
Editorial: Within and around organizational behavior

Editorial

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Back in 2019, I served as chair of the track “Organizational Cognition” at the European Academy of Management, an initiative I took with Emanuele Bardone (University of Tartu, Estonia). It was the second time we organized it and, this time around, we did want to mark the success of the track with something that could bring our discussions at the conference to a wider audience. After an exchange of opinions with some colleagues I sent an email to all the conference track participants to ask (1) if a special issue was a good idea and (2) whether anyone would volunteer to be guest editor. Claudia Toma (Free University of Brussels, Belgium) and Igor Menezes (University of Hull, UK) came forward and we wrote the call for papers. We had to make a decision about the journal.

This was a difficult one. The journal we were looking for needed to be focused on organizational behavior (OB) and, at the same time, should have a reputation of being open enough so that some of the unorthodox views on cognition expressed in some of the conference papers would not conflict with the editors or with the aims and scope of the journal, if accepted. We were concerned about finding the appropriate outlet for the potential papers. I knew the *International Journal of Organization Theory & Behavior* (IJOTB) as being both traditional and eclectic enough such that the editor could be interested. My source of information was personal, since the journal had published two of my articles, one of which had been very important in the theoretical development of my work with Emanuele Bardone. Given the positive experience, I sent an email to Khi Thai (Florida Atlantic University, USA), the journal’s editor, asking if they were interested in a special issue on “New Horizons in Organizational Cognition”. He replied that he had retired and stepped down as Editor-in-Chief. I was then redirected to Andrew Peart, then publisher at Emerald and responsible for the journal. In an exchange of emails and an online meeting I acquired the information that Emerald was looking for an editor and that they were very much open to reinvigorate the aims and scope of *IJOTB* as well as to reshape the editorial team. Given the extent of the openness at the publisher’s front, I put myself forward for the position of Editor-in-Chief.

My new position with *IJOTB* started March 1, 2020. I am now almost one year into it and I had planned to take Issue No. 1 of 2021 (Volume 24) to share the editorial lines with our readers, potential and existing authors, and reviewers. This is, I hope, a way to outline where *IJOTB* intends to position itself among other management and organizational research journals.

I have divided this editorial into three sections. The first is a very short overview of the editorial team, the second outlines *IJOTB*’s objectives, while the third and last presents some of the work done and is a summary of editorial stances.

The editorial team

I am very fortunate to share editorial responsibilities with Huiping Xian (University of Sheffield, UK) and Dinuka B. Herath (University of Huddersfield, UK) who are the two Associate Editors. They manage submissions that use a qualitative and a quantitative methodology, respectively. Since *IJOTB* receives an overwhelming majority of submissions featuring quantitative methods, I also assign myself to manage part of those. After a first reading of all papers, those that are not desk rejected are divided between the three of us.



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The journal also has an Editorial Advisory Board, made of 27 members representing a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and countries. The board mainly represents North America and Europe, and it also has Asian, Australian, and Middle Eastern members. We are currently looking to extend membership to include under-represented areas and, at the same time, to increase the diversity of our board.

Editorial lines and objectives

Together with the new website, last year “aims and scope” have been updated and entirely rewritten. *IJOTB* remains true to its original goal in that it is an outlet open to OB, broadly defined to include research on *micro*, *meso* and *macro* aspects. This means that the focus is on developing and expanding scientific knowledge of individual and group behavior in organizations. In practice, we operate on this claim by welcoming research that is internationally oriented, multidisciplinary, methodologically varied and open to a wide variety of topics. In the following, each one of these characteristics is presented briefly.

Part of our vocation is to welcome studies that have an *international outlook*, that have collected and analyze data from a selection of countries, or that simply present a sample from a country that is seldom considered in OB research. While we would be extremely pleased to consider multiple-country research for publication, we know that these are extremely difficult studies to conduct. This is why the general idea is to be open to those who study OB with a single-country focus such that the international dimension is provided by articles appearing in a journal volume rather than enclosed in each single publication.

There are several calls to conduct work *across disciplines* rather than within the domain of a single one, and they are apparent from reading aims and scope statements of academic journals and conferences. These calls are mainly due to the complexity of social phenomena. Organizational behaviors are not an exception, but a confirmation of how embedded complexity manifests itself. In fact, anything “organizational” can be (and is) studied under a variety of angles that, for example, span across anthropology, applied psychology, economics, engineering, mathematics and statistics, medicine, neuroscience, political science, sociology, and obviously management. I am not arguing that every study should include these aspects, I am merely pointing at the fact that any phenomenon occurring in an organization can be viewed from a plethora of different perspectives. Bringing two or more in would increase analytical depth, precision, relevance, and understanding, among others. Not only *IJOTB* is open to studies across disciplines, but we are in the privileged position to draw on a pool of colleagues with different disciplinary backgrounds and we can offer peer-review that is capable of tackling with multidisciplinary research. Our Editorial Advisory Board is an example of this variety, with many colleagues coming from disciplinary backgrounds outside of management such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, linguistics, engineering, economics, accounting and statistics. To write it differently, this multidisciplinary pledge is not an empty claim; we are equipped to manage submissions from a wide variety of disciplines. This is a rather unique advantage *IJOTB* can offer since, as far as my knowledge is concerned, there are not many other management journals that can claim such an open base of different disciplines.

The other opening this journal wants to commit to is *methodological variety*. This is, on the one hand, a consequence of being open to multiple disciplines and, on the other hand, a recognition that any devotion to one single method sounds like ideology rather than science. To this respect, *IJOTB* is (yet again) very much unique in that not only it opens to all qualitative and quantitative approaches but, at the same time, it also welcomes computational simulation methods, especially agent-based computational simulation modeling. This latter statement requires some explaining.

Agent-based modeling is becoming more and more popular across the social sciences as a tool and an approach for the study of complexity (Edmonds and Meyer, 2017). In spite of the relative success it has had in sociology and economics, its use in management and organization research is still very limited (Fioretti, 2013; Secchi, 2015). One of the problems has been the reluctance with which mainstream journals have opened to computational simulation. The team here at *IJOTB* and I would like to take a forward-looking perspective at the field and welcome any study that uses computational simulation either as part of a qualitative or qualitative empirical enquiry or as a pure computational study.

The opening to computational simulation and agent-based modeling has also repercussions on the way in which *theory* is intended. One of the limitations that has historically affected management and organization research is the almost complete absence of theorization based on a formal modeling effort. Computational simulation offers a solution to this limitation in that it allows for simple-to-complex modeling as a way to develop, test, or improve theory (Smaldino *et al.*, 2015). This does not mean that here at *IJOTB* we only see theory in relation to computational modeling, but that we are open to it [1].

The interest and importance of methodology in *IJOTB* is also apparent by a new editorial initiative. Together with the existing categories that Emerald allows for their journals, we have discussed a new one called *Short Notes on Methods* (SNM). These are articles that undergo a proper double-blind peer-review process and focus on a single specific methodological point, let it be qualitative, quantitative, or computational. The idea is to offer precise, specific and practical advice to OB scholars with an up-to-date short article on one single aspect of a method. The idea is for SNM to be short such that they are a relatively quick read and clarify the way in which that particular point should be dealt with in a research study. Needless to say, this is also a way to enhance rigor and precision of papers submitted and published in *IJOTB* and, hopefully, in the entire field. The date for the first SNM publication has not been defined yet, but I will write more on them together with the issue in which the first SNM appears.

With the above in mind, *IJOTB* is open to both traditional *topics in OB* and also to more unorthodox topics. Examples of the former are culture, decision-making, goal setting, identity, job satisfaction, justice, leadership, knowledge, learning, motivation, performance, personality, power, and trust. Together with these, the journal is open to topics that do not fall within the classic OB domain since they originate outside of management or are not as popular as other topics are at the moment. These are listed under “publication areas and topics” on our website but it is probably worth repeating them here:

- (1) Altruism, cooperation, and other aspects of prosocial behaviors;
- (2) Aspects of human resource management that directly affect behavior in organizations;
- (3) Biases, heuristics, and other features of bounded rationality;
- (4) Change, plasticity, agility, disorganization, and other dynamic aspects of organizational life;
- (5) Cognition in organizations, with particular emphasis on embodied, enacted, embedded, ecological, and extended aspects of the distributed/systemic paradigm;
- (6) Individual and group effects of corporate social responsibility and sustainable management;
- (7) Negative, damaging, controversial, abusive, and counterproductive behaviors;

- (8) Technical/soft/hard skills, competencies, qualifications, and other aspects of task performance and problem-solving;
- (9) The effect of organizational policies such as equality and diversity on positive/negative organizational behavior.

Any topic is suitable for a special issue and we encourage you to get in touch with anyone in the editorial team to explore opportunities and possibilities. We already have the special issue “New Horizons in Organizational Cognition” that is likely to be published late in 2021 or in 2022 and another in-the-making entitled “Rethinking Behavior in Organizations: Reflections on Disruption and Change” and connected to Track 6.3 of the Nordic Academy of Management [2].

Getting ready to look forward

The *International Journal of Organization Theory & Behavior* has come a long way. It celebrates its 24th Volume this year and this means that the journal has been around for quite a long time. Over the years, *IJOTB* has published within and around the field and the editorial team and I are thrilled to have the opportunity to keep this important tradition alive.

Over the years, the journal has been an outlet for public management research and, here too, we wish to continue in that tradition while, at the same time, keep the doors open to contributions outside that area. This is nothing new, since the journal was already open to a wide range of sectors, industries, countries as well as methodologies when we took over in 2020. All we have done is to make these openings more explicit.

In doing so, we have started by streamlining some of the editorial processes. The requirements to access peer-review have been strengthened and we always make sure that all decisions are thoroughly motivated. This means that all desk rejected papers receive reasonably detailed feedback that is actionable and constructive. Much work has been done to secure quality peer-reviews by implementing three procedures. First, all reviews are assessed with the objective of excluding reviewers performing poorly from the pool. Poor performance is a review made of one liners, lacking appropriate explanations, or simply not critical enough. Second, we have invited a number of colleagues to join the reviewers’ pool. Third, unsolicited reviewers’ requests are screened through an online survey [3] used to assess whether there is a match between potential reviewers and *IJOTB*’s quality expectations.

Some other processes have been improvised at first, and then became part of our modus operandi. For example, a sloppy “reply to reviewers” document sends the revision back to the authors and may eventually lead to rejection. In the circumstance of a reviewer’s report being below acceptable academic standards, we always try to involve another reviewer or, under certain conditions, take the decision in our hands. Together with the reports from the reviewers, all papers receive additional comments from the editor. We believe this is important in that it gives a way to interpret the feedback and, sometimes, it provides authors with additional actionable comments.

Despite (or probably because of) the pandemic, our submissions have increased during 2020, going from 190 to 228 (+20%). A desk rejection decision takes, on average, two weeks while the decision after the first round of reviews comes after approximately 6.5 weeks. The average time from submission to final decision on a manuscript has been ca. 119 days (17 weeks) but the range is, in this case, quite wide because every paper follows its own path. Volume 23 is made of 20 articles. Author affiliations are split between the following areas: 50% are from North America, 20% from Europe, 15% from Asia, 10% from Africa, and another 5% from the Middle East.

In summary, *IJOTB* is a journal that is deeply rooted in the OB tradition and, at the same time, it is open to both methodological and topic-based innovations. Of course, we do not

know if these editorial efforts will be successful and the extent to which they will, but we have already started to execute and propose them to the global community of scholars. Please direct any question to me and/or the editorial team; we look forward to reading your submissions.

Davide Secchi

Notes

1. This is to be true to the work that Martin Neumann (University of Mainz, Germany) and I have started some years back with the book we edited on *Agent-Based Simulation of Organizational Behavior* (Secchi and Neumann, 2016).
2. Even though the deadline has expired, here is the link to the call for abstracts: <https://journals.oru.se/NFF2021/article/view/593>.
3. If interested in becoming a reviewer for the journal, please fill in the survey (https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/IJOTB_reviewers) and email the editor.

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