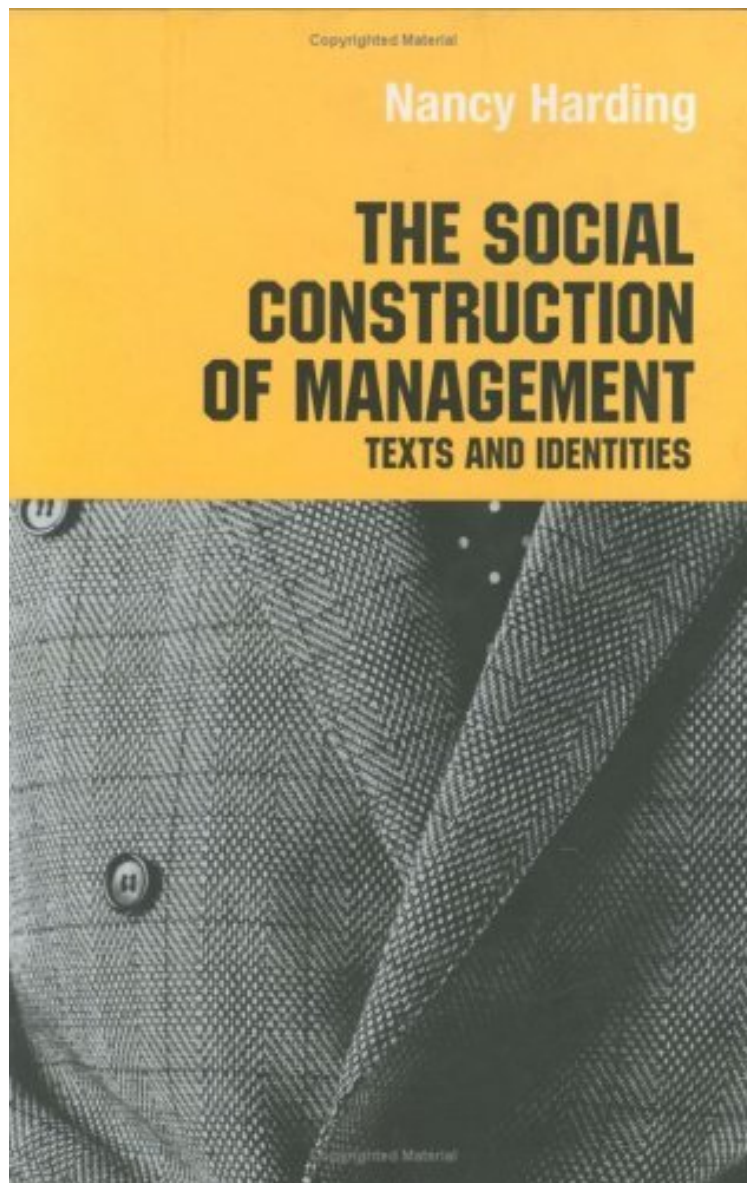


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Nancy Harding : The Social Construction of Management (Routledge Studies in Management, Organizations and Society) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Social Construction of Management (Routledge Studies in Management, Organizations and Society):

2 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Dumbed Down Sociology of Victimology By Wayne C. Lusvardi It seems there is a race going on in academia to be the first with the title of their book *The Social Construction of _____* fill in the blank. In this case the first author to lay claim on the title *The Social Construction of Management* is Nancy Harding a lecturer in management in Britain. The book purports to be an overview of how management is constructed in management textbooks. The book is an academic embarrassment. The wording is so dense and abstract, the content so rambling, and the grammar is so poor that the book is nearly incoherent and indecipherable. The book is filled with run-on sentences. Consider the following excerpt from page 3: The decentering SIC DECENTERING of the subject has replaced humanism and the concept of the universal human being with the individual who is involved perpetually in processes of identity formation, and it is those processes which fascinate and inform much of our current theorizing and research practices. What this sentence means is anyone's guess. Or consider the following sentence from page 1. If we are to work to bring about these changes, we first need to understand the deep processes of constitution and construction of management and managers, for as the metaphors of construction and constitution imply, the bedrock upon which the current oppressive identities are built serves to uphold them and make them impervious to change. Again, what does this mean? Harding almost cannot write a paragraph without quoting or citing some French intellectual. Consider the following from page 12. It is also Derridean in its exploration in that it studies how the Grand Discourses identified by Foucault can be identified through close analysis of texts, but also in that it draws upon Derrida's later work to explore how languages which speak through us colonize us (Derrida 1998). Name dropping passes for thought or analysis. If the average college student wrote such run-on sentences on their entrance or proficiency exams I dare say they would flunk. But such drivel passes for profundity in current academia. This is sad because a sociological treatment of management from a social constructionist viewpoint is long overdue. But this book isn't it. Unsurprisingly, the paradigm employed in the book is victimology - the managerial oppression of labor, women, gender, classes, or any other politically correct group. Victimology passes for sociology. This is strange because social constructionism is an antidote to victimology. Social constructionism views all social structures, including management, as precarious, non-deterministic human creations. The class-consciousness of oppression is itself viewed as a social construction or ideology. But the social constructionism contained in *The Social Construction of Management* only reinforces a paranoid sense of powerlessness. For example, there is no discussion contained in the book of the power of unions or whistle blowers on management. It is incredible that this book passed all the academic reviewers. There are many solid works that employ the social construction viewpoint. Kristin Bumiller, *The Civil Rights Society - The Social Construction of Victims* 1988 is a solid counterpoint work. Harding's historical study - if we want to call it that - leads her to believe that after 1988 management books became Dumbed Down. After perusing *The Social Construction of Management*, all I can say is that I wholeheartedly agree with her on that point. This book is not recommended.

What is management and how do the people who become managers take on a managerial identity? How does text inform the manager's identity? From cultural studies we understand that the relationship between text and reader is not passive but that each one works upon the other, and that text is active in forming the identity of the reader. This book is the first to analyse how many management textbooks construct their readers. It analyses management textbooks published since the 1950s and shows they construct a world in which chaos is kept at bay only by strong management, and in which strong management is based upon the rationality of modernity. This book exposes and analyses such claims-to-truths, and theorizes their arguments using the work of Butler and Foucault, the sociology of scientific knowledge, critical legal studies, art history and queer theory. By revealing a postmodern turn in management textbooks, *The Social Construction of Management* is both a critical and empirical study that explores the constitution of managerial identities in the age of mass education in management. An exciting contribution to the growing body of knowledge within critical management studies, this book challenges the way we think about organizations and their management, and about management education as a whole. This is thought provoking reading for anyone studying management, or working in the managerial organization.

"The book challenges the way we think about organizations and their management, and about management education in general." - "Business Horizons About the Author Nancy Harding is Senior Lecturer in Management at the Nuffield Institute at the University of Leeds. She has written widely on the subject of critical management, social construction and health-related topics.