

EDITORIAL ESSAY

My Affinity with MOR

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It was all because of Anne Tsui's vision, leadership, and never-exhausted energy that nurtured MOR to be born out of a scholarly scratch. I happened to be within proximity to lend her a helpful hand.

The place was Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) and the time was 2002. A leading scholar with worldwide influence in the research of management and Chinese organizations, Anne had been the founding head of the Department of Management in the HKUST Business School since 1992. I joined HKUST in 1997 and subsequently was appointed associate dean of the School of Humanities and Social Science (2000–2001) and head of the Division of Social Science (2002–2006). At this time, HKUST had only 4 schools and 19 academic units (17 disciplinary departments plus 2 multi-disciplinary divisions). The heads of the academic units and school deans/associate deans were thus de-facto members of the HKUST Senate – the decision-making body of the university – and consequently I was presented with plenty of opportunities to get acquainted with Anne through administrative and scholarly occasions on campus. As a scholar, I appreciated her impressive work on Chinese organizations, including two highly cited articles on relational demography and *guanxi* that I included as readings in my social network analysis class.

On a lovely day in spring 2002, I met with Anne at the campus coffee shop in the Academia Hallway. Marshall Meyer of UPenn was also there. His work on bureaucratization and economic sociology had an impact on my study of Chinese work organization (*danwei*) and inequality, and it was nice to meet him in person for the first time. After a round of chats, Anne spoke to the point of the tripartite gathering: She shared her vision and initiatives to establish an international association for scholars and students doing research on Chinese organizations and management, and to create an official journal of the new association. These were truly big ideas, but they were also admirable and doable. Both Marshall and I endorsed her plans as well as offered candid opinions and suggestions to solidify her initiatives, including the name of the new association (IACMR) and that of the new journal (MOR).

Emerging from the tripartite gathering was a blueprint of MOR. To confront managerial and organizational challenges of a rising Chinese economy on the global scale, the new journal should target an international readership with inherent interests in both theory-oriented comparative analysis and original empirical studies of Chinese management and organizations, and in doing so it should be in line, in terms of article quality and scholarly influence, with a dozen of the top management journals in a decade or so. To prepare the new journal for its anticipated future required a multi-disciplinary editorial board of established scholars to process submissions, a good stock of articles invited from some of the most influential researchers with China-relevant original theories and empirical studies to fill up the first two volumes, and a time-efficient, content-constructive, and double-blinded review structure. These initiatives, after all, would not work without two important platforms to be made: The biennial IACMR conferences (in even-numbered years) from whose participants to welcome manuscript submissions, and the biennial research methodology workshops (in odd-numbered years) of doctoral students from China's leading management schools that helped train new generations of the expanding IACMR membership base as well as growing MOR readers and contributors. These were basically Anne's ideas, to which Marshall and I added our amendments.

Immediately after the tripartite meeting, and on Anne's behalf, I invited Joe Galaskiewicz to serve on the editorial board of the new journal. A leading organizational sociologist and a top-notch social network analyst, Joe was my closet colleague at the University of Minnesota (UMN) where I taught before I moved to HKUST. Unknown to colleagues and friends outside UMN, Joe was keen to China and the key force to establish a scholarly exchange program for sociologists between UMN and Nankai University in Tianjin in the 1990s. Moreover, Joe's social network seminar at UMN was co-listed between sociology and management and each year it was filled by doctoral students with a strategic management concentration. I knew how busy Joe was, but I also knew he would seriously consider this joint invitation from Anne and me. We were indeed fortunate to have Joe on board. In addition to Anne, Joe, Marshall, and me, we were also very fortunate to have John Child (Hong Kong University), Yadong Luo (University of Miami), and Michael Morris (Columbia University) serve on MOR's inaugural editorial team as the editor-in-chief (Anne) and the associate editors (the others). Each of the seven of us invited other established scholars to serve as consulting editors and manuscript reviewers.

Built into each biennial IACMR conference has been a set of keynote panels, and many of the invited keynote panelists have made invaluable contributions to MOR throughout its 20-year history. For example, Joe and I organized a keynote panel at the 2004 inaugural IACMR conference in Beijing and were very excited to have influential sociologists Nan Lin (Duke), Victor Nee (Cornell), and Xueguang Zhou (then at HKUST) on the panel to speak about China's market transition and its implications for research of Chinese management and organizations. That keynote panel drew attention from a fully occupied lecture hall of several hundred convention goers. Happily, all three panelists contributed their original research articles to MOR, and two of them did so multiple times. Other influential sociologists whose contributions have appeared in MOR include Ron Burt (U of Chicago), Neil Fligstein (UC-Berkeley), and Andrew Walder (Stanford).

As MOR's associate editors, Joe and I had each written an editorial for the journal during the first 3 years after its kickoff in 2005. Joe's piece was in a 2007 issue on network theory of organizational behavior and has generated great attention from MOR readers (Galaskiewicz, 2007 MOR editorial, 138 Google Scholar Citations as of February 2024). My editorial was in a 2006 issue for which I chose to share a few lessons of household surveys conducted by sociologists. At the time, I was a founding co-PI of the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), a nationally representative sample survey project and a public data archive, and the invaluable experiences of CGSS would, I thought, be useful to management survey researchers. This judgment was not empirically rooted as my editorial had little impact (Bian, 2006 MOR editorial, 2 Google Scholar Citations). Happily, in later years, my commentary on the comparative significance of *guanxi* (Bian, 2017 MOR, 69 Google Scholar Citations) and my theoretical piece with Nancy DiTomaso on social capital and *guanxi* (DiTomaso & Bian, 2018 MOR, 41 Google Scholar Citations) received good attention from MOR readers. Thanks to the then MOR editor-in-chief Arie Lewin and other members of the evaluation committee, the coauthored piece won the 2020 MOR Best Paper Award. In that same year, I was also the recipient of the IACMR Distinguished Scholarly Achievement Award, one of the highest recognitions to IACMR members.

Since 2005, the senior members of the MOR editorial board have also seemed to take up a lot of instructional responsibilities at the Research Methodology Workshops. This workshop series has been a great platform, in my opinion. Every other summer, the 1-week workshop gathered a select group of 120 doctoral students from China's top management schools to receive teaching and coaching from a dozen senior scholars who are specialized in theory building, qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as research project development and writing. I was a workshop instructor at the 2005 workshop at Xi'an Jiaotong University and the 2019 workshop at Harbin Institute of Technology. Many of the students in my group in the workshop 19 years ago are now established scholars, some of whom have taken up leadership positions in China's top management schools. A good number of the students in my group in the later workshop have continued to be in touch with me through email or WeChat. I've enjoyed reading and sharing my comments on their article-length manuscripts before they were submitted to MOR or different journals.

In her 20-year development, MOR has benefited from three great editors-in-chief, each of whom I've worked with in different roles. The inaugural editor-in-chief, Anne Tsui, was a visionary, innovator, and gifted leader and manager; I was happy to serve as one of her associate editors in two 5-year terms. Arie Lewin was a great expander and redeveloper, and under his leadership MOR increased its visibility and influence; I was a frequent manuscript reviewer, a coauthor of a field-of-study review article, and twice invited by him to write a lengthy commentary on the lead articles of the journal. Since 2022, we have had Xiao-Ping Chen as MOR's helmswoman, who, like Anne, has a new vision, new leadership skills, and never-exhausted energy to try to lift MOR to a new height; I'm pleased to serve her as a consulting editor.

The above is a memory piece about my affinity with MOR, the journal around which we will continue to build an everlasting community for scholars and students doing research on Chinese management and organizations.