

EDITORIAL ESSAY

## Reflections on the Founding and Aspirations of *Management and Organization Review*

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In reflecting on the history of *Management and Organization Review* (MOR), it is not cliché to say that ‘time flies’. It is amazing that MOR has been in existence for 20 years. The memories of the excitement, challenges, and anxiety in the founding years are still vivid, like yesterday. Most organizations die within 5 years of their birth (Daepf, Hamilton, West, & Bettencourt, 2015; Gürtler & Miller, 2022; SAIC, 2013). We can assume that MOR has passed its survival threat. What accounts for its survival success? Is it luck, as would be the case of some entrepreneurial ventures that came to be at the right time in the right place? Survival was not on the minds of the founders of MOR; making an impact on advancing Chinese management research was. What were the founders’ aspirations for creating a new journal in an already highly competitive and mature field of journal publishing in business and management? How well has MOR reached its aspirations? Twenty years is a good occasion to take stock of the achievements of MOR, its challenges and opportunities, and what future does it desire in serving the global community of Chinese management and organization scholars?

The essays in this special issue, collectively, provide some answers to the above questions. The current essay attempts to answer some of these questions from the perspective of someone who was intimately involved with the forming of the idea, founding of the journal, and editing of the first nine volumes. We begin with a brief reflection on the founders’ aspirations through recalling the most memorable events in the founding years of MOR. In the second part of this essay, we assess the extent to which MOR’s aspirations were realized by analyzing the publications in MOR since its founding and the articles with Chinese data or Chinese theory in six United States (US) leading journals in the 20 years before the launching of MOR and the 20 years after. The essay ends with an optimistic note on the future of MOR and Chinese management research in general.

### Reflections on the Founding Years of MOR

#### *The Idea of a New Journal for Chinese Management Research*

Anne Tsui became the head of the Management Department at the Business School of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology in early 1995. She moved there from the University of California, Irvine, when China was at the beginning stages of business education. The faculty in Chinese business schools had no exposure to empirical research methods at that time. Most of the research papers written by the Chinese faculty were case studies or ‘opinion’ essays. Anne recognized the importance of training Chinese scholars on international standard empirical research methods. Given the rising interest in Chinese management by Western scholars, this training is necessary for any potential global intellectual exchange or collaboration. From 1999 to 2003, she and her colleagues at HKUST held four annual training workshops on empirical research methods for a total of 150 young scholars from the top business schools, most of them from China and a few from Taiwan.

This training was an eye opener for these scholar-students. The leaders of Chinese business schools were also delighted because this would enable the schools to pursue the internationalization of business education. They were eager for their faculty to publish in Western journals and to join the global management research community. There was also great interest in bringing Western scholars to Chinese

business schools to engage in knowledge transfer in both teaching and research, and to facilitate collaboration. This collaboration required some knowledge of international empirical research methods to improve the absorptive capacity of the Chinese scholars.

In 2002, about 200 scholars, a mixture of Chinese and Western (from the US, Europe, and Asia), met in Washington DC at the annual Academy of Management meeting location. They discussed the need for and agreed to create the International Association for Chinese Management Research (IACMR). The inaugural conference was held in 2004 at The Peking Hotel in Beijing. About 450 scholars and students, with about a third of them coming from countries outside China, attended the inaugural conference.

During the founding years of the IACMR, there was a parallel conversation on the idea of a journal dedicated to publishing Chinese management research. There was a proposal for the IACMR to partner with the journal *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* (APJM), which was a well-established journal published by the business school at the National University of Singapore with a broad focus on the Asia Pacific region. The IACMR had its focus on China only, though inclusive of mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau, known as the Greater China region. The IACMR and the broader Asia Pacific focus of APJM did not seem like a good match. Shortly afterward, APJM became the official journal of the *Asia Academy of Management*. That was a perfect marriage.

### **Formation of the Founding Editors**

Realizing that the best work on Chinese organizations had been published by sociologists, Anne reached out to her colleague Prof. Yanjie Bian, head of the Division of Social Sciences, at HKUST. Yanjie identified several sociologists who had interest in China, one of them being Prof. Joe Galaskiewicz, who was at the University of Minnesota. Anne reached out to John Child and the late Max Boisot. They had co-authored an excellent paper on China's network capitalism in the journal *Administrative Science Quarterly* (ASQ). We also recruited Yadong Luo, Marshall Meyer, and Michael Morris. All of them had published excellent work on China or on cross-cultural research with a special interest in China.

Many of them also had journal editing experience, e.g., Marshall Meyer was a former Editor of ASQ. John Child not only was a China expert, he also had served as the Editor of the journal *Organization Studies*. Anne just completed her editorship of the *Academy of Management Journal*. Most important, all of them had a keen interest on China, experience with conducting research in or about China, and a passion for advancing the scholarship of Chinese management and organizations. Most of them became the journal's founding editorial team.

### **Naming the New Journal**

Once a decision was made to launch a journal, the journal name became a core discussion topic. An obvious name was the 'Journal of Chinese Management Research'. We wondered if the word China or Chinese would be an advantage or a liability. Having it would clearly signal the primary focus of the journal. The downside is that it may signal a regional focus, which may discourage authors who prefer to work on universal theories albeit with Chinese data. Those who argued against having the word China in the journal name won the argument. This discussion also led to one of the major domain decisions, that the journal would publish both general theories of management and China-specific theories.

Furthermore, the journal was intended to be multi-disciplinary. The founding editorial team members came from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and management. Sociologists focus on the organization, psychology on individuals, and management on both. Yanjie Bian advised that the word 'organizations' must be in the journal name if we wanted to attract submissions from sociologists. We decided also that the journal should publish both empirical and conceptual papers. Up to this point, no decision was reached on the name of the journal, though we agreed that it should not have the words 'China' or 'Chinese'.

In the fall of 2003, Max Boisot visited Hong Kong. He met Anne for dinner at a Chinese restaurant to discuss the new journal. Where else would be more suitable for the occasion? The conversation was wide-ranging, and the focus soon zoomed in on the name. Max asked, 'What about Management and Organizations or MAO?' It's perfect, the surname of the founder of China, Chairman Mao. Quickly, we realized that this would not be politically smart. We ended the dinner conversation with a tentative name of MOR, which we proposed to the editorial team who accepted it enthusiastically.

### **The Mission and Domain of MOR**

The Editorial essay in the first issue of MOR (Editorial, 2005) defined the mission and domain of the journal. The editorial was titled 'Expand the frontier of global knowledge: Management and organizations in China'. The first paragraph describes the Chinese context and the potential contribution of MOR. The journal is to provide systematic knowledge on management and organizations in the dynamic and complex context of hyper-competitiveness with unparalleled economic and corporate transformations.

The Editorial (2005) describes the mission of MOR,

*to publish high-quality original research that contributes to knowledge of organizations (a) in general and (b) of special relevance to China. ...Both kinds of knowledge, general and China-specific, will contribute to the repository of global knowledge on management and organizations. (MOR1.1: 2)*

In volume 3, issue 1, the domain mission of MOR was expanded to publish

*innovative research contributing to management knowledge in three domains:*

- *Fundamental research in management,*
- *International, comparative and cross-culture management,*
- *Chinese management, including research on the management and organization of Chinese companies both in and outside of China and multinational companies operating in China.*

This domain statement has remained the focus of MOR except for the 8 years under the editorship of Prof. Arie Lewin, who expanded the domain to include management in all emerging economies with particular interest on China. After 20 years, it is widely recognized that MOR is the only English language high-quality journal dedicated to publishing Chinese management research.

### **Challenges and Contributions of the First Nine Volumes of MOR**

In the 9 years that Anne served as the Editor-in-Chief for MOR, the first 3 years were the most challenging. It literally was a struggle for survival. This is a common experience for new journals, but Anne was not prepared for this level of challenge. She was used to rejecting almost 90% of the submissions when she was the Editor for AMJ. In the first few years, MOR published four to five papers each issue and three issues in each volume. Anne had difficulty finding five good papers for each issue. By the end of the second year (volume 2), discouragement set in, and Anne consulted John Child about possibly discontinuing the journal. John persuaded Anne to hang in there and to have confidence. By volume 5, MOR had reached a steady state. Submissions were increasing at a healthy rate, and we had to reject more than 70% of the submissions, giving us confidence on the quality of the published papers.

In 2006, the second year of MOR, we applied for inclusion in the Thomson Reuter's ISI list of social science journals for the field of management. Many leading scholars wrote endorsement letters to ISI expressing their support for MOR. We received notification of acceptance a year later. MOR was selected for coverage in Current Contents/Social and Behavioral Sciences (CC/S&BS) and Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) beginning with vol. 4(1) 2008. In 2010, volume 6, MOR began to publish four issues per year, from three in the previous five volumes. After 5 years, MOR was on solid ground, passing the typical 5-year mark of survival risks for new ventures.

In the first issue of volume 5 (2009), MOR published an exciting Editors' Forum on 'The Future of China Management Research'. Contributing authors included Jay Barney, David Whetten, John Child, Mary Ann Von Glinow, Bor-shiuan Cheng, Shuming Zhao, (late) Kwok Leung, and Eric Tsang, along with their co-authors. Whetten's (2009) paper on the interface between context and theory has more than 700 citations according to Google Scholar and is one of the most influential papers published in the first nine volumes of MOR.

### Progress on MOR's Aspirations after 20 Years

After 20 years, what do we know about the management of Chinese organizations? What 'systematic knowledge' about Chinese management and organization now exists in the global management literature in journals beyond MOR? Specifically, has MOR lived up to its aspiration of providing knowledge about management and organizations in the Chinese context, either within the Chinese mainland or Chinese firms operating globally?

MOR was created in part due to the difficulty of Chinese management research being accepted in leading international journals in the 1990s, the early days of Chinese management research. Over time, international journals noticed the quality of the research and the interestingness of the topics. The birth of MOR signaled the importance of this new emerging scholarly topic. It might have served to legitimize Chinese management research and fuel increasing curiosity about and acceptance of business and management research in the Chinese context among Western scholars and journals. We can expect to see more articles on China published in the leading journals over time.

The difficulty of having Chinese research accepted in Western leading journals was a typical experience for most authors in the early years of this emerging research focus. How could scholars overcome this barrier? Whetten (2009) discussed how to gain acceptance of novel topics or research in novel contexts with the idea of 'from familiar to less familiar'. This is about extending an existing Western theory to a novel context either to confirm its generalizability or to test its boundary. Barney and Zhang (2009) distinguish between a Chinese theory of management and a theory of Chinese management. The Chinese theory is a context-specific theory whereas a theory of Chinese management is about contextualizing a general theory to the Chinese context. Were Chinese scholars more or less inclined to study general management questions with Chinese data? Focusing on general theories is attractive because it helps the reader to see how the paper's idea and findings relate to an existing body of knowledge. The paper by Fu, Tsui, Liu, and Li (2010) on the interaction of a CEO's personal values and transformational leadership style is an example of this approach. The Xiao and Tsui (2007) study on the cultural contingency of structural holes in network theory also is an example of testing the cultural boundary of a general (Western) theory. The approach of developing Chinese theories of management may be more difficult because it aims to develop new concept(s) or theories to explain context-specific phenomena, which Cheng, Wang, and Huang (2009: 91) referred to as 'The Road Less Travelled'. We offered two examples of this approach. Xin and Pearce (1996) introduced the concept of *guanxi* to the global management literature. Li and Piezunka (2020) developed the concept of *uniplex third* based on traditional norms of Chinese families, highlighting the role of the mother in elucidating the mechanism of intergenerational leadership successions in Chinese entrepreneurial firms.

Kuhn (1996) observed that scientific revolution and new paradigms were usually introduced by new entrants into a field of study. Young scholars are less committed to the dominant paradigm in terms of questions, theories, and methods. They are more likely to explore new ideas and solve novel problems that could not be addressed by the prevalent paradigm. This provides opportunities to open a new field of study with the potential to attract attention and following. Beginning in the 2000s, many Chinese students receiving Western education were employed by universities in the US, Europe, or Asia. Some of them chose to study Chinese phenomena and their research began to appear in the leading journals. A logical question is whether the primary authors of Chinese papers are mostly junior scholars.

However, seasoned scholars are more skillful in framing the research question and connecting the research to the existing literature. Novel topics written by experienced researchers may draw more

attention than novel topics by junior or relatively unknown scholars. We may expect to see more senior scholars publishing papers on Chinese management than junior scholars, especially in the earlier years of a new field. During its founding years, the editorial team deliberately invited many senior scholars to author papers for MOR. Their papers went through a rigorous review process like that of submitted papers. Publishing papers by experienced and reputable authors is a common strategy for new journals to gain legitimacy.

The rest of this essay provides the results of an analysis of papers published in six leading management journals and in MOR to seek answers to four questions:

1. What is the trend of top management journals in publishing Chinese management research? While expecting an increase across all journals, we are curious about whether there are differences among the top leading journals and between them and MOR?
2. What is the nature of the theories being analyzed in the papers using Chinese data, comparing those focusing on general theories for universal phenomena and those focusing on China-specific phenomena? Does the theoretical focus, general versus China-specific, differ in the leading management journals and in MOR?
3. What are the outcomes examined in these studies? Following Walsh, Weber, and Margolis (2003) and Tsui and Jia (2013), we are interested in the relative focus on performance and human welfare outcomes. Tsui and Jia (2013) compared MOR to six leading management journals on these two broad outcomes. They found that MOR did not publish more human welfare papers despite the socialistic context of the Chinese society, relative to the six English journals. Has the relative focus changed over time between the papers in the leading management journals and in MOR?
4. Are junior scholars more or less likely than senior scholars to conduct and publish Chinese management research? Are the tendencies different between leading management journals and MOR, and have they changed over time?

### **Data and Methods**

We followed the sampling strategy and data analytic approach used in Tsui and Jia (2013) to explore the answers to the above four questions.

#### **Empirical data**

Following Tsui and Jia (2013), we included articles related to Chinese contexts published in six leading journals: *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Organization Science*, and *Journal of International Business Studies*. Since these six journals are all published in the United States, we refer to them as the six US journals. Our data are articles published in these six US journals and in MOR during the period of 1985 to the end of 2023, 20 years before the launch of MOR in 2005 (designated as the pre-MOR period) and 19 years from the launch year 2005 to 2023 (designated as the post-MOR period). The data cover a total of 39 years. We did not include the year 2024 because the volume for 2024 for all the journals was not complete at the time of the data analyses and writing of this essay. We did not think that the results and conclusion based on the 19 post-MOR years would change even if the 2024 volume were included. We considered all articles, empirical or conceptual, excluding editorials and commentaries.

#### **Coding of Chinese studies**

We identified all the articles that used a Chinese sample or data (at any level of analysis) for empirical papers and the article's major topic, or focus is about a Chinese phenomenon or an issue within the Chinese context for conceptual papers. The first article related to the Chinese context appeared in 1985 in the US journals. In the 39 years, the six journals published a total of 639 such articles, out of a total of 12,325. In the 19 years of MOR, there were 307 such articles, out of a total of 431.

### *Coding of China-specific phenomena*

We examine whether the core phenomenon of the article is particularly salient in the Chinese context. If the nature of the phenomenon or theory developed or used is unique to or particularly salient in the Chinese context, and can represent Chinese cultural, institutional, or economic characteristics, such as state-owned enterprises, government intervention, precision poverty alleviation, Belt and Road, *guanxi*, and Confucian culture, we code it as 1, otherwise, it is 0. Hence, 0 represents general theory of management being studied. Although *guanxi* is also very prominent in Korean society, we consider *guanxi* to be a phenomenon with China-specific characteristics because the term originates in the Chinese culture. State-owned enterprises (SOEs) are a category of firms that particularly reflect the Chinese system, poverty alleviation and Belt and Road Initiative reflect Chinese economic characteristics, therefore we code them as China-specific phenomena. In the coding process, we also pay special attention to the fact that China-specific phenomena also could be solutions to Chinese problems, or knowledge that help understand management in or about China.

### *Coding of performance and human welfare focus*

Following Tsui and Jia (2013) who followed Walsh et al. (2003), performance outcomes include efficiency, productivity, and market values or returns. Human welfare outcomes include health, stress, satisfaction, justice, and social responsibility. If an article focuses on both performance and human welfare outcome, both foci were coded. Articles with double foci appeared in 7% of the six US journals and 6% in MOR. Some outcomes (such as job growth) could have either an economic or a social objective, we excluded such indicators due to its unclear meaning. This is to ensure that each variable measures one concept.

### *Coding of the academic rank of the first authors*

We coded the rank of the first author of each paper at the time of publication. If the article was accompanied by the authors' biography, we based our judgment on this information. If the article does not have authors' biographies (which often included the position or rank), we searched the internet through the school's official website to determine his/her academic rank. For papers published in the earlier years, we studied the author's curriculum vita to identify the rank at the time of publication. For recent years, if we did not find any information about the author's name on the school website, we judged him/her to be a student. We coded Assistant professors as 1 (including students), Associate as 2, and Full as 3. These numbers are for identifying the group and not treated as continuous variables.

### *Coding reliability*

We took several steps to ensure coding reliability. First, five research assistants independently coded 20 randomly selected articles, 18 from 6 US journals, and 2 from MOR. After discussing the results, we improved the coding scheme. The five assistants coded independently another 28 randomly selected articles (24 from six US journals and 4 from MOR). The five coders showed 87% agreement on human welfare variables, 94% on performance variables, and 89% on China-specific phenomena. After establishing adequate reliability, we randomly distributed the remaining articles equally to each coder.

## *Results of Empirical Analysis*

Table 1 addresses the first question (Question 1) on the number of articles with a Chinese sample and/or a China-focus in each of the six leading US journals and in MOR, relative to the total number of papers published in these journals. As shown in Table 1, in the six US journals, on average 2% of all the articles published in the 20 years before MOR (pre-MOR) were about China. The percentage increased to 7% in the 19 years after the founding of MOR (post-MOR). Among the six US journals, JIBS published more than the other five journals, from 9% in the 20 years pre-MOR to 16% post-MOR. The biggest increase is in JAP, from 1 to 11%. Overall, a total of 117 articles were published in the 20 years (1985–2004) pre-MOR, and 522 articles in the 19 years post-MOR. It is an

**Table 1.** The frequency of China papers in six US journals and MOR

	AMJ	ASQ	JAP	JIBS	OS	SMJ	All six journals	MOR
1985–2004 (20 years)								
Total # papers	1,090	445	1,480	669	559	1,019	5,262	
China # papers	20	7	12	45	15	18	117	
China %	2	2	1	7	3	2	2	
2005–2023 (19 years)								
Total # papers	1,308	401	1,349	905	1,445	1,655	7,063	431
China # papers	78	18	143	148	38	97	522	307
China %	6	4	11	16	3	6	7	71
1985–2023 (39 years)								
Total # papers	2,398	846	2,829	1,574	2,004	2,674	12,325	
China # papers	98	25	155	193	53	115	639	
China %	4	3	5	12	3	4	5	

Note: asq, *Administrative Science Quarterly*; AMJ, *Academy of Management Journal*; JAP, *Journal of Applied Psychology*; JIBS, *Journal of International Business Studies*; OS, *Organization Science*; SMJ, *Strategic Management Journal*; MOR, *Management and Organization Review*.

increase of 447%. On average, each of the six US journals published an average of 2.7 articles with a China focus for each of the 39 years, out of an average of 52.7 articles published in each journal each year.

We would expect all if not most of the papers in MOR to have a China focus. The data in Table 1 shows that 71% are about China. One possible explanation is the broader emergent economy focus during the 8-year editorship of Arie Lewin, out of a total of 19 years of MOR. During his 8-year term, there were many papers focusing on other emerging contexts.

Question 2 is about relative focus on general theory versus Chinese theory of management. The former aims to generate or test universal theories of management. The latter aims to discover China-specific theories of management to produce context-specific knowledge (Tsui, 2004, 2006). Table 2 shows the results of the data coding.

Keeping in mind that we are focusing on articles using Chinese data, we should expect more China-focused theories being proposed and/or analyzed. This should be especially true in MOR. Table 2 shows that in the six US journals, during the 20 years pre-MOR, about 64% of the articles using Chinese data focus on a Chinese theory of management. However, there was a reversal of the

**Table 2.** General (context-free) versus China-specific topics

	Six US journals	MOR
1985–2004 (20 years)		
	Total # papers = 117	
	General = 42 (36%)	
	China = 75 (64%)	
2005–2023 (19 years)		
	Total # papers = 522	Total # papers = 307
	General = 348 (67%)	General = 118 (38%)
	China = 174 (33%)	China = 189 (62%)
1985–2023 (39 years)		
	Total # papers = 639	
	General = 390 (61%)	
	China = 249 (39%)	

prevalence of general versus China-specific theories in the six US journals in the post-MOR period, even though the absolute number of China papers more than doubled, from 75 in the pre-MOR to 174 in the post-MOR period.

The pattern of the two types of theories in MOR is as expected. Among the papers focusing on China, about two-thirds are on China-specific topics. A good example of such a paper is Jing and Van De Ven (2014) that introduced the concept of *shi* (勢, momentum) based on the *yin-yang* perspective to explain organizational change processes. Another example is the conceptual paper on *guanxi* (Chen, Chen, & Huang, 2013), a very important Chinese phenomenon related to but different from the idea of social networks in the Western literature. It is particularly noteworthy that in the same 19-year post-MOR period, 67% of the papers with Chinese data published in the six US journals focus on general theories.

Question 3 is about the relative focus on performance versus human welfare outcomes in the Chinese papers published in the six US journals and in MOR. Table 3 shows the results of this analysis.

In the six US journals, performance outcomes were the focus of 75% of the Chinese articles in the 20 years prior to MOR and this focus increased to 82% in the 19 years after. The focus on human welfare changed from 26 to 24%, 2% less in the post-MOR period.

In MOR, the performance focus was 75% and human welfare was 30%. There were proportionally more articles focusing on human welfare (30%) in MOR, compared with the top six US journals (24%).

Overall, the relative focus on performance and human welfare among the six US journals and in MOR are highly similar to that reported in Tsui and Jia (2013) who focused on the same set of journals, and in Walsh et al. (2003) who focused on articles published in the *Academy of Management Journal* only. The general pattern did not change much over the years.

To have a more fine-grained picture of the two foci over the years, we plotted the percentage of articles with each focus each year. To remove yearly fluctuations, we used 5-year moving averages for the six US journals and 3-year moving averages for MOR.

Figure 1 shows that performance focus consistently dominate human welfare focus with the difference increasing after the early 1990s. This pattern has stayed consistent through early 2010s and diverging further until 2019 when there is a clear convergence with performance focus at 75% and human welfare focus at 33%. Divergence appeared again beginning 2021. In 2023, performance focus went back to 81% and human welfare focus at 28%.

Figure 2 shows the pattern for the articles in MOR. It is very similar to that in Figure 1. There was converging signs in 2015 when performance outcomes were the focus in 69% of the articles and human welfare was the focus of 42% of the articles. In 2023, the two figures are 78 and 27%. There is no sign that the two foci will converge in the foreseeable future.

These results are consistent with Walsh et al. (2003) and with Tsui and Jia (2013) in that much more management studies focused on economic performance than on human welfare. It is

**Table 3.** Performance versus human welfare focus of the articles

	Six US journals	MOR
1985–2004 (20 years)	Total # papers = 117 Performance = 88 (75%) Human welfare = 30 (26%)	
2005–2023 (19 years)	Total # papers = 522 Performance = 430 (82%) Human welfare = 127 (24%)	Total # papers = 307 Performance = 230 (75%) Human welfare = 91 (30%)
1985–2023 (39 years)	Total # papers = 639 Performance = 518 (81%) Human welfare = 157 (25%)	

Note: See also Figure 1 (six US journals) and Figure 2 (MOR) for moving averages over all the years.

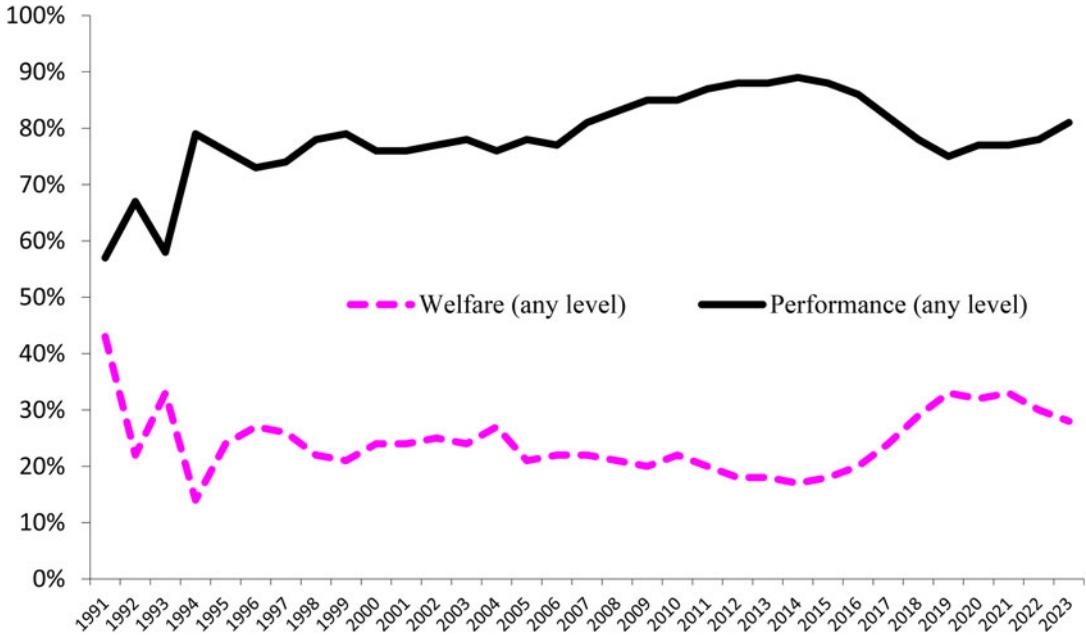


Figure 1. Performance and human welfare focus in six US journals (using 5-year moving averages)

disheartening that management scholarship persists in focusing on performance outcomes despite the call for attention to the wellbeing of other stakeholders over the years (Freeman, 1984; McGahan, 2018; Tsui, 2013).

Now, we turn to the final Question 4. Are junior scholars more or less likely than senior scholars to conduct Chinese management research, in both the US journals and in MOR? The results are

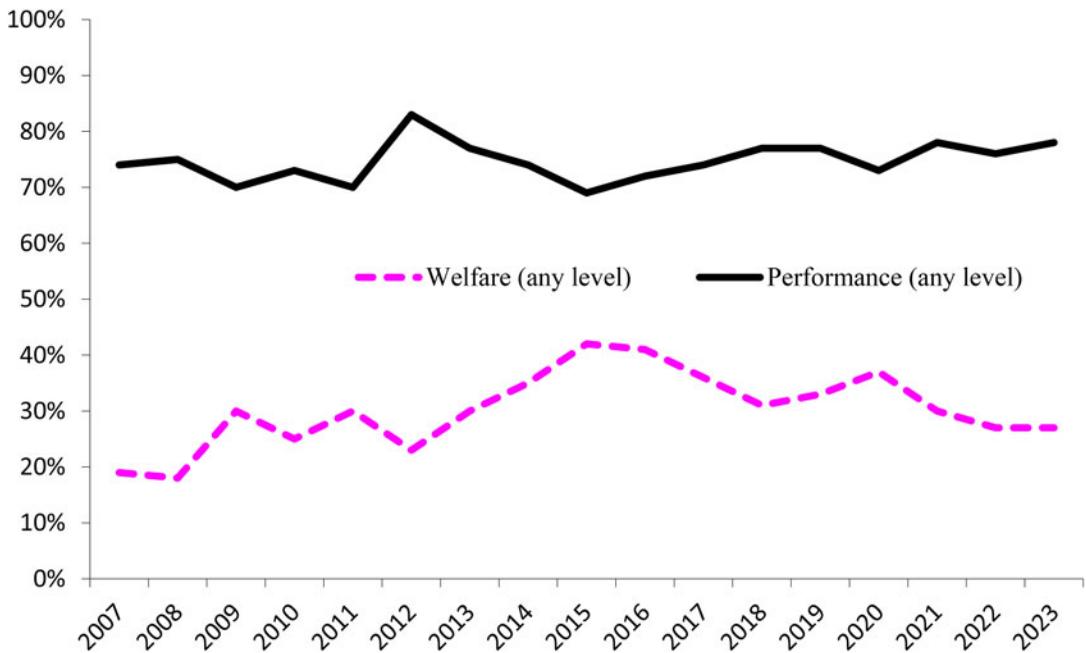


Figure 2. Performance and human welfare focus in MOR (3-year moving average)

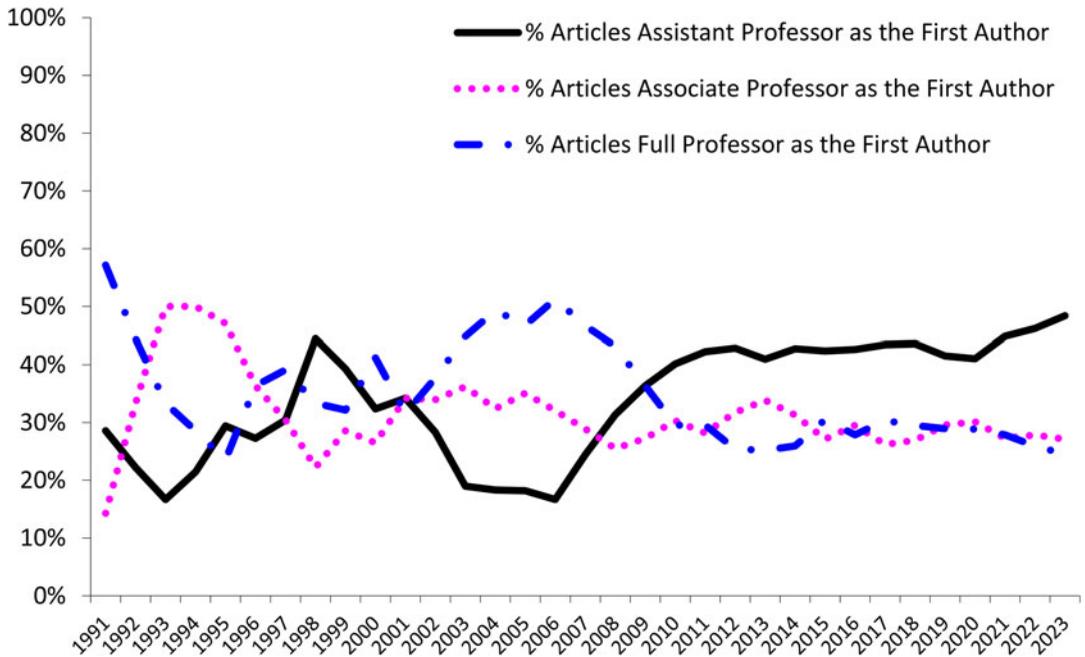
**Table 4.** Academic rank of first authors

	Six US journals	MOR
1985–2004 (20 years)	Total # papers = 117	
	Assistant = 28 (24%)	
	Associate = 38 (32%)	
	Full = 51 (44%)	
2005–2023 (19 years)	Total # papers = 522	Total # papers = 307
	Assistant = 224 (43%)	Assistant = 99 (32%)
	Associate = 148 (28%)	Associate = 87 (28%)
	Full = 150 (29%)	Full = 121 (39%)
1985–2023 (39 years)	Total # papers = 639	
	Assistant = 252 (39%)	
	Associate = 186 (29%)	
	Full = 201 (31%)	

Note: Assistant (professor) group also includes a few students (5% in the six US journals and 8% in MOR).

summarized in Table 4. Assistant professors were a smaller percentage (24%) of all papers in the six US journals in the 20 years pre-MOR. The percentage increased to 43% in the 19 years post-MOR. Junior scholars were first authors in 32% of MOR articles.

Figure 3 shows the patterns for the first authors of the China related papers in the six US journals (5-year moving average) over the 39 years. It shows that there were proportionally more full professors as the first authors of the papers published in the six US journals before 1992. By 2010, assistant professors increasingly occupied the first author position in the published papers. Since then, they



**Figure 3.** Academic ranks of first authors in the six US journals, 1985 to 2023 (5-year moving averages)

consistently were the first authors of the papers published in the six US journals, with associate and full professors holding the similar percentages.

Figure 4 shows the pattern for MOR. Full professors were the first authors of almost two-thirds of the papers (65%) published in the first volume of MOR. The yearly data show that full professors comprised 90% of the authors in the first volume (2005) of MOR. The percentage declined to around 30% in volume 19 in 2023. On the contrary, assistant professors were less than 10% in volume 1 (2005) and their percentage increased to a peak of almost 60% in volume 16 (2020). There was a steady increase of associate professors over the years. By 2023, each rank occupied about one third of the first authorship of all the papers in volume 19.

### Discussion and Limitations of the Empirical Analysis

The results of the empirical analysis affirm some of our prior expectations while also produce some surprising findings. There are two big surprises. First, the reversal of the proportion of papers on general and China-specific theories in the six US journals over the two time periods is surprising. During the 20 years prior to the launch of MOR, more than 60% of the papers focusing on Chinese phenomena and theories were published in the six US journals. In the 19 years post-MOR, China-specific papers declined to 33%. What accounted for the surge of general theory papers involving Chinese data over the past 19 years? Does this reflect the preference of the authors, the editors, or the reviewers? What might account for the propensity of authors to focus on general theories? Why would authors studying Chinese organizations or using Chinese data prefer to test general theories? One possible explanation is the training these young scholars received. Most of them studied in the US schools. It is possible that they learned primarily general theories, which fill the literature in the US journals. Table 4 provides some clue to support this speculation. Assistant professors comprise 24% of the first authors of the published papers in the pre-MOR period. They comprise 43% in the post-MOR period.

Of course, there is great value in developing and testing general theories of management. The important question is the motivation for this preference. It is widely known (Tsui, 2016;

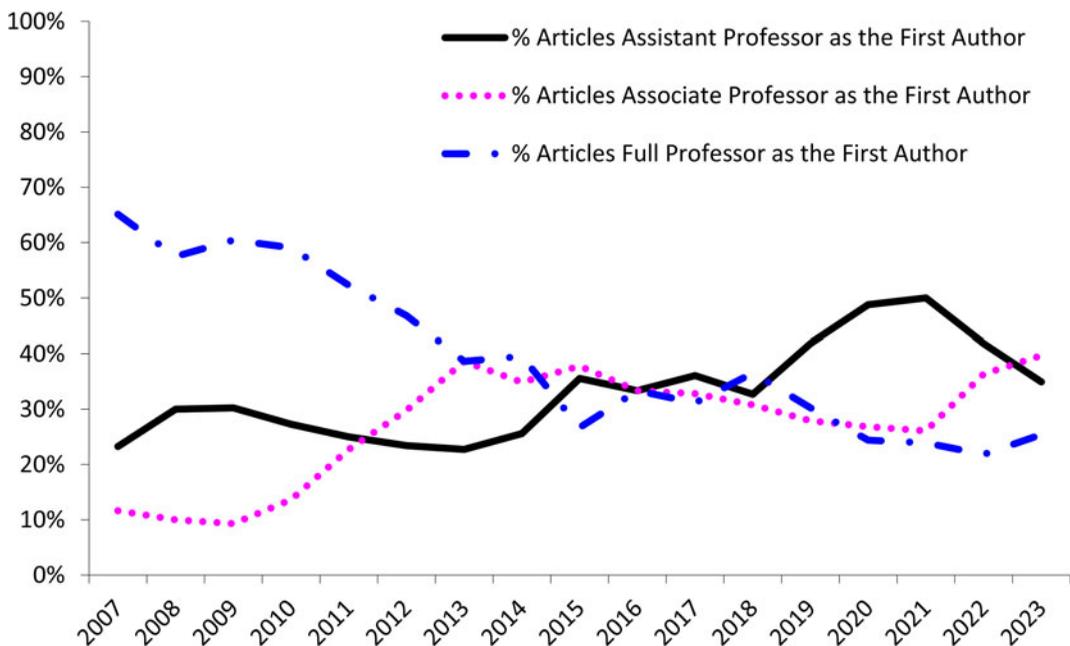


Figure 4. Academic ranks of first authors in MOR, 2005 to 2023 (3-year moving averages)

Walsh, 2011) that the incentive for research in business schools is the number publications in leading journals without much regard for the problem being addressed (McGahan, 2018) or the scholars who are doing the work (Glick, Miller, & Cardinal, 2007). To play it safe, most young scholars may choose topics that are popular in the journals and work on theories that are well accepted in the literature. They may avoid topics that are marginal, emergent, or novel. Chinese management may be still a novel topic in the minds of most authors, editors, and reviewers.

Lack of research attention to the context-specific issue producing locally relevant knowledge is not only a disservice to science but also a disservice to society. Lack of relevant knowledge may impose a limitation on the growth and development of local economies. Whether the persistence of general theory preference put a limit on scientific progress deserves research attention. This should be a topic of interest and importance to scholars in both developed and under-developed research communities.

The current analysis did not focus on the nature of Chinese-specific theories being introduced into both the US journals and in MOR. It would be useful to document what Chinese theories of management have been introduced into the global literature on management by both MOR and the international journals, US included. Fortunately, such an analysis is being conducted by a team of authors who published a paper on this question 10 years ago (Jia, You, & Du, 2012).

This team, with new collaborators, (You, Jia, Wang, Liu, & Yin, 2024) has updated Jia et al.'s (2012) paper. They applied the context-emic model to evaluate articles which used the Chinese context for their contributions to management and organization research. Using the context-emic model, they analyzed 639 articles published in six US journals between 1985 and 2023 and 260 articles from MOR from its launch in 2005 to 2023. They found 14 articles in the six US journals and 23 articles in MOR to have the highest degree of Chinese contextualization in the concepts or constructs (*what*), the relationships between the constructs (*how*), and the logics underlying the relationships (*why*). They discovered several new concepts, such as market transition (Nee, 1992), network capitalism (Boisot & Child, 1996), *guanxi* (Xin & Pearce, 1996), uniplex third (Li & Piezunka, 2020), institutional legacy (Zhang, 2022), *shi* (势, momentum, Jing & Van De Ven, 2014), *xin*-based (心-智) social competence (Wei, Bilimoria, & Li, 2017), and *xiao nong yi shi* (小农意识, parochialism, Feng, Liu, & Jiang, 2019). This research will answer the question of what Chinese theories of management have been introduced into the global management literature.

The second surprising finding is that there has been no or little change in the relative focus on performance outcomes and human welfare outcomes in Chinese management research in both the 39 years of the six leading US journals and in the 19 years of MOR. Examining human welfare remains a secondary priority for management scholars either in China or outside of China. If healthy human conditions were a prerequisite for innovation and productivity, social scientists in business fields seem to be short-sighted by not developing knowledge that will serve both employees and managers.

### The Future of MOR and Chinese Management Research

MOR is situated in a context where the broader research culture is still facing a number of challenges. Performativity or instrumental rationality is a pervasive research value in most business schools worldwide (Tsui, 2016). Tackling real-world problems and introducing novel but useful management theories that can help to improve the quality of human life is not a major consideration in assessing research contributions in most business schools. Can MOR evolve to be more context sensitive and tackle problems that are important in China today? I am confident that the current editorial team are both poised and eager to do so, as evidenced by the special issues introduced over the past two years, such as 'Digital Poverty Reduction' and 'Developing Inclusive Markets through Social Entrepreneurship in China and Emerging Economies'.

MOR is enjoying increasing acceptance and reputation among the Chinese management research community. The IACMR and MOR can shape the future of management research in China through promoting responsible research (Co-founders of RRB, 2017, revised 2020) along with enlightened intellectual leadership in business schools. Many of these leaders are involved with the IACMR, MOR, or both. As an intellectual community, the IACMR and MOR have a great opportunity to

play a critical role in transforming the research culture and practices in Chinese business schools from bean-counting to impact caring. Courage, patience, and perseverance are necessary for institutional change. I know the current editorial team and officers of the IACMR have all these attributes.

MOR serves the Chinese management and organization research community. With a clear focus and unwavering dedication to a strong mission, there is no doubt that MOR will succeed in publishing excellent research about Chinese organizations, providing valuable knowledge to inform business and management practices toward more innovative, productive, and humanistic organizations benefiting all stakeholders and not only owners or shareholders. The impact of MOR and the IACMR will go beyond China given the global interest in and interdependence between China and the rest of the world.

It has been an interesting process writing this essay and recalling many fond memories. Anne is deeply grateful for the opportunity to work on the creation of MOR with so many high-quality scholars who gave life to this journal. She apologizes for her flawed memory if she has failed to recognize everyone who played an extraordinary role in the early years of this journal. Your friendship is the most valuable fruit of the seeds that the founding team has collectively sown to grow this field of Chinese management research.

## Notes

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