the same) can lead to more harmonious interpersonal relations and trust between managers and union leaders. As an outgrowth of reduced grievances and disciplinary action, cooperation reduces the conflicts and costs associated with day-to-day contract administration. Finally, some unions have found that the organizational structures surrounding joint committee and team-based activities provide avenues for more regular input by members in union activities and policymaking. In summary, the literature identifies the following potential benefits to union leaders:

1. Recognition from Members for Improvements

See Burck (1981, a and 1981, b); Cammann, Lawler, Ledford, and Seashore (1984, pp. 11, 21-22); Greenberg and Glaser (1980); Dyer, Lipsky, and Kochan (1977).

2. Greater Participation and Input in Management Decisions

See Fraser (1986); Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton (1987, p.20); Simmons and Mares (1985, ch. 14); Work in America Institute, Inc. (1982, ch. 4).

3. Improved Communications Between Union Leaders and Managers

See Driscoll (1980); Smith (1988b).

4. Reduced Day-to-Day Contract Administration Problems

See Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton (1987, pp. 16-17); Kochan, Katz, and Mower (1984, pp. 134-146); Watts (1982).

5. Greater Membership Input into Regular Union Activities and Policies

See Burck (1981a); Kochan, Katz, and Mower (1984, pp. 138-146); Bieber (1984, p. 34).

Potential Costs: The adjustment from traditional adversarial roles to roles that embrace cooperation is just as trying and difficult (if not more so) for union leaders as it is for managers. One potential cost to union leaders is being coopted or being perceived as coopted by management—doing management's bidding, that is, instead of protecting the interests of the union as an institution or its members more directly. It has also been reported that employers potentially use cooperative programs to undermine or bypass the union or its leadership in various ways: by appealing directly to employees for employer-initiated changes, using team-based efforts to alter collective bargaining agreements (e.g., with respect to scheduling, assignments, bidding, and job classifications); by usurping grievance procedures and union authority in resolving grievances; and by weakening the union at the bargaining table (either by creating or uncovering divisions in bargaining unit preferences over negotiable issues).

The choice to embrace cooperation and choices about the form and extent of joint activities are fraught with political conflict over proper leadership roles. Here, dissension among leaders and the rank-and-file leads to increased uncertainty of reelection. Evidence also suggests that

there can be a loss of member loyalty or commitment to the union (and, hence, loss of union influence) as employees begin to accept and identify more closely with company goals. In summary, the literature identifies the following potential costs:

1. Perceived Cooptation by Management

See Goodman (1980, p. 490); Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton (1987, pp. 17-18); U.S. Department of Labor (1982, 1983); Work in America Institute, Inc. (1982, ch. 4); Hoyer and Huszczo (1988); Strauss (1980).

2. Undermining Traditional Roles of Unions and Collective Bargaining

See IAM Research Report (1984, pp. 16-21); UBC Bulletin (1984, pp. 41-42).

3. Heightened Political Conflict Over Leadership Role

See Hammer and Stern (1986); Strauss (1980); Levine and Strauss (1989).

4. Increased Uncertainty of Reelection

See Hoyer and Huszczo (1988).

5. Loss of Member Commitment and Union Influence

See Schlesinger and Walton (1977); Kochan, Katz, and Mower (1984, pp. 134-146); Guest (1979); Watts (1982).

Fundamental Problems Encountered

When the parties experience too much of the potential cost or too little of the potential benefits outlined above, problems arise. Indeed, one could identify a multitude of day-to-day problems and frequent crises encountered in cooperative activities. Most of these problems, it appears, boil down to several more fundamental problems. First, the literature and testimony repeatedly suggest that cooperative efforts between unions and employers are based on fairly uneasy or delicate

partnerships and that sufficient trust between managers and union leaders must be developed over time. When sufficient trust cannot be developed, joint activities are limited. When trust wanes or is violated, joint activities likewise wane. (Schuster 1984; Rosow 1986; Kochan, Katz, and Mower 1984.)

Sufficient commitment by all parties to cooperative efforts is also an essential ingredient to any long-run success. (See Schuster 1984, pp. 199-200; Cutcher-Gershenfeld 1988; Wintergreen 1986; Kochan, Katz, and Mower 1984.) The stronger the commitment, the more intensified and diffused these cooperative activities are likely to become. Furthermore, trust and commitment appear to be inextricably intertwined. Without sufficient trust, commitment is hard to attain; and without sufficient commitment, high levels of trust are unobtainable.

In their survey of approximately 140 union representatives, Kochan, Katz, and Mower (1984) ask the extent to which "loss of union support" and "loss of plant management support" limit the expansion of the participation process. They report (see their table 5-3, p. 147) that 43 percent of the respondents do not perceive loss of plant management support as a problem. About 37 percent perceive it to be somewhat of a problem and 20 percent perceive it to be "quite a bit" or "a very great deal" of a problem. With respect to loss of union support, roughly 55 percent of the respondents report that it is not a problem, 37 percent report it to be somewhat of a problem, and about 20 percent report it to be a much more serious problem.

A third fundamental problem that arises is disenchantment and demoralization when anticipated or hoped-for gains are not gotten. When the kinds of potential benefits described above are not realized, enthusiasm for joint activities is known to wane (Camens 1986; Cutcher-Gershenfeld 1988; Kochan, Katz, and Mower 1984). Kochan, Katz, and Mower report that, based on their survey of union representatives, over 60 percent of union respondents perceive "worker disenchantment" as somewhat of a problem, and nearly 35 percent perceive disenchantment as "quite a bit" or "a very great deal" of a problem. Only 4 percent respond that disenchantment among workers is not a problem. In a second related question, Kochan, Katz, and Mower report that 27

percent of the union respondents find “layoffs or other employment cutbacks” to be somewhat of a problem, whereas 53 percent find it to be a more serious problem limiting the expansion of cooperative activities.

Last, some recent literature describes how many problems arise because of the inherent difficulty of juxtaposing or balancing cooperation and more traditional collective bargaining (Bluestone 1987; Wever 1988; Hammer and Stern 1986; Smaby et al. 1988). Alternating between traditional contract negotiations and administration of contractual rights via grievance, arbitration, and discipline procedures, on one hand, and cooperative, mutually beneficial problemsolving, on the other, requires a delicate balancing of two fairly distinct processes.

Although the literature addressing these fundamental problems is rich, it remains largely testimonial and descriptive. There appear to be no scientific investigations into causes of these problems or their effects on cooperative efforts. Nearly all the literature addressing the problems of distrust, insufficient commitment, and demoralization, furthermore, has been filtered through the views of union leaders and rank-and-file; the views of managers are generally missing.

Conclusions

With very few exceptions, the existing literature about American union-management cooperation is generally descriptive and impressionistic. Although it is a rich and valuable literature, as a whole it lacks comparability across reports. It is piecemeal in its focus and, hence, lacks a broad theoretical grounding. It rarely provides any form of empirical testing of basic propositions or related specific hypotheses. The limited number of empirical investigations, furthermore, have largely attempted to determine whether or not joint efforts have had an effect on company performance and labor relations (Schuster 1983 and 1984; Katz, Kochan, and Gobeille 1983; Katz, Kochan, and Weber 1985; Katz, Kochan, and Keefe 1987; Voos 1987 and 1989). Although these empirical studies provide important evidence about outcomes (which are reviewed in chapter 4), they tell us very little about which

factors or what conditions lead to more or less successful cooperative efforts. Finally, except through highly descriptive assessments, the literature also tells us little about the key factors that induce or impede the establishment of cooperative arrangements between unions and employers. In summary, our understanding of cooperation is highly fragmented and incomplete.

The purpose of this study is to help begin filling in some of these holes, first by developing more fully a general theoretical model of labor-management relations and the role of cooperation in these relations, and second by developing and testing general propositions and specific hypotheses about factors affecting decisions to cooperate and the outcomes of cooperative efforts. Cooperation between American employers and unions historically has been uncommon and short-lived; in a sharp break with history, it is widespread today. A far richer understanding of what makes cooperation work or fail is imperative, since without that understanding history will surely repeat itself, not necessarily for the right reasons.