Part V
Management and organizational history at the margins
As we follow the historic turn (Booth and Rowlinson, 2006; Kieser, 1994) within management and organizational studies (MOS), we can explore not only what has happened and why (or what we can know of it), but also what has not happened and why. In particular, we are interested in the fact that historical accounts of MOS tend to largely focus on American (i.e. US-born and/or based scholars) contributions (Wren & Bedeian, 2009), with occasional references to European (largely UK) contributions (Urwick, 1963).

In this chapter we present the case of Canada and the lack of a distinct body of management theory that acknowledges and considers the country’s differences from the dominant force in MOS – the United States of America. We argue that while ostensibly developing a scientific, rational management science, MOS researchers have developed a body of knowledge that is unconsciously informed and constrained by its context, a context in which the United States dominates. A management theory that has inherent consideration for contextual differences at a societal level has never developed because management science was being developed in such a way that context was never taken into consideration. The theories being formulated applied to all organizations alike, so why would Canadian, or any non-American, organizations be studied separately? Likewise, a management theory, or body of knowledge, specific to Canada has never developed. We specifically posit in this chapter that Canada is distinct enough from the United States that management theory as developed does not fit, and we more generally posit that management theory is so US-centric as to be inapplicable for most other societal contexts.

Problematizing a ‘Canadian’ history

As we set about making our case for a Canadian management theory, we delve into Canada’s past for an understanding of both why a Canadian management theory does not exist, and why we need one. We proceed with the understanding that history is a social construction. We do not question that there is a past in which Canada has developed as a country, but we acknowledge that the past is not ontologically available to us (Munslow, 2010). We do not, and cannot, know that past except through powerful traces of networked, or relational, behaviours (Latour, 2005) upon which we impose a sense of the history. Thus, as we explore the idea of a Canadian management theory through our understanding of the past, we are socially constructing a history...
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that comes together based on the ‘information’ available to us through the works published by historians and other networked traces (e.g. archival materials, newspapers, artefacts, etc.). As our focus in this chapter is to convince management researchers of the differences between Canadian and American business contexts, our history accentuates the differences between the countries and glosses over the similarities. Rather than being ‘the history’ of Canada, this is our history. It has validity in that it is drawn from accepted works, but it is not, and does not claim to be, the whole picture.

As has been argued elsewhere, histories of the development of MOS have played an important role in the construction of the development of the field, creating retrospective accounts of who and what came to constitute the field (Cooke, 2006; Kelley, Mills & Cooke, 2006). In the process, the field of MOS has largely been constructed as an American project, dominated by American theorists (e.g. Taylor, Maslow), schools of thought (e.g. Scientific Management, Human Relations), and key studies (e.g. Mayo and the Hawthorne Studies, Lewin, Lippitt and White’s leadership studies). The most widely known of these histories are themselves authored by US scholars, including George (1968, 1972) and the work of Wren and Bedeian (Wren, 1972; Wren & Bedeian, 2009) whose editions have spanned the 1970s until the present.

It is our intention, both in this chapter and as part of a broader research collective, to develop histories of Canadian management theory. We are interested in both developing (some might argue recovering) a history and also in explaining how and why such a history has been ‘written out’ (Cooke, 1999). In the process we also want to contribute to the deconstruction of (MOS) history in general (Durepos & Mills, 2012), and US management history in particular (Foster, Mills & Weatherbee, 2014b). However, we recognize the tendency that existing histories of management theory have toward declaring themselves representations of the past as it actually happened, and of accepting this reality as the inevitable outcome of the development of management theory (Weatherbee and Durepos, 2010). We differ from this realist perspective in that we acknowledge that we present here only one of many possible histories, that in going forward with the development of a Canadian management theory we recognize it will be relational to our own context (Durepos, Mills & Weatherbee, 2012), and that where existing accounts of management theory present a history, we intend to use history to both make a case for developing a Canadian management theory and to play an important role in establishing what that theory is.

Canadian management theory – or the lack thereof

The lack of Canadian management theory is evident in Canadian business schools from both curriculum and research perspectives. Canadian business students are generally assigned either American textbooks, or ‘Canadianized’ editions of American textbooks. The textbooks and the models within, developed to teach students how to manage in American corporations, are adopted uncritically in Canada (Boothman, 2000). The use of American or Canadianized textbooks perpetuates the belief that management theory as developed in the United States is universal and can be applied in any context. While the textbook is ostensibly universal, studies have shown the influence of context on the development of management education curricula and textbooks, and that the textbook is very much a product of its geographic and temporal context (Foster, Helms Mills & Mills, 2014a; Grant and Mills, 2006; McLaren, 2011; McLaren and Helms Mills, 2010; McLaren and Mills, 2008; McLaren, Mills & Durepos, 2009; Mills and Helms Hatfield, 1998).

Canadian business school faculty are exhorted to publish in ‘top tier’ academic journals to earn tenure and promotion for themselves, and prestige and funding dollars for their university. Those so-called ‘leading’ management journals are strongly positivist and decontextualized,
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English-language, and mainly American. Management journals publish research that adds to the extant literature, incrementally filling in gaps, rather than research that questions dominant assumptions (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2012). The paucity of research focused on Canadians and Canadian organizations suggests that it is not valued by the leading management journals, and Canada’s only MOS journal, the *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, struggles to gain legitimacy as a high-quality academic journal (McLaren and Mills, 2013). This results in Canadian academics feeling that they need to conduct ‘context-free’ (meaning American) research to be successful in their careers in Canadian universities. Similarly, the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada (ASAC), was created to provide a home for Canadian business scholars and research, but has struggled over the years with maintaining a Canadian identity and attracting senior and expert scholars to its membership and conferences (McLaren and Mills, 2013). Canadian business schools themselves are based on the structure of American business schools, and are becoming more American under increasing pressure to earn AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Business Schools) accreditation for both legitimacy and financial reasons (McKee, Mills & Weatherbee, 2005).

**Management theory in Canada**

The impetus for the development of management theory as a formal body of knowledge and an academic discipline came from the United States and was provided, in part, by the influx of Second World War veterans into business schools on the GI bill (Cheit, 1985), the push for professionalization and specialized training of managers by industry (Khurana, 2007), and the perspective of academics that the existing vocational schools of business (based in the universities through University Extension) were unscholarly and a threat to academic legitimacy (O’Connor, 2012).

Both the Second World War and the increasing separation of ownership and control of corporations led to a push for specialized training of managers, as the realization that good managers, who were no longer the owners, were made, not born (Bendix, 1974). The massive managerial effort required to support the Second World War and the subsequent Marshall Plan, also known as the European Recovery Plan, showed that effective management required specific management processes that needed to be learned (Drucker, 1973). As US Second World War veterans flooded into the business schools, which made themselves the most open of the professional and academic schools (O’Connor, 2012), a curriculum needed to be developed and faculty needed to be found. The organizational and efficiency principles developed by the military during the Second World War formed the foundation of the business school curriculum (McFarland, 1964), with the ensuing Cold War years having a strong, and until recently ignored, influence on the research undertaken and the curriculum taught (Grant and Mills, 2006; McLaren and Mills, 2008; Mills and Helms Hatfield, 1998). The faculty were first pulled from related disciplines, such as economics, psychology, and sociology (Khurana, 2007).

Along with the need for individuals in managerial roles to have specialized training, US industry was seeking professionalization for the management profession, to elevate managerial status to the same levels as doctors and lawyers (Khurana, 2007). At the same time, business schools were seeking legitimacy within the academy, and the academy was likewise concerned about increasing the legitimacy of business schools to protect its own reputation (O’Connor, 2012). The search for legitimacy, as both a profession and an academic discipline, led to a concerted effort to develop management theory as a science. In a backlash against the classics-based university that came before, the research-based university was founded on the basis of science, positivism, and empiricism. Rather than being an institution for passing existing knowledge
along to the next generation, the research-based university was a place for knowledge to be created. First the social sciences, and then the business school, adopted the scientific method of inquiry to achieve legitimacy within the research-based university (Kieser, 1994; O’Connor, 2012). The concept of history was written out of management theory as nomothetic, abstract principles were favoured, context was ignored, and teleology and determinism were assumed (Weatherbee, 2012; Zald, 1993).

The immediate post-war years saw the rise of behaviourism in American business schools and an associated influence on the fields of psychology and sociology (Robin, 2001). This was led and exemplified by the RAND Corporation, which for many years was to play an influential role in the development of business theory and the social sciences in the United States (Abella, 2008). In the process the US military played an important role in the funding of behavioural research (Abella, 2008; Deitchman, 1976; Witzel, 2012), as did the large funding bodies such as the Ford and Carnegie Foundations (Abella, 2008; Macdonald, 1956).

Canadian business schools saw similar pressures as those in the United States, with growth through Second World War veterans, pressure for managers to become professionalized, and pressure for the business discipline to achieve legitimacy within the Canadian academy. While American business schools had been developing since the late 1800s, with rapid growth following the Second World War, Canadian business schools were in their early growth stages following the war. The backlash against vocational and professional programmes within the Canadian academy was greater than that in the United States, and Canadian businessmen were sceptical of the value of a post-secondary business education (Boothman, 2000), and of the techniques college-educated managers were bringing to the shop floor (Taylor, 2009). Canadian business schools based their structures on their American counterparts (Austin, 2000), and by the time they were actively recruiting faculty for undergraduate and MBA programmes, US business schools were graduating PhDs in business. The first Canadian business PhD degree was not approved until 1961 (Yavas, Kaynak & Dilber, 1985), so business school faculty consisted of American PhDs, Canadian PhDs from other disciplines, and part-time instructors; deans were either American, or educated in the United States (Boothman, 2000).

With American structures, deans, and faculty came American curriculum and textbooks. The Canadian business degree curriculum was based on textbooks written and published by Americans, and for the most part remains that way today. The small size of the Canadian textbook market means that the publication of distinctly Canadian texts, readings, or cases is not economically viable (Boothman, 2000). Some publishers produce Canadianized editions of American management textbooks (i.e. texts that were originally written for the US market that are subsequently altered to sell in Canada) but differences are generally restricted to simple substitutions of legal requirements of employers, employment rights (McLaren and Helms Mills, 2010), or terminology, such as substituting ‘municipal council’ for ‘county board’ (Fitzgerald and Mills, 2012). The sheer volume of US texts continues to this day to greatly outweigh the number of Canadian texts on offer – although the existing publishers have increasingly produced Canadian and Canadianized texts over the past two decades. While it appears that a call for Canadian content is being answered by publishers, further analysis will be needed to determine how Canadian the content actually is. We view as ‘Canadian’ those texts that are written specifically for Canadian-based university students and faculty by setting out to relate theories of management to the political, economic, and legal systems in place in Canada.

Over time, in continued attempts to legitimize the business school within the academy, business faculty, both American and Canadian, were placed under increased pressure to publish their research in social science-based journals. Tenure and promotion became increasingly dependent on publication in ‘top tier’ journals. The top tier journals for business schools are mainly
American, and strongly favour positivist, quantitative, decontextualized research (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2012). The publishing environment lays strict boundaries on what is acceptable research. Consequently, challenges to the existing bases of management theory – let alone with the assertion that it does not work for Canadians – is unlikely to get published. Top tier journals are far more likely to publish gap-spotting work, rather than work that challenges the status quo (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2012).

Among many obvious reasons as to why a Canadian management theory has never emerged, including the development and dominance of the business school in the United States (Boothman, 2000), and the influence of the Cold War (Hewitt, 2002; Horn, 1999), there lies a more subtle reason. As management theory came to be treated as a science, a perspective that was engaged explicitly to provide legitimization for the discipline and over time became the unquestioned and accepted reality, nomothetic, deterministic, and teleological principles became the expectation (Weatherbee, 2012). Management researchers were seeking the overarching theories that applied to every organization, and every person in that organization, in the same way. Differences in social, political, and economic contexts were either considered only as variables to be controlled or, more often, not considered at all. Researchers were seeking to develop not an American management theory, but a management theory that could be applied everywhere (Rowlinson, Jacques & Booth, 2009). US-based management theory had become universalist management theory.

Context, however, cannot be removed from research into, or the practice of, management. In our situation context applies in two ways – the context in which the researcher is working that is guiding what s/he studies, and the context of the population under study in terms of location, culture, diversity, etc. Canadian business academics work in a context that marginalizes the study of management in Canada as distinct from management in the United States. For hiring, tenure, and promotion, they are expected to publish in American ‘context-free’ journals. In the classroom, they are expected to teach curriculum developed largely in the United States. Research focused on Canadian issues can find a home with ASAC and CJAS, which exist to support Canadian research, but the research published by those outlets is deemed of second or third-tier quality by Canadian business school faculty (McLaren and Mills, 2013). Underlying all of this is the belief that management theory is a science, and therefore existing research applies to both Canadians and Americans equally.

Making the case for Canadian management theory

Setting aside, for the moment, discussion of the nomothetic nature of management theory, and accepting that current management theory is mainly American, one might question if Canada is different from the United States in ways that are relevant to management theory. Canada is often seen as the economically smaller, more polite neighbour to the north and beyond the stereotypical differences (the Great White North) is viewed as essentially American. Is there a need for Canadian management theory?

We present a set of fundamental ways in which Canada differs from the United States to make our case that Canada does need its own management theory, but we are not the first to make this call. In 1957, deans of Canadian business schools met as a formal group for the first time, a meeting which led to the creation of what is now known as the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada (ASAC). In existence, in various incarnations and with a variety of names, for over 60 years, one of the fundamental elements of ASAC’s mission has been to provide a home for Canadian business researchers and to solve the problems distinct to Canada (McLaren and Mills, 2013). A recent study of Cold War influences on Canadian and American business
textbooks (Foster, Helms Mills & Mills, 2014a) found calls from the 1960s for textbooks geared to the Canadian context, and a recognition that the contexts differ:

One consideration prompting this book was that many good texts in this field are written by Americans for the American scene, with consequently no allowance for the fact that our constitutional structure, trade and balance of payments picture, banking system, government regulations, system of taxation, degree of foreign ownership, size of market, and business laws are very different.

(Pugsley, 1965, as quoted in Foster, Helms Mills & Mills, 2013: 654)

In Boothman’s end of the twentieth century analysis of Canadian management education he raises the complaints of students and practitioners that “business faculty give grossly inadequate attention to the actual organizational traits and environmental framework of ‘Canadian’ capitalism” (2000: 304).

At a broader Canadian level, from 1972 to 1976 Thomas H. B. Symons chaired the Commission on Canadian Studies, whose mandate was to study and to make recommendations on the state of teaching and research in various fields of study relating to Canada at Canadian universities. The resulting report, To Know Ourselves, found that “[i]t would be a betrayal of their social and intellectual functions if Canadian universities failed to contribute substantially to an understanding and amelioration of Canada’s distinctive problems” (Symons, 1978: 19). Across disciplines throughout Canadian universities many felt that Canadian problems were “almost by definition of only second-rate importance” (Symons, 1978: 26) and were failing to study Canadian problems. Scientists viewed publishing in Canadian journals “as an act of charity” (Symons, 1978: 108). Specific to business, Symons found that while there is no country in the world in which business has occupied a more central role in national development, Canadian business and management have received far too little detailed study (Symons, 1978).

Looking back

Canada differs from the United States in fundamental ways: the country developed as a resource-based economy with significant amounts of foreign investment; while geographically large in size it has a small population spread across its southern border, divided regionally by cultural, linguistic, political, and economic differences; and it is a welfare state with a history of strong activist governments and an electorally-viable social democratic political party. This political, economic, and cultural context has a strong influence on how organizations operate and people are managed, and there needs to be management theory that fits the context, explains the behaviours, and helps Canadian organizations be successful. At the same time, some aspects of the context have contributed to the dominance of American management theory in Canadian business schools and organizations.

We briefly introduce some aspects of Canada’s history and context here, to begin to illustrate how fundamentally management in Canada is impacted by its context. The history of Canada and its relationship to the United States is obviously far more detailed, complex, and nuanced than we can present in this chapter, and we recognize that in selecting a few differences on which to focus, and in simplifying them, we are creating our own history.

Economic protectionism

Geographic size notwithstanding, Canada’s population has been consistently about one-tenth the size of the United States, with the majority of Canadians dwelling within 100 miles of the
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US border (Thompson and Randall, 2008). The significantly larger population of the United States, and the position of the United States on the world stage, has created an ongoing power imbalance between the two countries, economically, politically, and culturally. Canada’s economic growth and development since the 1500s has been based on its natural resources, with wealth coming from fisheries, furs, forests, agriculture, minerals, oil, and hydro-electricity (Martin and Milway, 2012). Rather than developing secondary industries to manufacture products from the resources, early Canadian business leaders were more interested in extracting and trading the raw materials (Craib, 1986). Canada’s resources have been developed primarily through foreign investment, in the beginning British and French, in the post–First World War years mainly American (Taylor, 2009), and now still mainly American, with China playing an increasingly greater role in the past two decades.

The Canadian government has enacted a long history of activist and interventionist measures to protect Canada from dominance by the United States and to bring other foreign investment into the country. The National Policy, brought into effect in 1878 (Granatstein, 1983), created protective tariffs for domestic manufactured goods and a national railway for market development (Taylor, 2009). As the tariff system protected products, rather than producers, it encouraged American companies to set up branch plants in Canada, injecting foreign capital and employing Canadians. At the same time, however, Canadian manufacturers struggled to compete with the branch plants that could draw on the financial resources and experience of American–owned companies. Canadian entrepreneurship, innovation, and risk-taking was discouraged by the National Policy through both the foreign-owned branch plants (Craib, 1986) and the protection of Canadian business from foreign competition (Granatstein, 1983), the impacts of which we are still seeing today (Martin and Milway, 2012). Branch plants also had implications for research and development (R&D) and innovation in Canada. The responsibility of a branch plant was to penetrate the local market with a product that had been developed by the parent company (Craib, 1986), and as such subsidiaries were rarely equipped with R&D capabilities (Taylor, 2009). At the same time, the best and brightest Canadians were being recruited to US and multinational firms, not Canadian.

Social welfare
Along with being an activist state in terms of protectionism, Canada has also developed a strong ideological foundation as a socialist welfare state. Canada’s move toward socialism actually followed the Americans, as Canadians and Canadian governments followed both the American Populist era and the implementation of the New Deal (Boyko, 2010; Taylor, 2009). Where the post–Second World War era in the United States saw a turning away from socialism and the rise of big business, in part in response to the Cold War, the fear of a return to the Great Depression led Canadians to demand jobs, security, and a good standard of living. Canada’s first socialist–democratic party, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), promised Canadians social security, and indeed was the party that introduced socialized healthcare to Canada during the time that they held the provincial government in Saskatchewan. Recognizing the importance of the welfare state to Canadians, it was the Liberal government of Mackenzie King that responded (Granatstein, 1983). Canada’s welfare state now includes a national healthcare system, a national pension plan, unemployment insurance, a welfare system, and provincially–run and subsidized post-secondary education.

We see again how the context in which Canadian versus American organizations exist differs drastically. At an explicit level, the influence of national healthcare to Canadian organizations, relative to the expectation that American organizations provide medical insurance to employees, must have had, and is still having, a huge impact on management theory areas of research such
as, to name only a few, employee motivation, organizational culture, and productivity. At an ideological level, employees who believe in the value of the welfare state are a different group of people than those who believe in individual rights over the collective. These differences must be taken into consideration when understanding how to manage.

**Diversity**

Canada is a country composed of distinct regions which are reflected politically, culturally, and economically. Economically and politically businesses deal with multiple levels of government, with some regulatory structures provincial, some federal, and some both. As regulations differ between levels, business owners struggle to understand their implications, but can also choose which jurisdiction is most favourable to their operations (Taylor, 2009). The National Policy, put in place to protect Canada from American dominance, was also purposively crafted to bring the disparate regions of Canada together (Thompson and Randall, 2008), through the construction of trans-Canadian railway systems and strong support for immigration to western Canada.

Alongside the cultural differences between Atlantic Canada, Ontario, the prairies, and western Canada, lie the official legislation of Canada as a French-English bilingual country and its pursuit of a policy of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism in Canada refers to “the presence and persistence of diverse racial and ethnic minorities who define themselves as different and who wish to remain so” (Dewing, 2009: 1). In the 2006 Canadian census, more than 200 different ethnic origins were reported, 19.8 per cent of the population had been born outside of Canada, the visible minority population was 16.2 per cent, and allophones (having a mother tongue other than English, French, or an Aboriginal language) were at 20.1 per cent of the population (Dewing, 2009). Canada is known as a cultural mosaic relative to the American melting pot, and strives to integrate immigrants into Canada without asking them to give up their cultural distinctiveness. While it is acknowledged that maintaining cultural diversity has not translated into integration of races and ethnicities throughout all levels of Canadian society (Porter, 1965), the diversity is still a factor that needs to be understood within organizations.

As workplace diversity is becoming a matter of concern for both academics and practitioners within the new global marketplace, Canada has a long history of dealing with diversity issues as a result of cultural differences between regions, official national bilingualism, and strong immigration rates into a country that ideologically espouses ethnic integration rather than ethnic suppression. What can we, as management theorists, learn from how Canadian organizations handle diversity and what value could we bring to Canadian organizations by understanding their specific diversity needs?

**Looking forward**

Understanding how and why the Canadian context differs from the United States, and therefore why a Canadian management theory would have had value for Canadian organizations, is the first step in moving from a purely scientific, context-free model of management theory. Using this understanding, and our understanding of Canada, we can look forward and assess the Canadian context with an eye to exploring how the current context may be influencing the business world and what direction our research should take to provide value to Canadian business practitioners.

Traces of a body of work that can be termed Canadian management theory can be found. Canadian management textbooks published in the 1960s reflect Canada’s slightly more moderate stance on the Cold War through acknowledgement of communism as an alternative to capitalism, and Canada’s welfare capitalism through the acknowledgement of legitimate forms
of organization other than the free enterprise, such as cooperatives and Crown corporations. This is in comparison to American textbooks of the same decade, in which neither communism nor organizational forms other than free enterprise were discussed (Foster, Helms Mills & Mills, 2014a). We see here empirical evidence of the influence of ideological differences on management practice and theory.

Management practice, while yet to be studied specifically, must differ in many ways between the two countries as Canadian organizations work within different regulatory environments, with a different population demographic embedded within different ideological frameworks, and within a different economic reality. A Crown corporation does not function in exactly the same way as a for-profit corporation, and as Crown corporations play a large role in the Canadian economy there must be different management practices in use than are currently accounted for in the American management theory that we have adopted as our own.

Based on their work with the Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity, Roger Martin and James Milway published the book *Canada: What It Is, What It Can Be* (2012), an assessment of Canada’s past economic performance, the three drivers of productivity and innovation, and how to take Canada’s economy to a higher level of sophistication. The book alone provides a strong argument for a need for Canadian management theory. Let’s look at some specifics. Martin and Milway (2012) contend that, for a variety of historical reasons, Canada is currently a strong country, both economically and in terms of happiness. They contend, though, that also for a variety of historical reasons, over the past few decades Canada has begun falling farther and farther behind countries such as the United States, Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands in terms of economic prosperity, competitiveness, and innovation. They posit that Canadians trail in innovation measures, that we are slow in adopting new technologies, that fewer Canadians live in metropolitan areas as compared to Americans, that Canadians lack competitive intensity, that we have significant amounts of regulation protecting us from intense foreign and domestic competition, that we under-invest in both technology and education, and that we do not adequately recognize the importance of management for innovation.

If any of their conclusions have a basis in fact (which we think they do), why would Canadian management academics ever assume that research done in an American context, with American participants, embedded in American ideologies, develop theory that is valuable for solving problems in Canadian industry? If Canadians are falling behind in innovation we need to understand why it is happening and how to fix it. Or, maybe a greater understanding of Canadians would lead us to the conclusion that there is nothing to fix. Martin and Milway (2012) assert that Canadian workers are less productive because those with higher education and higher incomes choose to work fewer hours over the course of a year than American workers of similar education and income levels. They think that there is greater financial return for highly-skilled Americans to work more hours than for Canadians, so Canadians choose to work fewer hours because they will not be financially rewarded at a high enough level. Their explanation of the productivity gap treats Canadians and Americans as having the same underlying goals – earning as much money as possible, as efficiently as possible. Maybe, though, highly-skilled Canadians choose to work fewer hours than Americans because the hours that they do work earn them enough money to meet their desired standard of living, and that they value life outside of work more than they value higher financial standing; significant sociological reasons for the difference. We have no way of knowing which explanation is correct, or, most likely, what combination of the two reasons, without studying Canadian workers in their Canadian context.

The introduction to Canada that we have presented in this chapter raises questions around, to name but a few, issues such as the National Policy and its impact on Canadian entrepreneurship, risk-taking, and innovation; Canada’s welfare state ideology and organizational culture,
motivation, and form; Canada’s response to the Cold War and organizational form and labour relations; Canada’s economy and population size and organizational form, risk-taking, and innovation; Canada’s federal and provincial governments and organizational form and innovation; Canada’s regional and ethnic diversity and workplace diversity, creativity, and innovation; and the impact of all of these factors on the integral management issue of power.

Conclusion

While management theory is espoused as scientific, deterministic, and teleological (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), the growing body of work incorporating history into both the analysis of existing theory and the development of new theory is showing the contextual and relational nature of the body of knowledge, and changing our understanding of what it means to develop management theory (Witzel, 2012). In this chapter we have presented a history of the development of management theory that illustrates the influence of the political, social, and economic situation during which the main body of knowledge was being developed, and we have drawn specific attention to the lack of a distinct Canadian management theory. We then briefly presented some fundamental elements of Canada’s past that have created a distinct context from that of the United States, and explored how those differences have created a context in which business and management is done differently. Finally, we look forward at Canada’s economic future and posit a few areas, out of many possibilities, in which studying the Canadian business and organizational context as distinct from the United States would be of great benefit to Canada. All of this is undertaken while maintaining awareness that in ‘creating’ a Canadian history we do so as actors embedded within our own networks, needs, and goals.

Moving forward we see many avenues of study for individuals interested in taking up the call to develop a Canadian management theory. One of the current concerns being raised by Canadian industry and government is the lack of innovation in Canada, an issue that can be directly tied to the National Policy and Canada’s history of protectionism. We are confident that many more of the concerns in Canadian industry today can be traced back, in part, to Canada’s historical context. In understanding why we are in our current situation, we can begin looking forward to how to develop theory that works for Canadian organizations. We also believe that there are many elements of management practice in Canada that differ from that in the United States, and from commonly-accepted management theory. Determining what those differences are, and why, forms the basis of our new Canadian management theory project.

The American influence on management education and dominance of management theory is not restricted to Canada. A 2004 symposium on the Americanization of European management education published in the Journal of Management Inquiry presents historical and comparative perspectives on the Americanization of form and content in management education (Üsdiken, 2004) in four distinct European regions: the Nordic countries (Engwall, 2004), Britain (Tiratsoo, 2004), Germany (Kieser, 2004), and Mediterranean Europe (Kipping, Üsdiken & Puig, 2004). One of the ways in which the European situation differs from the Canadian is that each of the regions had developed its own business, or economic, education systems prior to the dominance of the United States, and each has slowly, to varying extents and in varying ways, been adopting American form, content, and research. Wanderley and Faria (2012) have recently published an analysis of the suppression of management theory from South America due to epistemic coloniality. Their specific argument is that if Americans considered all knowledge legitimate, rather than unilaterally imposing their own knowledge on everyone else, the crisis of legitimacy in strategic management could have been avoided through the acknowledgement and use of the work of Celso Furtado in response to, and conjunction with, that of Alfred Chandler.
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We, as Canadians, will undertake empirical work to move forward into a deeper and more detailed understanding of Canadian history and its influence on a Canadian management theory, as well as the development of a Canadian management theory. At the same time we put forth a call for management scholars from other regions, including the United States, to understand how and why their management theory has developed as it has, and to begin the process of developing a body of knowledge that takes into consideration, at all levels, our contextual differences. As theories are interesting and influential when they challenge dominant assumptions in significant ways (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2012), we believe that in calling for a body of literature that develops a Canadian management theory, and in extending that call beyond Canada to all contexts, we are calling for management scholars to undertake interesting and influential work.

References


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