40 Title	**Rethinking the Hawthorne Studies: The Western Electric research in its social, political and historical context**
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Abstract	In primary accounts of the Hawthorne Studies (1924−32), the host organization, Western Electric, is treated as a largely anonymous actor. Through case-based historical research we find such treatment masks the distinctive profile of the company in the years preceding and encompassing the Hawthorne investigations. Besides its significant industrial standing, when Western's reputation for welfare capitalism is considered alongside a tragedy that galvanizes its Hawthorne workforce, the company emerges as an iconic manufacturer with a singular cultural inheritance. Unlike previous retrospective studies, this research explains a range of social and political factors that shaped the Hawthorne Works at this time. In particular, it describes how an ostensibly 'human relations' philosophy had been espoused at Western prior to Elton Mayo's arrival in 1928, but that this outwardly 'progressive' ethos was underpinned by hard-edged paternalism and tough-minded antiunionism. Later, during the 1930s, an increasingly challenging organizational climate developed at Western as a result of the Great Depression coupled with exigent AT&T policies. Findings from this research can be contrasted with 'enlightenment' or 'revelatory' narratives on Hawthorne as expressed in management textbooks. The article offers, at once, fresh insights into the history of Western Electric and new interpretations of the Harvard-influenced research conducted therein.