SPECIAL ISSUE CALL FOR PAPERS

(Re)Conceptualizing Middle Managers’ Roles in Modern Organizations
Submission Deadline: 15 September 2019
Submit to business.jms@durham.ac.uk

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BACKGROUND TO SPECIAL ISSUE
Middle managers, the decision-makers linking the strategic apex and operating core (Mintzberg, 1989: 98), are at the heart of organizational processes (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990; Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008). For instance, middle managers translate organizational strategy into operational goals and inform top managers about the progress of implementation (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Rouleau, 2005). Middle managers also contribute to strategic renewal by experimenting with novel practices and championing initiatives to top managers (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Glaser, Stam, & Takeuchi, 2016; Heyden et al., 2017; Heyden, Sidhu, & Volberda, 2015; Tarakci et al., 2018). Not surprisingly, middle managers have a strong legacy in several fields of research, including strategy, organization theory, organizational behavior, and organizational design.

These organizational advantages, however, come at a cost for middle managers. An increasingly loud chorus calls for eradicating middle management ranks altogether (Economist, 2011; Gratton, 2011; Jacobs, 2015; Mims, 2015) and middle management ranks are often the initial targets of reorganizations. For example, Lloyds Banking Group eliminated 15,000 middle management positions in an effort to save £1.5 billion a year (Gratton, 2011). ING started its
AIMS AND SCOPE OF SPECIAL ISSUE

Attempts to create value in the modern organization through technological innovations and organizational reforms call into question the role of middle managers in the future. To reconsider this role, this timely special issue aims to provide a central platform for state-of-the-art thinking and evidence. The ensuing discussion will serve to critically evaluate the relevance of middle managers in modern organizations, seriously reconsider how and where middle managers fit in contemporary strategy and organizational processes, explore how middle managers themselves are affected by and make sense of key changes, and develop core theories and introduce auxiliary theories to middle management research. The aim behind the initiation of this discussion is to document a commensurate evidence base to inform scholarship and practice and to shape a research agenda outlining the pressing challenges facing middle managers and the middle management role in contemporary organizations.

We propose to lay the groundwork for understanding the contributions of middle managers in the context of the most defining changes in current and future organizational landscapes, placing middle managers front and center in a coherent research program. The topics below provide an indicative, but non-exhaustive, list of questions that can be tackled through...
conceptual, quantitative, qualitative, or mixed method approaches, drawing on a variety of theoretical lenses and paradigms.

1. How will new technologies, practices, and business models shape the role of middle managers across industries, nations, and cultures?

2. How do changes in middle management relate to the functions and/or dysfunctions of hierarchy in contemporary organizations?

3. How and under what conditions will middle managers promote or resist discourses of change in contemporary organizations? How do emotions, sociomateriality and embodiment play a role in redefining the roles and identity of middle managers?

4. How will organizational capabilities and routines become disrupted, and how can new ones be created, as organizations shake-up their middle manager cadres, introduce new technologies, and redefine role expectations?

5. How are leader-member exchange (LMX) processes affected by how different organizational actors give meaning to the changing roles of middle managers? How do conflicts, power struggles, and identity clashes emerge and become resolved as teams and hierarchies are reshaped?

6. How do redefined roles of middle managers hone or challenge well-established perspectives and theories? And, how do new perspectives—such as practice theory, actor-network theory, and translation theory—help us to understand the redefined role of middle managers?

7. What methodological developments have the potential to advance a middle management research agenda?

**SUBMISSION PROCESS AND GUIDELINES**

- Manuscripts will be reviewed according to the JMS double-blind review process.


- The deadline for submission is **15 September 2019**.

- Manuscripts should be submitted by e-mail to business.jms@durham.ac.uk

- The guest editors will be available during the following symposium at Academy of Management Conference 2018 in Chicago: “Reconsidering Middle Managers’ Strategic Role in Modern Organizations” on Tuesday, 14 August 2018 3:00PM - 4:30PM at Swissôtel Chicago in Alpine II.

- For informal inquiries related to the special issue, proposed topics and potential fit, and/or the conferences below, please contact the guest editors at jmsmiddlemanagement@gmail.com
REFERENCES


