

Muckraking Through the Novel: Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and the Early History of Human Resources Management

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Background and Purpose: This study is based on the assumption that the novel, which is a modern narrative form, reflects the canon of the period in which it was written. In this context, the study tries to show how human resources management practices were carried out in large-scale industrial units in a period when the human resources management function was not specialized, with *The Jungle* novel by Upton Sinclair.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study is based on a typology that Bruce E. Kaufman used while describing the early history of US HRM. Kaufman lists fourteen factors that characterize early HRM. One of them is the revealing activities of the Progressive movement. Therefore, the novel is considered here as a means of disclosure. Designed on this basis, the study analyses *The Jungle* novel around the following themes: the foreman's empire, child labour, occupational health and safety, wages, job insecurity, career, and the blue-collar/white-collar divide.

Results: The novel shows that although the scale of manufacturing units grew in the early 1900s, human management practices were not yet institutionalized and specialized. Therefore, HRM routines are carried out with the arbitrary attitude of foremen, wages are below the natural wage level, child labour is widely used, and there is a working life full of risks in terms of occupational health and safety.

Conclusion: When the narrative of the novel about human management is read in parallel with the academic studies describing the period, the parallelism between the two narratives shows why the novels can be used as material for academic studies.

Keywords: *Human resources management practices, Early history of human resources management, Upton Sinclair's The Jungle*

1 Introduction: How to Approach the Impact of a Novel?

There is a phrase attributed to Karl Marx: "I am not a Marxist" (Fulcher & Scott, 2007: 30). If Marx uttered this sentence, he used it as a response to accusations of determinism. In other words, if Marxism implies econom-

ic reductionism, then I am not a Marxist! In fact, this reductionism expresses both an obstacle to grasping reality and a situation that inevitably imposes itself on analysing it. This is because reality, or in the perspective of a social scientist, social reality, is highly intricate. Numerous antecedents can lead to a given situation, but when dealing with that situation, not all these antecedents might be

known, and generally, focusing on one of them simplifies analysis. Sometimes, to specifically observe the impact of a single independent variable, others are held constant or placed in parentheses. Therefore, economists employ the concept of *ceteris paribus*; physicists use the concept of normal conditions.

Let's illustrate with an example. On paper, when you demonstrate that independent variable X yields result Y, it's easy to say that X causes Y. However, if this cause-effect relationship isn't occurring in the controlled environment of a laboratory, identifying X as the cause isn't always straightforward. For instance, consider a skills training provided to address performance gaps within an organization. When measuring the outcomes of this training six and twelve months later, could there not be other antecedents (causes) affecting performance at the time of measurement? The literature on training and development seeks to "isolate the effects of other factors" to solve this issue (Phillips, 2003).

Reductionism and dualities (Layder, 2005) are subjects of extensive debate in the social sciences. Recently, the approaches of social scientists such as Pierre Bourdieu or Norbert Elias have gained prominence due to their ability to address the social world with concepts that transcend or surpass these debates. In short, in the social world, there are very few instances that can be represented by the concise formula "Y is caused by X." Reading this introduction, one might think that the article pertains to macro indicators or phenomena (such as power, class struggles, distribution, equality, etc.), yet we will be discussing the impact of a book written by a very young author. Upton Sinclair's (1906) *The Jungle*, written in the early 1900s, is the subject of our investigation. After its publication, the novel had a significant impact in the United States and is claimed to have triggered certain legislative changes. The fame of the book largely rests on the discourse that canters around this claim. However, as previously stated, attributing an outcome solely to a single novel, especially in complex (developed) industrial societies, can lead to reductionism.

Therefore, it is necessary to state that the "triggered" outcomes of the book cannot be attributed solely to it, and isolating other factors (i.e., applying *ceteris paribus*) does not seem feasible. Nonetheless, there are evident indicators, such as the meeting between the author and the U.S. President of the time and subsequent regulations, that undoubtedly demonstrate the book's impact.

In this study, I will approach the cause-and-effect relationship within the historical context of human resource management in the United States. To achieve this, I will employ a conceptualization of "causes or effects" that Bruce E. Kaufman (2008) used when discussing the history of HR in early American business. Kaufman speaks of fourteen factors, centered around the "labour problem," that shaped HR practices in the United States. One of these

factors can be linked to the activities of "progressive era reformers" and their exposure efforts. Here, *The Jungle* occupies a significant place as an exposure narrative shaping HR development. In other words, I will discuss the relevant book in this context. Therefore, this study emphasizes that the book is a narrative that shows the periodic character of HRM practices, based on the assumption that the novel in question conveys important details from the period in which it was written.

Below, I will first provide a summary of Bruce E. Kaufman's framework. Then, I will evaluate *The Jungle* book under some headings in the context of early HRM practices.

2 The Early History of HRM: The U.S. Context and the "Labour Problem"

When discussing the history of a phenomenon, it's essential to first establish what that phenomenon signifies or how it's used. However, defining human resource management (HRM) in a universally accepted manner is not an easy task. Examining the literature in this field will reveal numerous definitions of HRM. It is possible to encounter a large number of definitions when the HRM literature is scanned (Armstrong, 2009; Beaumont, 1993; Ferris et al. 1995; Kaufman, 2004; Wilkinson et al. 2010).

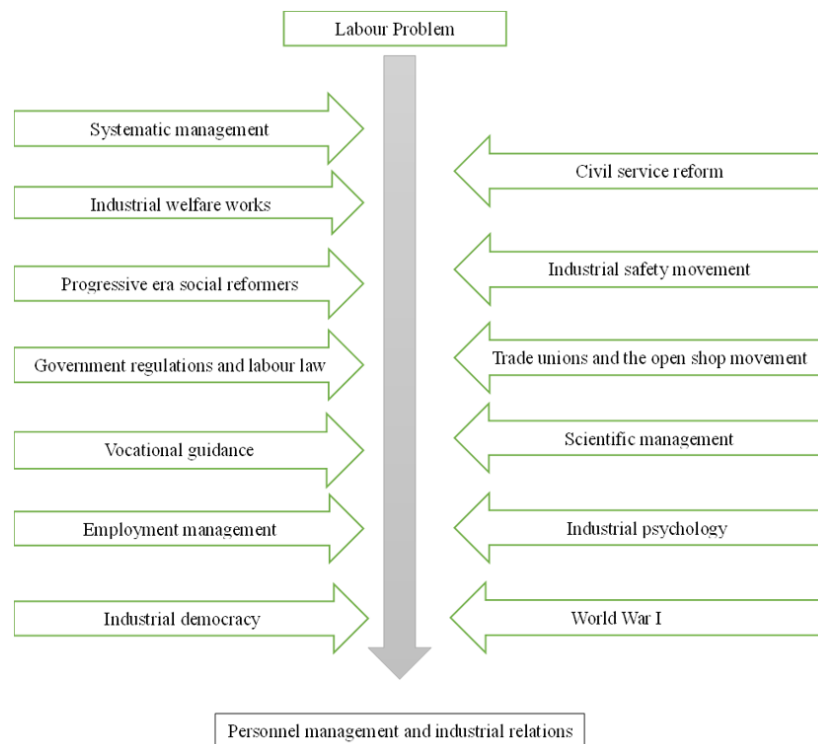
If we consider HRM as simply utilizing the human factor to achieve the goals of an organization, institution, or structure, then we must look back across an extensive history. For instance, throughout history, individuals employed in public bureaucracies or the human element composing large armies provide prominent examples within this framework. However, if we approach the issue as the utilization of the human element within commercial establishments and the subsequent emergence of a "distinct management practice" then a view into the post-Industrial Revolution world is necessary. In short, the formation of a paid working class and the emergence of HRM are interconnected. In simpler terms, an employer (master, shop owner, etc.) with a few workers (apprentices and journeymen, for instance) in their workshop or store would not require a personnel department or a HR specialist. In such a case, this master or employer would carry out all functions of contemporary HRM (e.g., recruitment, planning, compensation, etc.) and would not necessitate specialization. Indeed, after the Industrial Revolution, the scale of production units did not suddenly reach immense proportions. In other words, even up until the mid-19th century, neither factory workers nor large-scale factories predominated among laborers or manufacturing establishments in centres that had experienced the Industrial Revolution (Thompson, 1966). This situation largely persisted in the United States context until the end of the century. However, in the early 20th century, the U.S. industrial sector

experienced rapid growth. In terms of our subject, the number of operations employing thousands of workers increased significantly. Daniel Nelson (1979: 8–9), who examined the period around the 1900s, lists the largest manufacturing plants in the U.S. in the year 1900. The list includes nearly seventy factories employing between two thousand and ten thousand workers. Within the next 20–30 years, factories of much larger scales emerged, far exceeding these numbers. Nelson mentions some of these, with Ford's River Rouge factory being the most widely known; it would employ 68,000 workers (Nelson, 1979: 7). By the 1930s, at the peak of its employment, this number would surpass 100,000 (THF-TheHenryFord.Org, 2023).

In short, when considered within the context of U.S. history, the scale of firms increased dramatically in a relatively short period (roughly spanning from the last quarter of the 19th century to the first quarter of the 20th century). Such rapid changes brought about significant challenges. First of all, these scale-ups occurred during the lifetime of a single generation, in most cases in terms of human lifespan. In other words, an individual who initiated their manufacturing life with a simple endeavour, such as a workshop, transitioned to factories employing thousands of workers in a very short time. The clearest example of this narrative is embodied in the person of Henry Ford (Sinclair, 1987). The importance of this situation in the

management of human resources is that HRM, as a specialized field of activity, emerged as a need in the later stages of this process. As the scale grows, in the initial stages, our simple entrepreneur continues to manage human resources in a familiar or improvised manner. However, employment has grown so extensively that dealing with HR activities for a workforce of this size becomes practically impossible. During this period, one common method founders frequently resorted to was delegating certain HR practices to foremen. Predictably, this situation led to the creation of another form of arbitrary focus. The focus shifted partially from the owner to foremen. Although this topic deserves a standalone analysis, for it is not directly related to the main theme of this study, we'll simply mention it as one of the many factors deepening the labour problem that will be discussed later.

The labour problem, often referenced in the history of U.S. labour relations, points to harsh outcomes that emerged for all workers in industrializing centres following the Industrial Revolution. For example, practices such as long working hours (examples in the U.S. reached 84 hours per week in the 1910s), low wages, practices implying high risks for worker health and safety due to unhealthy and hazardous work environments, and so forth (Budd, 2005: 102), led to issues of productivity in labour relations and organizations. Bruce E. Kaufman extensively address-



Source: (Kaufman, 2008: 56)

Figure 1: Factors Contributing to the Development of HR in Early U.S. Business Management

es the labour problem. In the context that concerns us, the key point is to demonstrate which factors, in addition to the labour problem, influenced the development of HRM. Kaufman (2008) discusses fourteen major factors, with the labour problem at its centre. According to him, these factors played a primary role in shaping the development of HR as a specialized function in early U.S. business.

The title we will delve into from this list pertains to the progressive era's social reformers. Below I will provide brief details on what the progressive era meant and one of the activities of the social reformers of this era, muckraking activities. I will also address *The Jungle* within the context of these revealing activities.

3 The Progressive Era and Muckraking Activities

Many of the problems briefly discussed above within the axis of the "labour problem" can be seen as a recognizable manifestation of unregulated capitalism, as is the case in many parts of the world, including the United States. In this context, extreme imbalances or contradictions shaped by market dynamics on one hand, and actors striving to address these contradictions on the other hand, have emerged. Roughly the first two decades of the 1900s are referred to as the Progressive Era in U.S. history. The progressive movement did not deny the blessings of industrial progress, but called for utilizing these blessings with an emphasis on human values and social justice. According to the representatives of this movement, social problems could be addressed through political reforms and public education. Progressives were united in the belief that the economic and social problems of unregulated capitalism could not be resolved "spontaneously" (Kaufman, 2008; Nugent, 2010).

The progressive movement consisted of a diverse range of individuals from Democrats to Republicans, journalists to academics, all of whom were concerned about the injustices and contradictions of the status quo (Milkis, 2023). Progressives skilfully utilized journalism and scholarly documentation as a form of exposure weapon to draw attention to the necessity of a more institutionalized, professional, and humane management of human resources. Kaufman provides examples of scientific work in this regard, mentioning John Fitch's work "The Steelworkers", as well as Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* (Kaufman, 2008). Focusing on Sinclair's role within this exposure movement, we find that in the early 1900s he was a member of the investigative journalism known as "muckrakers". The muckrakers were mass media representatives of the progressive movement who published extensive and detailed articles on topics such as corruption in public administration, child labour, poverty, and working conditions (Stoklasová, 2016, p. 29). *The Jungle* emerged as one of

the most impactful results of these exposure activities. The book was rapidly translated into nearly twenty languages. Winston Churchill provided an assessment of the book in England; U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt wrote a critical letter to Sinclair and invited him to the White House (Valiunas, 2008). Subsequent investigations led to the enactment of two laws related to food inspection and hygiene in 1906 and 1907 (Stoklasová, 2016: 36).

Since the main interest of this study is on labour management, I will highlight Sinclair's emphasis on this subject below. Although our inferences here are not based on the assumption that the book is made up of one-to-one observations, it implies that what is written has a general view of the human resource management of the period. I will discuss this in more detail in the discussion section.

4 On the Meaning of Novel

"Romance" and "novel" are representing two distinct narrative genres. Etymologically, "romance" signifies "in the language of the Romans." This narrative genre describes a desired world rather than the existing one. In this sense, romance lacks complete reality; it lacks causal connections between events, is not constrained by time, and is vague in terms of location. As Aksoy also notes, such a genre could not have survived during the Enlightenment era. Novel, on the other hand, represents a narrative genre more suited to the spirit of the Enlightenment. It is fundamentally based on realism and credibility. The characters in this genre are ordinary individuals like us, rather than being endowed with extraordinary qualities as in romance (Aksoy, 2022: 275–276; Online Etymology Dictionary, 2023). Therefore, these characters correspond to the average of the societal types mentioned below.

A meaningful explanation that highlights the connection between the novel and real life comes from Turkish sociologist Besim F. Dellaloğlu (2020: 239–240). In response to an objection along the lines of "Well, novels aren't real; they're products of imagination," this explanation argues that the power of the novel lies in its characters being an average of certain societal types within a society. "The average age of students in a class being twenty-one and a half does not necessarily mean that there is someone in the class who is exactly twenty-one and a half years old. If there is, it's called a coincidence!" Another illustrative example of this "average" analogy appears in the latter part of Turkish novelist İhsan Oktay Anar's *Galiz Kahraman* [Vulgar Hero]. In this book, the main character, an anti-hero, engages in all sorts of indecent acts throughout the novel. At the end of the book, while he is being transferred to another place by train after being arrested, he happens to share the same train car with an anthropologist. The anthropologist has spent years collecting pictures of human faces. When he stacks all these pictures together

and takes the “average”, the image of the indecent hero emerges (Anar, 2020).

Therefore, the novel, in the sense of the narrative genre, needs to be approached as a form of realistic narrative. While classical artistic representations aim to reflect what should be, realistic literature as an extension of this strives to reflect what is. If we consider the novel as a reflection of averages or an expression of the ordinary and the everyday, we can also read it as a witness of the era in which it was written. In this context, *The Jungle* can be read as a text that provides significant details about the average individuals in the industrial world of early 20th-century United States. More specifically, the book showcases the details of HR practices of the relevant era’s businesses, demonstrating how human resource management, a specialized function in today’s context, was conducted in the early stages.

5 Analysis of The Jungle

This section of the study examines the content of the mentioned book. An analysis of content is shaped by the initial purpose. For instance, if the goal is to address gender issues, focus should be on related topics within the book. Similarly, if ethnic discrimination is the focus, then narratives related to that context should be emphasized. In this study, my focus is on labour relations, particularly human resource management practices. This is because I want to explore how these practices were conducted in the early 1900s, a time when human resource management wasn’t a specialized function yet, as Kaufman (2008) pointed out. The intention is to explore the history of HRM in early American business through the lens of this novel’s content.

Before writing his novel, Upton Sinclair conducted a seven-week preliminary research in Chicago in late 1904. One of the key texts that inspired him was Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. However, due to the period he lived in and his observations, he was compelled to write about a different form of slavery, referred to as “wage slavery”. Sinclair regarded the working conditions of labourers as a kind of slavery (Arthur, 2006). His aim was to make people aware of the workers’ plight. To achieve this, he conducted interviews with workers, reformers, and health officials, and likely even worked as a labourer himself for a short period (Graf, 2020: 911). The book he began writing around Christmas of 1904 was first published in sections in 1905 in the socialist newspaper *Appeal to Reason*, and in book format in 1906 (Arthur, 2006; Coodley, 2023).

After briefly introducing the context and subject of the book, the primary objective of this study is to demonstrate workplace practices related to specific themes concerning labour relations.

5.1 The Books’ Subject

The book’s subject revolves around the experiences of an 11-person family that emigrates from Lithuania to the United States. It’s possible to view American history as a history of immigration. Since the “discovery”, there has been a continuous influx of people into this “new world”. However, if we limit it to our subject, in the middle of the 19th century, intense waves of immigration from Central and Western Europe to the USA took place due to social and political reasons based on the famine in Ireland and the confusion caused by various political revolutionary movements in the continent. Later in the 19th century, the flow was largely fuelled by Eastern and Southern Europeans (Baxter & Nowrasteh, 2021). The family depicted in *The Jungle* was a part of this latter group. In the early 20th century, America was a beacon of hope for desperate individuals worldwide, often dubbed the “land of opportunity.” This is analogous to the “land of opportunity” idea, where New York City was referred to as the “Golden Door” (Ravitch, 1977).

The family members, none of whom know a word of English, encounter numerous unpleasant incidents throughout their journey to America. They fall victim to the exploitation of unscrupulous individuals, among other challenges. Their lives in America, though started with great hopes, spiral into a journey towards the bottom. The author vividly narrates this dramatic journey throughout the book. The power of the book perhaps stems from its portrayal of this journey, which becomes especially evocative due to the depiction of a kind of “survival of the fittest” in the *laissez-faire* system.

5.2 Main Themes

5.2.1 Foreman’s (and Forelady’s) Empire

One of the most common practices in the early stages of human management is the arbitrary governance of persons endowed with specific unwritten powers. These practices are generally known in the literature as “foreman’s empire” (Budd, 2005; Kaufman, 2008, 2009). The foreman is an individual responsible for overseeing a specific operation and arbitrarily procuring personnel for that operation. This arbitrariness describes an unspecialized practice, often accompanied by extensive exploitation. If there are hundreds or even thousands of people waiting to enter a job, but only a few are to be admitted, giving “spoils” to the foreman to get candidates inside becomes an unwritten rule. Foremen not only play an active role in hiring but also during the execution of work processes and even when the connection to the job is severed, continuing their exploitative behaviours. In short, during this period, the management of human resources operated on

dynamics other than rational rules, predefined processes, or merit-based elements.

Upton Sinclair repeatedly highlights these qualities of foremen in the book. The book commences with an extensive wedding chapter. Despite the many joy-dampening financial matters, the happiness of finally achieving the goal is emphasized for the bride and groom. However, on the day following this exhausting wedding, it's revealed that all workers are required to go to work. This includes the bride and groom as well: "There is no exception to this rule, not even little Ona—who has asked for a holiday the day after her wedding day, a holiday without pay, and been refused. While there are so many who are anxious to work as you wish, there is no occasion for incommoding yourself with those who must work otherwise" (p. 21-22). The forewoman Ona has not granted her permission. Another time, Ona becomes seriously ill, yet she still must go to work:

"For two weeks afterward she suffered cruelly—and yet every day she had to drag herself to her work. The forewoman was especially severe with Ona, because she believed that she was obstinate on account of having been refused a holiday the day after her wedding. Ona had an idea that her 'forelady' did not like to have her girls marry—perhaps because she was old and ugly and unmarried herself" (p. 88-89).

It took them two weeks to recover from the post-wedding fatigue, but even then, the day after the wedding, the family's child labourer Stanislovas failed to keep his job: "All that day he stood at his lard machine, rocking unsteadily, his eyes closing in spite of him; and he all but lost his place even so, for the foreman booted him twice to waken him" (p. 86-87).

Sinclair also provides detailed accounts of the mentioned "spoils". Gaining favour with the foreman to get hired required giving them some "gifts".

"Marija came home saying that she had met a girl named Jasaityte who had a friend that worked in one of the wrapping rooms in Brown's, and might get a place for Ona there; only the forelady was the kind that takes presents—it was no use for any one to ask her for a place unless at the same time they slipped a ten-dollar bill into her hand. (...) So in the end Ona, with a ten-dollar bill burning a hole in her palm, had another interview with the forelady" (p. 83-84)

Marija's hiring was possible due to another worker's (Mary) illness. This worker was quite productive but kept coughing due to the illness. "... and when Marija came, the 'forelady' had suddenly decided to turn her [Mary] off. The forelady had to come up to a certain standard herself, and could not stop for sick people, Jadvyga explained" (p. 72). In this section, Sinclair tells how Jonas took the place of a previous worker after he had a work accident, emphasizing "finding a job as a result of the misfortune of others" (p. 73).

Sinclair not only addresses the foremen's behaviour but also discusses the spoils received by the bosses, as depicted through the story of the elderly family member Antanas finding work. All capable family members must work for the family to survive. Under these circumstances, Antanas is also searching for a job. While searching, a man approaches him and asks how much he could pay to get the job. The elderly man is puzzled. The man asking the question suggests that if he gives a third of his wage, he can get the job. The family later investigates what this means. They learn that such behaviours from bosses are common (p. 69).

5.2.2 Child Labour

In the September 1906 issue of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, a story about a Native American chief touring New York City is featured. Upon returning from the trip, the chief is asked what surprised him the most, expecting his response to be about the city's grandeur, towering buildings, and apparent prosperity. However, the most astonishing thing to the chief was the sight of young working children. The article introducing this story also presents the child labour statistics of 1900: 1.7 million children who worked for meagre wages, toiling for ten to fourteen hours a day. The author notes that by the year of writing the article, 1906, hundreds of thousands more were included in this number (Marham, 1906: 480-481) (Sinclair also mentions a similar figure, 1,750,000, p. 85). This issue of the magazine is from the same period in which *The Jungle* was published. The sections in the book concerning child labour provide a more detailed portrayal of the reality described in this article. The Bureau of Labor in America expressed that in 1900, child labour accounted for 20% of all children (Schuman, 2017a). Even though significant regulations to combat child labour were not enacted in the same year the book was written, 1906, important proposals were put forward (Schuman, 2017b).

It is appropriate to say that Sinclair's book contributes to the debates of that time by exposing the grim reality of child labour. He constructs his narrative on the foundation of a large family with many children, aiming to unveil the exploitation of child labour. When the family first arrives in the US, there are six children in the family, constituting half of the members. Later, more children will be born. In the struggle for life and death, the labour of children and the few cents they bring home become the family's last chance.

"Very often a man could get no work in Packingtown for months, while a child could go and get a place easily; there was always some new machine, by which the packers could get as much work out of a child as they had been able to get out of a man, and for a third of the pay" (p. 80).

While labour laws of the time prohibited the employ-

ment of children under sixteen, bypassing this regulation was not difficult. For instance, Stanislovas, a child, is taken to a priest who issues a document claiming he is two years older than his actual age, effectively making him sixteen. Thus, the young boy's fate is determined (p. 84). As the family's situation worsens in the later parts of the novel, resorting to the labour of other children becomes inevitable. The section about two children being sent to sell newspapers paints a clear picture of the conditions of the time, albeit somewhat lengthy:

"So it was finally decided that two more of the children would have to leave school. Next to Stanislovas, who was now fifteen, there was a girl, little Kotrina, who was two years younger, and then two boys, Vilimas, who was eleven, and Nikalojus, who was ten. Both of these last were bright boys, and there was no reason why their family should starve when tens of thousands of children no older were earning their own livings. So one morning they were given a quarter apiece and a roll with a sausage in it, and, with their minds top-heavy with good advice, were sent out to make their way to the city and learn to sell newspapers. They came back late at night in tears, having walked for the five or six miles to report that a man had offered to take them to a place where they sold newspapers, and had taken their money and gone into a store to get them, and nevermore been seen. So they both received a whipping, and the next morning set out again. This time they found the newspaper place, and procured their stock; and after wandering about till nearly noontime, saying "Paper?" to every one they saw, they had all their stock taken away and received a thrashing besides from a big newsman upon whose territory they had trespassed. Fortunately, however, they had already sold some papers, and came back with nearly as much as they started with" (p. 144-145).

Children had to navigate through harsh winter conditions, and if they failed to make their way through snow-covered streets, they would face violence at home. In short, while Sinclair portrays the conditions of that era as an unbearable atmosphere for adults, he paints a much darker picture for children. Photographers have left rich visual records of child labour from this period (Hine & Freedman, 1998; Riis, 2015). Photographer Lewis Hine captured numerous photographs of children working in factories. *The Jungle* also illustrates this dramatic reality in detail through the character of Stanislovas. In fact, the main character, Jurgis, encounters a family member long after leaving home and learns from them that Stanislovas was killed by rats one night while sleeping in the workshop (p. 346).

5.2.3 Occupational Health and Safety

One of the responsibilities carried out by the human resources management function is workplace health condi-

tions and occupational safety. Among the tasks listed for a human resources manager in the International Labour Organization's international standard classification of occupations (ISCO-08) under code 1212 (h), "ensuring compliance with health and safety standards and regulations" is also included (ILOSTAT, 2008). This field under the HRM umbrella encompasses a broad context since it pertains to both workplace accidents and occupational diseases. In the early stages of industrialization, as the field was not yet regulated, motivations such as high production, efficiency, and profitability were prioritized over the lives of workers.

One of the primary emphases in *The Jungle* is workplace health, safety, and hygiene conditions within the Chicago meatpacking industry. Sinclair described the process in meat processing plants, especially the unsanitary conditions, in such detail that these details caused the book to arouse great resonance. In fact, the sentence "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach", which will probably be the first to come across in an ordinary search on this book, is related to this issue. The reason is that the food products are produced under such unhealthy conditions that it would be unlikely not to cause outrage among those consuming these products. However, this sentence also reveals that Sinclair initially thought this outrage would manifest differently. Many passages related to hygiene and OHS (Occupational Health and Safety) can be referred to, but I will focus on highlighting certain sections emphasized from the workers' perspective.

Starting with the conditions leading to the dramatic death of Jurgis' father, elderly Antanas, would be appropriate. For the family to survive, all family members need to contribute by working. Antanas also eventually finds a job after a long search. No matter how severe the conditions, the old man does not complain and continues to work. However, sadly, this results in Antanas being the first lost member of the family:

Then there was old Antanas. The winter came, and the place where he worked was a dark, unheated cellar, where you could see your breath all day, and where your fingers sometimes tried to freeze. So the old man's cough grew every day worse, until there came a time when it hardly ever stopped, and he had become a nuisance about the place. Then, too, a still more dreadful thing happened to him; he worked in a place where his feet were soaked in chemicals, and it was not long before they had eaten through his new boots. Then sores began to break out on his feet, and grow worse and worse. Whether it was that his blood was bad, or there had been a cut, he could not say; but he asked the men about it, and learned that it was a regular thing—it was the saltpeter. Every one felt it, sooner or later, and then it was all up with him, at least for that sort of work. The sores would never heal—in the end his toes would drop off, if he did not quit. Yet old Antanas would not quit; he saw the suffering of his family, and he remembered what it had cost him to get a job. So he tied

up his feet, and went on limping about and coughing, until at last he fell to pieces, all at once and in a heap, like the One-Horse Shay" (p. 90-91).

Sinclair emphasizes throughout the book how employees worked in extremely unhealthy conditions. First and foremost, when the family arrives in Chicago and starts exploring the factory district, we see that the entire neighbourhood is situated near a garbage dump. Later on, both the neighbourhood's and work environment's foul odour is described with a strong emphasis.

"The men who worked on the killing beds would come to reek with foulness, so that you could smell one of them fifty feet away; there was simply no such thing as keeping decent, the most careful man gave it up in the end, and wallowed in uncleanness. There was not even a place where a man could wash his hands, and the men ate as much raw blood as food at dinnertime. When they were at work they could not even wipe off their faces—they were as helpless as newly born babes in that respect; and it may seem like a small matter, but when the sweat began to run down their necks and tickle them, or a fly to bother them, it was a torture like being burned alive" (p. 120-121).

The odour described here, later in the book, would be overshadowed by the stench that clings to Jurgis while he works in the fertilizer plant. This sharp smell makes people avoid him wherever he goes, and getting rid of it is hardly possible. Even if you cut ties with the job completely, it takes days and weeks for it to fade away.

Another family member, Marija, Ona's cousin, loses her job at the cannery and finds work at another cannery. Her job involves slaughtering sick cattle. This job is also filled with risks of disease and accidents:

"She was shut up in one of the rooms where the people seldom saw the daylight; beneath her were the chilling rooms, where the meat was frozen, and above her were the cooking rooms; and so she stood on an ice-cold floor, while her head was often so hot that she could scarcely breathe. Trimming beef off the bones by the hundred-weight, while standing up from early morning till late at night, with heavy boots on and the floor always damp and full of puddles, liable to be thrown out of work indefinitely because of a slackening in the trade, liable again to be kept overtime in rush seasons, and be worked till she trembled in every nerve and lost her grip on her slimy knife, and gave herself a poisoned wound—that was the new life that unfolded itself before Marija" (p. 124).

Indeed, in later sections, we see that Marija injures her hand in a workplace accident and becomes unable to work. "She's cut her hand! (...) She's cut it bad, this time, worse than before. She can't work and it's all turning green, and the company doctor says she may—she may have to have it cut off" (p. 202).

One of the family's disasters was the workplace accident Jurgis himself experienced. While trying to escape from the animals brought for slaughter, Jurgis sprains

his ankle. At first, he doesn't take the accident seriously and continues working. However, as the pain intensifies, he eventually faints, and he has to report his condition to the boss. In order to work again, he needs to recover first, which takes months (p. 136).

Sinclair, particularly through the character of child Stanislovas, highlights child labour and the helplessness of children. The book portrays harsh winters in Chicago, where tough work conditions are coupled with harsh weather conditions. What the family fears most is losing their jobs. The accounting is so delicate that even the loss of one person's income disrupts the balance sheet. On a harsh winter day when the family sets out for the factory before dawn, they fail to reach it and are forced to return home freezing. Stanislovas' fingers are frozen.

"All that day and night the family was half-crazed with fear that Ona and the boy had lost their places; and in the morning they set out earlier than ever, after the little fellow had been beaten with a stick by Jurgis. (...) One of the consequences of this episode was that the first joints of three of the little boy's fingers were permanently disabled, and another that thereafter he always had to be beaten before he set out to work, whenever there was fresh snow on the ground" (p. 142).

Sinclair depicts the factories as a sort of "blood-sucking" monster. This monster immediately places healthy workers in jobs but has a mechanism that discards those who can't endure the harsh conditions. When Jurgis first arrived in America, he easily found work because he was strong and healthy. The employer noticed him and gave him a job. However, as he weakened, finding work became more difficult.

"In the beginning he had been fresh and strong, and he had gotten a job the first day; but now he was second-hand, a damaged article, so to speak, and they did not want him. They had got the best of him—they had worn him out, with their speeding-up and their carelessness, and now they had thrown him away! (...) The vast majority, however, were simply the worn-out parts of the great merciless packing machine; they had toiled there, and kept up with the pace, some of them for ten or twenty years, until finally the time had come when they could not keep up with it any more. Some had been frankly told that they were too old, that a sprier man was needed; others had given occasion, by some act of carelessness or incompetence; with most, however, the occasion had been the same as with Jurgis. They had been overworked and underfed so long, and finally some disease had laid them on their backs; or they had cut themselves, and had blood poisoning, or met with some other accident" (p.147-148).

Under these circumstances, Jurgis is left with no choice but to work at the fertilizer plant mentioned earlier. Sinclair portrays the workers here as people sentenced to death overtime:

“Here they made the blood into albumen, and made other foul-smelling things into things still more foul-smelling. (...) Working in his shirt sleeves, and with the thermometer at over a hundred, the phosphates soaked in through every pore of Jurgis’ skin, and in five minutes he had a headache, and in fifteen was almost dazed. The blood was pounding in his brain like an engine’s throbbing; there was a frightful pain in the top of his skull, and he could hardly control his hands. Still, with the memory of his four months’ siege behind him, he fought on, in a frenzy of determination; and half an hour later he began to vomit—he vomited until it seemed as if his inwards must be torn into shreds” (p. 152-155).

While Sinclair structured his novel *The Jungle* into 31 chapters, it can be divided into two overarching sections when viewed from a bird’s eye perspective. The first section depicts the family’s arrival in America with great hopes and their immediate encounter with harsh realities. This part begins with the family’s determined efforts to establish a foothold in life. As the story unfolds, a sort of journey to “bottom” commences. However, no matter how intense the drama becomes, the family never ceases to imagine a way out. For Jurgis, this struggle to “stand on the line” comes to an end with the death of his son, little Antanas. This event could be seen as a sort of nadir. After this incident, the second half of the story begins for Jurgis, representing a kind of personal journey.

If we were to follow this pattern of division, the second section (Chapter 22 in the book) starts with a sort of “return to nature.” In this part, upon receiving news of his son’s death, Jurgis leaves everything behind and abandons the family. He travels, seizing job opportunities that come his way. He takes up the job of tunnel digging for telephone lines.

“On an average, the tunnelling cost a life a day and several mangleings; it was seldom, however, that more than a dozen or two men heard of any one accident. The work was all done by the new boring machinery, with as little blasting as possible; but there would be falling rocks and crushed supports, and premature explosions—and in addition all the dangers of railroading. So it was that one night, as Jurgis was on his way out with his gang, an engine and a loaded car dashed round one of the innumerable right-angle branches and struck him upon the shoulder, hurling him against the concrete wall and knocking him senseless” (p. 269).

Lastly, under this section, it is pertinent to mention a passage that describes the company’s decision to bring in workers from other cities to continue operations after the union’s strike decision. This passage once again underscores the health risks inherent in the meatpacking industry’s working conditions:

“All day long the blazing midsummer sun beat down upon that square mile of abominations: upon tens of thousands of cattle crowded into pens whose wooden floors

stank and steamed contagion; upon bare, blistering, cinder-strewn railroad tracks, and huge blocks of dingy meat factories, whose labyrinthine passages defied a breath of fresh air to penetrate them; and there were not merely rivers of hot blood, and car-loads of moist flesh, and rendering vats and soap caldrons, glue factories and fertilizer tanks, that smelt like the craters of hell—there were also tons of garbage festering in the sun, and the greasy laundry of the workers hung out to dry, and dining rooms littered with food and black with flies, and toilet rooms that were open sewers” (p. 328).

While the novel extensively discusses workplace health and safety, it also delves into the hygiene of food processing. However, since the focus of this analysis is on working conditions and human resources management, I referred more to passages directly affecting workers. Nonetheless, it’s important to note that one of the reasons the novel had such a significant impact on public opinion after its publication was its descriptions of food hygiene. Despite Sinclair’s intentions, these passages had a profound impact, even unintentionally “hitting the stomach”.

5.2.4 Wages

In his work, David Ricardo, one of the foundational texts of classical economics, explains the concept of “natural wages” in the section on wages. According to Ricardo, just like any other commodity in the market, labour also has a market price and a natural price. The natural price of labour is the price necessary for workers to maintain and sustain their families without an increase or decrease in their numbers. This wage is determined based on the cost of food and other essential needs required by the labourer and their family for subsistence. Ricardo points out that while the market price of labour may deviate from the natural price due to the quantity of labour supply, it tends to gravitate towards the level of the natural wage (Ricardo, 2001: 58). Here, we observe that classical economists treat labour as a simple commodity. They believed that commodities have both market prices and natural prices, with the natural price representing the production cost of the commodity. Consequently, the natural wage of labour (though not easily calculated) corresponded to its reproduction cost (Moore, 1895: 291–292).

In this context, I am not aiming to delve into the extensive debates on natural wages within the labour economics literature. It suffices for our purpose to express that this wage level ensures a minimum level for the reproduction of the workforce. Upton Sinclair emphasizes in *The Jungle* that the wages earned by workers are significantly below this level. One passage ends with two sentences that highlight this situation: “This was in truth not living; it was scarcely even existing, and they felt that it was too little for the price they paid. They were willing to work all the time;

and when people did their best, ought they not to be able to keep alive?" (p. 118-119).

Under this heading, perhaps it would be appropriate to consider wages in the context of discrimination. In this wage regime, which could not even be counted as a natural wage, women and children were even more disadvantaged. Since institutionalized human resources practices were absent, wage records were not well-maintained, and the rightful wage of an employee depended on the attention of the record keeper. If you were underpaid, you had to remain silent. In fact, Marija loses her job for pursuing the missing wages she deserved (p. 122). Marija searches for a job for a month and finally finds work as a cutter in the meatpacking plant. "She got this because the boss saw that she had the muscles of a man, and so he discharged a man and put Marija to do his work, paying her a little more than half what he had been paying before" (p. 124).

I'd like to share two passages related to wages. One of them deals with the methods employers resorted to in order to reduce wages:

"They would get new pacemakers and pay them more; they would drive the men on with new machinery—it was said that in the hog-killing rooms the speed at which the hogs moved was determined by clockwork, and that it was increased a little every day. In piecework they would reduce the time, requiring the same work in a shorter time, and paying the same wages; and then, after the workers had accustomed themselves to this new speed, they would reduce the rate of payment to correspond with the reduction in time! They had done this so often in the canning establishments that the girls were fairly desperate; their wages had gone down by a full third in the past two years, and a storm of discontent was brewing that was likely to break any day" (p. 130).

The second passage emphasizes that the wages are even below the natural wage level mentioned above:

For an unskilled man, who made ten dollars a week in the rush seasons and five in the dull, it all depended upon his age and the number he had dependent upon him. An unmarried man could save, if he did not drink, and if he was absolutely selfish—that is, if he paid no heed to the demands of his old parents, or of his little brothers and sisters, or of any other relatives he might have, as well as of the members of his union, and his chums, and the people who might be starving to death next door. (p. 149).

5.2.5 Other Matters Related to Labour Relations in the Book

Under this heading, I will highlight a few points related to human resource management in *The Jungle*. One of these points is job insecurity. Job insecurity roughly refers to the lack of continuous employment or uncertainty regarding employment continuity. Especially during periods

when labour rights were underdeveloped and human resource management practices were not institutionalized, this insecurity was a fundamental aspect of work life. Although this uncertainty would later diminish in the Fordist work regime, which Zygmunt Bauman (2001) would refer to as the "heavy modern era," job security was far from being the norm during the time *The Jungle* was written. As known, in the Fordist work regime, job security and long-term employment would become the norm, but these securities would disappear again in the post-Fordist era (Bauman, 2004, 2013b, 2013a). In fact, to describe the uncertainties in post-Fordist work life, the term "precarious" would be used, which some authors would define as the deprivation of job security that the proletarians of the Fordist era had enjoyed (Standing, 2021). Returning to the book, finding and maintaining a job are of utmost importance. This is because surviving in the struggle for survival of workers is closely related to job retention. Therefore, even immediately after a special day like a wedding, our main characters have to go to work. Regardless of the reason, whether it's a wedding, a demand for rights, or harsh weather conditions, you know that every moment you don't go to work, someone else could take your place and you could lose your job. The reason for little Stanislovas enduring Jurgis's violence to go to work in cold weather is precisely this.

Another point I will address under this heading is career management. In *The Jungle*, which depicts a working environment far from the Fordist work regime mentioned above, career is not yet a matter dealt with in the long term. One must wait until the second half of the 20th century for that (Greenhaus et al., 2009). It is shown throughout the book that workers' work lives are dependent on the season, market fluctuations, the arbitrary attitudes of foremen or employers, in short, by a thread. However, one passage directly emphasizes the futility of career expectations:

"Jurgis had come there, and thought he was going to make himself useful, and rise and become a skilled man; but he would soon find out his error—for nobody rose in Packingtown by doing good work. You could lay that down for a rule—if you met a man who was rising in Packingtown, you met a knave. That man who had been sent to Jurgis' father by the boss, he would rise; the man who told tales and spied upon his fellows would rise; but the man who minded his own business and did his work—why, they would "speed him up" till they had worn him out, and then they would throw him into the gutter" (p. 70-71).

Lastly, let's conclude this section by emphasizing the blue-collar – white-collar distinction. As is known, as the scale of factories grew, the number of administrative positions needed also increased, giving rise to a sort of administrative class (Braverman, 1998). Although both blue-collar workers (manual labour) and white-collar workers (administrative roles) are sociologically members of the working class, there has always been a disconnect

between these two groups. The image of a white-collar worker is more associated with being educated, performing mental work, and working in clean environments, and is thus idealized as a more skilled employee. On the other hand, being a blue-collar worker is associated with lack of skill, lack of education, and performing manual labour. Therefore, a disconnect, and consequently a hierarchy, is assumed to exist between these two groups. A passage in the book highlights this distinction:

“The managers and superintendents and clerks of Packingtown were all recruited from another class, and never from the workers; they scorned the workers, the very meanest of them. A poor devil of a bookkeeper who had been working in Durham’s for twenty years at a salary of six dollars a week, and might work there for twenty more and do no better, would yet consider himself a gentleman, as far removed as the poles from the most skilled worker on the killing beds; he would dress differently, and live in another part of the town, and come to work at a different hour of the day, and in every way make sure that he never rubbed elbows with a laboring man. Perhaps this was due to the repulsiveness of the work; at any rate, the people who worked with their hands were a class apart, and were made to feel it” (p. 121-2).

6 Discussion: What can We Learn from a Novel in the Context of HRM History?

A novel brings the reader into the world it describes by focusing on the everyday and the mundane. In other words, the narrative of a novel describes a world that the reader is familiar with, a world they live in. Therefore, the characters are not true “heroes” in the literal sense. Characters belong to a league of ordinary individuals that an average reader can include themselves in. To this extent, a novel derives its power from the familiarity of the world it depicts. In fact, the more a novel captures this familiarity or ordinariness, the more it becomes a true novel. In other words, as mentioned earlier, the “averages” presented by a novel appear as authentic to the reader as they seem likely.

Still, isn’t it contradictory for a social science analysis to refer to a novel or artistic representation and attempt to support its claims through it? The answer to this question depends on how you define science, that is, whether you adhere to a strict positivist view of science or a more interpretive definition that allows for interpretation. However, we know that in recent times, sociological studies have made more use of artistic representations than before (Strangleman & Warren, 2008). Since Snow’s (2020) “The Two Cultures”, the number of those emphasizing the intersection of literature and scientific field has been increasing. Literature, in the context of this study, the novel, gains its power partly from its attempt to reflect the av-

erage of the depicted world, and moreover, from the author’s ability to intervene in the world they have created to make this average even more realistic. This has attracted scientists, who are otherwise confined by the rigid rules of scientific knowledge production procedures, to be able to see and present certain details and connections of their research subjects through these artistic representations. For instance, it’s difficult not to marvel at how Orhan Pamuk (2015) managed to capture the inner worlds or voices of the characters in his novel *A Strangeness in My Mind*. The reader might not have been aware of having similar thoughts in similar situations in their own life until they read about these subtleties. Hence, the novel includes the reader in this average and makes them a part of the story. Of course, Orhan Pamuk is just one example; you could also think of many novels by Dostoevsky, for instance.

Yet, we still haven’t reached the question that was posed at the beginning of this section. If a novel can present the familiar world, and furthermore, present details that a scientific perspective might miss, the answer will be relatively clear. Moreover, when you read the novel many years after it was written, the details you read are no longer part of your current world, but rather details of the time the story was set in. In other words, the novel transforms into a kind of historical narrative that conveys the world of its time. When considered in the context of *The Jungle*, the purpose of writing the novel becomes even more significant. As mentioned earlier, Upton Sinclair embarked on a sort of muckraking journalism and aimed to portray what was happening, especially in the workers’ world, in the meatpacking industry from his own perspective. Indeed, these exposé activities, as described above, created a huge impact and accelerated certain legislative actions. These regulations, along with other factors shown in Figure 1, are among the factors that shaped HRM practices. This aspect of the book is related to the factors shaping HRM.

On the other hand, the relationships between the book’s characters and work, as well as work organizations throughout the book, provide abundant details about the management of the human factor in early management practices. The HRM practices we examined individually above are now carried out in a more institutionalized manner that is suitable for the evolved state of HRM today. Nevertheless, it’s possible to say that the novel provides rich data in the context of showing early practices, which is the aim of this study.

Finally, while suggesting that the novel is an important genre in the context of examining the relevant period, it is useful to remind that one should not make the mistake of reading its narrative as an “academic historical text” by completely ignoring its fictional aspect. When social scientists use a novel as material, they should not forget their research purpose and should not engage with it entirely, reading it solely as a reality.

7 Conclusion

In this study, we examined the details related to human resource management presented in *The Jungle* based on the assumption that novels can provide important insights about the period they were written in. In other words, we subjected the novel to a “purposeful” reading. Purposeful reading refers to reading a relevant text within a predetermined thematic context. The main theme determined for this study is human resource management, or more broadly, employment relations. While the novel contains various details, purposeful reading highlighted the aspects related to employment relations.

The period in which the novel was written, an early period where specialized HRM functions did not exist, was known for organizations using arbitrary foreman practices (foreman’s empire) based on discretion to control and manage human resources. This aspect is emphasized throughout the novel.

Furthermore, this period was characterized by intense child labour. Although there were limited regulations to prevent it, these regulations were quite easy to bypass. Sinclair structured the central family in the novel as a large family with many children to vividly depict child labour. The challenges of child labour and the issue of bypassing the aforementioned regulations are openly displayed in the book.

Occupational health and safety are among the most prominently addressed themes in the book. Within this theme, it is appropriate to emphasize two points. First, the direct dangers inherent in the work and the accidents they lead to. The second is the unsanitary conditions in the food processing industry. Sinclair elaborates on both aspects in detail throughout the book. The public reaction to the hygiene issue even exceeded the author’s initial expectations and led to his famous statement: “I aimed at the public’s heart, and by accident, I hit its stomach.”

The book also provides details about the remuneration policies of the period. Regarding wages, it is possible to highlight two aspects. One is that wages are significantly lower than the level of the “natural wage”, and the other is that women and children receive significantly lower wages even when performing the same tasks.

In conclusion, *The Jungle* serves as a significant example of obtaining insights about a certain period from a novel. The novel, to the extent that it reflects the habitus of the period, can become a kind of time machine. It would not be an exaggeration to assert that the discussed novel is ambitious in achieving this.

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