Introduction

At an Academy of Management symposium in 2005 (Gibson et al., 2005), several participants who have been influential in either writing Organizational Behavior textbooks or writing about the history of management complained that what they termed ‘chapter two’ — the obligatory history chapter of these texts — was becoming shorter and shorter. Why might this be, since with every year that passes the field’s past becomes more extensive? One answer might be that the management disciplines are a science and a science is judged on its current body of knowledge — its data-based findings and their fit with theory. The past is of casual interest only, the story of our errors, our progressively declining ignorance. If ‘chapter two’ is dying, that simply leaves more space for useful knowledge.

Another answer might be that perhaps it deserves to die because it says nothing of interest. It is not history per se that is irrelevant, it is the specific history found in ‘chapter two’. Industrialization and the changes in authority in work organizations which accompanied it caused civil wars in Russia, Germany, Japan, England, and France. They nearly caused a second civil war in the United States two generations after a first war of industrialization that remains today more devastating to the country than both world wars and Viet Nam combined. Could the history of industrialization and the practices called management, which emerged from this crucible, possibly be this uninteresting?

This chapter queries and critiques the discursive construction and embedded values of the currently-dominant ‘chapter two’ histories of management, problematizing both their content and the way in which the content is ordered or emplotted (White, 1973, 1985). White’s theory of emplotment addresses how facts and traces get ordered into a story form, thus how actual stories are carved out of mere chronicles of events. He shows that plot structure (‘modes of emplotment’) is actively chosen by historians and influences the explanatory power of the historical construction. We argue that the way in which the past of management knowledge is created, written, and emplotted powerfully shapes the conditions of possibility and emancipatory potential of our discipline in the present and future.
A history of management histories

This chapter proceeds in three sections. First, we propose that management and organization studies fail to deal adequately with their disciplinary past. Not only are histories of management and organization studies few and far between, those that do exist share the discursive qualities of ‘chapter two’. These are inadequate in that they are simplistic and detached from both the context in which the events took place and their context of production. Due to the latter, they ignore the ideological forces at work in their construction.

Drawing on this point, we aim to show in the second section of the chapter that most extant histories of management are outcomes of an ideology shaped by conditions specific to modernism (Ermarth, 1992; Jenkins, 1999), which constitute a rigid prescription for ordering – emplotting – the events (White, 1973; Jenkins, 1995) which currently make up the dominant history of management. Modernist histories, according to Jenkins (1997) are characterized as those that are realist, objectivist as well as self-referential. Management histories that adopt a modernist mode of emplotment to create a particular order and convey the past of our discipline lead to histories that have a scientistic slant and appear timeless, universal, linear, progressive, and value-neutral (Ermarth, 1992; Jenkins, 1999). These histories portray our current condition as an unquestioned and uncontested outcome of our past – and in doing so presume an essence of certainty or false necessity (Unger, 1986). This mode of emplotting the history of management has consequences for how we come to know our past and our present and conditions how we come to know our future. Thus in the third section of the chapter, we discuss the consequences of adopting a modernist mode of emplotment.

The shrinking ‘chapter two’ of management textbooks

Over a century and a half ago, Freeman Hunt, a notable business author of his time, thought it would be “no great task” to create what he called a “Handbook of Mercantile Practice” and from this to construct “a true theory of business” (Hunt, 1857: vi). Since that time, it has been more or less continually announced in millenarian fashion that knowledge in this area was on the verge of becoming a true science (Jacques, 1996). Nowhere is this truer than in ‘chapter two’, which inevitably describes the history of management knowledge as a crawl out of the primordial ooze. On the one hand, management has presumably always existed; Robbins (1990: 36), in one of the most popular textbooks in the field, finds the roots of management knowledge in Leviticus. On the other hand, Bowditch and Buono (2005: 7), in another durably popular text, simply find the entirety of humanity, “largely biased against the concept of managing organizations efficiently and effectively” – except, that is, for Americans in the twentieth and present centuries.

‘Chapter two’ positions invariably give the impression that we slogged along in darkness and ignorance for two million years, until the dawn of Scientific Management. Then, in three generations, we developed humanistic theories of organizing exemplified by the ‘Hawthorne Effect’ studies, progressed to a Weberian understanding of bureaucracy, moved from closed-system to open-system thinking, advanced yet further into more sophisticated contingency theory, and are now just putting the final touches on (this valediction is invariable) – a true science of organizing. Is our story simply one of steady progress, a natural evolution of technical expertise, or has the construction been a more active, more values-based process? Consider these examples from the ‘chapter two’ canon:

- Henry Mintzberg’s ‘classic’ study: It has become mandatory to refer to this study of what managers ‘really’ do (Mintzberg, 1968, and successor publications) as a classic and it is so, in terms of canonization. It has been cited tens of thousands of times. What is the basis of the ‘scientific’ knowledge in this study? Observation included only an \( n = 5 \) convenience sample of
five relatively homogeneous, male, Canadian CEOs known to the author through family connections, yet Mintzberg (1971) claims that this study describes managers universally, from first-line supervisors to top management and ‘chapter two’ has canonized this wild extrapolation as fact. At best, this might be considered a severe problem of external validity, at worst, mere propaganda.

- **The Hawthorne Studies: Management and the Worker** (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939) was published fully 12 years after the Hawthorne experiments concluded, yet one does not find the legendary ‘Hawthorne Effect’ referred to within its 615 pages. There is little doubt that the phenomena which have subsequently been given that name did occur, yet why did they occur and why are only a few pages of a voluminous, landmark study canonically taught in business schools? Gillespie (1993) chronicles the construction of the Hawthorne legend and its artificial constriction to the supposed ‘Hawthorne Effect’ and the alleged discovery of the ‘informal organization’ (which was already both known and discussed prior to that time as documented in Jacques, 1996).

- **Theories X and Y**: Everyone who has studied management knows that McGregor divided management styles into two styles, X and Y – the problem is that this is clearly NOT what he was trying to discuss. Writing in 1960, McGregor invites the reader to consider that over all of history, there have only been two fundamental changes in sources of authority and that a third – which we would now probably call the post-industrial – was then just dawning. “The purpose of this volume is not to entice management to choose sides over Theory X or Theory Y. It is … to urge management to examine its assumptions and make them explicit” (McGregor, 1960: 246). McGregor was characterizing management styles of the past as X and Y and explicitly encouraging the reader to speculate on what the future might hold beyond these modes of authority. This is stated explicitly in *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960), whose canonical role in ‘chapter two’ functions to support a point quite contrary to that of the author. This is discussed in more detail in Jacques (1996) and Stager Jacques (2006).

- **Eustress/distress**: Any good student of management knows the inverted-U shaped model of stress, based on the Yerkes-Dodson Law, which incorporates the term ‘eustress’ introduced by endocrinologist Hans Selye. According to the ‘chapter two’ interpretation of this model, employees should be tuned like violin strings to have the optimum, not the minimum, of stress. This is quite convenient for managers, as it provides a ‘scientific’ rationale justifying stress in work groups without providing a metric for determining what is optimal. Once again, however, the original evidence seems to be a great distance from this construction. According to historical research done by Le Fevre, Matheny, and Kolt (2003), the ‘chapter two’ construction of the relationship of stress to performance is questionable for both construct validity and accurate reading of the original source materials:

  Selye’s concept of eustress or ‘good stress’ appears to be largely ignored in the literature, while the Yerkes Dodson Law is illustrated as a model for management practice. We suggest that the meaning assigned to the word stress has shifted from Selye’s original formulation, and that this shift, in conjunction with the use of the Yerkes Dodson Law leads to inappropriate management of stress in organizations.

  *(Le Fevre, Matheny, and Kolt, 2003: 726)*

- **Group dynamics**: Organizational reality is a group reality and anyone who has attempted to direct a group knows that they have a quality that is more than the mere sum of the individual participants. This is significant because, in work settings, the individual is insignificant; work is done by groups. At the other end of the telescope, the structural view of the organization
is hypothetical. ‘Apple’ does not go to China; a marketing group does or a manufacturing group … it is always a group. One might expect, then, that the teaching of management would centre on competency in managing groups, yet this topic is so peripheral as to be almost nonexistent in business teaching. “Most of the mistakes I made [dealing with groups as a new manager] … were made after completing my MBA!” (Jacques and Hobson, 2011: 30).

• A rigorous ‘behavioral scientist’ might criticize Bion’s foundational Experiences in Groups (1961) as subjective and anecdotal, despite the fact that it also showed keen insight into the phenomenon of ‘groupness’. However, even these supposed limitations would fit with the evolutionary narrative character of ‘chapter two’, because the study of groups very quickly took on the form of an experimental science (e.g. Cartwright and Zander, 1968). A decade later, however, small group research could already be discussed largely in the past tense: “What’s happened to small group research?” (Lakin, 1979). In yet another decade, those in this tradition, still marginal, discuss attempting to “reclaim the relevance and vitality of small group analysis” (Gillette and McCollom, 1990: 2). Their story is barely a footnote in ‘chapter two’. Scientific rigour, it would seem, has not prevented this potentially vital stream of inquiry from developing rigor mortis. If organization studies is a scientific discipline and if groups are central to the phenomena we must understand, this raises two questions: (1) How/why has the study of groups become so marginal when the group phenomenon is central to organizing itself? and (2) Why has scientific rigour been named as a cause of this marginalization, rather than an antidote, not by critics of this work, but by advocates (cf. Lakin, 1979: Introduction)? The natural evolution of technical knowledge does not seem an adequate answer.

• Personality vs. organization: “[W]e conclude that the needs of the healthy individual (in our culture) tend to be incongruent with the maximum expression of the demands of the formal organization” (Argyris, 1957: 229). The subtitle to this book is The Conflict Between System and the Individual. In the present-day canon, Argyris is justly remembered as a major figure in the development of management knowledge, but how is he remembered? As an Action Researcher, as a figure in Organizational Development, as a theorist of the knowledge organization – NOT as a figure discussing power and conflict. It seems his claim that organizations are toxic to our well-being has been gently erased from history.

• Behaviorism: In a discipline based on empirical findings, we might expect to find a great deal written on Behaviorism, since we demonstrably both produce and respond to operant conditioning stimuli every day in innumerable ways. Yet, Behaviorists, despite possessing a strong experimental tradition, receive short shrift in ‘chapter two’, being generally treated as extremists at best, sinister characters at worst. A reading of Beyond Freedom and Dignity (Skinner, 1971) shows quite a different picture. The author invites us to consider that our social world already shapes our actions through operant conditioning. He is not the harbinger of a dystopian future, but a messenger inviting us to reflect on how we might most effectively achieve the greatest good for the greatest number in the operant-conditioning present. Try to find an extended discussion of Behaviorism in a management text. You will be disappointed (cf. Stager Jacques, 2006 for elaboration). In a discipline nominally based on the value-free accumulation of testable fact, this outcome is anomalous.

These are not the only examples we could produce, but they are sufficient to indicate that something is going on in the way we tell our history that goes beyond merely the compiling of tested and valid findings. Our point is not so simplistic as to argue that the dominant mythology of management history is ‘wrong’ or to suggest that it could possibly be replaced by a story that is ‘right’. Our goal is to demonstrate that every story we could possibly tell is contestable, to show that what we believe about our past is power-laden because it conditions the questions we will ask, the answers we will generate, and the actions we will take in the future.
A critique and contextualization of what is currently present in ‘chapter two’ is not sufficient without some discussion of what is absent, such as the Group Dynamics tradition mentioned above. After all, the “question of what the history of management has been is far less interesting than why we have told the story in certain ways … and what such tales cause us to see – and not see” (Jacques, 1997: 1). Our work is inevitably shaped as much by what we omit as by what we include. In a review of Wren’s Early Management Thought, Jacques (1997: 2, 4) states in part that:

In short, what is generally missing from these selections is anything that might contravene expectations set by exposure to the mainstream folklore about the universality of management knowledge, its quasi-natural ‘evolution’ and its separation from questions of social power and privilege … Industrialization has also been the site of emergence of modern feminism, unionism, and a radically transformed and redeployed professionalism. It produced the Salvation Army and the Settlement movement. Wesley, Penn, the Cadburys and the ‘Protestant ethic’ of capitalizing time provided both an ethical basis for and a moral mandate to capitalize the work of the individual (cf. Langton, 1984) while Social Darwinism, and Eugenics provided a context for the industrial ‘discovery’ of a new (and conveniently hierarchical) ‘human nature’. Trusts, monopoly power and public outcry (cf. Tarbell 1902 and the other ‘muckrakers’ of the Progressive movement).

This selection from a much longer list of omissions strongly suggests that such omissions are not random; they have a pattern which produces the illusion that one has a comprehensive knowledge of a past that is much more complex and indeterminate than our neat impression of it suggests. It is quite easy for omissions to be passively misleading, precisely because they are not there for examination. For example, Jacques (1997: 3) also notes:

[A] tendency to underrepresent female contributors in these selections as well. Admittedly, management writing in the time period represented was largely a boys’ game, but Mary Marshall, who is represented, hardly constitutes the scope of women’s contributions. Without effort, the examples of Katherine Blackford, Lillian Gilbreth, Jane Adams, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Ida Tarbell and especially Mary Parker Follett come to mind. This is particularly important in a collection of source documents because one of the sustaining arguments of patriarchal history is that women cannot be included because women were not permitted to participate and their lack of participation is circularly legitimated by their non-inclusion.

Since a signature feature of omissions is that their absence leaves no trace, in order to see them one must do the legwork of studying, if not primary sources, at least varying interpretations. Hunt (1857), for example, could afford himself the luxury of writing simply about the pragmatics of doing business. This does not mean that the problem of getting a group of people to achieve a planned outcome was not as thorny a problem then as it is now. However, ‘management’ was not yet an object of discourse, so its absence does not leave a trace. Indeed, even the 1901 I.C.S. Business Man’s Handbook (International Correspondence Schools) which purports to offer encyclopedic advice to the business ‘man’, does not index ‘management’ nor contain a single entry about managing people. So, does the story of management begin at the same point as the need to manage organizational outcomes? It appears not. The story detailed in the paragraphs that follow is also missing from the contemporary ‘chapter two’ of management textbooks.
The emergence of management

What is now called management emerges from several major forces related to American industrialization beginning in the 1870s and largely complete by 1920 (Jacques, 1996; Chandler, 1977). During this period, society was radically transformed from one of self-employed small business people to one of ‘wage slaves for life’ or, as we now habitually call them, ‘employees’. During this period, stories of the development of management could not simply treat the problem as a practical question of getting the job done. First, such stories had to address the issue of *legitimation*.

Contrary to the bland impressions given by compilations such as Wren (2004) or Wren and Bedeian (2008), ‘chapter two’, management did not just happen. As worker groups organized, their unions did not initially fight merely for wages and hours; they fought over who would get to control the process of production, what we now refer to as ‘management’. Factory ownership struggled to keep things moving with annual turnover that was generally well above 100 per cent. ‘Welfare workers’ sought to change the destitute conditions of the average worker. Jacques (1996: 59) describes this period as an American “Reign of Terror” when traditional meanings that had sustained communities from early colonial times became “unbundled from practices” with, for a time, no new order of things to replace them. Now, the problem was not merely a pragmatic one of getting work done; it required a legitimating narrative to hold society together.

Responding to this turmoil, early representatives of management expertise – Systematic Management, Scientific Management, the ‘Management Movement’ (Litterer, 1959/1985; Taylor, 1911; Blackford and Newcomb, 1914) – made light of the fact that they represented a new source of power in ‘the works’, a shift of control away from the foreman and in the direction of technical experts representing the employer. Among the large financial interests, which were producing the ‘trusts’ – businesses so large that Americans of a generation before could not have imagined them – the rallying cry was ‘rationalization’. A central figure, financier J. P. Morgan, had been educated in Europe and had interests that went beyond mere wealth (although he found plenty of that). ‘Morganization’ of the steel, oil, and other industries was often portrayed by the public as rape, but the interests Morgan represented spoke of eliminating ‘destructive competition’ and ‘rationalizing’ essential resources (Jacques, 1996). Neither position is a complete truth, nor is either entirely fanciful.

Early proponents of Scientific Management minimized the degree to which they were marginalizing the foreman, the traditional source of power on the factory floor, and emphasized that if production were put on a scientific basis, the worker would have – not less authority – but greater pay and reduced physical effort. A predominant theme pervading the narrative of legitimation of this power shift is education. Workers are not hostile; they are ignorant. The foreman hates the Taylor system because he doesn’t understand the best way to do the work, not because it turns him from a person of authority into a proletarian. The human being in the factory is not just a factory ‘hand’, but a ‘resource’ to ‘develop’ (Blackford and Newcomb, 1914).

Another theme in the narrative of legitimation is fairness. From the writings of Scientific Management, through the stories told by such notables as Carnegie (1920), Ford (1922), even Sloan of General Motors (1963), we find legitimation based on the technical determination of what is putatively the one, best way to deal with production processes, wages, and working conditions. This effectively silences the fight that was going on between labour and employers for authority within the factory. The appeal to a nonexistent and unachievable standard of objective truth paves over the very possibility of class, occupational or cultural differences with the promise of, “[P]rosp[erity] for the employee coupled with prosperity for the employer” (Taylor, 1911: 72) as well as society as a whole, “[I]n the end the whole people receive the greater part of the benefit … increasing … the prosperity of the civilized world” (Taylor, 1911: 136).
As edifying as this story of management history may have been to some parties it was not the only story available. Other stories were told in disciplines outside the discourse of management, disciplines which were then and remain today largely unheard in the business school (see for example Wiebe, 1967; Hays, 1957; Prude, 1983; Andreano, 1962). From these stories we see a less benign transition from a peasant America to an industrial power, one in which the social fabric frayed so badly that it nearly tore violently apart as it had in 1861. For example, in the decade of the 1890s, the US National Guard, nominally a defence militia, was called out against labouring Americans over 500 times (Jacques, 1996). If there was indeed ‘one best way’, many seemed to disagree as to what it was.

Explicit narratives of legitimation are found in virtually all major texts through the 1920s. One sign that a new order was, by then, fairly well sedimented is the disappearance of these narratives. Barnard (1938) is a lengthy tome on the functions of management, yet it treats the ‘executive’ and the ‘employee’ as common-sense roles even though they had been emergent and controversial barely a generation prior. His discussion of the executive role is framed entirely as a technical problem. The need for a narrative of legitimation has disappeared. Even labour organizations were, by this time, largely resigned to fighting for wages and working conditions rather than seeking control of the production process.

Why are these stories of the past of our discipline not told? A partial answer is that the view chronicled in ‘chapter two’ is so deeply entrenched that it is impossible to imagine otherwise – it is not a ‘view’; it is ‘fact’. Although a great deal of evidence which would cause us to question this story is “hidden in plain sight” (Stager Jacques, 2004: 54), we fail to see it because of our ‘common sense’.

Constructing ‘chapter two’: an outcome of a modernist mode of emplotment

After the Second World War, a new need for legitimation arose within management discourse. Prior to this time, business schools were uncommon, generally attached to elite schools and dedicated to training future business leaders, not managers in general. At the other end of the spectrum were the correspondence schools which tended to focus on subjects that could be taught effectively by mail such as entry-level accounting or drafting. Beginning in the 1950s, and supported by the boom in higher education that lasted for the next two decades, the American business school metastasized. The question of legitimacy was no longer whether managerial capitalism was a justifiable practice. With the general public, that battle was over. The new challenge was for the business school to convince managers, employers – and especially students – that it contained a body of knowledge, which would result in superior organizational and career performance.

This is the literal source of ‘chapter two’, the first canonical, textbook version of who we are and how we got here. At this point we find that theoretical tomes accepted as canonical follow the Barnardian example of ahistoricism. Likert (1967), McClelland (1961), Thompson (1967), and March and Simon (1958) are representative in this regard. One might even draw the conclusion from Simon’s highly influential earlier work (1945) that management decisions are simply a computational, a cybernetic, problem. One can scrutinize these works without finding any evidence that managing is something other than a contemporary problem with a technical solution. History is no longer an integral aspect of developing a critical understanding of one’s situation. The ‘evolution’ of management has been reduced to the status of creation-myth à la Midgeley (1985), mere prologue to the ‘real’ knowledge.

The textbook version of ‘who we are and how we got here’ chronicled in ‘chapter two’ not only tells a tale of the progressive rise of modern(ist) management. The textbook is itself an
effect of the very knowledge that it documents. Both in content and form, it is an outcome of a condition of modernity, characterized by an unquestioned (and blind) belief in progress, linearity, objectivity, rationalization, and efficiency (Cooper and Burrell, 1988). The hallmarks of modernity are active in shaping, not only the content but also the order with which the events are emplotted into story form. White’s (1973, 1985) notion of emplotment pertains to the specific manner historians or scholars structure the content and order the events into story form. It pertains to the plot structure adopted by the historian that gives the narrative a recognizable form. According to White (1985: 83), “histories gain part of their explanatory effect by their success in making stories out of mere chronicles”. What this means is that the story assumes part of its meaning through the way in which the “sequence of events is fashioned into a narrative” (Jenkins, 1995: 159). The fashioning of events is an activity undertaken by those who write the stories of our past. Histories have no meaning independent of the storyteller’s touch. Storytellers of the past give “form to the apparently formless, shape to the apparently shapeless” (Jenkins, 1999: 15). History has always been “and always will be necessarily configured, trooped, emplotted, read, mythologized and ideologized in ways to suit ourselves” (Jenkins, 1999: 3). Thus, imposing a plot structure is neither good nor bad but inevitable (Jenkins, 1999; Kellner, 1997).

The implications of adopting a modernist mode of emplotment to tell the story of the past of management are multifaceted (Jenkins, 2003, 1999, 1997, 1995; Ermarth, 1992) and invariably structure ‘chapter two’. The following list tabulates some key qualities which will likely be familiar to the student of mainstream management history:

- **Timeless and universal**: The notion of universalism in many senses can be understood as closely related to and somewhat responsible for that of timelessness. Universalism suggests that a body of knowledge is applicable to all societies regardless of geographical location and temporal period (Booth and Rowlinson, 2006) and is therefore timeless. Management knowledge would, then, not be thought of as culturally or temporally specific. Rindova (1994), for instance, unapologetically ‘discovers’ the twentieth-century Theories X, Y, and Z existing in ancient China. Moore and Lewis (1998) anachronistically describe twentieth-century Japanese/Korean *keiretsu* capitalism in ancient Phoenicia. This strains credibility. In whatever ways the Chinese and Phoenicians were organizing, it is doubtful they were deploying the twentieth-century methods which constitute *managing*. Historians are generally more cautious about such universalism: “[K]nowledge of the past is always embedded in particular cultural practices and cannot exist outside of them” (Rigney, 2007: 152); *our* history is not understood to exist, “except as defined locally” (Ermarth, 1992 as quoted in Jenkins, 1999: 174; Jenkins, 1995).

- **Evolutionary**: The all-pervasive metaphor of ‘chapter two’ management history is that of ‘evolution’. Management knowledge was not developed by individuals with power-laden values, perceptions, interests, and beliefs. It simply evolved (Wren and Bedeian, 2008). Any undergraduate biology major knows that evolution does not have goals, purposes, or interests. It is a value-neutral, blind mechanism of selection that has the effect of adapting populations to their environments. If management has ‘evolved’, there is no room to question its foundations, its construction, its embedded values – these are simply responses to the dictates of ‘the environment’ and, as objective responses to an objective problem, they are beyond questioning except in the descriptive sense that one can ask, “how does it work?”

- **Linear and progressive**: Management histories chronicle events in a linear and progressive way in that a later (presumably more advanced) event is linked to and illustrated as the inevitable, progressive outcome of a previous event. This ‘certaintist’ manner (Ermarth, 1992; Jenkins, 1999) in which events are sewn together leads to a narrative that projects a false necessity
making it impossible to imagine otherwise – despite the fact that at any given moment in the past, a multitude of options could or may have been pursued. In ‘chapter two’, this is most evident in the popular opinion that management knowledge merely emerged from the growing desire and ability of people to do work more efficiently and productively. Other social issues of the time are shut down in the histories; they are portrayed by their absence as irrelevant.

- **Value-neutral and disinterested**: To offer that management history is value-neutral and disinterested is to suggest that it is portrayed as divorced from the values and interests of its writer. The chronicler is merely an observer, detached from the text. Historians have long argued that authors of history are always involved in the historical moment of writing and therefore historicizing is never a neutral task (Kellner, 1997; Ermarth, 2007). Maintaining the belief that management knowledge does not act for or against any vested interest is a condition of credibility within the discipline. To suggest otherwise is to relocate oneself from the dominant circle of ‘behavioural scientists’ into the never-never of ‘radical’ theory – and nobody needs to listen to a radical because we know radicals are all crazy.

- **Power is absent**: It is quite staggering that, within the study of the social force which, more than any other, shapes present-day American life, it is inappropriate to use the term ‘power’ in American business studies. Presumably, business school students study with the intention of having the power to influence organizations and their careers, but to suggest the presence of power undermines the presumption of value-neutrality. Managers do not represent vested interests. They represent only efficiency and effectiveness.

- **The scientistic imminence of a True science**: It is now *de rigueur* to describe management knowledge as a science that is neatly nailing down the final corners of paradigmatic completion. That this claim has been made continuously at least from Hunt (1857) to the present day should make one wonder.

- **All (wo)men are NOT created equal**: The social norms and institutions of America from its founding until the late nineteenth century were based on the philosophical presumption (if not the social reality) that all people have more or less the same capabilities. This follows a strong tradition of British philosophy going back at least to Hobbes. In a world of small communities composed largely of peasant farmers and self-employed small businesspeople, this assumption was workable. In the factory, it was not. As soon as there was a business need for hierarchy and specialization, it was neatly ‘discovered’ that people differ from each other in a way that corresponds to the positions available in that hierarchy. Initially, this followed the then-pervasive eugenic thinking. As the discipline of psychology developed, it provided a framework for producing and reproducing specialization and hierarchy that was less overtly sexist, racist, ethnocentric, and classist.

Having structured discourse in the field according to these modernist values, who would care if ‘chapter two’ is disappearing? What matters is the steadily increasing efficacy, of our body of objective knowledge. One cannot question facts. We once were lost, but now are found; were blind but now we see. What could be the problem? Well, here is one:

For a generation, thought leaders in business have increasingly been talking about a revolution in the workplace, one centred on the increasing knowledge demands of work. Some would call this the post-industrial economy. The Fordist factory hums along, but primarily in fast food and other service work. For the majority of positions in the workplace it is impossible to get top performance from the worker by engineering and controlling the job. The worker has to also want to perform well, has to exercise discretion and judgement. A body of management knowledge built on the need to get *compliance* from the task worker is precisely what is not needed
in order to get \textit{initiative} from a worker whose discretion is essential. “But,” one might object, “if management knowledge is simply an accumulation of useful facts, how can we not be fine just adding one then another brick to the edifice we’ve been building since God spoke to Moses in Leviticus?”

This is where history becomes valuable, even essential. If we take Kuhn (1962) seriously – and we should – we understand that any body of knowledge we could have produced was produced as a result of interests and values. This is not a failing; it is a necessity. Who has had the ability to articulate what problems merit researching? Whose voices have been heard and whose have not? What problems has our accumulated knowledge been developed to solve? What occupational and intellectual predisposition has conditioned the framing of questions in the research community? The perspective that our knowledge just ‘evolved’ is not only naïve; in this respect it is counterproductive.

Our blind acceptance and adoption of a modernist mode of emplotment in the construction of the history of management thought weds us to an increasingly outdated body of knowledge because we fail to distinguish it from Truth. This has significant consequences for our discipline to which we now shift our attention.

\textbf{The consequences of a modernist mode of emplotment}

\textquote[Organization studies lacks an awareness of history that is integrated into the process of knowledge generation in a manner that results in constant scrutiny of the social relevance of the problems addressed by the field and the processes through which this is done. This failure stands in the way of developing [new] organizational knowledge … because the field is harnessed to cumulatively adding to problems that were of concern to early industrialists. (Stager Jacques, 2004: 272)]{Organization studies lacks an awareness of history that is integrated into the process of knowledge generation in a manner that results in constant scrutiny of the social relevance of the problems addressed by the field and the processes through which this is done. This failure stands in the way of developing [new] organizational knowledge … because the field is harnessed to cumulatively adding to problems that were of concern to early industrialists. (Stager Jacques, 2004: 272)}

What are the consequences for creating and ordering knowledge of the past according to a modernist mode of emplotment? Below, we identify what we feel are those consequences and offer these as sufficient justification for moving toward a new way of telling the past of our discipline.

\textit{The God trick:} A modernist mode of emplotment conceals the ideological forces at play which act to order the past of our disciplinary knowledge. This can be studied as an ‘ideology,’ although that term is often inflammatory, suggesting an unquestioned commitment to preconceived values that is incompatible with the presumed open-mindedness and value-neutrality of the scientific enterprise. \textit{Au contraire.} Since the late nineteenth century, those who have studied the history and philosophy of science have been forced to become increasingly sanguine about the overly-optimistic modernist belief that with enough effort, the datum will speak unambiguously of its own meaning. To quote one highly influential source:

\begin{quotation}
Observation and experience can and must drastically restrict the range of admissible scientific belief, else there would be no science. But they cannot alone determine a particular body of such belief. An apparently arbitrary element, compounded of personal and historical accident, is always a formative ingredient of the beliefs espoused.
\end{quotation}

(Kuhn, 1962/1970: 1)

Kuhn concludes that no scientific community can “practice its trade without some set of received beliefs” (Kuhn, 1962/1970: 4). That is, the data will never simply speak for themselves. Their meanings are subject to beliefs about reality, truth, and the structure of the body of knowledge
which – inevitably – reflect the values of that scientific community, the time and the society which produced it. Ideology, then, is not a negative thing, but an integral element of knowledge production; *the science which purports to exist without ideology is a science that exists on pretence*.

One may judge this as good, bad, or otherwise, but one must accept it as inevitable. Not only has the Objectivist view of science not been able to demonstrate the existence of a value-free perspective on any subject, the possibility of doing so has been a receding horizon at least since the 1890s. Kuhn is not alone in this conclusion. Philosophers of empiricism such as Quine (1953) and Popper, although they were *defenders* of empirical inquiry, conceded that: “*[A]ll observation involves interpretation in the light of our theoretical knowledge … pure, observational knowledge, unadulterated by theory, would, if at all possible, be utterly barren and futile*” (Popper, “Knowledge Without Authority”, in Miller, 1985: 49). If the physical sciences have not been able to separate values and beliefs from the datum, how much more is this true of the social sciences? If the ‘observer effect’ noted by Schrödinger and Heisenberg applies even to atomic particles, how much more is this a quality of social systems, where awareness of being observed fundamentally changes the behaviours available to observe?

A blind acceptance of a modernist ideology, which erases itself from the text, in both the content and emplotment of management history leads to what Haraway (1988: 584) has termed the “‘god trick’ promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully”. She is critical of the god trick as a patriarchal delusion. Jenkins (2003: 11) calls this the “history narrator as nobody effect” or the “omniscient narrator trick” (Jenkins, 1999: 170). Blindly accepting a representation of the field’s past as independent of a specific community’s deep-rooted belief system, accepting it as Real, *normalizes* this mode of emplotment (Jenkins, 1995, 1999, 2003), prematurely closing down the conditions of possibility of the ways we can or could come to know our history. According to Foucault (1982: 126–7) members of a discipline

Do not communicate solely by the logical succession of propositions that they advance … [T]hey communicate by … the conditions of possibility of the enunciative function [which] defines the possibilities of a field’s ability to deploy identities, thematic continuities, translations of concepts, and polemical interchanges.

These conditions of possibility are not merely the statements taken as true or valid within a field. They determine the rules for any statement which is to be taken as *sensible*. For instance, one may argue within contemporary medical science that diet cholesterol either is or is not related to blood cholesterol. Whichever position is correct, both are sensible. However, to state that a sanguine or phlegmatic humor is related to diet cholesterol goes beyond the conditions of possibility for making a sensible medical statement today because it appeals to a discursive object (the humors) which is “within the true” (Foucault, 1982: 224) of an incompatible discourse.

One cannot simply paste facts onto a neutral field. In order to attain meaning, they must be interpreted through the filter of a discipline’s conditions of possibility. All knowledge, without exception, is bounded by socially-produced conditions of possibility. Those who attest otherwise have, after four centuries of philosophical, social, and scientific dominance, been unable to prove their thesis. A premature closing of these conditions of possibility by naturalizing a discipline as inevitable and power-free prevents reflective study and discussion of the effects these conditions have on the body of knowledge.

Certain modes of ordering knowledge are more sympathetic to ‘imagining otherwise’, which is important as an antidote to believing there is only one possible story. An example is counter-factual history, where embedded in the construction of this knowledge is the need to question at every intersection, what could have been as opposed to merely chronicling what was (Booth
and Rowlinson, 2006). To choose a cliché, what would modern European history look like if Hitler had never been born? Removing the cult of the man lets us reflect on the role of Junker militarism, multinational anti-Semitism, international capitalism, the 1918 Treaty of Versailles, the failings of the Weimar regime ... in short, it helps us to better see forces that were powerful in shaping European history 1933–45 with or without Hitler. This helps us to see events from a different and possibly productive new angle.

Linearity, as a condition of possibility of a modernist mode of emplotment, also prematurely closes down the opportunity to discuss the ways in which our presumed knowledge of our past has been constructed (Ermarth, 1992; Jenkins, 1999). A linear chronicling of events creates a strict and definite association between what it treats as ‘prior’ and ‘later’ events, associating them to one another so rigidly that it is impossible to imagine that one event could have led to anything other than what is dictated through the historical construction. The outcome is knowledge that is infused with an essence of false necessity (Unger, 1986). As such, the conditions of what could have been, the conditions of possibility of the historical construction are prematurely closed down. One might ask how chronologically separate events can possibly be ordered in more than one way. Jacques (1996) offers innumerable examples of concepts that were known and discussed decades before they were labelled by organizational ‘scientists’ and ordered into a discourse with different conditions of possibility. Cut off from this history, the student may well believe that the concept was newly discovered at the time the new term was deployed, when this is not necessarily so. Alternatively, ordering can create a false sense of causation. In ‘chapter two’, one-best-way management is alleged to have been succeeded by contingency models because the latter were more effective. Perhaps this is so, but it may also be that with managerial capitalism firmly established in public common sense by the 1950s, it was no longer necessary to legitimate it as the one best way. The causality is complex and by no means determinate.

Ermarth (1992), Rosenstone (2007), and Jenkins (2003: 3), among others, have adamantly stressed that there is “no way that any historical closure can ever be achieved”. Nothing is ever given in the order of things as “complete or stable” or fixed “once and for all” (Jenkins, 2003: 4). Instead, this illusion is created through emplotment configurations such as those of modernist histories. Jenkins (2003: 4) critiques modernist histories by offering that no hegemonic settlement on the configuration is conclusive. Instead, texts should continuously be subjected to the “risk of being transformed; refigured” (Jenkins, 2003: 4). The aim then, is to refigure the historical enterprise in the direction of a “radical, open-ended democracy that grasps the impossibility of enacting a total historical/historicizing closure of the past” (Jenkins, 2003: 5). This type of “open-ended democracy” will breathe emancipatory potential into the historical enterprise and allow us to ask questions that were not otherwise permissible.

‘Emancipatory’ potential? We cannot be emancipated from history itself and there is no ‘right’ story of our past that will liberate us. The potential lies in our ability to develop a reflective, critical dialogue about our past because our past is not simply past; it has a huge presence in our present and our future. Actively questioning the canon, what it has incorporated and why, what it has silenced, how it became the canon, how it does and does not serve various interests ... these are all massively important questions we cannot ask if we accept as dogma a naturalizing, modernist, empiricism in which facts are assumed to have self-evident meanings.

The questions we can(not?) ask: As noted, prematurely closing down the conditions of possibility denies the occasion to formulate and develop a voice that challenges dominant discourse. Drawing on Rosenstone (2007: 13) we suggest the need to “liberate history from its own history” and develop histories that “surprise and startle us”, that “let us see things we haven’t seen”. This is a call to open our imaginations to other ways of seeing and of telling. It is a call for the
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development of new modes of emplotment which by their nature demand that we write-in transparently as part of our histories the answer to questions such as:

• What values are embedded in our research?
• What significant events have been written out of our story?
• In what ways does our knowledge play into relationships of power?
• What other research questions might we ask? How else might we ask them?
• Whose voices are and are not being heard?
• What other stories could we tell with the same data?
• Do we accept our dogma on faith or scrutinize it critically as we claim scientists do?
• What interests are most represented in the development (and funding) of questions?

These questions demand reflection from the chroniclers of our discipline’s past, but beyond this, they must become part of a thread of reflexivity in the mainstream discussion of meanings within the discipline.

Being reflexive about the content and emplotment of our histories: If we have learned anything from twentieth-century philosophy, as Kuhn, Popper, and many others have noted, the most carefully controlled inquiry can only restrict the interpretations which can be put on the data; there is never only one possible interpretation. We cannot avoid embedding our beliefs about the nature of reality and social life into the constructs we create from the data we study. Since this is necessary, we, the authors, do not—cannot—advocate stopping it. We, the discipline, can, however, become reflective about how we are doing this; we can become more aware of the consequences of our choices. Until truly objective data are produced which transcend the need to interpret (and this seems unlikely), we must provisionally accept that our knowledge—all of it—is value- and power-laden.

In crafting any history, the role the historian plays in shaping the narrative must be stressed. She or he first selects certain traces over others to use as ‘evidence’, followed by a decision concerning which events can be described as history from those traces. In making sense of the traces and events, she or he is active in deciding which mode of emplotment will be used to construct a coherent and recognizable narrative out of otherwise disparate events (White, 1973). If the historian is so central to the activity of doing history, how is his or her ordering hand so easily erased in modernist histories? We need to write “the kind of self-reflective history that places the historian in the moment—or better, process—of creating the historical text” (Kellner, 1997: 402).

No, this does not mean abandoning factual histories for some sort of relativism. We should bear in mind that, in their origins, the terms ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ do not represent an opposition of truth to fantasy. A ‘fact’, from the Latin *facio*, represents a deed, something that is done. A ‘fiction’, from *fingere*, is something moulded, crafted by hand. Both verbs refer to active construction of knowledge and neither refers to truth or falsehood. It would be well to bear in mind that it is both possible and necessary for us to fiction historical fact. Our fictioning cannot be judged by a standard as unattainable as truth-value. More immediate standards must be used, such as usefulness, correspondence with data, and consequences.

Conclusions

The recent, growing call for an historic turn in organization studies (Zald, 1993; Kieser, 1994; Üsdiken and Kieser, 2004; Booth and Rowlinson, 2006; Stager Jacques, 2006) offers hope for more attention to the history of our discipline. It holds the promise of histories of a different
kind, and even potential for a “transformation of organization studies” (Rowlinson, Stager Jacques, and Booth, 2009). This call for an historic turn represents a:

[T]urn against the view that organization studies should constitute a science analogous to the physical sciences … [P]eople – and society – cannot be reduced to a deterministic, laboratory science … [I]t would also entail a return to debates regarding historiography – the methods and historical theories of interpretation through which historical meaning is created.

(Rowlinson, Stager Jacques, and Booth, 2009: 289)

It is questionable what effect this historic turn has had on the dominance of modernist histories. In this chapter, we have attempted to relate the shrinking ‘chapter two’ to conditions of modernism and its scientistic mode of emplotment. We follow Jenkins (1995: 10) who offers that the historical “moment of modernism has passed”. It is time to move on from a modernist condition to something beyond it, perhaps a postmodern condition (Jenkins, 1999)? Postmodernism as an intellectual movement seems to have long since reached its point of exhaustion, but the fundamental changes which led to questioning the passing of the modern as a way of understanding are substantive. Something ‘amodern’ is slowly emerging (Latour, 1990, 1993; Durepos and Mills, 2012a, 2012b).

I wonder whether we may not envisage modernity rather as an attitude than as a period of history. And by ‘attitude,’ I mean a mode of relating to contemporary reality … And, consequently, rather than seeking to distinguish the ‘modern’ era from the ‘premodern’ or ‘postmodern’, I think it would be more useful to try to find out how the attitude of modernity, ever since its formation, has found itself struggling with attitudes of ‘countermodernity’.

(Foucault, 1984: 39)

References
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