

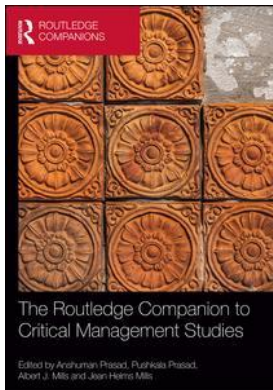
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 27 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Companion to Critical Management Studies

Anshuman Prasad, Pushkala Prasad, Albert J. Mills, Jean Helms Mills

A rebel without a cause? (Re)claiming the question of the 'political' in Critical Management Studies

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315889818.ch5>

Ajnes Prasad

Published online on: 08 Sep 2015

How to cite :- Ajnes Prasad. 08 Sep 2015, *A rebel without a cause? (Re)claiming the question of the 'political' in Critical Management Studies* from: *The Routledge Companion to Critical Management Studies* Routledge

Accessed on: 27 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315889818.ch5>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

A rebel without a cause? (Re)claiming the question of the ‘political’ in Critical Management Studies

Ajnes Prasad

What is the organizational imagination? It is the quality of mind that enables organizational researchers to make linkages between history, structures, and individual lives in the service of an intellectual and political purpose.

(Mir & Mir, 2002: 121)

Introduction

In the last couple of decades, Critical Management Studies (CMS) has exponentially grown in purchase. There are now conferences (the biennial International CMS Conference in Europe and the biennial CMS Research Workshop in North America), edited books (Alvesson, Bridgman & Willmott, 2009; Grey & Willmott, 2005; Wolfram Cox, LeTrent-Jones, Voronov & Weir, 2009), and special issues (Prasad & Mills, 2010) devoted to this academic domain. Given the proliferation of CMS scholarship that has emerged, there have been concerted efforts, in the last several years, to identify CMS's origins (Rowlinson & Hassard, 2011) and its underlying “pillars” (Adler, Forbes & Willmott, 2007; Fournier & Grey, 2000). Perhaps no other evidence of its growth – and its legitimacy – is greater than the fact that articles have emerged from non-CMS members of the academy appraising and critiquing this intellectual domain (Eden, 2003; Frenkel, 2009). Given its prolific growth, some scholars have observed that CMS is approaching a state of ‘institutionalization’ (Rowlinson & Hassard, 2011).

One pivotal effect of the institutionalization of CMS is that it is dangerously close to losing its political edge. Indeed, CMS scholarship appears to be increasingly moving against the contours of its original radical political orientation. This political orientation was, at one point in time, the defining feature of scholarship being conducted under the CMS label. As Cunliffe and colleagues (2002: 489) elucidated in their description of CMS: ‘[it is] a branch of management theory that critiques our intellectual and social practices, questions the “natural order” of institutional arrangements, and engages in actions that support challenges to prevailing systems of domination’. If CMS's radical political orientation is forsaken, then it becomes severely vulnerable to being subsumed by the wider academy – which does not share CMS's ontological affinities – or otherwise risks almost wholly failing to realize that which it was created to redress:

the rectification of the underlying problems caused by mainstream management theory and practice. Hence, at this juncture it may be timely to ask, 'Has CMS become the proverbial rebel without a cause?'

The intention of this chapter is to reclaim the question of the 'political' in CMS. I argue that research conducted within the loose domain of CMS ought to be explicitly motivated by a political agenda. This political agenda will, of course, vary depending on the nature and the scope of the research project; however, the point remains that CMS scholarship should be directed toward contributing to the actualization of social change through the careful enactment of, and engagement with, the question of the political (Prasad, 2014a). The specific aims underlying the political agenda would be located within the purview of what CMS, as a broad intellectual tradition, already advocates for in theory. One way by which to achieve this directive would require CMS scholars to engage with what Paulo Freire (1970) calls, in his writings on critical pedagogy, *objectification* – a trajectory by which subjects learn about themselves and the social world. As he explains, 'without objectification, man [and woman] would be limited to be *in* the world, lacking both self-knowledge and knowledge of the world' (Freire, 1970: 40; emphasis in original). Thus, objectification results in a level of *conscientization* – again I borrow here from Freire (1970) – which opens up paths for greater lucidity of the political aims underlying CMS scholarship (see Fotaki & Prasad, 2014). In sum, I contend that if CMS is to harness its full – and this certainly means its socially transformative – potential, then at the ideological crux of CMS scholarship ought to be the explicit consideration of the political and, by extension, an accounting for how it informs social change (Prasad & Mills, 2010).

At this point, it would be appropriate to provide a caveat. The aim of this chapter is not to denigrate or otherwise negate the important contributions that have been made by critical scholars who have sought to utilize their positions as members of the so-called intellectual elite to dismantle the structural systems of hegemony and domination that continues to subjugate various oppressed classes and, in the most extreme of cases, society's subaltern constituents (Prasad, 2009; Spivak, 1988). Indeed, as a relatively junior member of the academy, I remain in admiration of scholars who have thoroughly engaged with the political by having had the courage to confront the inequities in our society and to demand their proper destruction – the very inequities that have furnished undeserved privilege to one group at the direct disenfranchisement of another (on this point, see McIntosh, 1998). Bobby Banerjee's commitment to exposing the abject marginalization of indigenous communities through a plethora of neocolonial discourses (Banerjee, 2000; Banerjee & Linstead, 2004), Stella Nkomo's diligent efforts to constructively render visible those racialized minorities silenced in the writing of management research (Cox & Nkomo, 1990; Nkomo, 1992), and Karen Ashcraft's thoughtful endeavors to illuminate not only women's voices at the organizational margins but also the paradoxical fruitfulness of feminist organizational forms (Ashcraft, 1998; 2001) – these are but a few examples of those who have mobilized their scholarship (and themselves, in some instances) to move toward engendering productive social change. I will not even mention the contributions in this project for social change imparted by the editors of this volume as that would merit a chapter of its own. These scholars are nothing short of trailblazers for me and for many of my contemporaries, as they have taken the necessary personal and career risks to open up space from which to catalyze dialogue and to conduct research on phenomena that *substantively* matter. With that said, I believe that the amount of CMS research being conducted in the 'political' spirit underlying the works of the previously named authors is diminutive. As such, there remains a pertinent need for CMS scholars to partake in a more concerted effort to engage the question of the 'political' in their scholarship and in their practice.

The remainder of this chapter unfolds in three substantive sections. In the first section, I discuss how the current disposition of CMS as a paradigmatic – or perhaps to be less terse, as an

intellectual – domain is a recursive illumination of the broader academic field of organization and management studies. This is especially the case in terms of how CMS centralizes certain scholars and relegates others to the periphery through the exercise of myriad systems of disciplinary power. I use academic conferences to describe one particular site at which this disciplinary power operates. In the second section, I further extend this discussion by elucidating the implications that emerge from the present disposition of CMS. My focus in this section is largely reserved for two related manifestations that I have witnessed: the sanitization of CMS's radical and ideological edge and, by extension, the ontological disjuncture in CMS praxis. Finally, in the third section, I contend that CMS would be better served if the scholars who work within it began to more explicitly, more provocatively and more unapologetically integrate a political agenda into the studies that they produce. To contextualize this point, I revisit the case of academic dismissal of Norman Finkelstein from DePaul University.

CMS (at conferences): A reified site of ordained power relations?

CMS – Are we any different?

There is a tendency among CMS scholars to stringently demarcate the research that they generate from the type of scholarship being produced by non-CMS members in the field (Voronov, 2008). This demarcation is predicated on the origins, the pillars and the undergirding conviction of CMS versus those of the mainstream academy (Fournier & Grey, 2000). Dov Eden's (2003) editorial in the *Academy of Management Journal* on his accidental encounter with the CMS community at an Academy of Management Annual Meeting elaborates on this point. As he observed:

[T]he group comprised many disgruntled members [who] think the Academy runs a dull, one-sided show that takes an uncritical – almost unthinking – pro-management stand. They stressed their call for “critical” research and writing to get management scholars to question their assumptions and to analyze whose interests they are promoting with their research, at whose expense. Their agenda for a critical approach to management research includes positions on feminism, sexism, and ageism, but it goes far beyond these . . . When they say “critical,” these people mean business. They correctly dub their approach “radical”; the word is derived from the Latin *radix*, which means root. It is appropriate because the critics seek to go deep in their quest to expose, understand, and change the underlying causes of managerial and organizational phenomena that others study more superficially.

(Eden, 2003: 390)

It is precisely these characteristics that often serve as the basis for identity formation – and for pride – for constituents of the CMS community.

Retaining hierarchical power structures

Although there appear to be ontological and epistemological differences between the CMS and the mainstream communities, several scholars have noted that in some arenas, CMS reflects the same hierarchical power structures of the mainstream of the academy. One site where these dynamics play out most vividly is the academic conference.

Academic conferences have been the subject of critical inquiry from numerous CMS scholars of late (Bell & King, 2010; Ford & Harding, 2008; 2010; Learmonth & Humphreys, 2012; McLaren & Mills, 2008; O'Doherty, 2013; Parker & Weik, 2014; Spicer, 2005). While some

observers have noted differences between academic conferences, as defined particularly by geographical boundaries (Learmonth & Humphreys, 2012), there remain many similarities. Andre Spicer’s description of the academic conference aptly captures its defining features: ‘Indifferent food. Petty controversy of the latest theory. Many glasses of the local liquor. Extramarital affairs. Verbal violence. Arrogant grunts. Closed circles. Dashed hopes. Petty promotionalism. Scholastic policing. Grinding headaches. Boredom. Body pain’ (cf. Parker & Weik, 2014: 169). Given that the academic conference is a site that most academics must traverse in the process of circulating scholarly ideas, ascertaining feedback, professional networking and seeking first or new academic appointments, it functions as a location from which to analyze how CMS scholars engage in myriad forms of performativity. In particular, it allows for the understanding of the juxtaposition between what CMS scholarship advocates and how CMS scholars present themselves.

Among the most lucid (and poignant) description of the CMS conference comes from the auto-ethnographic experiences of Emma Bell and Daniel King (2010). As they write:

Although certain superficial cultural practices distinguish CMS conferences from the mainstream – CMS is no place for the smart suit, well-polished CV or business card (Burrell, 1993) – we experienced the power relations that characterized CMS conferences as more competitive, aggressive and masculine than their mainstream equivalents. While these dynamics were most obvious at the main conference, we observed similar practices at other CMS events, including smaller seminars and tracks at other conferences.

(Bell & King, 2010: 432)

In this account, Bell and King assert that CMS conferences in fact embody the ‘competitive, aggressive and masculine’ cultures, which CMS academics all too often loathe about their mainstream counterparts. This type of culture is consistent with incidents described by others. For instance, Marianna Fotaki (2013: 1262) recalls a story from one of her informants in a study on the experiences of women academics in the field: ‘[a]s a postdoctoral fellow and an attendee at an international critically orientated organizational studies conference, Joanna, a North American woman in her early 30s, describes an established middle-aged male professor “demolishing” a female PhD student’s work at the conference’. Fotaki goes on to elaborate that ‘[t]he incident reported occurred during the doctoral consortium where the role of the professor was to provide developmental feedback. When questioned, the senior male professor explained, to her disbelief, that “he was not used to women doing theory”’. This is precisely the type of patterned behaviors that result in CMS reflecting the institutionalized power hierarchies that we often accuse the mainstream constituent of the academy of embodying. CMS scholars must be more self-reflexive of, and more active in deconstructing, such systems of power relations. Indeed, it is virtually impossible to ignore the power dynamics in the following conference scene described by O’Doherty (2013: 6), which is hardly impervious from CMS activities: ‘The image of tenured professors swarming around the hotel pool surrounded by an entourage of pin-striped PhD students waving their CVs and publication list’.

Losing the political

In her book *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), bell hooks beautifully advocates for teaching to be used as a mechanism to subvert the systems of oppression that are laden in the communities in which the teaching occurs. Certainly, research has a similar potential. Yet when CMS comes to reflect the mainstream of the academy – and comes to adopt the mainstream’s values – its radical potential is forsaken along the path of such things as careerism and game playing (Prasad, in

press). Within this purview, research becomes apolitical. I am not trying to negate, here, that many CMS researchers are invested in advancing the good in some way, for instance, in attempting to recognize the voices and the positions of members of marginalized classes and seeking to identify appropriate forms of rectification. Nonetheless, there remains a salient disjuncture in CMS praxis – namely, a rift between theory and practice in CMS scholarship. Indeed, there exist few initiatives that conscientiously confound what phenomena we study (and how we study it) with the lived realities of the disenfranchised in such a way that our research cannot be demarcated from our political statement. CMS scholars are largely situated at a distance from the material conditions of those who suffer, those who are exploited, as a corollary of the organizations and the forms of organizing that prevail and that support contemporary power relations (on the concept of distance, see McCabe, 2015).

CMS research ought to be guided more explicitly by an engagement with the political. Mir and Mir (2002: 105) have articulated this point when commenting on social science research: ‘Social science needs to recover its purpose as a tool of intellectual and political transformation and that avant garde scholarship that is bereft of a commitment to transform social institutions represents a failure of purpose, of politics, and of imagination’. One of the symptoms of the ‘avant garde scholarship’ which Mir and Mir decry is the field’s fetishization of theory and theory advancement. Indeed, editors and reviewers (including those inflected by the CMS mandate) at ‘career-making’ journals will rarely consider publishing a manuscript that does not overtly advance theory, even if the paper covers important CMS phenomena (Tourish, 2011; also see Voronov, 2008). The field, including CMS, is now in a predicament where theory is being built on theory, and yet without any intervening empirical validation. This obsession with theory – not with the material conditions of lived realities – is indeed what Mir and Mir observe as ‘a failure of purpose, of politics, and of imagination’. On this point, Paul Adler (2008: 926) states that ‘[e]ngagement with the practice of management means studying it from close up, not just from our office armchairs; it means working shoulder-to-shoulder with those struggling against oppression and exploitation to how management looks from their vantage point’. While some initiatives, such as the Getting Out workshops sponsored by the CMS division at the Academy of Management Annual Meetings, attempt to bridge the disjuncture in praxis, there remain too few of these endeavors.

Several scholars have prudently noted that political engagement with CMS is essential but must be duly balanced with other considerations (Stookey, 2008; Voronov, 2008). This includes consideration of our own careers – to maintain jobs that allow us to sustain ourselves and thereby permit us to engage with projects for social and political transformation (Stookey, 2008). Requirements for job security (i.e. tenured or continuing appointments) often require research output in the form of publications in the field’s most coveted journals. As a result, there must be balance between what Sarah Stookey (2008) calls ‘populism’ and ‘elitism’. However, in striking this balance, we should never lose sight of what our research is intended to achieve.

Reclaiming the political in CMS

The preceding discussion ultimately prompts the question, ‘What ought to be done to save CMS from itself?’ The short answer, which I am proposing in this chapter, is that CMS studies require a more explicit and a more conscious engagement with the political. This is to say that scholars working within CMS should be aware of the political project that underlies their studies. To contextualize this point, I will revisit a case revolving around a scholar from the humanities and social sciences: Norman Finkelstein.

The case of Norman Finkelstein

Norman Finkelstein was born in 1953 to parents Zacharias and Maryla Finkelstein. Both of his parents were Jewish and victims of the Nazi holocaust, having survived their confinement in several concentration camps and the Warsaw Ghetto. Finkelstein was raised in New York City. Following graduation from high school, he earned his undergraduate degree from Binghamton University in 1974 and subsequently completed his PhD in the Department of Politics at Princeton University in 1988. Perhaps informed by his own personal history – the experiences of his parents living under the brute conditions of the Final Solution in 1930s and 1940s Europe – Finkelstein's research focused on Zionism.

It was during his graduate student days at Princeton that Finkelstein had his first substantive brush with controversy as a consequence of his research pursuits. MIT professor emeritus and public intellectual Noam Chomsky (2002) describes the case in his essay 'The Fate of an Honest Intellectual'. In the process of researching for his dissertation, Finkelstein read Joan Peters' highly acclaimed book (at the time), *From Time Immemorial* (1984). In the book, Peters develops a detailed argument that essentially proclaims Palestinians to be recent immigrants to the land that is present-day Palestine and Israel. The thoroughly cited account served as dangerous ammunition for the Zionist project inasmuch as it offered academic validation to the belief that the region, until only recently, was barren land. This belief simultaneously negated the historical argument for the entitlement of Palestinians to their own lands and contended that the region was *destined* for Jewish settlement. As Chomsky (2002) describes, Finkelstein was perplexed by the claims of the book and elected to scrutinize its sources: '[h]e's [Finkelstein] a very careful student, and he started checking the references – and it turned out that the whole thing was a hoax, it was completely faked: probably it had been put together by some intelligence agency or something like that'. In response to the fraudulent claims found in *From Time Immemorial*, Finkelstein drafted a paper summarizing his findings and circulated it to some 30 scholars in the field (Chomsky, 2002), hoping to receive feedback. As Chomsky (2002) recounts:

[H]e got back one answer, from me. I told him, yeah, I think it's an interesting topic, but I warned him, if you follow this, you're going to get in trouble – because you're going to expose the American intellectual community as a gang of frauds, and they are not going to like it, and they're going to destroy you. So I said: if you want to do it, go ahead, but be aware of what you're getting into. It's an important issue, it makes a big difference whether you eliminate the moral basis for driving out a population – it's preparing the basis for some real horrors – so a lot of people's lives could be at stake. But your life is at stake too, I told him, because if you pursue this, your career is going to be ruined.

Chomsky could see the proverbial writing on the wall. In debunking the text that reified the most insidious of myths that justify the ongoing systematic mistreatment of Palestinian subjects, Finkelstein became a pariah in his field. Chomsky (2002) recalls how Finkelstein's professors at Princeton refused to read drafts of his work, make appointments to see him or write letters of reference on his behalf; academics in the field applied pressure on him to suspend his line of scholarly inquiry, and editors refused to publish his research. During this time:

He's [Finkelstein] living in a little apartment somewhere in New York City, and he's a part-time social worker working with teenage drop-outs. Very promising scholar – if he'd done what he was told, he would have gone on and right now he'd be a professor somewhere

at some big university. Instead he's working part-time with disturbed teenaged kids for a couple thousand dollars a year.

Not heeding Chomsky's warning about the backlash that he would encounter, Finkelstein continued with his stream of research. In 2000, Finkelstein published his provocative book, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*. In the book, Finkelstein offers an incisive critique against the Jewish community in the United States that promotes the Israeli agenda. He argued that Holocaust memories are ideologically invoked by certain unscrupulous constituents of the community for various political and monetary gains (for similar observations, see Berkowitz, 1997). *The Holocaust Industry* appeared around the same time that Finkelstein secured a tenure-track position in the Department of Political Science at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois.

By the time that Finkelstein arrived at DePaul, his research had placed him in the crosshairs of the Israeli lobby in the United States (Klein, 2008–2009). Several commentators on the case have suggested that the initiative to delegitimize and derail Finkelstein's work was led by Harvard Law School chaired professor Alan Dershowitz (Abraham, 2011; Klein, 2008–2009). Abraham (2011: 184–185) recalls the campaign that Dershowitz lodged against Finkelstein:

[I]n September 2003, Dershowitz began a personal campaign to drive Finkelstein out of the academy (see: Finkelstein, n.d.; Goodman, 2003). In 2004, Dershowitz contacted [DePaul University] President Dennis Holtschneider, attaching a manuscript entitled "Literary McCarthyism," arguing that DePaul should fire Finkelstein. In addition, Dershowitz contacted the chair of DePaul's political science department, Professor Patrick Callahan, as early as 2004, and again three months prior to the political science department's considering Finkelstein's tenure case (see: Dershowitz, 2006). There is also strong circumstantial evidence that Dershowitz sought to contact members of DePaul's Board of Trustees, specifically its chair, Mr. John Simon, about Finkelstein, who Dershowitz labeled "a full-time, malicious defamer" (see Jenner & Bloek, 2004).

In 2007, Finkelstein went up for tenure at DePaul. At the time of his tenure application, Finkelstein had published five books and was widely considered to be a leading commentator on the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. His teaching evaluations were also excellent. These credentials earned his tenure application the support from DePaul's Department of Political Science and the college personnel committee (Klein, 2008–2009). Even with the support that he received from the department and faculty levels, Finkelstein's bid for tenure was ultimately denied by DePaul's University Board on Promotion and Tenure (Cohen, 2007). One observer notes, "There can be little doubt that Finkelstein was fired because of his criticisms of Israel's human rights violations against the Palestinian people and for his fact-based criticisms of the Israel lobby" (Klein, 2008–2009: 307). Reflecting on his rejection for tenure, Finkelstein commented that he refused to 'indulge in a bout of self-pity' and reflected on his parents' experience in Nazi concentration camps in an effort to contextualize his own circumstances. As he stated, '[t]hey survived . . . I'll survive' (Cohen, 2007).

Norman Finkelstein's case illuminates the importance of pursuing scholarship that socially and politically matters even when ideologically driven elements seek to thwart the research (and the researcher). For instance, in undoing the underlying argument found in *From Time Immemorial* and therein deconstructing the myth that propagates an 'empty' Palestine, Finkelstein's work demands that the Palestinian question be resolved while affording dignity and respect to groups that lived in the region prior to Jewish settlement. His research stands up for disenfranchised Palestinian constituents who increasingly must live under subaltern conditions (Spivak,

1988). His research equally demands that memories of the Holocaust not be exploited for self-interested, ideological objectives. In the process, unfortunately, Finkelstein found himself under attack, which engendered his dismissal from his academic post. Finkelstein could have played it safe and pursued a comfortable (and apolitical) academic career – which so many of us, including those with tenure, routinely do. While he was forewarned by Chomsky that his research would encounter severe hostility, Finkelstein had the courage – and took the necessary risks – to engage the political in the most provocative of ways.

I have sought to use Finkelstein as a source of inspiration to specifically inform my research on the Palestinian–Israeli conflict and, more generally, to posit the political into my scholarship. In a recent article on my experiences in conducting fieldwork in the region, I explicitly reflected on this point:

Witnessing the conditions of the West Bank firsthand, I have made a concerted effort in framing my interpretation of the ongoing occupation in terms of neo-colonialism, hegemony, and oppression, rather than conforming to the dispassionate vernacular that defines much of the field of organization and management studies. This has meant that I not only unapologetically circulate the stories of the informants, but it further demands that I expose the reprehensible conditions of neo-colonial occupation. I understand that doing so may entail certain consequences to my career; however, I equally recognize that such an act also ensures that I am giving back substantively to those individuals who took the necessary risks to share their stories with me so honestly and openly.

(Prasad, 2014b: 250)

In my own small way, I hope that the research that I am pursuing on the topic will make a constructive impact on the subjects and the communities that I have studied. It would be useful for scholars in the field of CMS to look at Finkelstein as a case, *par excellence*, for positing the political into academic inquiry.

The political in organization and management studies

Scholars in the field of organization and management studies have addressed the political in fruitful ways. My example here may seem curious at first as to capturing the question of the political in CMS studies. In 1998, Karen Ashcraft published an article in *Management Communication Quarterly* entitled, ‘I Wouldn’t Say I’m a *Feminist*, but. . .’. In the article, Ashcraft adopts a narrative perspective to illuminate the discursive tensions that emerge between adopting a *feminist* label and encountering mundane forms of gender-based inequities in organizational and familial settings. The political is located in her reflexive insights – at minimum, it can be found in the ways in which she conflates the personal and the political, thus capturing the spirit of the old feminist adage *the personal is the political*. Indeed, Ashcraft offers a contextualized understanding of how myriad micropractices create, maintain and reify gendered systems of everyday social life, which individuals should be aware of and which should be subject to deconstruction where necessary.

At around the same time that I first read Ashcraft’s article, I was beginning to teach my own courses as a sessional instructor. Given my research interests in gender and diversity, I would introduce, to the students enrolled in the courses that I taught, issues pertaining to the specific challenges confronting women and minorities in the workplace. I was habitually taken aback by just how resolutely students would distance themselves from assuming the ‘feminist’ label, much akin to what Ashcraft describes. Often, women students appeared to more emphatically disassociate themselves from the feminist label than even the men students in class. Inasmuch as the

feminist movement seeks to achieve substantive forms of gender egalitarianism, I was somewhat puzzled by the responses that I received from students. As such, in 2010, when I assumed a tenure track appointment at a business school, and I was assigned to teach an undergraduate course on the social organization of work, I elected to use Ashcraft's article as a required reading. Given the nonthreatening and intuitively interesting exposition of the article, I was curious to learn precisely how it would be received by students. It was apparent that her article resonated with members of the class (both women and men), who would explain how they had a new awareness and a different interpretation of how some of their own experiences – or the experiences that they were complicit in creating – represented micropractices of gendering or outright sexism. At the very least, the article prompted many students to engage in objectification and develop a new conscientization on the matter, as Friere articulates (1970).

On a final point, I believe that a conscientious and thorough consideration of the political will contribute to researchers avoiding what I would qualify as bad or socially irresponsible research. When I entered the doctoral program in the autumn of 2006, the *Journal of Organizational Behavior* had just published an article by Kingsley Browne (2006) entitled 'Evolved Sex Differences and Occupational Segregation'. In it, Browne adopted a neo-Darwinian perspective to explain occupational segregation by asserting the saliency of ontological sex differences. I was concerned with the argument presented by Browne inasmuch as it appeared to concurrently negate the social determinants of human behavior and naturalize the assumption that there is a biological basis of social phenomena, in this case why women are underrepresented in certain occupations. One implication that I could foresee emerging from this argument is that occupational segregation along the fault line of sex need not be rectified as it is the corollary of *naturalized* dispositional traits. Given that the article can serve as scholarly support for such a conclusion is, for me, an example of socially irresponsible scholarship *par excellence*. More than two decades ago, Alison Davis-Blake and Jeffrey Pfeffer (1989) predicted some of the outcomes of Browne's position. As they observed, a dispositional-based approach to management poses serious implications, and not least is that it 'tends to excuse individuals from confronting the consequences of their actions and, in particular, tends to allow organizational participants to escape responsibility for the systems they design'. Extending from Davis-Blake and Pfeffer's (1989) astute critique of dispositional research, scholars should consider the negative social implications that their work can potentially realize. Retaining the political at the forefront of CMS scholarship is, I believe, one way that the field moves toward avoiding the creation of bad or socially irresponsible research.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has sought to illustrate how one interpretation of the current status of CMS suggests that it is reflective of the mainstream academy – with all the problematic and hierarchical power systems embedded within it. Indeed, with only some exceptions, we have the same celebrity adulation, wanton careerism and detachment from praxis that is to be found in mainstream circles. Given this, we need to dispel the myth that I have encountered in so many CMS forums over the years – which, admittedly, I have accepted at various points – that we possess more moral or intellectual foresight vis-à-vis members of the academy who adopt a functionalist approach to research because we perceive ourselves as being more reflexive, engaged and conscientious. If my interpretation is to be afforded any veracity, and if the field continues on the trajectory that it has, we will meaningfully lose the ideological convictions that originally catalyzed the emergence of CMS. At that juncture, we will merely pay lip service to the ruins of these convictions. One avenue by which to address this predicament is to (re-)engage the question of the political in CMS scholarship. To do so would mean that scholars pursue impassioned research with ideological

aims that are intended to subvert exploitative or otherwise harmful structures in society and to engender positive social change. This means capturing the 'organizational imagination' that Mir and Mir (2002) describe in the quote at the introduction of this chapter. A not so modest but worthy endeavor, I think.

References

- Abraham, M. (2011). The question of Palestine and the subversion of academic freedom: DePaul's denial of tenure to Norman G. Finkelstein. *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 33(3–4): 179–203.
- Adler, P. S. (2008). CMS: Resist the three complacencies! *Organization*, 15(6): 925–926.
- Adler, P. S., Forbes, L. C., & Willmott, H. (2007). Critical management studies. In J. P. Walsh & A. P. Brief (Eds.), *Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 1: 119–179. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Alvesson, M., Bridgman, T., & Willmott, H. (Eds.), (2009). *The Oxford handbook of critical management studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ashcraft, K. L. (1998). 'I wouldn't say I'm a feminist, but. . .': Organizational micropractice and gender identity. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 11(4): 587–597.
- Ashcraft, K. L. (2001). Organized dissonance: Feminist bureaucracy as hybrid form. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(6): 1301–1322.
- Banerjee, S. B. (2000). Whose land is it anyway? National interest, indigenous stakeholders, and colonial discourses: The case of the Jabiluka Uranium Mine. *Organization and Environment*, 13(1): 3–38.
- Banerjee, S. B., & Linstead, S. (2004). Masking subversion: Neocolonial embeddedness in anthropological accounts of indigenous management. *Human Relations*, 57(2): 221–247.
- Bell, E., & King, D. (2010). The elephant in the room: Critical management studies conference as a site of body pedagogics. *Management Learning*, 41(4): 429–442.
- Berkowitz, S. J. (1997). Empathy and the 'Other': Challenging U.S. Jewish ideology. *Communication Studies*, 48(1): 1–18.
- Browne, K. R. (2006). Evolved sex differences and occupational segregation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(2): 143–162.
- Chomsky, N. (2002). The fate of an honest intellectual. Retrieved on June 6, 2013 from <http://www.chomsky.info/books/power01.htm>
- Cohen, P. (2007). Outspoken political scientist denied tenure at DePaul. *New York Times* (June 11).
- Cox, T., Jr., & Nkomo, S. M. (1990). Invisible men and women: A status report of race as a variable in organizational behavior research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 11(6): 419–431.
- Cunliffe, A. L., Forray, J. M., & Knights, D. (2002). Considering management education: Insights from critical management studies. *Journal of Management Education*, 26(5): 489–495.
- Davis-Blake, A., & Pfeffer, J. (1989). Just a mirage: The search of dispositional effects in organizational research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(3): 385–400.
- Eden, D. (2003). Critical management studies and the *Academy of Management Journal*: Challenge and counterchallenge. *Academy of Management Journal*, 46(4): 390–394.
- Finkelstein, N. (2000). *The holocaust industry: Reflections on the exploitation of Jewish suffering*. London: Verso.
- Ford, J. & Harding, N. (2008). Fear and loathing in Harrogate, or a study of a conference. *Organization*, 15(2): 233–250.
- Ford, J., & Harding, N. (2010). Get back into the kitchen, woman: Management conferences and the making of the female professional worker. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 17(5): 503–520.
- Fotaki, M. (2013). No woman is like a man (in academia): The masculine symbolic order and the unwanted female body. *Organization Studies*, 34(9): 1251–1275.
- Fotaki, M., & Prasad, A. (2014). Social justice interrupted? Values, pedagogy and purpose of business school academics. *Management Learning*, 45(1): 103–106 [doi: 10.1177/1350507613476617].
- Fournier, V., & Grey, C. (2000). At the critical moment: Conditions and prospects for critical management studies. *Human Relations*, 53(1): 7–32.
- Frenkel, S. (2009). Critical reflections on labor process theory, work and management. In M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman & H. Willmott (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of critical management studies*: 525–535. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Friere, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum International.
- Grey, C., & Willmott, H. (Eds.). (2005). *Critical management studies: A reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Critique and its (dis-)contents

- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress*. New York: Routledge.
- Klein, D. (2008–2009). Why is Norman Finkelstein not allowed to teach? *Work & Days*, 26/27(51–54): 307–322.
- Learmonth, M., & Humphreys, M. (2012). Autoethnography and academic identity: Glimpsing business school doppelgängers. *Organization*, 19(1): 99–117.
- McCabe, D. (2015). The tyranny of distance: Kafka and the problem of distance in bureaucratic organizations. *Organization*, 22(1): 58–77.
- McIntosh, P. (1998). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. In M. McGoldrick (Ed.), *Re-visioning family therapy: Race, culture, and gender in clinical practice*: 147–152. New York: Guilford Press.
- McLaren, P. G., & Mills, A. J. (2008). 'I'd like to thank the academy': An analysis of the awards discourse at the Atlantic Schools of Business Conference. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 25(4): 307–316.
- Mir, R., & Mir, A. (2002). The organizational imagination: From paradigm wars to praxis. *Organizational Research Methods*, 5(1): 105–125.
- Nkomo, S. M. (1992). The emperor has no clothes: Rewriting 'race into organizations'. *Academy of Management Review*, 17(3): 487–513.
- O'Doherty, D. (2013). Conferences: A critical management perspective. In *Critical Management Studies Newsletter* (June).
- Parker, M., & Weik, E. (2014). Free spirits? The academic on the aeroplane. *Management Learning*, 45(2): 167–181.
- Prasad, A. (2009). Contesting hegemony through genealogy: Foucault and cross cultural management research. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 9(3): 359–369.
- Prasad, A. (2014a). Playing the game and trying not to lose myself: A doctoral student's perspective on the institutional pressures for research output. *Organization*, 30(4): 525–531.
- Prasad, A. (2014b). You can't go home again: And other psychoanalytic lessons from crossing a neo-colonial border. *Human Relations*, 67(2): 233–257.
- Prasad, A., & Mills, A. J. (Eds.). (2010). Critical management studies and business ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 94(S2).
- Rowlinson, M., & Hassard, J. (2011). How come the critters came to be teaching in business schools? Contradictions in the institutionalization of critical management studies. *Organization*, 18(5): 673–689.
- Spicer, A. (2005). Conferences. In C. Jones and D. O'Doherty (Eds.), *Organize! Manifestos for the business schools for tomorrow*: 21–27. Abo: Dvalin.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*: 271–313. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Stookey, S. (2008). The future of critical management studies: Populism and elitism. *Organization*, 15(6): 922–924.
- Tourish, D. (2011). Journal rankings, academic freedom and performativity: What is, or should be, the future of leadership? *Leadership*, 7(3): 367–381.
- Voronov, M. (2008). Toward engaged critical management studies. *Organization*, 15(6): 939–945.
- Wolfram Cox, J., LeTrent-Jones, T. G., Voronov, M., & Weir, D. (Eds.). (2009). *Critical management studies at work: Negotiating tensions between theory and practice*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.