

Preface

Writing a book is not very much appreciated in today's academic world and it is not popular by any means. Scholars (including myself) are oriented toward writing and publishing journal articles, that is where the newest advancements in the field are often found. For this reason, the number of academics that rely on books for their research is lower compared to those that lean on articles. According to Thompson (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2005, Vol. 51, Issue 41), in the 1970s the number of copies per monographs that US and UK publishing companies would print was somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000. Expectations were to sell the most part of them. That trend has changed dramatically. Today, publishing companies print 400 or 500 copies of a monograph and hope to sell most part of them. Some publishing companies print "on-demand" and make the text available as an e-book. The decline in monograph publishing is only limitedly attributable to budget cuts in libraries, financial independence for academic presses, or for business conglomerates. There has been an increasing lack of support for this kind of publishing from scholars. This is my guess on the evidence reflected in the numbers that Thompson mentions in his book and in an article that appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. You may disagree with my interpretation, but you cannot disagree about the data that show a declining trend for monographs and on their lack of popularity in today's academia (general management and organization behavior fields are not excluded).

Another factor that supports what is written above is that an academic career is usually not affected by book writing as much as it is by article writing. This element may vary depending on the discipline, but it has expanded from the hard science to all the remaining fields.

On top of this, writing a book involves a type of activity that is very different from what it takes to write a journal article. The latter is usually based on one (hopefully) original and innovative idea that is empirically tested or validated through a theoretical model. The former contains several ideas, organized in a web of connections. They are two outcomes of research and creativity that require different efforts, time, and dedication. Of course, I am not concerned with those monographs that are collections or that rewrite previously published articles. These are not original and add little to the spirit of a research effort. Everyone that earned a PhD knows the difference between writing a dissertation—that is very close to a book—and writing

an article. The dissertation may well be a collection of articles, where the candidate explains what the links are among them. Even in this case, dissertations and books usually require more effort, if not more time.

To sum up, monographs (1) are not supported nor considered for one's academic career, and (2) they require more effort and time. It seems that my decision to write a book makes little sense. If I add to these reasons that I am an assistant professor at the early stage of my career, this decision makes even less sense. Was it a rational decision? Why did I write this book then? Didn't I care about my career and the academic community I belong to?

From what I wrote, it is apparent that the reasons for this book should be found elsewhere. In fact, this is an attempt to ask some questions on rationality and decision making. Given what I wrote above on monographs, my decision to write this book should in itself be analyzed under the lenses of rationality. Is it rational for a young scholar at the early stage of his career to write a monograph? Well, besides writing that I really hope so, in the following I present the reasons that brought me to the decision to write this book. The entire book may be used as a tool to understand, among many others, if the reasons I provide below are rational or not.

The reason underneath this project is tied to my research plan. I needed an outlet to present and analyze how the well-known theory of bounded rationality changes when its assumptions are modified. This effort cannot be contained in a single journal article, nor can several together give the breadth or the continuity that are needed. This is the rationale for the book. Bounded rationality is the idea that individuals have (a) limited computational capabilities (i.e., internal bound) and (b) limited access to information (i.e., external bound). As far as I know, there are no (recent) books that discuss foundational assumptions of this theory. Attempts to find a different perspective or to improve the existing framework are limited. The book aims at introducing some concepts that have the potential to redefine bounded rationality.

For almost five years Emanuele Bardone and I have been planning to write a book that could summarize most of our efforts in understanding rationality and developing the bounded rationality theory. Ever since I moved to the United States, this distant cooperation worked fine with respect to articles, but we found it hard to write a book. We still plan to do that in the future. In the moment I am writing, both of us are about to submit books to the attention of some publishing companies. When Emanuele and I started to discuss rationality and decision making, it took both of us a while before getting a common understanding of what we were saying. He is a cognitive scientist, I am a management scholar. At first, we just couldn't understand each other. Anyway, I hope that this work will be the first of many attempts to present these ideas, and that we can soon add more writings on our common and, we believe, very interesting and intellectually challenging projects.

Second, it happened that one semester (spring 2009) I taught an MBA class at the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse together with Thomas Krueger, professor of finance. The course was "Decision Framing II." I have no idea why somebody decided to use the word "framing" instead of "making;" anyway, this is not relevant here. What is important is that Tom was in charge of teaching students how to

make decisions in uncertain financial environments, and I was in charge of providing students with an introduction to decision making. In particular, as a professor of organizational behavior, I had the idea to put all my efforts toward defining how people make decisions inside organizations. I thought this part should have been very easy, although I wanted to give students perspectives that were current (e.g., sense-making, embodied cognition, distributed cognition, and more). I looked at books on this topic, but they ended up being too narrow, too broad, or too simplistic. I wanted something that fitted my needs. I couldn't find anything. After that, I started collecting articles on the topic and soon I realized that what I wanted to teach stayed together with difficulty. Then I tried to mix chapters of books with academic papers, but still the material remained too heterogeneous. At that point I realized that it was hard for students to read from all of these different sources without ending up being confused. Problems were related to two major points: (a) academic papers are not the easiest thing to read (sometimes even if you are in the profession!) and (b) jumping from author to author makes it hard to follow a common line of thought.

Although the first part presents a quasi-standard reading of bounded rationality, the second part is too explorative and far from mainstream research. If used in a class on decision making, for example, the book needs to be associated with more "standard" readings—as I personally do in the classes I teach. It is probably more suitable for doctoral seminars.

Third, early in January 2009 I was stuck in a situation that I didn't want and that I didn't expect. I accepted a tenure-track position at the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse on January 7, 2007, and started working for that university that same year on August 27. While I was getting a few papers published, I found it difficult to study and write on new topics or even to continue with my older streams of research. The reason was that here at UW-L we teach three classes per semester and, if I include summer sessions, in the first year I taught seven classes, most of them for the first time. The following fall I was stuck with four classes, two of which I had never taught before. I like teaching, but not at this rate. When my third semester at UW-L finished the only thing I could do was to recharge my batteries. I asked myself "Is this why I moved to the States? Is this what I wanted to do in the profession? Teach?" The answer was crystal clear in my mind. I decided to enter this profession because I have always had a passion for research and I know I cannot live well without my usual studying, reading, thinking, opinion exchanges, and writing. I needed to change something, and I needed to do it quickly. I decided to push hard on research, no matter what. While the teaching load for the coming semesters hasn't changed, my research plan for the year 2009 was to have at least one publishable outcome per month.

The first two months of the year were particularly productive. I wrote a total of six papers between January and February, well beyond my plans and expectations. Although I have other projects going on and I know that a book is not the best outcome for a tenure-track guy, I also thought that I have never written for career purposes only; I write because I think I have interesting questions to answer. Moreover, sometimes there are concepts that don't fit into one, two, or several papers. I thought a book should have been a good product to start with in March.

I ended the first draft in April. I was still tied to my writing and research plan; also I built some foundational concepts for the future. I know that this is probably something you usually don't write in prefaces, but this has been a starting point in my decision making.

Although I wrote this book having my students in mind, this is not a textbook. There are several aspects that have potential interest for organizational behavior and decision making scholars. In the first chapter I go into further detail and explain what is new with the approach to decision making you are about to read, and then conclude with a short overview of the book's contents.

As far as the "rationality" of writing a monograph is concerned, I believe that these few pages (and Chapter 1) help clarify why I came out with the *unpopular* and *improbable* decision to write a book.

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