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The Routledge Companion to Management and Organizational History

Edited by Patricia Genoe McLaren, Albert J. Mills,
and Terrance G. Weatherbee

The Routledge Companion to Management and Organizational History

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The Routledge Companion to Management and Organizational History

Edited by Patricia Genoe McLaren, Albert J. Mills and Terrance G. Weatherbee

This book provides a much-needed critique of how we do management history and why. It offers a wide variety of perspectives on the subject, critiques existing methodologies and stimulates much-needed debate about historical purpose and practice. Scholars will argue over some of the views presented here for years to come; and that is a very good thing.

Morgen Witzel, *Fellow, Centre for Leadership Studies, University of Exeter, UK*
and author of *A History of Management Thought*

The editors and authors fulfilled a difficult task: tracing an arc on this topic to represent the ongoing process of thinking “history” in management and organization studies, as well as the intimate connection of history with thinking in our field altogether. An extraordinary collection and “must read” for anyone in management and organizational studies.

Marta B. Calás, *Professor, University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA*

This much-needed volume provides a critical foundation for the new historical turn in management research and scholarship. The authors have assembled a series of writers who provide both a substantive review of organizational theory through a historical lens but also provide a programmatic roadmap for the field.

Rakesh Khurana, *Professor, Harvard Business School, USA*

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and Terrance G. Weatherbee*

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To Murray Genoe, from whom I clearly inherited my fascination with both history and academia. In the early days of my history work you kept asking “but what about Canada?” Chapter 22 is for you Dad.

Patricia Genoe McLaren

To Deans David Wicks and Patricia Bradshaw, whose support and nurturing of the Sobey PhD (Management) has helped to make it history.

Albert J. Mills

To my Mother and Father, Fred and Yvonne Weatherbee, who in living their lives have always reminded me you are never too old or too busy to learn something new.

Terrance G. Weatherbee

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yet sparkling works of critique that tackled the neoliberal university and the epistemic domination of 'the rest' by North Atlantic theories of organization. Compelling and forthright in print, Eduardo was, in person, a man of compassion and warmth as well as being active in the organizational politics of his own institution. He was a contributing author and associate editor of *Organization*, contributed to the development of LAEMOS and, over the years, to the Critical Management Studies Community through both the CMS division at the Academy of Management and at Critical Management Studies Conferences. Above all he was in the full sense of the term *a scholar*: a man of tremendous learning, whose writing forms a unique archive in its own right, but whose political sensitivities were always with the lives of people.

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Trish, Albert and Terry

Part I

The historic turn in management and organization studies: critical responses

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Introduction

The historic turn in management and organizational studies: a companion reading

*Terrance G. Weatherbee, Patricia Genoe McLaren,
and Albert J. Mills*

Whether the beginning of the ‘historic turn’ in management and organizational studies (MOS) is marked at 1994 (Kieser, 1994), 2004 (Clark & Rowlinson, 2004), or earlier (Zald, 1993) is more a matter of choice in the tropics of narrative emplotment (White, 1985, 1987) than any signal of the primacy of a particular event. However, the benefit of two decades of hindsight does permit us to say – and without worry of compromise – that in the intervening period we have seen a veritable explosion of interest in history-work undertaken in MOS. Engagements with history in MOS have since spread from few to many, from the margins to the mainstream and back again, and are now established throughout a wide range of conference activities and journals, and in a growing number of texts. All of this work stems from, and is constitutive of, a deep richness to be found in the debates surrounding the various approaches used to interrogate where and how history is to be used (or not) for the study of organizations (Rowlinson, Stager Jacques & Booth, 2009; Weatherbee *et al.*, 2012). From our own position within the turn we now assess this sub-field as having matured sufficiently to warrant a survey of its state. Our survey is designed to provide management scholars and students an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the leading-edge and emergent thinking of scholars working within the turn as they engage in discussion and debate which collectively focuses on the problems, challenges, and potentials associated with doing history-work in MOS.

While we are collectively embedded within the varied interests and efforts comprising the historic turn, the story of this particular project starts with one of us. In 2012 Routledge decided that it was time for a *Routledge Companion to Management and Organizational History*. Our editor contacted Patricia Genoe McLaren and invited her to edit the companion. Trish immediately contacted Albert (Mills), who jumped at the opportunity to be involved, and Albert recommended bringing Terrance (Weatherbee) on board as well. Albert quickly drafted the first version of the proposal for this volume he had been thinking about for years, and after input from Trish and Terry the proposal was sent to Routledge, where it was quickly accepted. With the publisher having successfully enrolled the editors, it became time to put into practice what we had been preaching to ourselves in the proposal.

In order to publish a quality work that would capture our belief in the importance of history to MOS and engage a broad and diverse group of scholars, our small network needed to grow

substantially. We needed scholars whose work in MOS is emblematic of the ‘historic turn’ and whose thinking could further inform us as to the many potentials to be found across the wide span of approaches to theory, methods, and purposes for doing history-work. Fortunately, each of us knew several like-minded researchers, some personally and others only by their scholarly reputation, whom we hoped would be interested enough in the project that they would be willing to commit the time and effort to work with us and create this companion.

As in all complex endeavours some of these efforts at enrolment into the project were successful on the first attempt, some on the second, and some not at all. However, between the merits of the idea and the persistence of our appeals – and with due accord given to the roles and effects of contingency, happenstance, and the odd dose of luck (of both kinds) – over the span of a year the network took shape. While its formation was to wax and wane through a series of welcome ‘yes’s’ and regretfully accepted and usually apologetic ‘no’s’, we endeavoured to remain true to our original aims. We envisioned our text as a somewhat authoritative reference that would be considered relevant to a wide audience across a number of overlapping academic areas (e.g. general management, organizational behaviour, organizational theory, organizational communication, international management, sociology of organizations, and the sociology of work, as well as business history, historiography, and business research methods). Our companion would be inclusive of multiple paradigmatic perspectives representative of the wealth of effort(s) taken and under way in the area (e.g. positivist, Marxist, poststructuralist postcolonial, etc.), reflecting the widest set of scholarly geographies possible (east, west, north, and south), and possessing a variety of ends, ways, and means in the doing of history-work (theoretical, methodological, historiographic).

While *we* believe that we have been faithful to our intent and remain hopeful that readers will agree with us, we also know that the true utility and value of the companion can only be found in its use. Value is located in the relationships to be established between the reader and the works of the individual contributors. Value is located within the interstitial spaces created by the act of assemblage of such a diverse array of work. Value is to be found in the questions raised and the reflexivity invoked in the space between each reader’s historiographic position and those of each contribution or the collection as a whole. So rather than engaging in obligatory convention for texts of this form – that is, a summary introduction of the chapters or sections accompanied by an appropriately sagacious and instructive detailing of how the various contributions interrelate to form a coherent whole – we thought it would be of more interest to briefly present some of our own thoughts and reactions (surprises, lessons learned, reminders, etc.) to our reading(s).

In the first contribution we see a unique blend of citation analysis and biography, sourced through both academic (journal articles) and personal accounts (letters) as method. Milorad M. Novicevic, J. Logan Jones, and Shawn Carraher provide us with an intellectual portrait of Daniel Wren and his signature work *The Evolution of Management Thought* (Wren, 1972; Wren & Bedeian, 2009). While they rightfully acknowledge Wren’s role as one of the first progenitors of a canonical history of MOS and showcase the significant contribution he has made, through their decentring they also reveal to us how orthodox representations of the past may constrain our efforts to understand our discipline and the management and organizational phenomenon. We see their post-foundational surfacing of the construction of the disciplinary frames used in the dominant canonical history creating a space to displace the orthodox and the freedom to revise our history under different terms.

A canonical text of a different kind is the 1994 *Organizational Science* piece by Alfred Kieser that we have reprinted as a testament to our belief in its value – namely its oft-cited call for the launch of the historic turn in MOS and its contribution to the growth of management and organizational history (MOH) as a field. To that end, it is an understatement to say that we were

surprised by the retrospective that he contributed to this edited collection. In our reading of Kieser's retrospective we are vaguely reminded (albeit for very different reasons) of the work of historian Keith Jenkins who began by 're-thinking history' (1991) and ended by 'rejecting history' (Jenkins, 2009). Kieser presents not so much a walking away from history as a somewhat ironic lament on the evolving homogeneity of explanation in organizational theorizing. The lament comes at the beginning, where he states, "a historical turn is still not identifiable [in organization theory] and likely never will." He goes on to suggest that perhaps his call for a historical turn was "naïve". While this may be read as a rejection of his earlier call for a historic turn in MOS, it seems to us that there is an underlying disappointment in the direction that MOS has taken that makes its scholars less likely to be attracted to (or enrolled by) the need for historical analyses. That, at least, is our translation. Other readers may take something else away. That is always the issue of textual analysis.

The second reprinted article – by Charles Booth and Michael Rowlinson (2006) – is, metaphorically as well as literally, our reproduction of another work that has been widely cited as canonical in the field of MOH (see the many chapters throughout this collection that cite it). If there are any surprises here it is that (a) it continues to be cited as a critical starting point for a renewed call for the historical turn – despite the fact that in an earlier article Peter Clark and Mick Rowlinson (2004) made a much more explicit call – and (b) the call for greater methodological and philosophical debates inadvertently served to freeze debates around what Clark and Rowlinson had earlier problematized as a 'historic turn'.

Mick undertakes a personal reflection in relation to the way the historic turn unfolded. It is one that emotively resonates with us and his accounting of the circumstances by which the title of the article he co-authored with Peter Clarke (2004) became constructed strikes us as instructive in several ways. The use of his(own)story emphasizes for us the importance of the humanness of knowledge of the past and of the process nature of the interactions that lead to its co-creation. It sensitizes us to the networked nature of knowledge work and disciplinary projects comprised of authors, editors, and reviewers. In an academic world wracked by the pressures of publishing, author order, and evaluation exercises, this is sometimes easy to forget, as quite often in our individual life projects we forget that ours is a collective discipline rather than an individual one. Mick's recounting also highlights the oftentimes contingent nature of this process, revealing a case of the power of words. Power that was located in what was the right phrase at the right time, that is, the 'historic turn' – an ironic expression that became a symbolic rallying cry (a claim which is easily substantiated with citations).

Richard Marens' somewhat subdued polemic on how Marx and the intellectual corpus derived from his work has been marginalized, written out, and largely ignored by business and management scholars served us with notice that there are many differences between the approaches to the construction of history. These differences have historicity, arising as they do from the practices underwritten by politics, ideology, and geography over time. We find it ironic, as does he, that while the Marxian traditions have extensively informed the discipline of history, they have failed to do so for MOS. We agree that this is an unusual circumstance given that the large body of work on business and capitalism from a Marxian perspective represents a wealth of knowledge that we have eschewed for political rather than empirical reasons.

We read Roy Jacques and Gabrielle Durepos' review of textbook histories and the emplotment used by textbook authors as a clarion call that there is still much to be accomplished within the overall arc of the historic turn. The simplistic narratives of the historical orthodoxies found in chapter 2 (when there is one!) of our general and introductory texts are counted as failures in both historical and pedagogical terms. In historical terms they are so partial in their construction that they collapse into bowdlerized stories of the past that have little to no educational purpose.

This is a point Terrance Weatherbee also takes up in his chapter where he argues that simply adding in or transforming the form(s) of history in textbooks, though necessary, is insufficient if we wish to rid ourselves of the pedagogical history deficit. The work of all three – Jacques & Durepos and Weatherbee – reminds us that much of our pedagogical responsibility suffers from being ahistorical. Despite over a decade and a half of collective observations we still cannot seem to get it right in our teaching. The intersection of history and management pedagogy as pointed out almost a decade ago (Stager Jacques, 2006) seems to us to be rich with still untapped potential. Perhaps there is something in Alfred Kieser's lament after all!

Alun Munslow's observation that we all use and construct histories in our day-to-day practices stresses for us that our sense of the past is constructed in many ways – in speech, in writing, and in our use of other sense-making tools such as spreadsheets and PowerPoint slides. His perspicacious view reveals for us that it is history, rather than the past, which inheres strongly with our lived experiences. The relationship between organizing, business, and the past is an intimate one actively expressed in history-work. This reminds us that those working in organizations reconstruct history anew each day and that the continuity of action seen within them is a constructed one – a sense of pastness constructed on the basis of interpretation and meaning when articulated as histories (not the past!).

Scott Taylor exposed for us how hermeneutic approaches have moved far beyond their truth-in-text purposes and now represent a neglected method of interpretation of the past. He positions critical hermeneutics as an approach and method that, while underutilized, has significant potential for understanding the creation of historical narratives in the present. Given the textual nature of much of history in MOS (not to discount text in the broader sense, but used here in the sense of the textual presentation of history in journals and books), his observations draw our attention to different ways of seeing the textual and understanding its production.

Gabrielle Durepos' project, while still nascent, we see as being ripe with fruitful potential. She maps a way out of the divisive and intellectually sticky trap represented by the modern–postmodern duality that has consumed much effort in MOS over the last decades. Her explication of the dynamics of each of these positions with regard to history not only serves as a map of the intellectual terrain for each, but it provides a peek over the horizon of the possible. We are intellectually attracted to a way of seeing history as process, practice, and enactment, and her carefully constructed notions of 'amodern' historical approaches resolve to some extent the tensions we see in the either/or nature of singular and relational or unitary and relative. We can see openings for investigating and understanding how we can approach the historical as co-participants in the history we produce.

Somewhat shockingly, and wholly naively for us, Adam Rostis' powerful argument for a second look at humanitarianism has overturned our taken-for-granted conceptualizations of what we see as the 'good' in the humanitarian impulse. His use of Foucauldian genealogy uncovers the logics and orderings of organized humanitarianism and positions them as a colonizing discourse, a discourse which privileges a managerial ethos of efficiency and which treats the individual in economic terms. Humanitarianism has now become for us a history-laden and potentially repressive instrument that, when engaged in the recovery from hazard and disaster in failed/failing states, operates in the absence of countervailing factors. So when working in concert with private enterprise, humanitarianism can privilege the economic under the guise of doing good. It has, for us, radically signalled the need for expanding our attention to the intersection of history and organizing beyond simply the economic affairs of just business.

David Boje and Rohny Saylor have rewritten the story of the end of history. Their chapter crafts for us another potential ending – an ending heralded by the destruction

of humanity. A self-imposed ending and concluding narrative brought about through the actions of the capitalist project(s) writ in its largest sense. A project that has become so vast in its *longue durée* that it may yet lay waste to our planet as it has made humanity a, if not the, dominant geologic force upon it. There is a manifesto which we see as urging us to move beyond the modern and into a posthumanist historical space. A reminder that we can rewrite and recraft histories that do not artificially separate out human-centred histories from non-human-centred ones and which can refocus our attention upon our own selves living in an historically based world.

Diego M. Coraiola, William M. Foster, and Roy Suddaby resituate for us the critique of an ahistorical MOS. Drawing upon the work of Alun Munslow they investigate and categorize the approach to history in their analysis of the work of New Institutional scholars. Their study reveals that reconstructionist and constructionist approaches to historical understanding dominate that work and that rather than ignoring history, history is very much present. However, they also observe that this use of history is neither acknowledged nor problematized, nor is the relationship between the past and history questioned. They reinforce that MOS is *ahistorical* and not *unhistorical*, a lesson which informs us that we must be cognizant that our own theoretical and methodological choices commit us to a particular worldview and our disciplinary work is also a form of history-work (Weatherbee & Durepos, 2010).

While we saw Boje and Saylor's work as vast in both scale and scope, Stephanie Decker shows us that the 'small' is just as important in history-work as well. She reveals how microhistorians and those engaged in institutional perspectives often interrogate the same subjects – just from different scales. Consequently, her call for a more historiographic turn rather than a historic turn reminds us that there are many intellectual and methodological resources available to us in the discipline of history, an untapped stock of insight for doing history-work in MOS.

Tuomo Peltonen has abruptly shifted our own understanding of a canonical figure in MOS. Similar to the decentring of Wren's work by Novicevic, Jones, and Carraher, Peltonen has succeeded in changing how we now interpret the contributions of Elton Mayo as Peltonen's work both displaces and renews Mayo and his contributions in historical terms. This draws our attention to the tripartite dangers of unitary historical representations: histories which portray persons as one-dimensional in historiographic terms, that are essentialist in their treatments of persons, and which write-out the effects of the socio-political upon ourselves as scholars in the world (Cooke, 1999).

Using Fordism as their analytic framework, Ali Mir and Raza Mir reinforce for us the benefits of taking a longer historical view of management as practice. Their highlighting of the historically cyclical nature of managerial practices within the broader domain of the evolution of capitalism surfaces the strains experienced by management practices when engaged in the perennial search for solutions. It suggests to us that the dynamism of management and organizations may be the result of unreflexive practices passed on from one 'generation' of management to the next. For us this signals the trap of reading capitalism as a homogeneous economic form and managerial practice as tradition.

In a similar vein, Albert J. Mills, Terrance Weatherbee, Jason Foster, and Jean Helms Mills provide a rebuke to the way(s) in which we have constructed our own disciplinary history. They reveal for us that while socio-political activities operating within the contexts of what we know as the New Deal and the Cold War worked in tension to set the disciplinary boundaries of MOS, their import is conventionally absented from our renderings of our own past. Indeed, and not unsurprisingly, we are very much sympathetic to the problematic which they highlight for us. Any selections of what to include in representations of the past are also choices of what to exclude. Once taken and rendered into history these choices may become the normative discourse which signals what is a permissive activity within a disciplinary domain. Thus, for us, the

revisiting of our disciplinary history permits new insights, new questions to be asked, and new frames for interpreting where our discipline has been and is or could be going.

Bert Spector's analysis of over 500 articles in the *Harvard Business Review* during the first two decades of the Cold War serves as a poke in our collective (and parochial) scholarly eye. His study re-emphasizes for us that the phenomenon we study is as much the result of practice as it is of scholarly study. His observation that the polishing of the foundations of a uniquely American notion of Liberal Market Capitalism was developed as a counter-ideology expressed in the pages of the business press brings new insights into stark relief, not only the heretofore unknown element of our collective past, but also the interrelationship between the formation of ideology and history-work by management in organizations. His study also drew our attention to the inherently dialectical nature of management development in the Cold War and raised for us a question of what was the dialectic that followed and what is it now?

Amy Thurlow's use of critical discourse analysis in her historical investigation into the development of public relations (PR) draws for us some stark similarities and parallels between the professionalization of both PR and MOS as academic fields. Her work reveals that the development of PR was subject to many of the same processes which have been observed in the formation of MOS. For us in particular, her observations of the unitary and US-centric origin from which PR developed its historiography are particularly germane. These saw a process of development which totalized the theoretical dimensions in that academic field from an American standpoint. A standpoint from which non-American – in her case Canadian – scholars find themselves just now debating in historiographic terms.

This is a condition observed throughout many of the works in this companion, and in particular in the efforts of Patricia Genoe McLaren and Albert J. Mills in their exploration of Canadian management theory. Similar to the observations Thurlow has made concerning the default Americanization of the PR field, they argue that the history of MOS has never been Canadian either. This has, of course, a great deal of resonance for us, not just in terms of our professional interest in historiography and history-work in MOS, but also personally as situated Canadian scholars.

These concerns are also shared by Kristene E. Coller, Corinne McNally, and Albert J. Mills who surface a demonstrably Canadian contribution to management theory. Their study of the scholarly contributions and theoretical influence of Canadians working in New Institutional Theory reiterates for us that the conjunction of theory development with history as written in our journals and texts does tend to assume the universal. If the Americanization of Canadian management theory could be explained solely as a function of the geographic, cultural, and political proximities shared between Canada and the United States it would be far less worrisome to us as Canadians. However, for us as scholars the evidence which is accumulating to the contrary would seem to suggest otherwise.

Our third reprinted article is by Eduardo Ibarra-Colado. Originally, Eduardo had agreed to contribute a new piece written especially for this edited collection. Sadly his untimely death left us with an important intellectual void in the book. We wanted to bring his very different perspective and challenging voice to the debate because it held the promise of a rethink of – rather than an extension to – the historic turn by reminding/informing us of the embedded (Western) knowledge work contained within our attempts to make that historic turn happen. To retain his voice and the challenge he posed to us we chose to reprint one of his earlier works where he first develops this argument. As we wanted to do more than simply add this as a chapter we asked several like-minded scholars and friends – Nidhi Srinivas, Ana Guedes, and Alex Faria – to reflect on the contributions made by Eduardo Ibarra-Colado. Eduardo's contributions problematizes our understanding of the practices of management knowledge in terms of research and

education across national and cultural boundaries; especially when embedded in the knowledges of the so-called Other and the spaces in between. In their tribute to Eduardo as colleague, mentor, and friend, they reproblemate for us his project on epistemic coloniality and question a good part of the (Western/Northern) history project on which we are all embarked

Beyond the richly detailed and highly informative discussions concerning where the historic turn has been and where it is going found in the contributions of William M. Foster and Roy Suddaby and Matthias Kipping and Behlül Üsdiken, our own reading of the collective contributions to this companion has allowed us to sketch for ourselves a ‘historical’ arc of history-work in MOS. We find a trajectory which has seen movement(s) away from our singular and common-sense notions of the past – notions founded on a pragmatic realism where history was conceived as unitary and universal. We see movement towards multiple forms of history and history-work to arrive at relational amodern forms of co-construction. The in-between has, and still is, composed of a variety of theoretical and methodological choice. In this respect we see ‘fragmentation’ as richness and choice as freedom from the orthodox. If we are to grow our knowledge of that which we study, we need to continue to revisit what we know and how we have come to know it.

Finally, in closing this introduction, we would like to make especial mention of three individuals: Alun Munslow, Stewart Clegg, and Eduardo Ibarra-Colado. Alun Munslow very kindly responded to an unsolicited email from someone he had never met; one which asked him if he would be interested in bringing his unique perspective to a companion text to be published in a discipline that was not his own. Alun’s theorizing in his own discipline is of world renown, and as many of us have drawn inspiration from his work we were more than pleased when he graciously accepted. To Alun, our most grateful thanks. As many of you know, Stewart Clegg is an *éminence grise* in MOS, and his stature and reputation keep him extremely busy as teacher, mentor, and scholar. With many persons and projects around the world seeking his attention and asking of his time, we were very pleased he agreed to provide our closing commentary. We are also appreciative that he has indeed held our individual and collective intellectual feet to the fires of critical observation. Thank you. Finally, and most sadly, we would like to remember Eduardo Ibarra-Colado who wished to contribute anew to our discussion and debate. You are missed.

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Decentering Wren's *Evolution of Management Thought*

*Milorad M. Novcivic, J. Logan Jones,
and Shawn Carraher*

Today is not like yesterday, nor will tomorrow be like today; yet today is a synergism of all our yesterdays, and tomorrow will be the same. There are many lessons in history for management scholars, and the most important one is the past as prologue.

(Wren, 1994)

Introduction

Throughout the twentieth century, management history had been viewed as a domain of inquiry with the capacity to produce a “unique and valuable form of knowledge” (Carson & Carson, 1998: 29). However, this historical knowledge was not recognized as a significant part of the foundational knowledge in management and organization domains. But in the twenty-first century, the scholarly significance of examining the history of management thought has been recognized (Booth & Rowlinson, 2006). Specifically, the focus on history has generated a ‘historic turn’ in management and organizational studies which is slowly gaining legitimacy in management and organizational scholarship (Rowlinson, 2013; Buchelli & Wadhvani, 2014). The proponents of this turn have called for a more critical approach to the history of management thought. This approach challenges the received view that the only proper way of conducting management history research is by investigating, synthesizing, and interpreting the evidence from the past in an objectivist and universalist manner (Mills & Mills, 2013).

This ‘historic turn’ has been championed by a number of distinguished British and Canadian researchers (Durepos & Mills, 2012a). However, the prominent US management historians have retained the traditional approach to historical research (van Fleet, 2008). The traditional approach involves: (1) chronological studies proposing periodization in the evolution of management thought; (2) studies aimed at ensuring that management’s knowledge base does not contain any myths or misinterpretation from the past; (3) studies uncovering examples from the past to serve as benchmarks for the future; and (4) studies aimed at reevaluating the past against our current knowledge base to identify management fads and fashions (Kieser, 1994; Carson & Carson, 1998; Gephart, 1996; Smith, 2007). The outstanding

proponents of the traditional approach in the US have been Daniel Wren, Arthur Bedeian, and Charles Wrege (Gottschalk, 1956; Lamond, 2005; Thomson, 2001; Wrege, Greenwood & Hata, 1999; Novicevic *et al.*, 2008).

These three outstanding US management historians have taken different, yet complementary paths to solidifying the foundations of knowledge in management history. By emphasizing the importance of dispelling myths embedded in the foundations of knowledge in the field of management history, Bedeian and Wrege have espoused that it is the primary obligation of management historians to focus on uncovering these myths and integrating their corrections into the practice of management education. In contrast to them, Daniel Wren developed a framework of narrating the presumably undisputed foundations of the history of management thought. His framework has been recognized by management historians across the world as exemplary primarily due to his most influential book, *The Evolution of Management Thought*, which has become a prominent locus in management history education (Gibson, Hodgetts, and Blackwell, 1999). Through nearly fifty years of active life in academia, Dan Wren has been “committed to teaching, promoting, and researching historical evolution of management” based on the foundations canonized in his book (Abraham *et al.*, 2009).

We use decentered theory (Bevir, 2003; Donovan, 2007) to examine the beliefs, practices, and meanings underlying Daniel Wren’s book *The Evolution of Management Thought*. We focus our theoretical frame, which allows for an alternative conceptualization of history, to unpack the philosophical foundations of this exemplary book and decenter it as the received canon of the history of management thought from the management historians and researchers. The primary illustration of our decentered approach is related to the concept and practice of Taylorism.

We selected Taylorism for our illustration because it seems to be the conceptual gravity point of Wren’s book, as both the symbol of modernity in management practice and the invented tradition of management thought (Nyland & Bruce, 2014). In particular, Taylorism has been both recognized as the legitimate object of theorizing (Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2008) and denied as a myth (Wrege & Greenwood, 1991). But Wren’s book has unambiguously sustained its legacy both as a practical means to achieving harmony in management–labor relations and as a source of mental revolution that legitimized management as a discipline.

To present our decentered examination of Wren’s history of management thought we have organized this chapter in the following manner. First, we provide an overview of Wren’s life and intellectual contributions. Second, we decenter Wren’s analytical framework to deconstruct his claims of historical knowledge about management thought. Third, we unpack the philosophical foundations of Wren’s approach to the history of management thought. In conclusion, we outline the implications of our findings for alternate conceptualizations of the history of management thought.

Our decentering of Wren’s conceptualization of management’s past focuses on interpreting beliefs and meanings shared by Wren, other management historians, and great management thinkers who have been involved in articulating the traditional history of management thought. Taking a decentered theoretical perspective (Donovan, 2007) which is grounded in a specific postfoundational philosophical view (Bevir, 2013a), we uncover the meanings and beliefs of Wren and other management historians and thinkers and interpret their expressed claims. We selected a postfoundational philosophical approach, which falls within the anti-structuralist paradigm, as a source of the guiding logic for our attempts to answer what we know about the history of management thought. Our anti-structuralist paradigmatic approach is different from the poststructuralist approach that Durepos & Mills (2012b) have applied in an exemplary manner to management and organizational history (for a comprehensive overview and comparison of the anti-structuralist and poststructuralist paradigms, see Hassard & Cox, 2013).

We use specifically Bevir's (2013a) hermeneutic/phenomenological postfoundational version of the anti-structuralist approach, which suggests that individual management thinkers and historians socially construct characteristics of management and organizational phenomena and narrate management history based on the traditional webs of belief that they inherited. Bevir's version would suggest that they weigh their current beliefs against the inherited traditional ones that are reflected in the historical narratives. Only when contradictions between the individual current and the shared traditional beliefs become salient, does a dilemma emerge as to whether the traditional beliefs and narratives should be revised and modified. When this dilemma is recognized by a significant number of management historians, polarized views will emerge. These polarized views will likely suggest different ways of how the history of management thought should be narrated and how management's past should be theorized (Bevir, 2000a, 2000b).

Bevir's hermeneutic/phenomenological variation of postfoundational philosophy, which we use for grounding our decentered approach to interpreting Wren's book, rejects positivist factual truth-claims comprising the presumed historical conceptual foundation of management knowledge. This philosophical approach suggests that individual management historians and thinkers construct and reconstruct management concepts based on the beliefs inherited from traditions of interpreting the history of management thought. We examine how this conceptual construction and reconstruction is reflected in Wren's framework and used in his narration of the history of management thought. As we assume that Wren's framework reflects the traditional webs of beliefs about management history, we use it as the object of tracing the genealogical paths of management concepts espoused by management thinkers and historians. With this tracing, we attempt to uncover alternative ways to conceptualize the history of management thought and thus modify traditions of interpreting it.

The main purpose of our decentering of Wren's seminal history of management thought is to reveal how he navigates the historical maze of management traditions that are shaped by management thinkers and historians. We recognize that the main contribution of Wren's book is his development of the framework containing institutional, political, economic, and cultural dimensions that are instrumental to explicating the history of management thought. This framework rests on the assumption of epistemological universalism and its foundationalist principles of obtainable, objective, historical knowledge about management thought. In this chapter, we decenter Wren's foundationalist view of the history of management thought embodied in his framework. Our goal is to open paths to alternative conceptualizations of the history of management thought. In the following section, we examine how Wren's life experiences and his educational background have influenced his traditionalist understanding of management concepts and his foundationalist view of the evolution of management thought.

Wren's life-story and intellectual contributions

The life-story and intellectual contributions of Daniel Wren have been chronicled comprehensively in two separate articles published in the *Journal of Management History*: 'Becoming an outstanding management historian in the USA' (Abraham *et al.*, 2009) and 'Management history gurus of the 1990s' (Gibson, Hodgetts & Herrera, 1999). Therefore, our synthesis of Wren's life, education, and contributions is primarily grounded in those two articles. In addition we use the letters supporting Wren's nomination for the Academy of Management's awards.

Daniel Wren was born in Columbia, Missouri on January 8, 1932. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial and Personnel Management from the University of Missouri

in 1954. He spent the next four years in military service in the United States Air Force as a squadron/wing personnel officer. Wren then worked in his family's retail grocery business and focused on earning his Master's degree in Management and Labor Relations at the University of Missouri. After receiving his Master's degree in 1960, he left the family business to work as a production supervisor at Hallmark Cards Corporation in Kansas City, Missouri.

Having been intellectually stimulated by his previous academic experiences, Wren left Hallmark after just one year to pursue a PhD at the University of Illinois. He eventually received his doctorate in management, having also taken a diverse set of courses in economics, marketing, social psychology, and labor economics. In Wren's first job at Florida State University, his research focus in the 1960s was not on studying management history but on studying general management. His main research objective was to target the elite academic journals such as the *Academy of Management Journal*. During this decade he co-authored a book, *Management: Process, Structure and Behavior*, published several high-quality articles, and served as the Editor of Florida State University Press.

The 1970s marked the beginning of Wren's lifelong passion for teaching and researching management history which was largely triggered by his pedagogical experience with teaching a History of Management introductory course at Florida State University (Abraham *et al.*, 2009). Based on the material used in his teaching of management history in 1972, Wren wrote and published the first edition of what would become his most acclaimed book in the field of management history, *The Evolution of Management Thought* (Abraham *et al.*, 2009). Wren attributed his capacity to write this seminal book of management history to his generalist management training, which he received while simultaneously working and earning his doctorate (Abraham *et al.*, 2009; Gibson, Hodgetts & Herrera, 1999). In other words, the broad nature of both his work experience and his education helped him examine and narrate the history of many different fields of management.

In 1973, Wren accepted an academic position at the University of Oklahoma (OU) in the Department of Management, where he would later become the Curator of the Harry W. Bass Business History Collection. With access to the collection's unique and valuable historical resources and his passion for researching management history, Wren's research output peaked at the OU. Over the next five years, he authored or co-authored multiple articles that were published in leading journals such as the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Management*, and *Academy of Management Review*. He also published new editions of his books, *Management, Process, Structure and Behavior* and *Evolution of Management Thought*. Throughout his early career at the OU, Wren was able to contribute high-quality research while concurrently serving in multiple positions such as Director of the Division of Management and Editorial Review Board member of *Academy of Management Journal* (1973–1975), *Journal of Business Research* (1973–1975), and *Academy of Management Review* (1975–1978).

In the early years of his career in Oklahoma, Wren was honored by being listed in *American Men and Women of Science* (Social and Behavioral Sciences, 1973). He received an Outstanding Service Award from the Southern Management Association (1975), and became a Fellow of the Academy of Management (1976). Since these early years, Wren has continued his research in the area of management history, focusing mostly on several management pioneers (e.g. Frederick Taylor, Henry Fayol, and Whitney Williams). He acquired the titles of the David Ross Boyd Professor of Management (1989) and the McCasland Foundation Professor of American Free Enterprise (1994). He published several books including multiple editions of *The Evolution of Management Thought*. He served as the Interim Dean and Fred E. Brown Chair (2005–2006). In 2007, Wren was named Dean Emeritus, in addition to Fred E. Brown Chair Emeritus, and

the David Ross Boyd Professor Emeritus, at the Price College of Business at the University of Oklahoma.

Throughout the later stage of his career at the OU, Wren has been committed to service through affiliation with multiple professional organizations such as the Academy of Management, the Southern Management Association, the Business History Conference Association, and the Southwest Academy of Management. Dan Wren is a Past President of the Southern Management Association (1973–1974) and one of the two original members of the Management History division of the Academy of Management. He has also served on the Editorial Review Boards of the *Oklahoma Business Bulletin* (1986–present), *Journal of Management* (1986–1995), *Journal of Managerial Issues* (1989–1998), *Journal of Management History* (1994–present), and *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship* (2000–present).

Wren's lasting impact on the work of many reputable researchers in the areas of management and management history can be illustrated with the following exemplary testimonials. "He is a wonderful colleague offering support and encouragement to doctoral students and other professors as well" (M. R. Buckley, personal communication, January 8, 2002). Dan Wren is committed to both offering guidance to academics and building the next generation of management history researchers. In his career, he has served on over 55 doctoral committees and he has mentored many of the top scholars in the field including Arthur Bedeian (former President of the Academy of Management), Richard Hodgetts (winner of the Academy of Management Distinguished Scholar Award), and David Van Fleet (Fellow of the Academy of Management).

"These three recognized management scholars influenced by Dan Wren maintained strong interests in management history for decades and they have all published major works in the management history area" (M. Wortman, personal communication, January 9, 2003). Bill Wolf, former President of the Academy of Management, said that "the fact remains that in the advancement of knowledge we stand on each other's shoulders ... to me the significant reason for awarding people such as Dan is that by making such an award we are saying to our members that behavior such as his is of value to our society and should be emulated." He went on to say about Dan that he is "at the pinnacle in contributing to the history of contemporary management thought" (personal communication, January 31, 2002).

For his contribution, Wren has received numerous noteworthy awards, including those for his dedication to teaching, research, and service, such as Outstanding Professor (University of Oklahoma, 1980), Merrick Foundation Teaching Award (1982), AOM Distinguished Educator (1991), Founding Fellow of Southern Management Association (1995), Associates Leadership Award (University of Oklahoma, 1996), AOM Ronald G. Greenwood Award (1999), SWAM Outstanding Educator Award (2001), and Distinguished Scholarly Contribution Award (AOM Technology & Innovation Management Division, 2010). He was inducted into the Oklahoma Higher Education Heritage Society Hall of Fame in 2011. Wren was the first active AOM recipient of three different Academy-related awards including the Distinguished Educator of the Year Award given by the Academy of Management (1991), the Ronald G. Greenwood Award (1999), also from the Academy of Management (Division 1), the Outstanding Educator Award (2001) from the South-West Academy of Management, and the Distinguished Scholarly Contribution Award (2010) from the AOM TIM Division. W. Jack Duncan, past President of the Southern Management Association said:

In 1986 when the Academy of Management celebrated its 50th anniversary and the Centennial of Management, it was my honor to be selected to serve as Chair of the Centennial and Anniversary Celebration Committee which was celebrated at the

Table 2.1 Daniel Wren's research and service (not all inclusive)

Year	Service: Editor	Research books	Research articles: people	Research articles: concepts
1966	FSU Press			CNV: Televising a Basic Management Course
1967	FSU Press			AMJ: Interface and Inter-Org. Coordination
1968	FSU Press	<i>Management: Process, Structure and Behavior</i> , 1st edn.		SBJ: Personnel Testing
1969	FSU Press			
1970	Bus. Perspectives			
1971	Bus. Perspectives			
1972	Bus. Perspectives	<i>Evolution of Management Thought</i> , 1st edn.	AMJ: Lillian Gilbreth	
1973	Bus. Perspectives			
1974	AOM, JBR			
1975	AOM, JBR			
1976	AMR	<i>Management: Process, Structure and Behavior</i> , 2nd edn.	SOB: Fritz Roethlisberger	JOM: Anything New in Management
1977	AMR			AMJ: Perceptions of Management Pioneers
1978	AMR			JOM: Managerial Experience of Management Professors
1979		<i>Evolution of Management Thought</i> , 2nd edn.		JOM: Theory/Applications in Management Pedagogy
1980			AMR: Walter Polakov	
1981				AHJ: History in Business School
1982				BHR: American Business Philanthropy and Higher Education
1983				BH: History in Business Schools
1984		<i>Management: Process, Structure and Behavior</i> , 3rd edn.		JHBS: Industrial Sociology
1985				
1986	JOM, JLA	<i>Papers Dedicated to the Development of Modern Management</i>		
1987	JOM, JLA	<i>Evolution of Management Thought</i> , 3rd edn.; <i>White Collar Hobo: The Travels of Whiting Williams</i>		JOM: Management History: Issues and Ideas for Teaching and Research
1988	JOM, JLA			
1989	JOM, JLA			
1990	JOM, JLA, JMI			

Chicago meeting that year. One of our charges was to publish a special ‘proceedings’. The committee was unanimous in selecting Dan to edit this proceedings entitled *Papers Dedicated to the Development of Modern Management* ... I think 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 which makes him a member of a very elite group of individuals.

(Personal communication, January 31, 2003)

To establish a chronological timeline sequence, illustrating the breadth and the depth of Wren’s contributions, we have listed the titles, themes, and concepts permeating all Wren’s published books and articles (see Table 2.1). Table 2.1 shows not only the years when all of the editions of Wren’s book were published, but also the key management thinkers and management concepts that he examined in his published articles. For the inputs to this list we utilized Google Scholar, Scopus, and JSTOR, to assess certain quantitative indicators of the direct and indirect impact of Wren’s work (e.g. number of citations, types of subject areas, subsequent referencing research). This use is based on previous research that has supported Google Scholar as an accepted resource for evaluating article impact (Harzing & Van Der Wal, 2009; Kousha & Thelwall, 2007; Levine–Clark & Gil, 2009). A search of ‘D.A. Wren’ as author in Google Scholar undeniably established as salient his most influential work, *The Evolution of Management Thought*. Wren’s book, which followed Claude George’s popular book published a decade earlier, differed from George’s book in that it examined management history within an analytical framework that contained economic, institutional, political, and cultural dimensions and encompassed a chronological timeline of the consecutive time periods or eras in the evolution of management thought. In contrast, George focused only on the contributions of seminal individuals without developing a chronological framework (Gibson, Hodgetts & Herrera, 1999).

In the Preface to the sixth edition of the book, Wren and his co-author Arthur G. Bedeian justify their focus on the chronological framework of periodization by stating that their research is designed to place “people and ideas that comprise the management discipline’s intellectual heritage within a chronological framework” (Wren & Bedeian, 2009: xxv). To formalize this focus, the authors divide the book into four ‘eras’ of management: (1) early management thought; (2) the scientific management era; (3) the social person era; and (4) the modern era. Their periodization of management history into eras was also intended to facilitate the book’s use in management education because the material was presented in a chronological and meaningful manner using a valid analytical framework (Abraham *et al.*, 2009).

In an interview in 1996, Wren explained the origin of his idea to develop an analytical framework for *The Evolution of Management Thought*:

The University of Missouri offered an elective in the history of management, taught by Professor Robert Grant Cook. I have always loved history and took this course which involved each of the class members selecting two people to research and give oral reports in class. I chose Fredrick Taylor and Charles de Fremenville. If we finished our reports before the class ended Professor Cook would fill the remainder of the period by reading passages from Copley’s life of Taylor. I thought that there must be a better way to teach such a fascinating subject as management history. That was the germ of the idea for what became *The Evolution of Management Thought*, but it had to wait until I finished my master’s degree, worked for Hallmark Cards, finished my doctorate, and co-authored another book.

(Wren, 1996)

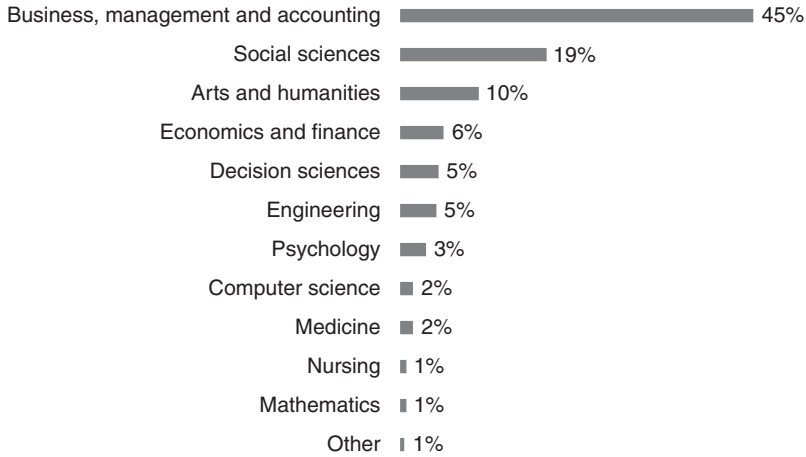


Figure 2.1 Academic disciplines influenced (Scopus as of October 15, 2013)

Table 2.2 Journal subject groupings (JSTOR as of October 15, 2013)

<i>Journal groupings</i>	<i>JSTOR publication category</i>	<i>Examples of journals in category</i>
Business	Business, management, accounting	<i>Academy of Management Journal</i> <i>Journal of Management</i> <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i> <i>Management Decision</i> <i>Journal of Business Research</i>
Social sciences	Education, political science, psychology, sociology	<i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i> <i>Journal of Public Administration, Research & Theory</i> <i>Journal of Criminal Justice</i> <i>Innovative Higher Education</i>
Economics and finance	Economics, finance	<i>Economy and Society</i> <i>Journal of Economic Issues</i> <i>History of Political Economy</i> <i>Economic and Labour Relations Review</i>
Other	Other disciplines not listed	<i>Journal of Academic Librarianship</i> <i>International Journal of Technology Management</i> <i>Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly</i> <i>Technology and Culture</i> <i>Journal of Health and Human Services Administration</i>

The Evolution of Management Thought has had a major impact across disciplines as it has been cited over a thousand times and is in its sixth edition. To capture the diverse impact of the book, we examined publications that have referenced *The Evolution of Management Thought* and grouped those journals utilizing Scopus analytics and JSTOR. Among the publications that have referenced his book the greatest percentage lies within business disciplines. However, as shown in Figure 2.1, there is evidence of the book's significant influence on other academic areas such

Table 2.3 Most cited publications referencing *The Evolution of Management Thought* (Google Scholar as of October 15, 2013)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Citations</i>
Barley & Kunda	Design and devotion: Surges of rational and normative ideologies of control in managerial discourse	1992	Article	<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	977
Weisbord	<i>Productive Workplaces: Organizing and Managing for Dignity, Meaning and Community</i>	1987	Book	Jossey-Bass	715
Griffin & Moorhead	<i>Organizational Behavior: Managing People and Organizations</i>	2011	Book	South-Western	689
Swanson & Holton	<i>Foundations of Human Resource Development</i>	2001	Book	Berrett-Koehler	595
Huczynski	<i>Management Gurus</i>	2006	Book	Routledge	569
Hunt	<i>Leadership: A New Synthesis</i>	1991	Book	Sage	562
Fournier & Grey	At the critical moment: Conditions and prospects for critical management studies	2000	Article	<i>Human Relations</i>	464

as social sciences and humanities. The specific groups of journal publications that contain references to Wren's book are shown in Table 2.2, following the grouping approach used by JSTOR. To illustrate the significant indirect impact of Wren's book, we identified the most cited publications that reference *The Evolution of Management Thought* as reported by Google Scholar; these results are shown in Table 2.3.

Our overview of Wren's life, education, and contributions points to his persistent focus on environment as the primary source of factors influencing our historical knowledge in the field of management. He believes that the evolution of management thought should be analyzed by grouping environmental factors into a framework that casts historical process in an analytical format that is also handy for effective teaching. In the following section, we decenter the beliefs, practices, and meanings underlying Daniel Wren's framework that is the backbone of his seminal book *The Evolution of Management Thought*.

Decentering Wren's history of management thought

We study Wren's history of management thought using Bevir's (2003) variation of decentered theory, which is grounded in the epistemological doctrine of hermeneutic/phenomenological postfoundationalism (Cederström & Spicer, 2014; Ginev, 2011). We examine Wren's book and articles about Wren in a decentered way with the intent of capturing the meanings that permeate them. In the examination, we use decentered theorizing as the lens for our interpretation of Wren's intentions and claims (i.e. 'speech acts') stemming from his beliefs about the history of management thought. In the development of this interpretation, we adopt Bevir's (2013a) assumption that we are constrained in our attempts at collecting sufficient

evidence to develop meaningful interpretation of the history of management thought from the contemporary point of view (Bevir, 2003). Given this constraint, we can only develop an approximate interpretation of the way the evolution of management thought is explicated in Wren's book by comparing it iteratively to the interpretations of the beliefs about his book that are shared by outstanding management scholars and historians. This comparison is crucial to explicate in a decentered way Wren's meanings and beliefs about management's past (Bevir, 2013a, 2013b).

Our comparison indicates that Wren has had the capacity to change the webs of shared beliefs about management history that he inherited. In particular, we claim that Wren changed the way in which the history of management thought is now commonly viewed and taught by introducing the analytical framework of social, political, and economic factors that influenced historical change in management practices. We argue that in his book Wren depicts this historical change through the meanings that we uncover from his framework-based conceptualization and narration of the history of management thought.

Our decentered theorizing, however, introduces a destabilizing shift to Wren's framework-based way of interpreting the history of management thought. Specifically, we posit that traditional management historians like Wren may have 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. The commitment to this web of beliefs in their academic communities may constrain the capacity of Wren and those sharing his views to change their inherited traditional beliefs. In other words, membership of management historians in traditional academic communities may constrain their individual capacity to reexamine their personal beliefs against the background of inherited webs of beliefs, and decide whether they need to modify the traditional beliefs. Our decentered perspective posits that management historians like Wren are situated agents who individually and collectively can change/modify the inherited traditional beliefs only when the community becomes polarized and contested views emerge. Our decentering efforts are focused on identifying these polarizing faults that may happen.

In our decentering of Wren's history of management thought, we focus on interpreting data as evidence of beliefs and desires that underlie Wren's claims (Håvard, 2014). Our data are thick descriptions of meanings found in Wren's book and the related articles. The data from the book represent rich evidence of Wren's beliefs, while the data from various articles and letters indicate the extent to which his beliefs are shared by the community of management historians. Our interpretation of data in decentered theorizing accentuates "the importance of learning about the intentionality of actors, that is, the beliefs, cultures, and traditions that inform actions and beliefs. The constructive relation of beliefs to actions encourages studies of beliefs and identities, and the actions and cultural practices to which they give rise" (Bevir, 2013b: 292). To insure quality interpretation, we focus on "thicker accounts of the divers webs of meaning that are embedded in human activity" (Bevir, 2013b: 292).

Our decentered theorizing is particularly focused on interpreting data that represent patterns of Wren's narration of the history of management thought with the purpose of revealing the underlying beliefs (meanings) embedded in these patterns. However, we recognize that the patterns cannot be captured as stable structures but can be only provisionally and temporarily described by pointing to how Wren tries to galvanize them as stable structures into his analytical frameworks that he presents as stable within specific time periods. As the decentered theory does not support the assumption of structural stability, our interpretation of data about Wren's developed framework calls for reframing that framework. Specifically, we call for decentering and recentering of Wren's frameworks through the "conditional connections