Methodologies Within Management History

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Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss some of the methods currently used in management history. It addresses some of the major issues currently in the field: quantification, theory, creativity, facts, and sources, and those figures which have managed to lose ground. This chapter builds on previous chapters focused on the various debates within the field of management history. I also discuss some of the various contributions of management historians.

Keywords

History · Methods · Creativity · Theory

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Introduction

When George Homans (1984) decided to become a sociologist, he asked his mentor, Lawrence J. Henderson, on what courses should he take. Henderson provided Homans with several different suggestions, but the one, perhaps most interesting, was that Homans should study history, since it was the one social science with a clear method. Since this statement, the development of social sciences has continued. History has come to be regarded more as an art, rather than a science. The historical method, so crucial to becoming a historian, is considered so basic and unimportant that many historians, especially those who study field such as management history, have little training in the methods and terminology of history. Put more simply, too often doctoral programs ignore management history in favor of other courses.

It is with this in mind that I have written this chapter. I would like to discuss the role and types of sources; the use of theory and social sciences; issues with quantification; and issues with context. I also discuss the importance of time periods and the difference between historical fact and interpretation. One of the difficult issues is that we often talk about invented traditions, without understanding the difference between historical fact and interpretation. A tradition is, by definition, fictive, since it is an interpretation. There is also a section discussing the role of creativity and management history. The purpose of this section is to discuss how management historians can be creative. The concluding section includes a discussion of an excellent American history, David Potter.

The Importance of Facts and Sources

History is the remembered past (Lukacs 1968). We must use evidence to determine the remembered past based on probability and detective work. One of the issues I find most troubling about the postmodernist history is that it disdains facts in favor of interpretations that are usually to the whim of the historian. I would like to define these terms briefly. A fact is something that is true and is based on the preponderance of evidence. That is to say, it is more likely than not that something occurred (Bogue 1983). An example of a fact is that Elton Mayo was born in 1880. This is a simple fact, but facts can be more complicated. For example, we could provide facts on how Henry Ford's policies led to changes in manufacturing.

This is not to say that evidence is completely true and whole and that we were completely objective in our analysis. But history must have some moorings on evidence. We cannot document history by wish; it must be grounded in evidence. This is my issue with postmodernism. Postmodernism is skeptical and, indeed, sometimes outrightly hostile to most forms of historical evidence (Appleby et al. 1994). Its proponents note that official documents are flawed sources of evidence because they either do not consider all relevant factors or because individuals in power seek to control the record. Similarly, oral history and memoirs are flawed since memories are social creations. Within organizations, according to postmodernists, it is only the constructed memories of the powerful that endure. Other types

of evidence, such as demographics, are deliberately ignored in that reference to such sources mitigates historical explanations built around power and oppression, which postmodernists regard as the real drivers of history (cite).

That different people take different sides should not be surprising. The importance of history means that there will be consistent argument, debate, and conflict over facts and, more importantly, their relationship with each other. Historians play an important role – they are the ones who develop narratives that inform countries and professions. It is for this reason that George Orwell made Winston Smith a historian (Bailyn 1994). Smith was not an independent historian; his history was dictated by the state.

Modern researchers do not have this level of coercion, despite the pressures they face. Rather the historical record is a field of intense debate. However, factual evidence can serve as a bridge, a template to test whether our assumptions and theories are correct. Evidence emerges from a wide variety of sources. Each source – whether it is oral history, official documents, or autobiographies – has a limitation. According to Salevouris and Furay (2015, p. 14): "History is not 'what happened in the past'; rather, it is the act of select analyzing, and writing about the past. It is something that is done, that is constructed, rather than an inert body of data that lies scattered through the archives." However, different sources can lead to more accurate histories. Based on these sources, historical facts and interpretations emerge.

Sources are crucial to the historian – they are for historians what experiments and surveys are to scientists of various types. There are three types of sources in history. The basic source is primary source material. Primary sources are evidence from those who witnessed, participated, or commented on the period during which we study (Salevouris and Furay 2015). They could consist of corporate and government records; private papers of important (or even non-important) figures; and autobiographies, diaries, and oral histories of participants; they could consist of newspapers and other accounts. Secondary sources are often derived from primary sources. They are interpretations and arguments that historians have developed from primary sources. A third type of source, tertiary, would be textbooks or history books, which are based on secondary sources. An example of this would be the Oxford History of the United States (Salevouris and Furay 2015).

There has been an argument thrown around in certain circles that primary sources are better than secondary and tertiary sources. This is not true, in my opinion. Firstly, the explicit differences between a primary, secondary, or tertiary source are unclear. Rather than being placed in rigid categories, there is great fluidity between them. For example, a biography, considered by most historians to be a secondary source, could be a primary source, depending upon the questions being asked. In his work on Lincoln's memory, Merrill Peterson (1994) uses what would be considered secondary sources as primary sources. Secondly, secondary and tertiary sources help scholars develop research questions to better understand primary documents. Thirdly, secondary and tertiary sources enable scholars to understand the past, the different uses of languages, how people lived, and other pertinent issues. Secondary and tertiary sources can be considered a Berlitz book.

Yet, facts alone are not enough to create history. Knowing when Elton Mayo was born does not really matter. What matters is the relation of facts to each other as Lytton Strachey once wrote. The relationship between facts allows for historical construction to occur. These historical constructions lead to the development of historical interpretations. A historical interpretation is the "process through which we describe, analyze, evaluate, and create an explanation of past events" (Slatta, https://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/slatta/hi216/hist_interp.htm), and this process is based on historical evidence. That Mayo is *the* father of human relations is an example of historical interpretation. There is a fictive element to this, in that it is constructed (Lukacs 1968). This opinion may be true or false, but there must be evidence behind it. There is considerable evidence to support this position; just as there is considerable evidence to oppose this opinion. Given that other scholars can also lay claim to this title, it makes more sense to state that Elton Mayo was *a* (rather than *the*) father of human relations. As Salevouris and Furay (2015) write: "all good history is interpretation."

Interpretations can range from who is the father/mother of a field to the importance of a study of figure and to larger issues, such as naming a time period. History without time is merely a collection of facts. Although snapshot versions of history have value, they are limited because they do not track evolution and development. Take a history of Australia written for the bicentennial (i.e., 1988) of the founding of the Australian nation. There is a considerable amount of detail, but unless someone knew the history of Australia, then such a history is limited (Bailyn 2015). There is little understanding of how and why Australia emerged. Time explains how events and individuals interact. If we are to state that history is a narrative, facts are the characters, interpretations are the narrative, and then time periods are the setting.

Compounding this is the confusion of myths versus history. In scholarly professions, we often use myth to provide a sense of legitimacy. Management has sought – over the years – to seek legitimacy through several different methods, the use of theory building, the scientific method, and practical application (Pfeffer 1993). As a new field, we have status anxiety and envy toward other more established fields (Steinmetz 2005). This is a common trend throughout other, more established, fields as well. Economics has envy of physics and sociology has an envy of economics (Steinmetz 2005). In fact, scholars such as Jeffrey Pfeffer (1993) have bemoaned the lack of a clear paradigm in the field of management, noting that we are losing ground to other business fields. Therefore, we tend to stress certain figures and events. But myths based on facts often go much further than facts would allow.

Yet, there is considerable argument over "invented traditions (please see Weatherburn 2019)." Since a tradition is, by definition, an interpretation invented by individuals in the field, perhaps it is the reason why managers start the process of management with Frederick Winslow Taylor, rather than such flawed figures as Henry Ford, whose violent anti-union policies and anti-Semitism made him a compromised figure (Lacey 1986). Perhaps, had Ford died in 1918 soon after his electoral defeat when he was compared to Moses, we would have used him as a model. Yet, we also focus on Taylor for reasons that were historical as well, namely,

that Taylor appeared at the right time and place for management to emerge as a distinct field. A check of how Taylor inspires thinkers is clear. Similarly, while there were other efforts to understand social man, the Hawthorne studies were the study that inspired scholars to reexamine the field to consider the role of social motivation in terms of economic motivation, i.e., to what extent does an economic benefit shape human behavior. Likewise, checking a listing of citation numbers would reveal what contemporaries believed about the Hawthorne studies and how it inspired thinkers of his own time (Muldoon 2012). It is important to note, therefore, that the complexities of history usually do not lead to ready reduction.

To debunk myths, management historians often create straw men. Wrege and Perroni argued (p. 26) that scholars should "think to look at the idol early enough in the game to discover that it had feet of clay before it was hoisted onto a pedestal." I am curious as to how we answer the question in management: who do we idealize? One of the favorite targets of critics has been the Hawthorne studies. Firstly, scholars have, for the last several years, pointed out that the Hawthorne studies were poor methodologically, that they proved nothing, and that Mayo had a biased viewpoint (Gabor 2000). Secondly, we have also been told that Mayo did not discover "social man" and that its discovery had been researched many years before. These concepts were not alien to the people who wrote at the time the studies gained fame (Muldoon 2012). In addition, the argument that welfare capitalism and human relations were similar concepts is something that is objectively false. If anything, welfare capitalism encouraged worker revolt by reducing all relationships to economic exchanges. By contrast, human relations attempted to solve the underlying alienation of workers that caused revolt (Cohen 1990). As historians look at the Hawthorne studies, the key question should be: why did the Hawthorne studies gain prominence (rather than whether this or that aspect of the project was methodologically valid)? An explanation could be that other ways of dealing with worker revolt were exhausted and managers needed new techniques (see chapter on Mayo).

Compounding our problems as historians is the fact that our interpretations change from one period to the next. I agree with Williams and Mills (2017) that we have, at times, neglected the contributions of certain management thinkers of the past. Williams and Mills selected, as an example of this viewpoint, the work of Frances Perkins, who was President Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor. There are several reasons that Williams and Mills gave for Perkins deletion from the historical record. The points include anticommunism, attacks from her colleagues in the New Deal, and administrative studies focusing on major undertakings like the Tennessee Valley Authority. Therefore, Frances Perkins did not receive credit for some of her ideas, including important concepts like the triple bottom line.

While I believe that this was a strong article, I am not convinced that the historical record is wrong. Namely, they do not demonstrate, in any way, that Perkins' work influenced management *thinkers*, even if, as Labor Secretary, she influenced management *practice*. Certainly, Perkins played a key role in the development of an important body of government *policy*. Much of this body of policy was, however, later overturned by conservatives in Congress. In addition, most business leaders were opposed to the New Deal by 1935, and, given the connection between business

research and big business, it would make sense for management scholars to ignore certain thinkers and focus on others. Therefore, there is a degree of subjectivity. Although Perkins *advocated* ideas like the triple bottom line, Williams and Mills (2017) do not demonstrate that she really *developed* the concept. To demonstrate that she was an early developer of the triple bottom line, they would need to conduct a citation analysis.

Another important area of management history research has focused on Elton Mayo's work, especially his notion that social groups have a profound influence on work. However, we have learned in the last 40 or so years that Taylor also understood groups (Locke 1982), that Whiting Williams and Henry Denison anticipated the Hawthorne studies, and that the Taylor Society had similar attitudes to work arrangements. Of course, I am not sure people were aware of the research of others; nor did they really believe that Mayo was original. Even if there is evidence that ideas relating to social groups were in circulation prior to Mayo, I would still find this hunt for the prime mover problematic. As Pitirim Sorokin (1956) once wrote regarding social science, we often have a "Columbus Syndrome" in that we consistently rediscover new concepts again and again. In fact, the idea of multiple discoveries is not unusual either. The famous Bayes Theorem, now one of the major concepts in statistics, may not have been developed by the Good Reverend Bayes but by someone else. John Maynard Keynes was foreshadowed by William Trufant Foster and Waddill Catchings, two American economists. Milton and Rose Friedman (1998) noted that economists at the University of Chicago had produced proto-Keynesian work before the Great Depression, and he argues, as a result of this "discovery," that the Chicago economists were not impressed with Keynesian economics. Similarly, what we now call social exchange theory had a "prehistory," in which some of the ideas that characterized it were first floated in the nineteenth century. Some of the work of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown also anticipated this body of theory. But does this lessen in any way the originality or significance of the intellectual currents associated with social exchange theory in the twentieth century? I would say not.

This theme – the search for prime movers – is so common that there is a name for it, Stigler's conjecture (also referred to as Stigler's law of eponymy), developed by the University of Chicago economist George Stigler and his statistician son, Stephen. The Stiglers' work started as a scholarly joke on the work of the great sociologist Robert K. Merton, who proposed a similar concept called the "Matthew Effect." The "Matthew Effect" states "this pattern of recognition, skewed in favor of the established scientist, appears principally (i) in cases of collaboration and (ii) in cases of independent multiple discoveries made by scientists of distinctly different rank." One of the examples of the "Matthew Effect" was stated by the noted management historian, Dan Wren (2005), who argued that the Harvard connection benefited Mayo over would-be theoreticians from lower-ranked institutions. Certainly, such outcomes – favoring the senior scholar from the better known institution – would be an example of the Matthew Effect. Yet there are other explanations as to why certain ideas capture the imagination of their time. Looking at time periods, and contextual cues, is beneficial to understanding our judgments of fact, i.e., why certain interpretations and theories are accepted as valid.

This leads to my next point. If one was to look for a single work that has defined "traditional" or "mainstream" management history, it would be *The Evolution of Management Thought*. Currently in its seventh edition, this work was originally the creation of Dan Wren (University of Oklahoma) with latter editions being updated, revised, and expanded in collaboration with Wren's colleague, Arthur (Art) Bedeian (Louisiana State University). For Wren and Bedeian (2018), management is seen in overwhelmingly positive terms, driving a process of both intellectual enlightenment and economic and political liberation. The influence of Wren and Bedeian's ideas is found not only in their publications but also in their leadership roles within the (American) Academy of Management (AOM) and as PhD supervisors and intellectual mentors. For a generation, Wren, Bedeian, their colleagues, and their former students dominated management history within the United States. Both Wren and Bedeian were foundation members of the AOM's Management History Division (MHD) in 1971. Subsequently, Wren served as the Division's Chair in 1975 with Bedeian becoming Chair in 1977 (Greenwood 2015). Writing of Wren's influence, Jack Duncan, the past President of the (United States) Southern Management Association, wrote in 2003 that, "management scholars generally agree that Dan Wren is the most distinguished management historian of the current generation. Most scholars, I believe, would consider Dan of equal status to business historians such as Alfred Chandler" (cited Novicivic et al. 2015, p. 18). In the last decade, however, Wren's approach has come under attack from postmodernist-inclined "critical management historians."

One of the major criticisms of Wren's approach has come from Novicevic et al. (2015). The argument provided is that Wren and traditional management scholars "developed their web of shared beliefs about the history of management thought not only objectively but also relationally through their socialization in their academic communities." One of the primary concerns that they express was the use of time periods to describe the evolution of history, Novicevic et al. (2015, p. 23) complaining how Wren reconstructs history by describing a connection in time between events, not only between the past and the present but also "between management's present and future." In short, they complain that we err when we use the historical past to guide the future.

In their critique, Novicevic and his co-authors argue for a "decentering" and a reimagining of management history that frees the future from the dictates of the past. In doing so, they remove history of its most potent and salient force – time. Yes, it is true that there is a fictive element to time periods. They are merely interpretations that historians use to make sense of a series of events. One question is – if we eliminate time periods – how can we organize history? This would be akin to eliminating chapters in a book, stages in a play, or yards on a football field. Time periods make history understandable and approachable. This is part of the fictive element that I refer to above. Time periods are interpretations based upon facts. We construct concepts, such as eras, to make history understandable and coherent. To suggest this does not make one a postmodernist – in fact, traditional history understood this concept all too well (see Lukacs 1968). These types of interpretations are what we use to make sense of the world. Without time periods, we would

have historical snap shots. Basically, we would change history from being a moving picture (with time going forward) to a series of unrelated snap shots, with little understanding of how and why we move from one period to the next.

Then how do we determine what to name the time period? There are two general methods. The first general method is to name the time period after the major ruler or figure that best fits the generation. In the United States, we would talk about the Age of Jackson, named after the President Andrew Jackson, whose characteristics were a symbol of the age. In many ways, Jackson's policies defined his generation, in that it led to clear lines of both policy and social organization and behavior. However, scholars have generally abandoned naming periods after Presidents and kings, although there are exceptions (we still talk about a Victorian age). The concept of naming time periods after a reigning figure declined due to the decline of biography. The second general approach is naming the time period after political, economic, and military movements. We still talk about the New Deal era. We now talk about the Jacksonian period as the market revolution.

For management, talking about time periods still makes a great deal of sense. We know that management goes through fads and fashions – suggesting that certain issues are important at certain times. Personality was once considered to be a dead construct; now it is one of the most important constructs in the literature. We have now moved past the Big Five (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism) to research other constructs. There were management thinkers who scientifically studied management before Taylor and human relations before Mayo. Yet both Taylor and Mayo seem to fit their eras – although I would not speak of an Age of Taylor or Mayo. The reason why time periods work is due to the concept of generations (Mannheim 1952). Arguments within generations arise due to the different sociohistorical experiences that a generation has. Some young people in the 1960s became leftists and others conservatives. Both rejected New Deal liberalism (Klatch 1999). Another reason why management is based on time periods would be that management is a response to socioeconomic conditions. For example, one reason why human relations became so accepted was that some viewed it as a solution to the labor problems that emerged during the Great Depression and Second World War. To write history without time periods would cause more issues than it would solve.

Let's take human relations as a time period. Firstly, we could see the genesis of human relations in the scientific management era. In fact, if we could, we could see human relations well before the scientific management era. Some critics of Elton Mayo noted that he was basically writing arguments like the Gospel of Luke, as assertions of divinely inspired fact (Roethlisberger 1960). For example, Whiting Williams wrote several books and articles that predated Mayo's work. Taylor recognized the importance of groups. One of the notable contributions has been that of Christopher Nyland, who wrote about the policies of the Taylor Society. Therefore, the roots of human relations movement could be seen well before Mayo even started writing on industrial relationships.

If the human relations movement had a "prehistory," this does not change the fact that the movement really began with the work of Mayo, Mary Parker Follett, and

Chester Barnard. There are several crucial explanations for this outcome. Firstly, the concept of Taylorism had a very negative reputation in many circles. This had less to do with Taylor's ideas or the ideas of his associates and more to do with how individuals perceived them. Remember, Taylor promised a mental revolution but wrought rebellion. Secondly, the decline of welfare capitalism, which was ending by the 1920s and ended in the 1930s, meant that new techniques were needed to develop connections with workers. The incredibly high levels of violence and strikes of the 1930s and 1940s provided important reasons to search for methods to produce trust. Accordingly, we are justified talking about a certain time period, the "human relations era."

Creativity and the Historian

Creativity is an extremely important part of the historian's craft as it is how the field progresses. Creative historians stretch the field by asking new questions, uncovering new sources, or through the reinterpretation of existing sources. According to Bernard Bailyn (2015, p. 81), who has written about creative historians, a creative historian is someone that shifted the direction of "historical inquiry" through "substantive and enduring discovery." The list of historians that have won Pulitzer Prizes contains many individuals who would fit the definition of a creative historian.

What are some of the examples of creative historians? Bailyn lists several notable ones. His list is personal and reflects his eclectic taste and experiences. The first historian that he would list as a creative historian would be the American Perry Miller, who was a professor to Bailyn, Edmund S. Morgan, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., among others. Miller primarily wrote about Puritans, their beliefs, and their ongoing relevance to the American mind (Middlekauff 1969). What made Miller's work so important was that he expanded history. Previously, when scholars considered the Puritans, their criticisms were similar to those of the seventeenth century: that Puritans were boring, enemies against pleasure and nature, and overly pedantic (Middlekauff 1969). The statement that summarized prevailing thought about the Puritans came from H.L. Mencken, who wrote that the Puritans had a "haunting fear that somewhere, someone might be happy" (in Middlekauff 1969, p. 171). Yet, Miller, noting the richness of ideas through previously under-researched sermons, argued the ongoing relevance of Puritan thought to American intellectual life. His discovery of the deep connections between Puritans and the Church of England demonstrated the underlying uniformity in religious persuasion that was born from their experiences in England. Yet, this uniformity would die in the next age, as it witnessed the growth of multiple religious experiences. In other words, the Puritans expressed beliefs that were initially common but became unique because they held on them whereas others let them go. This was a notable and deep discovery that transformed the field.

A second historian that Bailyn considered to be a creative historian was Charles McLean Andrews, who was a historian attached to Yale University (Johnson 1986). Andrews' great achievement was to place the Colonial period of America in an

Atlantic context, through stressing connections between Colonial America and the British Empire. The previous generation of American historians had grappled with the question of how democracy emerged in America (Bailyn 2015). The first approach was the one provided by Henry Baxter Adams, which stated that democracy and American politics could trace its roots to Anglo-Saxon village institutions. The "germs" (Baxter's phrase) eventually took place in America, building a democratic nation. Frederick Jackson Turner disagreed with this approach. He argued that American democracy was the experience of the American frontier. Turner (1920, p. 293) wrote that "American democracy was born of no theorist's dream; it was not carried in the Susan Constant to Virginia, nor in the Mayflower to Plymouth. It came out of the American forest, and it gained new strength each time it touched a new frontier." By contrast, Andrews argued, based on little used archives, that the British Empire had a deep connection to American democracy (Bailyn 2015). Therefore, colonial America could not be understood without careful consideration of the British Empire. When Bailyn and others examined the pamphlets at the time of the American revolution, they noted various references to the travails of British revolutionaries.

Which management historians could be considered creative? Again, the most creative historian, as well as the best, has been Dan Wren, who developed the standard approach by developing a narrative of the evolution of management thought. Wren has the equivalent prestige to Alfred Chandler, the famed business historian (Novićević et al. 2015). The reason is that Wren largely created the structure of management history. The previous works tracing the development of management thought, such as Whyte (1969) or George (1972), merely provided a brief overview of the concepts or gave biographical data. What Wren did, and did successfully in my opinion, is to create a synthesis of management thought, tracing its evolution from one period to the next. Wren (1987) also rediscovered an important, but forgotten, figure, Whiting Williams, whose work on human relationships predated those of Elton Mayo. This discovery encouraged me to examine why the Hawthorne studies became prominent. Another creative management historian could be Charles Wrege, whose work was not in synthesis, but discovery. His work on both the Hawthorne studies and Taylor, based on years of research, has greatly influenced subsequent historians.

This leads me to one final point. Mills and Novicevic (2019) took issue with my review of the *New Management History* (co-authored by Stephen Cummings, Todd Bridgman, John Hassard, and Michael Rowlinson) which I pointed out that the authors wished to supplant Wren and Bedeian from their perch. When they called their work *A New History*, basically, it is res ipsa loquitur, the thing speaks for itself. Given that their interpretations, worldview, and motivations are different than Wren's, it should be obvious that they wish to supplant or start the process of supplanting the standard history of the field. There is nothing wrong with this. We should seek to build on the foundations of excellent scholars of the past. My problem was over interpretation not ambition. Unlike Bowden, who challenged their postmodern assumptions, I merely pointed out some of their points lacked nuance and an understanding of the broader historical literature. This is a common criticism that

could be directed at any history or historian. However, I do respect that they are stretching the field, forcing us to consider new approaches. Scholars, such as Rowlinson and other like-minded postmodernists, can be creative as well. They are forcing us to consider our roots.

Context

One of the most important aspects of history is to consider the social, economic, political, and intellectual context of the time in which we study. To do so is extremely important because the past is radically different than the present (Bailyn 2015). Context helps to give a better understanding to primary sources. For example, there has been a recent debate among Lincoln scholars over the sexuality of Abraham Lincoln. This is an important debate, because the Lincoln heritage is a rich and distinct one. As David Donald (1956) noted, politicians often try "to get right with Mr. Lincoln." In this case, history serves as a common framework, a useful myth to rally society (Peterson 1994). In scholarly professions, we often use myth to provide a sense of legitimacy. Accordingly, there have been attempts by several scholars and activists to enlist Abraham Lincoln as a gay man. Yet, the evidence for such a conclusion is sparse. The fact that Lincoln shared a bed with a man for a period is inconsequential. In fact, many of the lawyers who traveled the legal circuits shared beds. The one exception to this rule was Judge David Davis, owing less to his role as a judge and more to his obese size. Likewise, as Doris Kearns Goodwin pointed, strong intimate relationships between males were common at the time. A better understanding of the context of Lincoln's society and time would have prevented a line of inquiry that is based more conjecture than historical fact. It is also interesting to note there are very few works on James Buchanan's sexuality, for whom there is much more evidence of homosexuality than Lincoln. Of course, Lincoln was the far superior President.

How do we learn about the context of the past? We immerse ourselves in both primary and secondary sources. We attempt to make an understanding of the types of language used and other cultural aspects of the past. The past is a very different place, and the great historian can detect importance from seemingly obscure events. As Salevouris and Furay (p. 67) write, "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there." One of the most important works of history has been the work of Robert Darnton (1984), whose work on a massacre of cats in the eighteenth century reveals how different the past is compared to the present. Using the anthropology of Clifford Geertz, Darnton reconstructed a massacre of cats, which to Darnton was a symbolic action. The cats were murdered by a group of disaffected workers (this could be considered one of the first examples of counterproductive work behavior), who were upset with their master and mistress and murdered the cats as a form of a joke. Further, humor was found in the fact that the massacre implied that the master was a cuckold. This is a barbaric act by modern standards. The fact that we have a hard time understanding it is suggestive of just how remote the past is compared to

the present. Yet, Darnton, by combing through primary and secondary sources, could uncover the reason why this occurred: it was simply a form of worker protest.

One issue to note is the common abuse of "the Whig interpretation" of history. Coined many years ago by Herbert Butterfield (1931), the "Whig interpretation" is a tendency to lump the progressive forces of history as the good guys against the forces of darkness. This is typical in history; many historians, especially those of the liberal stripe, view the world as advancing toward progressive values and beliefs. In doing so, they strip history of its nuance and complexity. As both Butterfield and Bailyn (2015) pointed out, Martin Luther and other Protestant leaders were was as intolerant as the Pope against whom they protested. The concept of freedom developed during the seventeenth century only bares a distant relationship of freedom today. Put simply, we try to find those in the past that have our values and grade them accordingly, which makes history less interesting and relevant.

We have this same tendency in management history. Let me state clearly that management has been a great blessing to society. And the people who have benefited most from management are the average worker, an outcome that (Bowden 2018) is contrary to the expectations of those scholars who have a leftist bent. This is not to say that the workers of the past were wrong to oppose Taylorism or Fordism. Take Taylorism as an example. Taylorism encroached onto worker freedom in their search for higher wages. The workers of the time had little reason to trust Taylor, a middle-class reformer and someone who received his wages from the owners. Furthermore, Taylor's rhetoric was deeply upsetting and even hateful. His writings have whole passages dedicated to the racial and intellectual inferiority of whole ethnic classes. True, as some of his defenders point out, these values were common at the time. However, we must also understand that a man who writes such horrible things about workers would have a problem convincing them to buy into his theory.

One of the most difficult issues in history is dealing with the losers. It has been difficult for Americans to write about the Loyalists, those Americans who continued to support Britain during the Revolutionary War (Bailyn 2015). Most writers of American history painted the Loyalists as traitors, fools, and morally bankrupt. Yet, many of the Loyalists, men such as Thomas Hutchinson, were loyal to the Crown and the British system and were sober in thought and deed and did not believe that the Crown's activities gave the right of rebellion. In fact, the problem of justifying the rebellion required American ministers to spend a tremendous amount of time searching the Bible for justification. The Loyalists often had a clearer understanding of the real relationship between Britain and American than did the rebels. In fact, given the special relationship between American and Britain, we have moved toward something closer to the Loyalist version than the rebels. Hutchinson may have finally won over Thomas Jefferson, who hated Great Britain.

Who are the losers in management thought? Well it depends upon who is writing. As mentioned above, the workers who opposed Taylorism have been, at times, denounced as fools. However, they had important reasons to reject Taylorism, including, but not limited to, taking away many of the privileges labor had, in exchange for higher wages. Of course, we also assume, because we are modern individuals driven by the market, that wages matter. However, in traditional peasant

culture, wages did not matter as much. As we later learned, based on Hawthorne studies, and Equity Theory, pay does have social dimensions and social implications. In short, the connection between pay and worker behavior is more complex than Taylor though.

Another area where historians sometimes have issues is in judging the winners. We can see an example of this in the Hawthorne studies. In writing about the Hawthorne studies, some critics, both contemporary and historical, view the Hawthorne studies as a means for management to regain the right to manage (Harris 1982). For instance, Bruce and Nyland (2011, p. 401) wrote, "Mayo provided the business community with a sound body of intellectual prize-fighters who would support them when they launched their post-New Deal campaign to win back the right to manage that they believed had been challenged during this era." True, management lost power during the War over issues such as production and pricing, but, as stated above, it was going to gain back that power; even liberals realized government intervention in the economy did not work – all one had to do to recognize it was to read an edition of the *New Republic* (Brinkley 1995). Even then, big business played a major role in securing government contracts, revealing a complicated picture of the state. Roosevelt himself stated that Dr. New Deal was retired. Conversely, many executives entered into government service. It was also the case that large parts of the American public had a skeptical and even hostile view toward unionism. As the question of labor's participation in production decisions was debated, many labor leaders – men such as United Automobile Workers President Walter Reuther – stood against labor's participation in decision-making at both the firm and workplace levels (Lichenstein 1989, 1982; Patterson 1997). Accordingly, the ability of labor to make fundamental changes to the nature of capitalism is a greatly overstated argument. How could big business regain the right to manage when it never lost it? Labor's position of ascendency in the country had never been secure and was by no means secure in 1946 (Lichenstein 1989; Patterson 1997). Indeed, it would appear management had all the means to regain prestige and power even without the Hawthorne studies. During the war, it seemed to many that the effects of unionized labor were causing more problems than benefits. In 1944, there were 4956 labor stoppages alone. In 1945, there were 4750, and in 1946, there were 4985. Most of these strikes were wildcat strikes, which means that they occurred against the wishes of the unions to which the striking workers belonged. In fact, some contemporaries saw the Hawthorne studies (Chase 1946; Drucker 1946) as a means to lower the amount of discord in society. To dismiss someone like Stuart Chase as a management shill would be misrepresentative, considering he was a man of the left. His work appeared in the left-wing publication, the *Nation*, which opposed the Cold War. Conversely, conservative magazines would not publish his works.

Not only does history happen within context, historians also write in the context in which they live. If we trace the books and articles published by major presses and journals, we would notice that the amount of certain topics rise and decline. For example, of the great books published on Abraham Lincoln, in a biography written by Benjamin Thomas, there is no recognition of Frederick Douglass, the preeminent

African American abolitionist. Yet, there is today a vast literature on the relationship between Lincoln and the various abolitionists, including Douglas, a literature that traces a deep and complicated relationship. This shift reflects the fact that historians now write with a different strain of historical thought in mind than that of the 1950s. A thematic study of the *Journal of Management History* (Schwarz 2015) would find a great increase in papers of women and minorities in management. Old topics, such as the Hawthorne studies, reflected a single article published in 2010–2014. This reflects a change in management history.

When I was at Gettysburg College many years ago, we read two differing frameworks of the Reconstruction (i.e., the Unionist occupation of the United States South during the late 1860s and early 1870s), written by two different authors. The first was written by Hillary Herbert (1912) who was highly critical of Reconstruction policies, many of which sought to give African Americans the same civil rights as other Americans. The second was written by Kenneth Stampp (1965) who was favorable to Reconstruction and wished that Reconstruction had worked. Herbert had fought in the Civil War on the Southern side, was from South Carolina, and had opposed racial integration. Stampp was a Northerner from Wisconsin, who came from a family with strong progressive tendencies. He also wrote during the 1960s, which some have called the Second Reconstruction. The lesson was, when reading history, consider the historian. I never read history the same way again. However, scholars have been aware of this type of technique for years. In management history we have similar lines of debates. Hanlon, who is a radical historian, views worker's refusal to work and rebellion as pushing management forward. Other scholars view workers' rebellion with a less favorable view.

Interpretations can change how we view facts. One of the great American historians on slavery was U.B. Phillips, who was Southerner, located at Yale University. Phillips was the most influential and thorough historian regarding the Southern plantation system in the first half of the twentieth century (Hofstadter 1944). Phillips was a great historian, but he was a deep racist, whose attitudes to African Americans were, if not hostile, deeply patronizing and paternalistic. Phillips' contention was that slavery was an economic blight but an acceptable method of racial control. Phillips also noted that slaves were treated well. Again, Kenneth Stampp (1956) overturned this observation by arguing the reverse: that slavery was an economically efficient system but a deep and cruel social system. Rather than viewing slaves as docile and lazy, Stampp argued that they actively resisted. Stampp's position would be validated as historians of slavery gathered evidence from different sources.

There is a myriad of examples about the problems of contextual analysis. To do it properly, we need to conduct thorough analysis of citations and texts to recreate social networks. This work must be done through evidence. This is a painstaking process but one that could lead to a better understanding of the past. As I have written before, the reason why I respect Bernard Bailyn as a historian is that he looked at old evidence with a new eye and, in the process, discovered new pathways that scholars had previously been unaware of. This should be the goal. I feel too often that the new management history wishes to tear down canon because they

disagree ideologically with those scholars not because they are bringing a new eye to an old problem.

Theory and Quantification

There has been a call, in recent years, to use theory to make management history better and to gain more respect in the field. When I entered the field a little over 12 years ago, theory was the mania of the profession; I see little reason to believe it has changed. Our top journals often reject papers because they lack theory or do not make enough of a theoretical contribution, a phrase that is often used but one I find puzzling. Theory is a term that is often used to describe concepts and other phenomena. Whether these concepts and phenomena are theoretical, I am not sure. Often, we call something theory, but it does not fit what a scientist would call a theory. In fact, much of what we call theory, such as Talcott Parsons's work, would fail this distinction. This point is not an idiosyncratic one, as both Sutton and Staw could not define a theory, merely what it is not. Even under their definition theories, such as the covering law approach, would not fit Sutton and Staw's definition of theory (DiMaggio 1995).

I find this embrace to be slightly ironic. It is not because many of the critical theorists are poor theorists. The opposite is true; many of them are excellent theorists. One of them, Roy Suddaby, has been named an outstanding reviewer in our preeminent journal, the Academy of Management Review. The embrace is ironic because they are doing what they claim others do – namely, shaping their narrative and worldview to those who are in power. At present, people who wish to build theory are in power in the academic profession. Naturally, those scholars who wish to gain admittance to the higher levels of the academy will, in turn, shape their work to reflect a scholarly bent. This drive has been repeated in several academic fields, including sociology and economics, two fields with a close connection to management.

Yet, I would caution future management historians in their embrace of theory. I believe that theory is a generalizable approach that approximates the real world. It ignores complexities that the real world has. Many historians, especially those who pay close attention to primary material, are often skeptical that theory or laws would apply to history (Salevouris and Forney 2015). Despite the attempts over the years to make history a science, it remains completely a craft and an art. History also cannot be falsified and therefore does not fit what a scientist would state what a theory should be.

This hunt for theory development reminds me of the experiences of George Homans (1984), the father of social exchange theory, one of the most important theories in social sciences in general and management, in particular. Homans had unusual training for a student of sociology; he took no classes in sociology, and his principal professors were Lawrence Henderson, a medical doctor, and Elton Mayo, a psychologist. Henderson felt that the one social science with defined boundaries was history, and Henderson encouraged Homans to conduct research there. This is the

reason why Homans's first scholarly book focused on English villages in the Middle Ages. It was a topic that could be safely considered historic. Yet, Homans moved passed this to type of research – and even studies about industry – to theory, because to gain prestige, he needed to be a theorist.

History and the social sciences have had an unusual association. Richard Hofstadter, a Columbia-based historian, wrote a series of books that used concepts and theories from sociology, including the work of his Columbia colleague, Robert Merton. Over the years, we have witnessed many works that have combined both history and social sciences, such as psychology, sociology, and economics. The reception of these works has been mixed, to say the least (Handlin 1979; Peterson 1994). For example, there were several works published on Abraham Lincoln that argued that Lincoln commenced the Civil War due to his poor relationship with his father. Basically, the America created by George Washington served as a proxy for Lincoln's father. These and other works based on psychology have, with good reason, been highly controversial. Yet, psychology has helped to revive biography, which has lost prestige due to the Annales and Marxist schools (Garraty 1960).

Likewise, works that use quantitative techniques also have a problematic place in management history. Much of the controversy has been devoted to the field of cliometrics, which was developed in the 1950s to the 1970s by economists, such as Robert Fogel. The principle work on this issue was by Fogel and his co-author Stanley Engerman, *Time on the Cross*. This work argued that slavery was highly profitable; that slavery was highly efficient; and that slaves were only marginally economically exploited. In fact, the authors argued that slaves were treated better under slavery than they were afterward. These were stunning observations that upended generations of thought on slavery.

Needless to say, the book was highly controversial. Both scholars were attacked as racists, even though they wrote the book to destroy myths that were propagated against African Americans for years. Fogel was married to an African American woman. Fogel would win the Noble Prize. The book itself would win the Bancroft Prize, one of the top awards in history. Yet, its reputation in historical circles has not been high. The book launched a whole cottage industry of attack. Scholars, such as Oscar Handlin and James McPherson, noted that both Fogel and Engerman made numerous mistakes in calculation. Herbert Gutman criticized not only the erroneous calculations but also the failure of Fogel and Engerman to consider social aspects such as lynching and whipping. Arguably, however, the most damning critique was that made by Haskell (1975), who observed:

> Fogel and Engerman should have known from the beginning that any comparison of regional efficiency in the antebellum period was fraught with breathtaking difficulties. The basis for their comparison, a rather controversial economist's tool known as the "geometric index of total factor productivity," gives results whose interpretation is debatable in even the most conventional applications. The index is essentially nothing more than a ratio of output to input: it ranks as most efficient that region, or other economic entity, which achieves the highest output with the lowest inputs of capital, labor, and land. The fatal limitation of the index, given the uses to which Fogel and Engerman wished to put it, is that it measures output in market value, rather than physical units (contrary to the impression given in

> volume one of *Time on the Cross*). There is no escaping this limitation, for one cannot aggregate a total output composed of bales of cotton, bushels of peas, pounds of pork, etc., without reducing everything to dollar value.

Although Fogel and Engerman did respond to their critics, the conversations between the economists and historians were not fruitful. Simply put, using quantification is important, but unless you understand the nuance of the time period, you will have a difficult time using those numbers. However, quantification is important and necessary for historians, especially those of us who study management and business.

To Be a Potter

I would like to conclude this chapter with a discussion of an American historian who exhibited some of the best characteristics that a historian should possess. His name was David M. Potter, who was a professor at Yale and then Stanford, where he served as Coe Professor of History. He was a student of U.B. Phillips, who, given their shared Southern heritage, would suggest that his ideas would be not too dissimilar to that of his mentor. But, unlike Phillips, he was able to transcend the limitations of his heritage and, in the process, made a substantial contribution to American historiography. His most significant contribution was his work on the Secession crisis, which is the period from Lincoln's election until the battle of Fort Sumter in April 1861. This is a very controversial period of American history, when the Civil War really started. Potter's book was published in 1942 and has been reprinted several times since then. No less an observer than Sir Dennis Brogan (1969) called the work the second most original dissertation and one of the most durable contributions of an American historians. This durability has endured despite the opening of the Lincoln papers and the publication of many other books on the Civil War and antebellum America.

It was on the basis of this contribution that won Potter his professorship at Yale. What was truly remarkable about Potter was that he was able to transcend his background as a Southerner and to write as someone that could look beyond his sectionalist background. Not only did Potter cover the Succession crisis, he also explored the ideas and passions that drove the crisis. It covered not just the political maneuverings but also the passions and ideas of the general public. He also developed a portrait of Lincoln as he was, an untried but talented politician, struggling with a new minted party and an uncertain mandate. He also describes with nuance and understanding the contradictions between the liberal and conservative wings of the Republican Party and how this division played a role in the crisis. He also wrote intelligently and ingeniously on Lincoln's decision to prevent the Crittenden Compromise – which would have curtailed the need for succession by entrenching slavery in United States law – from passing through Congress.

The reason why I mention Potter's work is that in management we are something at a crossroads. The recent economic stagnation and the market crash of 2008 have damaged management. Increasingly, there are scholars who are questioning the

various foundations of the field; there are scholars attempting to defend those foundations. I must confess that I have played a role in this debate. Debates such as these are good for the field. History is a series of arguments. These arguments must be based on evidence. To examine the evidence in a dispassionate way, to rise above our biases, to base arguments on limited evidence, requires that we demonstrate some of the sound judgment that Potter possessed.

Cross-References

► Debates Within Management History
► What Is Management?

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