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Using the past responsibly: What responsible managers and management academics can learn from historians' professional ethics

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The "uses of the past" approach emerges as a promising avenue to blend history and management theory. This research considers an organization's past as a contested symbolic space, which organizational and social actors shape and renegotiate for their diverse interests. However, while a growing number of studies describe and theorize on such productions and uses of historical narratives in the present, there is little literature addressing ethical questions and implications. This chapter looks at the ethics of the uses of the past to advance responsible uses of the past and counter its abuse. We do so by drawing on scholarly and professional norms of historians and expand their scope to the domain of the management community of practice. First, based on professional norms, we provide definitions and present (ir)responsible uses of the past as a matter of moral integrity. Second, based on scholarly norms, we outline processes and practices of responsible uses of the past, which stresses a reflexive responsibility to engage in communicative activities when crafting, circulating, and revising historical narratives. Third, by turning our attention to management academics, we distinguish between scholarly and professional responsibilities to begin a discussion on the ethical responsibilities of "uses of the past" and other management academics. In all, this chapter explores the intersections of academic and managerial communities of practice to enable mutual learning towards more responsible uses of the past.

Keywords: Uses of the past, ethics, responsibility, organizational history, historical narratives

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Introduction

Management researchers are increasingly recognizing the value of historical methods, evidence, and knowledge to advance our knowledge of management and organizing (Bucheli & Wadhwani, 2014; Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014; Godfrey, Hassard, O'Connor, Rowlinson, & Ruef, 2016). Empirical approaches to history foreground the production and uses of historical narratives by historians and management academics for theoretical purposes (Maclean, Harvey, & Clegg, 2016; Rowlinson, Hassard, & Decker, 2014; Vaara & Lamberg, 2016). Another approach to history, in contrast, acknowledges that engagement with the past is not an exclusive academic domain (Foster, Coraiola, Suddaby, Kroezen, & Chandler, 2016). Drawing from the insight that history is constitutive for human beings' sense of self and their actions (Hansen, 2012; Wadhwani & Bucheli, 2014), management researchers increasingly take the uses of the past by organizations and managers as a phenomenon worth investigating (Wadhwani, Suddaby, Mordhorst, & Popp, 2018). The "uses of the past" approach, that is, the umbrella term that embraces the emerging discussion, studies how organizational actors engage with the past to construct present and future conditions for their organizations (Suddaby, Foster, & Qinn Trank, 2010). Beyond such a "hypermuscular" view of managers who can craft and control an organization's historical narrative (Lubinski, 2018), recent contributions also consider an organization's past as a contested public space, shaped by and renegotiated with diverse stakeholders for their strategic interests (Cailluet, Gorge, & Özçağlar-Toulouse, 2018; Lubinski, 2018).

However, while a growing number of studies describe and theorize on such productions and uses of historical narratives in the present, only very few have addressed ethical questions in managerial history-work (Schrempf-Stirling, Palazzo, & Phillips, 2016; Zundel, Popp, & Holt, 2016). Consider for instance the case of Cadbury. Rowlinson and Hassard (1993) critically demonstrated that managers deliberately misrepresented Cadbury's past to emphasize its origin in Quaker beliefs about caring for employees. The dilemma faced is that, while we know that managers *do* use the past for their strategic purposes, there is little attention to the question of whether managers *should* use particular representations of the past (Wadhwani et al., 2018, p. 1676).

Given that at the heart of responsible management scholarship is the conceptualization of management as a profession (Abrams, 1951; Prahalad, 2010; Laasch and Moosmayer, 2015), we believe that it is important to establish the ethical grounds for the responsible use of the past by managers. Prahalad (2010, p. 36) reminds us that managers are the “custodians of society’s most powerful institutions” and with that comes a duty and responsibility to their community and stakeholders. Being members of a profession requires managers to hold themselves to higher standards to maintain their legitimacy and status as a profession. Given that managers use the past strategically to gain legitimacy, clarifying professional standards in relation to using the past in responsible management is an important, yet missing element in responsible management scholarship and worth defining.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish ethical grounds for the *responsible* use of the past by managers and academics. Inspired by a research note by Wadhwani et al. (2018), we apply and expand scholarly and professional norms of academic historians to the domain of the responsible management community (Laasch, 2018a, 2018b; Laasch & Conaway, 2015). We first build on De Baets’ (2009) Code of Ethics for history professionals to draw the boundary between responsible and irresponsible uses of the past. Essentially, we argue that responsible instances rest on the honest and truthful character of using history. Second, we draw from Gill, Gill, and Roulet (2018) to outline processes and practices of responsible uses of the past by managers. Gill et al. (2018) developed scholarly principles and techniques for constructing trustworthy historical narratives. While rejecting the epistemological possibility to write an objective history of the past, Gill et al. (2018) understand that any crafted historical narrative is open to reframing by other historians. Instead of promoting the noble dream of showing the past "as it once was" (Von Ranke), they urge organizational historians to take responsibility for what they write in bringing to the fore the textual choices in selecting and emplotting their narratives. Such "reflexive responsibility" enhances the understanding of a historical narrative, as it allows other historians to reconsider the decisions underpinning the story and question or refine the initial representation. Hence, we argue that responsible use of the past by managers is underlined by a reflexive responsibility to engage in communicative activities when crafting, circulating, and revising historical narratives.

By expanding a set of ethical principles and practices of organizational historians to the domain of the responsible management community, we follow Laasch's (2018, p. 12) recommendation to consider intersections of academic and managerial communities to "enable mutual learning and to further mutual relevance, necessary for the joint endeavour of 'making' responsible management and responsible managers." Hence, this chapter contributes to this boundary-spanning project. Furthermore, our normative reflection contributes to the "uses of the past" literature, which has mostly circumvented ethical issues of managerial invoking of the past, as we provide a basis to guide an advance of the "uses of the past" scholarship and practice on more ethical rails.

In the remainder of this chapter, we first briefly introduce the "uses of the past" approach and discuss some of its conceptual cornerstones (i.e., the past, history, and historical narrative). We then explore the existing yet scarce literature that considers ethical aspects of managerial uses of the past. Thereafter, we apply professional norms by De Baets (2009) and scholarly principles of reflexive responsibility by Gill et al. (2018) to the managerial practice of using history. We conclude by discussing some implications for future research and management learning.

Conceptual background

The "uses of the past" approach

The "historic turn" in management and organizational research called historians and management theorists to join discussions on how to best combine history and management research (Bucheli & Wadhwani, 2014). This collective effort led to an upswing of a variety of empirical approaches to history that became legitimate methodological options for interdisciplinary scholarship (Maclean et al., 2016; Rowlinson et al., 2014; Vaara & Lamberg, 2016). While history has spilled into many fields of management research, the "uses of the past" approach has emerged as one of the most promising theoretical avenues to conceptually integrate history and management theory (Wadhwani et al., 2018). Primarily, the "uses of the past" scholarship has examined how organizations strategically deploy their histories (Foster et al., 2016; Zundel et al., 2016). In particular, Suddaby et al. (2010, p. 157) introduced the notion of "rhetorical history," defined as "the strategic use of the past as a persuasive strategy to manage key stakeholders of the firm." Many scholars have built on the idea of rhetorical history. They refined our knowledge that the invoking of the past can be a useful asset to build identity, create culture, promote legitimacy, and generate authenticity (Foster et al., 2016). Subsequent research, however, recognized that managerial uses of the past are subject to external judgment by audiences and contextual constraints in time and place (Cailluet et al., 2018; Lubinski, 2018; Zundel et al., 2016). Therefore, despite the agentic role of managers in shaping historical narratives, internal or external stakeholders might contest particular representations of the past because of their distinct strategic interests (Zundel et al., 2016).

Conceptual definitions of the "uses of the past" approach

As this stream of research matures, the field converges on some conceptual consensus (see, particularly, Wadhwani et al., 2018). While drawing from different strands of historical theory and philosophy (e.g., Ricœur's reflections on narrative, Gadamer's hermeneutics, Hobsbawm's concept of invented tradition), the community of scholars would likely agree on a set of ideas that has underpinned our discussion so far. First of all, the literature makes a clear distinction between the past and history. The "past" refers to the empirical reality of "all events that occur chronologically before the present" (Wadhwani et al., 2018, p. 1666). In contrast to the objective past, scholars bring forward a subjective and processual definition of "history," that is, "the mobilization of the past in the present" (Wadhwani et al., 2018, p. 1666). As such, managers can convey their subjective interpretation of the past by producing and using a "historical narrative," that is, "a sequence of logically and chronologically related events organized by a coherent plot" (Rowlinson et al., 2014, p. 254). This subjective manifestation of historical knowing, finally, is always situated in time between an actual past and an ongoing present and emerging future (Gadamer, 2013). Through situated power relations, historical narratives have the performative potential to "bring into being the relationships they describe" (Wadhwani et al., 2018, p. 1666), that is, making "a particular view of the past true by embedding it in collective memory as facts" (p. 1667).

In sum, this discussion suggests the usefulness of distinguishing a researchable, objective past from a mythological or invented past that organizations and social actors produce and circulate for their instrumental purposes.

Towards an understanding of using the past responsibly

While the "uses of the past" literature has advanced our understanding of the performative consequences of managerial history-work, there is a lack of studies that take the ethics of the use of the past in organizations seriously (Wadhwani et al., 2018). To the extent that some scholars delved into ethical aspects of the use of the past, the literature supplies some starting grounds. First of all, most scholars would agree that the recent "uses of the past" literature emphasizes the situated nature of managerial use of the past, which stresses the performative or *instrumental* constraints of history-work (especially: Lubinski, 2018). In particular, historical narratives have to be convincing and accepted by an audience if they are to fulfill the performative promises (Foster et al., 2016). To be effective, "historical narratives have to be coherent (i.e., the story must make sense) and consistent (i.e., it must be grounded in the past)," according to Foster et al. (2016, p. 5). As a consequence, the relevant audience can question and reject a historical narrative if it feels that the historical claims are not legitimate (Foster et al., 2016).

As these approaches are rooted in an instrumental view of history, Zundel et al. (2016) proposed a more reflexive yet nevertheless utilitarian perspective. In contrast to the view of history as a productive asset, they present the idea of "being historical" for managerial practice. By being historical, they mean a reflexive concern for "context-dependence and the simultaneous transgression of epochal strictures by recourse to history" (p. 230). They argue that an open engagement with the past sharpens the understanding of "anomaly, disjuncture, and asynchronicity" in the present when one is willing to understand the past on its own terms. This awareness of history by managers might open up speculative possibilities "for things being otherwise" in an imagined emerging future (pp. 229-31).

Another ethical line of inquiry, so far only loosely associated with the "uses of the past" approach, emerges from Schrempf-Stirling et al.'s (2016) idea of "historic CSR" (see, also, Phillips, Schrempf-Stirling, & Stutz, 2018; Stutz, 2018). Rooted in the community of practice of business ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR), Schrempf-Stirling et al. (2016) built a theory of how organizations deal, and *ought* to deal, with a negative past when it re-emerges in historical claims raised against organizations in the present. This line of research is normative, as it draws from prior literature on political CSR. This literature foregrounds the socially constructed legitimacy of organizations that managers should maintain through deliberative communication with the public (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). While Schrempf-Stirling et al. (2016) consider the full range of potential organizational behaviors, one can read their work guiding organizations to demonstrate greater openness, transparency, and good-faith discourse with critical stakeholders concerning the historical claims raised.

However, while we acknowledge the merits of the paths taken and build on some insights, we suggest considering the professional norms and ethical principles of academic historians useful to promote more ethical practices in the management community. This involves a deliberate move from the organizational level to the individual level, which allows our discussions to be connected to the responsible management literature. We now turn our attention to the professional responsibilities of academic historians.

Historians' professional ethics for responsible management

Most professions—prominently, for example, medicine and law—provide Codes of Ethics to spell out the professional standards and norms to remind professionals of their responsibility and strengthen the public's trust in the profession. Unlike professions that are protected by solid access barriers, membership in the history profession is open. Its members range from career academics with doctorates to freelancers without any university degrees (Tapper, 2010)—and, we are inclined to say, managers as professional producers and narrators of history. Despite the weak institutional barriers, there are a variety of codes of conduct for historians, which provide some common ground for the otherwise fragmented community of history practitioners.[1]

[1] Please see http://www.concernedhistorians.org/content/ethichist.html for a collection of ethical codes of conduct for historians (accessed, March 2019)

Professional norms: Defining (ir)responsible uses of the past

De Baets (2009) offers a solid starting point for our endeavor, as he wrote extensively on the "abuses" and "irresponsible" uses of history (perpetrated by or within the context of authoritative states). His Code of Ethics envisioned four fundamental values for historians (p. 188): freedom (to research), personal integrity (of historians), respect (for those they study), and a methodically determined search for historical truth (as the process and output).

Additionally, he demarcates between scholarly and professional responsibilities. The former is concerned with "content and method, questions of truth and reliable expert knowledge" (p. 11). Fundamentally, he believes that the search for historical truth is the core of the history scholarship. In contrast, questions of the profession are more concerned with ethical issues. For him, the ethical core of the profession cannot be the truth, since to err is human. Instead, it is about truthfulness or honesty. Hence, we suggest that we should apply the idea of personal integrity at the center stage to fix the boundary between the responsible and irresponsible use of the past (see Table 1).

Following De Baets (2009), we first define irresponsible uses of the past. De Baets (2009) distinguishes two types, that is, abusive history (or pseudohistory) and reckless history. The main distinction is the level of intentionality to commit morally wrongful behavior: Abuse of history is its use with the intent to deceive. Reckless history, in turn, is somewhat negligent in its use (p. 14). To be clear, De Baets (2009) considers such uses of history

> "*morally* wrong because citizens (including citizens who are historians) have the (moral) duty to be honest and, even if there are circumstances where one is not obliged to tell all of the truth […], the intent of not speaking should not be to deceive. In addition, almost always the aim of deception is to acquire an unfair advantage" (p. 16).

In contrast, we consider managerial use of the past *responsible* when a producer of history is committed to an honest search for historical knowledge and accepts its provisional nature. After all, we believe that these definitions hold in the managerial context. For instance, Hatch and Schultz (2017, p. 36) recommend, for managers who want to engage in history-work, that "they should align their strategic interests with history [i.e., responsible use of a researchable past] rather than trying to align history with their interests [i.e., a danger of using the past irresponsibly]." Table 1 summarizes the demarcations in managerial use of the past. Importantly, it should be noted that responsible and irresponsible uses of the past are unaffected by the competence of the history practitioner and the quality of the historical narrative (good or bad history), which is not part of our discussion.

Table 1. Demarcations in managerial uses of the past (based on De Baets, 2009)

Concept	**Description**
Irresponsible use of history (pseudo or reckless historical narratives)	Irresponsible use of the past is either its deceptive or negligent use
Responsible use of the past (trustworthy historical narratives)	Responsible use of the past is committed to an honest search for historical knowledge and acceptance of its provisional nature
Incompetent use of the past (wrong historical narratives)	Incompetent use of the past produces erroneous, distorted, and biased historical narratives due to a lack of training and experience (while the moral boundary of dishonesty or gross negligence is not transgressed)

In sum, professional norms guide responsible managers to commit themselves to an honest search for historical knowledge and oppose any abuses and irresponsible uses of history. In the next section, we explore the scholarly norms of history and outline principles and practices for managers to construct "trustworthy" historical narratives.

Scholarly norms: Constructing trustworthy historical narratives

While De Baets (2009) dedicated himself to Karl Popper's scientific world view, the "uses of the past" literature considers other philosophical assumptions to define the status of historical knowledge. In particular, proponents of the "uses of the past" literature would agree with De Baets (2009) that the past is objective, but see history as a processual result of subjective interpretation instead. Hence, in line with the widely accepted epistemological assumptions that it is not possible to write an objective history (Hansen, 2012; Rowlinson et al., 2014), we follow Gill et al. (2018) and others who argue that the best that historians can do is to accept the ever provisional status and take scholarly "responsibility" for what they write. This responsibility involves demonstrating "trustworthiness" through communicative action, i.e., "making [...] research practices visible, and therefore auditable, enabling others to gain a richer insight into how their findings were produced" (Gill et al., 2018, p. 194). If other historians understand the decisions underpinning a narrative, they can reconsider and revise it. To enhance such communicative responsibilities between writers and readers, Gill et al. (2018) developed principles and techniques for constructing trustworthy historical narratives in historical organization research.

To this end, Gill et al. (2018) converted traditional assessment criteria of qualitative research by Guba (1981) into a set of principles and practices to generate more transparent historical narratives. The criteria encompass credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability. Each criterion refers to a felt problem with a historical narrative that decreases the probability of trustworthiness. In contrast, the proposed ethical practices can increase the probability of trustworthiness in relation to felt problems (see Table 2).

Table 2. Principles for responsible use of the past

Concerns and felt problems	**Assessment criteria**	**Ethical practices to increase the probability of trustworthiness**
Truth value; Rival stories are more plausible	Credibility	- Engage with the content and context of evidence (by being faithful to hermeneutic horizons of past actors) - Verification by independent historians
Non-applicability	Transferability	Use language skillfully - to build a richly contextualized account ("thick description") and - to permit comparisons to current contexts

		Allow for the agency of history (instead of aligning history to organizational purposes)
Inconsistency	Dependability	- Engage in "reclaiming" activities to prove consistency
Narrator's bias	Confirmability	- Provide public access to empirical material used - Engage in good-faith discourses with the relevant stakeholders and the public

Credibility

The first concern with trustworthiness refers to the recipient's confidence in the "truth value" of the output of history-work in relation with the perspectives and experiences of actors in the past (Guba, 1981; Gill et al., 2018). For today's ears, the story must "ring representationally true" (Maclean et al., 2016) and rule out all plausible alternative stories (Guba, 1981). If a consumer of a historical narrative challenges it on the issue of credibility, there is not a textbook answer guarding against such threats of trustworthiness. Instead, since ringing true refers to interpretive processes in the minds of the recipients, the history-using manager can do nothing more than take steps to increase the probability of a narrative's trustworthiness (see, especially, Guba, 1981).

To build confidence in interpretations of the past, Gill et al. (2018) propose a set of practices for historians, including source criticism and expert historian checks. In managerial practice, the former could mean engaging in the content and context of existing remnants of the past. While the display of historical materials might serve the sole purpose of sensationalism, historians stress the importance of putting evidence in historical perspective, that is, being attentive to historical specificities when interpreting the past (Maclean et al., 2016). The second practice, expert historian checks, places value on historiography to verify a managerial historical narrative. However, if managers commission a historian to write a company history, the trust in such paid work is likely to be lower than that in independent historical research (Schrempf-Stirling et al., 2016).

Transferability

The second concern with trustworthiness relates to the degree of fittingness of a historical narrative of the past to actual contexts and challenges of an organization (Guba, 1981; Gill et al., 2018). This resonates with the primary idea of rhetorical history by which managers lend the authenticity of the past to a current context through the skillful use of language (Suddaby et al., 2010; Hatch & Schultz, 2017). To capture the practical work of rhetorical history, Maclean, Harvey, Sillince, and Goland (2018) bring forward the idea of "intertextuality." This notion is defined as "the numerous ways in which texts [i.e., historical narratives] appropriate prior works, which they adapt and rework in response to new contexts, remaining open to interpretation and alteration in subsequent retelling" (p. 2). As such, it is the skillful use of language that establishes the applicability of history in the pursuit of organizational goals in the evolving present.

To this end, Gill et al. (2018) suggest creating what Geertz has dubbed "thick description," that is, a richly contextualized account of the past. In addition, Hatch and Schultz (2017) propose that history has agency in the sense of possessing the power to act on people before it occurs to them to make use of it. Hence, Hatch and Schultz (2017, p. 36) warn managers who intend on massaging history in alignment with organizational goals. This manipulation risks failing because it could undermine the agentic power of history to create the "immediacy, intensity, and emotionality that history inspires in others."

Dependability

The third felt problem refers to inconsistencies that could damage confidence in a historical narrative (Guba, 1981; Gill et al., 2018). Consistency, in turn, implies that an inquiry into the past would produce stable results if replicated (Guba, 1981). However, historical knowledge is always provisional, as the relevance and meaning of the past continually change from the evolving present (Wadhwani & Decker, 2018). Also, managerial uses of the past are always in dialogue and competition with other historical narratives. Lubinski (2018), for instance, coined the notion of "rhetorical history revisions" to describe historical maintenance work in relation to rival historical narratives. Thus, as stable knowledge of the past is impossible, Gill et al. (2018) follow Guba's (1981) idea of dependability. This notion acknowledges that inquirers into the past are intimately involved in shaping their narrative. Dependability, thus, strives not for the goal to produce researcher invariant results (Stutz & Sachs, 2018) but asks researchers to explain the expected variance in results (Guba, 1981). For historians, dependability implies tracking and revealing the methodological steps involved in developing subjective interpretations, so that others can follow the trail (Gill et al., 2018).

For managerial practice, however, we suggest that Hatch and Schultz's (2017) notion of "reclaiming" is more applicable. This process unfolds when someone demands proof of whether the managerial use of the past is authentic or not. Such a request could guide organizational actors to explore the past more rigorously, which produces (or not) additional evidence that corroborates the original narrative. In contrast, if reclaiming fails, the managerial use of the past could risk turning into a manipulation effort (i.e., to abuse history).

Confirmability

The final concern relates to the "neutrality" of the historical narrative. An audience may question whether a historical narrative is solely a function of biases, interests, and motivations of its narrator (Guba, 1981; Gill et al., 2018). However, as any historical work unavoidably reflects the predilections of the researcher (Stutz & Sachs, 2018), Guba (1981) shifts the burden of neutrality from the investigator to the data. Thus, confirmability refers to historians' requirement to ground any interpretation in evidence (Gill et al., 2018).[2] Historians meet this expectation through the technique of active citation and footnoting that should explain precisely how the empirical material supports historical claims (Gill et al., 2018). In addition, Gill et al. (2018) recommend that historians should reveal to their audience their historiographical school or research strategy, which caused them to initiate the research project in the first place. In organizational history, this could mean aligning an inquiry with one of the many methodological approaches (e.g., the conceptualizing approach to history, Maclean et al., 2016), which provides readers with sound principles to assess a manuscript.

Given these principles for historians, we see two implications for managerial practice. We first advise managers to ground their histories in actual empirical material. Indeed, Seaman and Smith (2012, p. 50), both history consultants, urge managers that any efforts to leverage an organization's past is "only as good as the raw materials—documents, images, and artifacts—you have at your disposal." Second, this material has to be made accessible, for instance, through public archives (see, critically, on organizational archives: Decker, 2013). Seaman and Smith (2012, p. 51) recommend that managers should "engage audiences inside and outside in an ongoing dialogue about the meaning of that past for the company's work." Essentially, this resonates with what Schrempf-Stirling et al. (2016) called a good-faith discourse with the public concerning the past.

Discussion

In this chapter, we explored the intersections of academic and managerial communities of practice to enable mutual learning towards a more responsible use of the past. On the one hand, we observed that empirical reality provides ample examples of managerial abuses or

[2] Please note that our use of the term confirmability refers to what Foster et al. (2016) called consistency (which we cited earlier in this chapter).

irresponsible uses of the past. On the other hand, our literature review pointed out that the "uses of the past" literature recognizes the powerful impact of managerial history-work but turns a blind eye to ethical questions and implications. Thus, we set out to establish ethical grounds for the responsible use of the past. We did so by considering De Baets' (2009) Codes of Ethics for the history profession and expand its scope to the domain of managerial history-work. To transform the abstract principles to managerial practice, we drew from Gill et al. (2018) who developed practices and techniques to construct trustworthy historical narratives. In this discussion, we elaborate on the implications to provide scholars avenues for future research.

(Ir)responsible use of the past

This chapter presented responsible managerial history-work as a question of the personal integrity of the manager. Mainly, we draw the boundary between different instances of the use of the past by considering their honest and truthful character. As future research might find our definitions useful, we suggest that researchers should further investigate the antecedents, processes, contents, and outcomes of (ir)responsible use of the past by managers.

First, we extended the professional standards of academic historians to the domain of responsible management community. However, the question arises as to whether such ethical standards can be maintained. For academic historians, Tapper (2012) concluded that the norms and standards are sustained by nothing more than individual vigilance and personal integrity. Analogous to historians, managers are likely to evaluate the moral basis of their history-work (implicitly or explicitly). Future research could zoom in and investigate those moral evaluations and the guiding values as antecedents of (ir)responsible managerial history-work.

Second, we also believe that there might be in place some institutional processes that constrain and enable (ir)responsible use of the past (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). For the history profession, De Baets (2009) argues that any abuse of history could damage historiography as a whole since each breach is likely to lead to a decrease in the confidence of a society in the academic quality of the profession. Extending this insight to the domain of managerial practice, we suggest that the proliferation of managerial abuses of history is likely associated with a decline of the effectiveness of rhetorical history-work in a given context. Hence, future research could not only extend our individual perspective but also explore the institutional nature and consequences of history-abuses.

Third, our discussion has largely sidestepped any questions regarding the "content" of the past and its performative effects. Prior research on the use of the past describes that managers can appropriate the history of the founder, the organization, the industry, or even the nation-state (Foster et al., 2016). Future research could start exploring the narrative content's implications. In particular, we are interested to see its relationships to the consequences, be it beneficial or harmful. De Baets (2009) suggests that an abuse of the past always risks causing harm for stakeholders and societies. Scholars interested in this topic could follow the line of inquiry by Mena et al. (2016) who wrote about the processes of concealing an unpleasant past in collective memories.

On the contrary, it would be especially interesting to see beneficial outcomes of responsible use of the past—namely beyond the narrow instrumental goals of organizations. For instance, Christensen, Morsing, and Thyssen (2013) presented the idea of "aspirational talk," that is, a rhetorical commitment to reduce the gap between actual reality and a projected "better" future, which helps responsibility standards take deeper roots within organizations. The effectiveness of using the "triumphs of the past" (Christensen et al., 2013, p. 380) to stimulate ethical improvements in the future is largely unknown. In addition, scholars could follow the lines of Schrempf-Stirling et al.'s (2016) work and consider managers' ethical dealings with an unpleasant past. Their work implies that, if an organization did the hard work to reconcile with its unpleasant past, it is likely that the managers are "most aware of the broader implications of current activities, including implications for the distant future" (p. 714).

Last but not least, we also introduced a definition of incompetent use of the past. To the extent that there are only a few top managers with a history degree, we expect to see many "bad" uses of the past. As we are not aware of studies that investigate gross failures in history-use, this path represents another opportunity for future research.

History in management practice and learning

This chapter outlined the processes and practices of responsible use of the past. In particular, we built on Gill et al.'s (2018) ideas of constructing trustworthy historical narratives. By using the term trustworthiness, we highlighted the reflexive responsibility to engage in honest, communicative activities when crafting, circulating, and revising a historical narrative.

However, when it comes to responsible management, scholars have pointed out a gap between knowledge and practice (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015). More specifically, managers know ethical expectations towards them but do not put this knowledge into practice (Alcaraz & Thiruvattal, 2010). In order to address this theory-practice gap, Hibbert and Cunliffe (2015) proposed moral reflexive practices to highlight irresponsible behavior and pave the way to more responsible management practices. At its core, reflexivity means to question existing assumptions and practices of oneself and others (Cunliffe, 2009).

Thus, to teach future managers and mentor experienced managers, we suggest that history could play a central role in responsible business education. Historically, there is a demise of history in the business school curriculum despite its practicability (Van Fleet & Wren, 2005). For instance, Warren and Tweedale (2002) argued that history and business ethics education should be combined, as a historical standpoint allows ethical issues to be understood more thoroughly.

As a starting ground, we suggest that business educators should transform and implement Suddaby's (2016) idea of historical consciousness, that is, "a sensitivity and awareness of the degree to which history is both a product and a source of human reflexivity" (p. 57). In line with the "uses of the past" approach, this notion stems from an objective understanding of the past that constrains what actors can and cannot do in their history-use (Suddaby, 2016). Another useful concept for responsible business education emerges from Zundel et al.'s (2016) notion of "being historical." In contrast to historical consciousness, this idea stresses that recourse to history might be useful to transgress the path-dependent constraints of the past. By realizing the political nature of today's taken-for-granted reality, "being historical" could stimulate students and managers to imagine a different future. In sum, we believe that future business education and management learning should revive history in the business school curriculum (see, also, Bridgman, Cummings, & Mclaughlin, 2016; Cummings & Bridgman, 2015).

Ethics of history in academic practice

Our engagement with De Baets' (2009) Code of Ethics animated us to reflect on our own responsibilities as history and management academics. With De Baets' (2009) distinction between scholarly and professional responsibilities, we propose the following ethical implications. The scholarly dimension makes historians and management academics liable to represent history in a truthful light, to the best of their ability. This includes the falsification of factually incorrect representations and versions of the past by managers and organizations (Wadhwani et al., 2018). While negligent use of the past might not justify a scholarly response, we suggest that "uses of the past" academics should especially be attentive to abuses of history, in which managers misrepresent history with the intent to deceive.

The professional dimension, in turn, acknowledges ethical norms and political implications. History, as De Baets' (2009) conclusion on the abuses of history by authoritative states, is often an instrument to legitimize ideology and power. In such politicized conditions, history academics may mobilize their moral compass and values to critique the powerful and uproot the taken-for-granted masked by wrongful history (e.g., by the standards of universal human rights). Analogously, Wadhwani et al. (2018, p. 1677) "posit that a […] case could be made that organization scholars […] do have a positive ethical and normative obligation to critique the uses of the past by managers, and not just describe and theorize it (Stutz & Sachs, 2018)." We agree. De Baets' (2009) code of ethics explicitly allows moral evaluations to be made on the subject of studies, "on the condition that these have sufficient factual basis, are prudent and fair, and are a contribution to the public debate about history [or management practice]." After all, this form of critical reflexivity requires "uses of the past" academics to "question the social practices, organizational policies, and procedures that [they] are involved in creating: identify, advocate, and support necessary changes in situations that promote harmful values" (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2013, p. 180). Practitioners of the responsible management field, we believe, are best positioned to lead this transformative journey.

Conclusion

History and management academics have set up a research field that investigates managerial use of the past for organizational purposes in the present. Research in this field has primarily examined how organizations deploy their histories strategically in relation to relevant, and sometimes critical audiences. This chapter looked at the ethics of the use of the past to establish ethical grounds for responsible use of the past. We presented first (ir)responsible use of the past as a matter of moral integrity. Responsible instances rest on the honest and truthful character of using history. Second, we outlined the processes and practices of responsible use of the past, which stresses a reflexive responsibility to engage in communicative activities when crafting, circulating, and revising historical narratives. Third, we distinguish between scholarly and professional responsibilities to begin a discussion on the ethical responsibilities of "uses of the past" academics. In all, this chapter provides a basis to advance the "uses of the past" scholarship and practice on more ethical rails. We add the responsible use of the past to the portfolio of responsible management competences to further establish management as a profession.

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