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Opportunities and Challenges of Engaged Indigenous Scholarship

Andrew H. Van de Ven,[1] Alan D. Meyer,[2] and Runtian Jing[3]

[1] *University of Minnesota, USA,* [2] *Univeristy of Oregon, USA, and* [3] *Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China*

INTRODUCTION

Management and Organization Review (MOR) is announcing a renewed initiative that seeks to encourage and publish research reporting engaged indigenous scholarship in China. MOR invites empirical as well as conceptual studies of indigenous phenomena related to management and organizations. MOR welcomes exploratory studies of new, emerging, and/or poorly understood indigenous research questions that employ abductive reasoning and creative hunches, as opposed to testing hypotheses deduced from non-indigenous Western theories. Data on indigenous phenomena can come from any source, including qualitative and quantitative data from case studies, field surveys, experiments, and ethnographies.

This essay examines some of the opportunities and challenges in undertaking engaged indigenous scholarship on organization and management issues. It suggests engagement strategies and methodologies that are useful when conducting indigenous research and provides specific examples from China. Our objective is to catalyze new and unconventional approaches to observing, describing, and analyzing indigenous phenomena, and to encourage scholars to attend paper development workshops to refine papers for submission to a forthcoming MOR special issue on engaged indigenous scholarship.

ENGAGED INDIGENOUS RESEARCH: AN ACADEMIC COMBAT ZONE

We cannot think of three words that come loaded with baggage that is as heavy, multiplex, or controversial as 'Engaged Indigenous Research'. Individually and in

Corresponding author: Andrew H. Van de Ven (avandeve@umn.edu)

combination, these words often trigger reactions among academicians that are emotional and vitriolic. They mobilize ideological troops to march under the standards of scientific method, cultural imperialism, cultural appropriation, neo-colonialism, and decolonialization, and other doctrines.

Accordingly, our first objective in this essay is to surface the assumptions that we bring to the topic. As we will discuss, our goal is to sidestep ideological acrimony and situate MOR's initiative in a 'third space' (Nkomo, 2011) that our colleagues will find convivial and inclusive. Let's unpack our assumptions around these three words.

Indigenous Research

The term 'indigenous' arouses particularly strong emotions. Its affect-loaded interpretations include ancient, primitive, traditional, aboriginal, geographically emplaced, marginalized, identity-based, and set apart from the dominant culture. As Smith (1999) and Jackson (2013) point out, the term 'indigenous research' is culturally sensitive, with a taint of colonialism and exploitation imputed by indigenous people of the world. Some of these negative meanings are captured by Smith (1999: 1) in her critique of research on New Zealand's Maori people. Her interpretations merit our close attention because they highlight research methods and practices to avoid in studying indigenous topics and communities.

> From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. It is so powerful that indigenous people even write poetry about research. The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized people. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity. Just knowing that someone measured our 'faculties' by filling the skulls of our ancestors with millet seeds and compared the amount of millet seed to the capacity for mental thought offends our sense of who and what we are. It galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that it is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us. It appalls us that the West can desire, extract, and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations.

Smith's candid and evocative words bear witness to how research on indigenous topics and communities has been abused in the past, and consequently has lost

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all legitimacy in the eyes of many indigenous communities. In all likelihood, the Western researchers did not recognize or inquire into the unique cultural values, interests, and knowledge of the indigenous people they studied. In failing to engage the indigenous community, the researchers failed to anticipate the negative obtrusive effects of their 'foreign' research methods. A much deeper and more reflexive engagement with indigenous people is necessary to obtain their unconditional consent to the research and draw out their unique contributions to the topics being studied.

Nkomo (2011) critiques both the colonial and the anti-colonial representations of indigenous research on African leadership and management studies. She discusses the unproductive dismissals and mirror excesses in the binary oppositions of colonial and counter representations. She encourages scholars to celebrate pluralism and diversity among indigenous voices, and suggests that more descriptive and less theory-driven research on indigenous phenomena may provide a way forward.

The challenges of conducting indigenous research are substantial. Peter Li (2012: 850) points out that:

> First, there is little consensus on what indigenous research is. Some argue that any research will automatically qualify as indigenous research if it covers an indigenous phenomenon or topic, even when Western theories or concepts are adopted (e.g., Whetten, 2009). Others maintain that indigenous research requires location-specific contextual factors that must be indigenous, but the dominant theoretical framework can be borrowed from the West (e.g., Tsui, 2004). Still others posit that only when an indigenously derived notion or theory is adopted or developed can the research be qualified as indigenous'. … In addition, the researcher's values and agenda shape the interpretation of 'indigenous'. Is it intended to simply verify the extant Western theories? To modify them? Or is it sought to develop new theories to explain unique local phenomena, to possibly supplant Western ones?

All research is indigenous in the sense that it occurs in the context of a particular time, place, culture, and perspective of the researchers. But as Nkomo (2011) points out, management theory, which emanates primarily from the United States, is often represented as universal, and many scholars do not notice the 'universal' is indeed specific to indigenous context. Minnick (1990) labels this faulty generalization as a significant error in the production of knowledge. The error occurs when one group is studied and the knowledge generated is extrapolated to represent a generic concept, such as leadership or management. Then in subsequent discussions of leadership or management, the prefix 'American' is suppressed. In contrast, the 'Other' who speaks or writes on the same topic must always attach the prefix 'African' or 'Asian' in reference to leadership or management theory (Nkomo, 2011: 371).

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In response to these dilemmas and pejorative connotations, Jackson (2013) proposed discarding the term 'indigenous' altogether and replacing it with 'endogenous'. However, instead of introducing this new term, we have opted to rehabilitate 'indigenous'. The distinction between an 'emic' and an 'etic' perspective (Pike, 1954) is useful in this effort – our version of indigenous research is tied to the emic point of view, which Evered and Louis (1981) term 'inquiry from the inside' as opposed to 'the outside'. Specifically, *we view 'indigenous research' as scientific studies of local phenomena using local language, local subjects, and locally meaningful constructs, with the aim to build or test theories that can explain and predict the phenomena in their local social and cultural contexts.* We agree with Tsui (2004) and Li (2012) that indigenous research must reflect the uniqueness of local constructs and contexts, which, by default, requires embracing a local (emic) perspective rather than a foreign (etic) point of view. Universal constructs and perspectives must be either replaced by or complemented with indigenous constructs and perspectives. Indigenous research requires not only the recognition of a location-specific *context* but also the adoption of a local *perspective* to observe that location-specific context.

The international scientific community bears the responsibility for judging the quality of indigenous research. However, this scientific community is not monolithic. Like Zhao and Jiang (2009), we believe that management and organization scholarship has suffered from replicating and perpetuating a Western (especially an American) brand of management research in studying culturally-embedded phenomena in China and other countries. While this imitation is understandable for emerging research communities striving to learn and gain legitimacy, it has had the unintended consequence of stifling diversity and innovation in the conduct and content of management research. Encouraging diversity and variation in management theories and research methods is critical for advancing the cumulative body of management knowledge (Bruton, Zahra, & Cai, 2018). But this is not to say that anything goes. Instead, it is to say that state-of-the-art standards ought to be applied to the indigenous perspective. Instead of homogenizing management research by trying to adapt and apply foreign theories and methods that are not sensitive to local contexts, MOR seeks to encourage its heterogeneity by developing indigenous management theories, methods, and institutions that are sensitive to local contexts.

Western researchers' fixation upon universal theory has led us to sacrifice accuracy for generality. In pursuit of universal and general explanations, we have ignored the specific and idiosyncratic contexts of managerial and organizational phenomena. Conducting *indigenous* research demands the attainment of context-specific understanding before exploring the applicability of this understanding in other settings. Conducting *engaged* scholarship imposes the additional obligation of incorporating multiple stakeholders' perspective to insure that indigenous values and interests are not obscured by the unrecognized biases of a distant and disengaged researcher.

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Scholarship

We embrace Ernest Boyer's (1990) model challenging the academy's singleminded focus on original research and calling instead for an expanded view of scholarship which encompasses the scholarly domains of discovery (original research and publication), integration (scholarship involving synthesis across the disciplines), application (bringing knowledge to bear on the world's consequential problems), and teaching (the pursuit of innovative pedagogy informed by academic knowledge).

Particularly relevant to articulating our assumptions about indigenous research is the scholarship of *application*, which Boyer later turned to calling the 'scholarship of engagement' (Boyer, 1996). Boyer saw scholarship as a highly communal activity, and insisted that scholars should serve the interests of their communities by applying knowledge to significant problems in the real world. Like Boyer, we believe that indigenous scholarship should not only respond to indigenous social problems, but also allow those problems to help define the agenda for engaged scholarship.

So for us, it is critical to start by being reflexive (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000) and explicit about the beliefs we bring to this initiative. We solicit and enthusiastically welcome scholarly research that is inductive, descriptive, exploratory, ethnographic, and historical. However, we continue to welcome research that is positivistic, linear, and deductive – provided that this work meets both scientific standards and the additional criteria for 'engagement' that we shall spell out below. 'Scholarship means something more than research, and engagement is the means for scholarship to flourish'. (Van de Ven, 2007: 1)

ENGAGED INDIGENOUS SCHOLARSHIP

Engaged scholarship offers a constructive way to surface and codify indigenous knowledge that addresses local social problems. By engaging, honoring, and including multiple stakeholders, the interests and concerns of both academic and lay critics of indigenous research can be addressed. Engaged indigenous scholarship is a participative form of research that incorporates the views of key stakeholders (academics, practitioners, policy makers) to understand a complex problem in its particular context. Scholars can significantly increase the likelihood of producing knowledge that advances theory and practice by engaging stakeholders whose perspectives are relevant in research problem formulation, theory building, research design, and problem solving (Van de Ven, 2007). By definition, stakeholders are participants who have different stakes or interests in a study topic, and therefore know the indigenous values and local circumstances of the specific context being studied. By exploiting differences in the viewpoints of these key stakeholders, engaged indigenous scholarship produces knowledge that is more penetrating, comprehensive, and insightful than research that does not engage stakeholders and is undertaken from only an etic perspective.

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Engaged indigenous scholarship entails a fundamental shift in how we as scholars define our relationships with the topics we study and the stakeholders in indigenous communities. It begins with the recognition that we often study topics or problems that exceed the limits of our individual capabilities. Because each of us is a product of a certain history, culture, and disciplinary training, we inevitably refract a topic or issue through a distorted conceptual lens. We can understand these topics better if we step outside of ourselves and engage other relevant stakeholders in formulating research problems, building theories, designing research, and communicating and applying research findings.

This form of engagement requires scholars to become participants in a collective learning process and to develop a reflexive awareness of whose perspectives and interests are served in a study. It requires *humility* in one's own limitations and profound *respect* for other kinds of knowledge producers. This is 'not because we don't have an important and distinctive role to play in knowledge production, but because we don't have the exclusive right to such production. As we begin to engage in relationships with [different stakeholders] on the basis of such deep respect, we allow ourselves to become real-world problem solvers in a way that is otherwise not possible' (Edward Zlotkowski quoted in Kenworthy-U'ren, 2005: 360).

Engagement is a relationship that involves negotiation and collaboration between scholars and practitioners in a learning community; such a community jointly produces knowledge that can both advance the scientific enterprise and enlighten an indigenous community. Instead of viewing the organizations of an indigenous community as data collection sites and its native people as 'subjects', an engaged scholar views them as collaborators and 'informants' in a learning workplace, where practitioners and scholars co-produce knowledge on important questions and issues by testing alternative ideas and different views of a common problem. 'Abundant evidence shows that both the civic and academic health of any culture is vitally enriched as scholars and practitioners speak and listen carefully to each other' (Boyer, 1996: 15).

Engaged indigenous scholarship is critically important for the development of management knowledge that expresses and celebrates the unique social and cultural contexts of different countries and regions. For indigenous scholars, it provides a career strategy for building on their strengths because it focuses attention upon topics whose origins and meanings arise from the local cultures and contexts that they know best and to which they alone have direct access. In fact, during the past decate, the awareness of the importance of this kind of research has been rapidly growing in Chinese context (e.g., Bruton et al., 2018; Tsui, 2004; Van de Ven & Jing, 2012). Various research associations, forums, and seminars about indigenous management research were voluntarily established, and the department of management sciences of the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) has significantly increased the funding support in this area. The efforts to conduct responsible research that can address real management

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problems have gained strong momemtum in both the academic and the practical worlds. Ultimately, encouraging this form of scholarship is also a central founding objective of the International Association for Chinese Management Research, and its journal, *Management and Organization Review*.

Applying indigenous cultural knowledge is challenging and easy to get wrong. Jing and Dong (2017) suggest avoiding direct application of cultural teachings (e.g., Sun Zi's military dictums) in current research contexts (e.g., firms' competitive strategies). Learning from historical wisdom requires researchers to delve deeply into the context and pay more attention to the underlying cultural assumptions, values, and logics rather than the literal meanings. Without deep contextualization, we may run the risk of interpreting indigenous concepts and values through the lens of our own perspectives and reactions.

Management scholars are human, and management theory is often a product of cultural logic. Chinese culture inclines to holistic and dialectic thinking, which may shape the theories we construct (e.g., HeXie theory; yin-yang model of change; yin-yang view of paradox and other behaviors we observe in Chinese contexts (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Jing & Van de Ven, 2014; Li, 2012; Zhang, Waldman, Han, & Li, 2015). On the one hand, a holistic approach can help us to better understand complexity in social life. On the other hand, it may clash methodologically with the reductionism of modern scientific traditions, playing havoc with familiar research design protocols. Here, we urge researchers to adopt methods that can capture the configurational (e.g., Fiss, 2007; Meyer, Tsui, & Hinings, 1993) and process (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013) aspects of the indigenous context's dynamics. Inductive logic and qualitative methods are often better suited to a holistic approach than deductive logic and quantitative methods (e.g., Tsui, 2004). Appreciating local understandings of indigenous phenomena requires sensitive qualitative measurement procedures, such as the use of 'visual data' (Meyer, 1991) by collecting data from informations in the form of pictures, diagrams, computer graphics, and other visual representations.

EXAMPLES OF INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

We now present two examples that reflect engaged indigenous research in China: HeXie Theory and ancient Chinese theories of control.

HeXie Theory

During 1980s, management research in China was dominated by systems or optimization theorists. Youmin Xi, a young doctoral student from Xi'an Jiaotong University Management School, was interested in studying the impact of so-called 'internal frictions' ('内耗') that may obstruct decision making involving multiple stakeholders, which has been prevailing in Chinese society due to cultural and institutional reasons. He undertook what Western researchers would call

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'gounded theory building', focusing on the decision-making processes of a large and controversial infrastructure project, the Three Gorges Dam project (Zhang, Fu, & Xi, 2018).

The project was first proposed in the 1950s, and triggered three decades of debates on its feasibility that brought decision-making to a standstill. Based on months of naturalistic observation and in-depth interviews, Xi found that the impasse arose from multiple stakeholders whose contradictory values and interests were rooted in flood control, transportation, immigration, power, central government, and other parochial interests. The *flood control sector* was an active advocate of the project's potential to contain devastating floods. When the initial plan to build a high dam of storage level at 200 meters was rejected, flood control proponents pushed for a middle-level dam plan. The *transportation sector* voiced concerns about waterway shipping, which could be impeded by either a middle- or high-level dam construction due to sediment deposition. The *immigration sector* focused on the resettlement problems of local residents, because over 800 thousand inhabitants of the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze River would be dislocated. The *power sector* advocated power generation benefits, and loudly protested negative impacts of the protracted debate and the lengthy construction period. *Central government* was the ultimate decision-maker but it maintained an indecisive posture. Finally, *other sectoral* stakeholders expressed their interests as well, including environmental protection and tourism, usually taking opposing positions in the decision-making process.

Xi concluded that the intractable conflicts between these sectors arose from four underlying factors – different problem positioning, inconsistent information, differences in social values, and conflicts of interest. The intensity of these conflicts meant that complex problems of this sort could not be addressed by the rational decision models that he had learned, and the learnings from discussions with other scholars and government officials inspired him to include human factors into conceptualization. Consequently, in his Ph thesis, Xi formulated what he termed the 'HeXie theory'. The Chinese characters HeXie ('和谐') literally mean harmonious or well-coordinated. His HeXie theory proposed two mechanisms to facilitate decision-making processes wrestling with problems such as the Three Gorges Dam project: *(1) The 'Xie' ('谐') Principle (XP)*, a control mechanism based on rational design and optimization which assumes that people are rational and will obey the established order, and *(2) The 'He' ('和') Principle (HP)*, an adaptive mechanism arising from organizational members' initiative and self-determination. *HP* assumes that people are boundedly rational, but can reshape cultures and values to absorb environmental uncertainty. The two mechanisms are targeted at different aspects of 'internal frictions' problems, and can complement each other in resolving persistent conflicts. By educing his theory directly from the context of Three Gorges Dam project, Xi and his colleagues put forward alternative decision-making plans to the Chinese government. In April 1992, the matter was finally resolved by the National People's Congress.

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Being an evolving theory adapting to changing contexts, Xi's research team continued to refine and extend the HeXie model. Initially, following the paradigm of system sciences, HeXie theory had taken diagnosis and evaluation as its major aims (Xi & Shang, 2001). But around the turn of the century, inspired by the behavioral theory of firm (e.g., March & Simon, 1958) imported from the West, Xi and his colleagues incorporated new theoretical components and expanded the model's scope from just decision conflicts to encompass organizational development. They renamed it HeXie Management Theory (HXMT), offering broad applications in areas such as strategy, leadership, and organization design (e.g., Cao, Zhang, & Xi, 2011; Xi, Liu, Kong, & Ge, 2013). This was a collaborative knowledge production process, driven by years of engagement from multiple scholars, managers, and politicians, both domestic and overseas.

HeXie researchers take a realist view toward theory construction, and invited practicing managers to participate in the research process as knowledge co-creators rather than just data sources. For example, in the leadership studies from HXMT perspective (e.g., Xu et al., 2014), a key research question is how internal factors (e.g., experiential learning) and external forces (e.g., social events) combine to forge optimal leadership behaviors. Different from the embedded agency assumption in neo-institutional theory (Seo & Creed, 2002), HXMT highlights the roles of leadership in dealing with environmental complexitity during organizational evolution, represented by the the designing and implementing of the XP and HP. To address this question, a multidimensional or configurational view of leadership construction is essential (Meyer et al., 1993). The HeXie research team adopted a methodology that enabled researchers to take an 'insider' view by interacting and empathizing with the views of practicing leaders in formulating conceptual frames and causal understandings that incorporate local language and perspectives (Zhang et al., 2012).

Due to his two-fold identity as practitioner-scholar, Xi exemplified principles of engaged scholarship in his own management practice. Since 1996, he hasserved as dean of a management school, vice president of a public university and executive president of a joint venture university, and meanwhile he still kept on working as a leading scholar in research community. This gives him a unique chance to work his theory in real management world. His better sense of HP and XP mechanisms helped him to ambidextrously deal with the complicit or even conflicting institutional pressures of establishing the first research-led joint venture university in China (Zhang et al., 2012), which is now well recognized as a pioneering successful model of higher education through the highly-regulated systems: *'It [HXMT] enables me to clearly see the logic connecting different issues and know what should be dealt through rules and regulations and what needs human initiative as well as how I can develop a robust operation system'* (Zhang et al., 2018: 218). Many top managers of Chinese companies also benefited from the theory by applying it in their management practices and policy-making (Xi et al., 2013).

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Following an iterative process, Xi's research team shifted between theory building and application. Currently, they are trying to apply it in broader contexts of Chinse companies. Striving to bridge the gaps between indigenous concepts and ones in the Western literature (e.g., strategic issues, organizational ambidexterity, institutional leadership), allows them to synthesize ostensibly conflicting logics, addressing practical problems while contributing fresh knowledge to the global research community (Zhang et al., 2018).

The HXMT case shows how challenging engaged indigenous research can be. The integration of opposing forces clashes with both managers' credos and scholars'doctrinare research paradigms (Van de Ven & Jing, 2012). But these efforts are honorable. Beginning thirty years ago with his initial interest in internal frictions, Xi and his colleagues have codified and constructed new indigenous knowledge to the context of Chinese management.

Ancient Chinese Theories of Control

Violina Rindova and Bill Starbuck's (1997) study of 'Ancient Chinese theories of control' provides a second exemplar of engaged indigenous scholarship. It serves as a useful counterpoint to Youmin Xi's HeXie Theory, wherein a Chinese scholar engaged in a form of 'action research' (Lewin, 1946) so as to formalize principles he had educed from observation of contemporary Chinese managers' decision-making practices.

In contrast, Rindova and Starbuck are Western scholars who conducted an extensive historical analysis of ancient Chinese texts. They focused on prescriptions about 'managerial control – how superiors and subordinates should relate and how to control, lead, and motivate people'. Their scholarship is exemplary because their work: (1) was based upon an in-depth understanding of Chinese social and political history before the Christian Era (BCE), (2) entailed triangulation between multiple translations of ancient texts, (3) recognized and corrected for biases and factual revisions introduced as these texts were copied by successive generations of scribes, (4) took changing temporal context into account [for instance, factoring in effects of technological and social discontinuities, and considering how unvarying terms such as 'king', 'official', and 'ceremony' took on changed meanings from era to era], and (5) compared the conclusions they had deduced from analyzing ancient Chinese rulers' dictums and creeds with the principles espoused by modern Western management scholars.

These two English-speaking Western scholars concluded that by 1100 BCE, China's leaders had established well-articulated bureaucracies with 'departments, coordination links among officials, standard operating procedures, and audits of officials' performance' supported by 'a sophisticated understanding of rewards and punishments, social norms, symbolic actions, and resource allocation'. They report that 'very ancient Chinese ideas about leadership resemble contemporary transformational leadership', and that more recent ones detail 'a contingency

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theory of leadership that resembles Fiedler's (1967)'. They go on to note that Chinese scholars also offer us a distinct and attractive alternative to modern leadership models – 'moral leadership [that] combines charisma with ideology, aiming to attract voluntary followers [through] both the leader's very unusual overall excellence and the leader's moral uprightness'. Rindova and Starbuck conclude that indigenous ancient Chinese theories 'are as complex as modern ones and are supported by reasoning that we can appreciate even when it differs quite a bit from our own'.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This essay has discussed some of the opportunities and challenges in conducting engaged indigenous scholarship, defined as scientific studies of local phenomena using local language, local subjects, and locally meaningful constructs, with the aim to build or test theories that can explain and predict the phenomena in its local social and cultural context. Our objective is to encourage scholars to attend paper development workshops in response to a call for papers for a forthcoming MOR special issue on engaged indigenous scholarship.

We attempted to sidestep ideological acrimony by situating MOR's initiative in a 'third space' (Nkomo, 2011) that celebrates pluralism and diversity among indigenous voices. Encouraging indigenous management theories and research methods is critical for increasing the variation and heterogeneity of management knowledge, and enhancing its validity and pratical applicability. Instead of homogenizing management research by adapting and applying foreign theories and methods that gloss over local contexts, MOR seeks to encourage heterogeneity and relevance by developing indigenous management theories, methods, and institutions.

We argued that engaged indigenous scholarship provides a constructive way to to address the problems that critics have raised. Engaged indigenous scholarship is a participative form of research that incorporates the views of key stakeholders (local academics, practitioners, policy makers) to understand a complex problem in its particular context. By engaging, honoring, and including multiple stakeholders, the critics' concerns are addressed. In its quest for universal and generalizable knowledge, much contemporary research strives to maintain distance between researchers and people in the systems under study. The belief that etic research from an outside distance is more 'objective' and 'valid' than is emic inquiry from the inside is wrong. Caswill and Shove (2000: 222) critique this view. 'The trouble is that arguments about independence and interaction, and about theory and application are readily and sometimes deliberately confused. In everyday discussion, it is sometimes asserted, and often implied, that interaction outside the academy is so demanding of time and mental energy that it leaves no room for creative thought. When distance is equated with purity, and when authority and

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expertise is exclusively associated with analytic abstraction, it is easy (but wrong) to leap to the conclusion that calls for interaction threaten academic inquiry'.

Engaged indigenous scholarship also provides indigenous scholars a career strategy for building on their strengths because it focuses on studying topics whose origins and meanings arise from the local cultures and contexts that they know best and to which they have direct access. This is a central founding objective of the International Association for Chinese Management Research, and its journal, *Management and Organization Review*.

We presented two examples that illustrate the attributes of studies that qualify as indigenous engaged scholarship, according to our benchmarks. These attributes take into consideration: the researcher's personal identity, the empirical context, the research question, and the methods for observing and analyzing data. Both engage in emic inquiry that enables rich description of indigenous phenomena, and honors indigenous philosophical, epistemological and ontological assumptions.

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Andrew H. Van de Ven (avandeve@umn.edu) is Professor Emeritus in the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota. He studies, writes, and teaches courses on managing organizational innovation, change and behavior, and engaged scholarship research methods. Van de Ven was President of the Academy of Management (2000–2001), founding editor of *Academy of Management Discoveries* (2013–2017) and became Deputy Editor for Engaged Indigenous Research of *Management and Organization Review* in 2018.

Alan D. Meyer (ameyer@uoregon.edu) is Professor Emeritus, Charles H. Lundquist College of Business. He studies environmental jolts, industry emergence, field configuring events, and corporate venturing, using organizational theory and sociology as theoretical frames. He is a field researcher who triangulates between archival data and primary data gathered through interviews and naturalistic observation. Meyer has served as Associate-Editor-in-Chief for *Organization Science*; as Associate Editor for *Academy of Management Journal*; and on the editorial boards of *Administrative Science Quarterly, Organization Science, Academy of Management Journal,* and *Strategic Management Journal.*

Runtian Jing (rtjing@sjtu.edu.cn) is a professor of organizational management in the Antai College of Economics and Management of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University. He received his PhD from the Xi'an Jiao Tong University in 1997, and taught at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China before his present appointment. His research focuses on organizational change and leadership behaviour. He was granted the Award of Yangtze River Young Scholars Distinguished Professor by the Ministry of Education of China.

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