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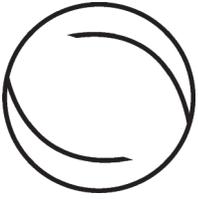
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# The Circulation of Ideas across Academic Communities: When locals re-import exported ideas

Julie Battilana, Michel Anteby, and Metin Sengul

## Abstract

The circulation of ideas across academic communities is central to academic pursuits and has attracted much past scholarly attention. As North American-based scholars with European ties, we decided to examine the impact of *Organization Studies* in North American academia with the objective of understanding what, if anything, makes some *Organization Studies* articles more likely to have impact in North America than others. To set the stage for better understanding the role of *Organization Studies* in this academic community, we first present the key characteristics of North American academia. Secondly, relying on archival data spanning the first 29 years of *Organization Studies* (1980 to 2008, inclusive), we identify an apparent dynamic of select re-importation of exported ideas. Put otherwise, top North American journals tend to re-import ideas authored (and exported) by select North American scholars in *Organizations Studies*. Thirdly, we discuss the implications of this process on the field of organization studies and on the circulation of ideas across academic communities.

**Keywords:** circulation of ideas, re-importation, translation

## Preamble: A Tale of Wonderland

Wonderland is an island inhabited by individuals who are gathered into guilds and live in groups of small cottages spread throughout the island. All the inhabitants of this island specialize in the craft of chiseling beads. (They also engage in many other tasks such as public singing and annual migrations, but rarely speak about them.) Whereas guilds vary in size and prestige, they all serve the same mission of training less experienced inhabitants in their craft. Most of Wonderland's inhabitants are trained in local guilds; others are trained in guilds located on other islands and have then made the decision to join Wonderland. Although there are sharp differences between one island and another, all follow a common practice: by the end of the training in their guild, apprentices are given a string necklace that they carry for the rest of their lives. The necklaces are the same across islands, but their color varies from one island to another so that inhabitants of any island can easily identify where the people they encounter were trained.

After they have been awarded their necklace, Wonderland's inhabitants usually have to join a new guild with the hope of becoming responsible for the training of the next generation of inhabitants. Finding a new guild is a challenging

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stage in life, as guilds are quite selective. Local apprentices, just out of their training in Wonderland, compete with each other for a limited number of openings in guilds. The arrival of remote contenders from other islands only adds to the competition. Whereas some local apprentices relocate to other islands, most prefer to stay in Wonderland.

After joining one of the local guilds, the inhabitants of Wonderland, like those of other islands, work hard to add beads to their necklaces. (Early bloomers sometimes exhibit several beads before joining a guild.) Beads are the most common way to secure a permanent membership in their new guild. Many Wonderland inhabitants aspire to the status of permanent member, which is granted after elaborate rituals by the group of permanent members. Their decision depends on whether or not the candidate to permanent membership has displayed a sufficient mastery of the craft of chiseling certain beads. There are differences across guilds when it comes to the number of beads, the type of beads, and the amount of chiseling that is required to grant someone permanent resident status. The most prestigious guilds are well known for applying very high standards and valuing only the beads made out of the most precious local materials, which are perceived as the most difficult to chisel. Hard-to-chisel beads are thought to be precious because many people notice them and talk about them. By the same token, becoming the 'talk-of-the town' in the right guilds can suggest that a bead is precious.

All Wonderland inhabitants are in principle free to choose the material they want for their beads as well as the type of chiseling that they want to perform, but they are all aware of how risky it is to produce exotic beads — namely, beads that might not be valued by their guilds. Unless the exotic materials acquire the status of precious local materials, working on them is often discouraged by the guild. However, part of the attraction of Wonderland is that once granted permanent residency, inhabitants can choose to work with any materials to adorn their necklaces. (Not everyone in Wonderland succeeds in attaining the permanent guild membership that allows for this.)

## Introduction

We do not live in Wonderland, but there are some stark similarities between Wonderland's guild system and the North American academic system in which we evolve. The three of us have similar trajectories to the extent that we are Europeans who were trained both in the European and North American systems, and who started our academic careers in North America. Relying on our experiences as we thought about the role of *Organization Studies* in North American academia, we could not help but draw a parallel between non-North American journals like *Organization Studies* and the exotic materials that guild members sometimes use to chisel beads in Wonderland.<sup>1</sup> By 'exotic materials', we mean publishing outlets that retain a somewhat exotic flavor in the minds of many North American scholars.

An outlet is said to be exotic when scholars assessing one of their peers (based on the outlets in which she or he publishes) find it hard to pass judgment by simply looking at the outlet.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, an outlet is deemed precious if assessors immediately associate it with high-quality scholarship. *Organization Studies*

rarely appears in the list of top journals that generally are most valued for promotion and tenure decisions in North America. A review of studies looking at publications in the field of organization studies in North America actually revealed that *Organization Studies* almost never appears in the list of journals regarded as 'top journals' in North America (see Coe and Weinstock 1984; Sharplin and Mabry 1985; Salancik 1986; Extejt and Smith 1990; Johnson and Podsakoff 1994; Tahai and Meyer 1999; Podsakoff et al. 2005). Compared to outlets that consistently appear in lists of top journals such as the *Academy of Management Journal*, the *Academy of Management Review* or *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Organization Studies* proves to be an exotic bead in North America.

The motivation behind this study is to assess the impact of *Organization Studies* in North American academia and to understand what, if anything, makes some *Organization Studies* articles more likely to have impact in North America than others. Addressing this latter issue is crucial as it will enable us to see whether exotic academic beads might become precious ones in a given academic community, and how that might happen. More specifically, this study will help us identify the factors that make some exotic beads become precious and others less so.

In the remainder of this essay, we first present the key characteristics of North American academia to set the stage for better understanding the role of *Organization Studies* in this academic community. Secondly, relying on archival data spanning the first 29 years of *Organization Studies* (1980–2008), we try to understand the factors that have influenced the level of impact of *Organization Studies* articles in this context. Finally, we discuss our findings and their possible implications for the circulation and translation of ideas from one academic context to another.

## The Academic Field of Organization Studies in North America

For those readers less familiar with the idiosyncrasies of the North American academic system, let us consider the typical case of a large research-based university. In that university, most departments keep a list of what their members consider to be the most respected journals and presses in their field. These journals and presses are then rank-ordered by level of prestige in broad categories ('A-level' journals, 'B-level' journals, and so on). The resulting list constitutes an imperfect yet fairly consensual proxy for academic quality in those settings. Such a definition of quality is not only used in US institutions, but also increasingly adopted in non-US based institutions. What has been labeled the 'Americanization' of business school research is also evident in many European and Asian settings, where the reliance on top-tier publications and citation impact as a proxy for quality has become the norm (Pfeffer 2007).

The most prestigious trajectory for faculty members in typical US research universities is the tenure track. (Tenure is the equivalent of permanent membership in a guild on Wonderland.) In the life cycle of an aspiring tenure-track faculty member, the promotion to the next grade level (such as 'associate with tenure') corresponds to a fairly expected combination of research productivity and quality. Oftentimes, teaching and service to the community or the profession also play into the promotion decisions, but in many major research universities

to a lesser extent. A junior faculty member in such a setting can list quite accurately what is expected of her or him to reach the next level: for example, publish a certain known number of articles in the lists of A- or B-level journals. Predictability in such an environment is high. Publishing in such outlets is widely thought to reflect the quality of a scholar's work (see, for instance, Musselin (2009) for a recent review of the academic labor market).

A complementary path to gaining status in an academic field entails being cited by members of the field when those members publish pieces in select outlets. This more tangential pathway to gaining status is more risky, less evident upon first glance, and not as widely traveled. Nonetheless, some scholars have been 'picked up' at some point in their careers by influential scholars and ultimately gained recognition in their field. To be picked up amounts to being cited by other scholars in outlets providing exposure for the cited scholar's work. (Electronic databases such as the *Social Science Citation Index* and *Google Scholar* allow a fairly standard tracking of such citations.)

For scholars located in the North American academic community, the rules of the game spelled out above are fairly clear. Knowing that *Organization Studies* proves exotic within this environment, what kind of impact can such an outlet achieve given the norms that govern North American academia? What, if anything, makes certain articles published in *Organization Studies* have impact in the North American academic community? Answers to these questions will also help us better understand the circulation of ideas across communities.

### Exploring *Organization Studies*' Echo in North American Academia

A journal's echo (or impact) can be measured in many ways. In this study, we measured impact through citations in academic journals — the most widely used empirical measure of impact in academia (Sharplin and Mabry 1985; Salancik 1986; Baird and Oppenheim 1994; Johnson and Podsakoff 1994; Tahai and Meyer 1999). We examined how articles published in *Organization Studies* got picked up (i.e. cited) by more mainstream, 'precious' outlets within the North American academic community. To do so, we constructed a dataset that contains data on all *Organization Studies* articles published between 1980 and 2008, inclusive, as well as all articles that cited one or more *Organization Studies* articles within the same period of time. At the time of construction, 2008 was the latest year for which we had complete data. Our main data source was the *ISI Web of Science Database*. We supplemented this dataset with citation index information from *Social Science Citation Index* and *ISI Web of Science Journal Citation Reports*, and with manually coded author information, mainly from author biographies published in *Organization Studies*.

Within the 29-year period we cover, 1,182 pieces (i.e. articles, editorial notes, book reviews, announcements, and so on) were published in *Organization Studies*. The *ISI Web of Science Database* contains detailed information on all these contributions, including title, publication type, length, author(s), and keywords. Because we were interested in examining the influence of *Organization Studies*' articles in North American academia, we excluded all

contributions that were neither articles nor essays. Hence, we excluded conference, symposium and workshop announcements, calls for papers, book reviews, and book review introductions. Out of the remaining contributions, we also excluded all that were shorter than five pages, because it appeared, after checking their content, that they were neither articles nor essays. The final *Organization Studies Articles* dataset contains 1,080 articles.

We also manually coded author information for articles included in the *Organization Studies Articles* dataset. For each article, we collected information about authors' affiliation at the time the paper was published, as well as the last hierarchical position they held (e.g. associate professor). We were able to collect information about authors from the authors' biographies that are provided at the end of each *Organization Studies* article. We supplemented the missing information, whenever possible, from author CVs that we could access over the Internet. The final *Organization Studies Authors* dataset contains 1,905 author-by-article observations with 1,319 unique authors.

We constructed a separate dataset containing all articles that cite one or more *Organization Studies* articles. The raw dataset included 8,271 articles (including 686 *Organization Studies* articles), published in 935 different outlets. Out of all these articles, we focused on the ones that had been published in a list of 20 'top' North American journals in the field of organization studies, including management journals, sociology journals, and social psychology journals — the assumption being that if an article is cited by a 'top' mainstream journal, the 'exotic bead' might gradually become more precious. To select the top 20 journals in these three areas, as we detail below, we used journals' five-year impact factor, as measured by the *Social Science Citation Index* in 2008. The final *Citing Articles* dataset contains 1,111 observations.

For management journals, we selected journals whose impact factor was superior to 4.0. This selection criterion led us to select 10 management journals, including *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Management*, *Management Science*, *MIS Quarterly*, *Organization Science*, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, and *Strategic Management Journal*.<sup>3</sup> We circulated this list among a set of organization studies scholars across several North American universities, who confirmed that it comprised all the management outlets locally regarded as 'top' journals. Following the same procedure, we selected three social psychology journals whose impact factor was superior to 4.0, including the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and *Psychological Bulletin*. After sharing this list with a panel of social psychologists working in the field of organization studies, we added three journals to this list, including the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, and *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. Finally, following the same procedure, we selected the sociology journals based on their five-year impact factor. Three sociology journals, namely *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, and *Annual Review of Sociology*, had an impact factor superior or equal to 4.0. After circulating this list among a panel of North American organization sociologists, we then added *Social Forces* to that list.

Figure 1.  
Number of  
*Organization Studies*  
Articles, 1980–2008

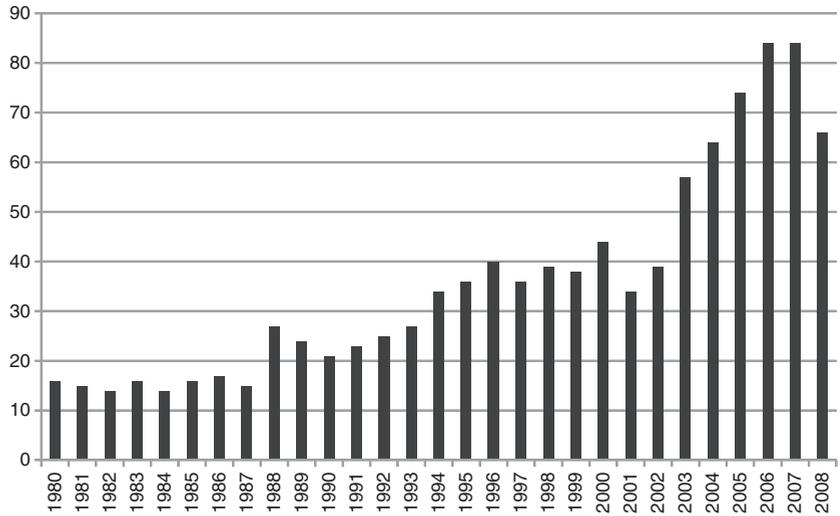
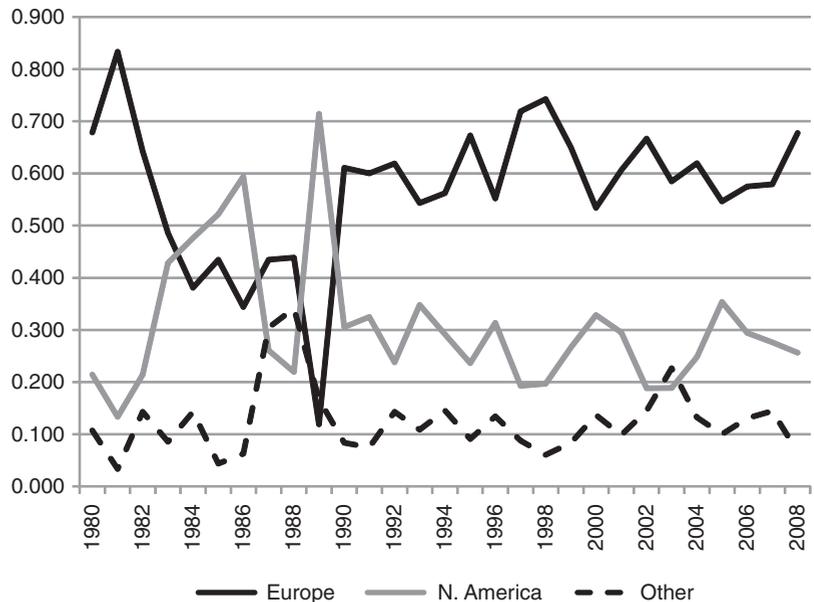


Figure 2.  
*Organization Studies*  
Authors' Geographical  
Affiliation, 1980–2008



### Evolution of *Organization Studies* from 1980 to 2008

In an effort to better understand the supply side of articles that might subsequently get cited, we first looked at the evolution of *Organization Studies*. Over the last 29 years, *Organization Studies* has published more than 1,000 articles. While it published an average of 20 papers a year in its early years, it now publishes more than 80 articles a year. Figure 1 shows the evolution of the number of articles published in *Organization Studies* by year.

Table 1.  
Journals with Highest  
Number of Cumulative  
*Organization Studies*  
Citations, 1980–2008

Journal name	Number of articles citing (one or more) <i>Organization Studies</i> articles
<i>Organization Studies</i>	686
<i>Journal of Management Studies</i>	391
<i>Human Relations</i>	309
<i>Organization</i>	243
<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	194
<i>Organization Science</i>	174
<i>International Journal of Human Resource Management</i>	160
<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	151
<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	142
<i>Journal of Organizational Change Management</i>	140
<i>Management Learning</i>	127
<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	121
<i>Journal of International Business Studies</i>	112
<i>Accounting Organizations and Society</i>	90
<i>Journal of Management</i>	89
<i>British Journal of Management</i>	84
<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	82
<i>Journal of Management Inquiry</i>	75
<i>Long Range Planning</i>	71
<i>Research Policy</i>	65
	Total = 3,506

To identify the authors' voices that *Organization Studies* made heard, we examined the profile of the authors publishing in *Organization Studies* and its evolution over time. We looked in particular at authors' geographical (i.e. institutional) affiliation. Figure 2 shows the evolution of *Organization Studies* articles authors' affiliation over time. Except for short periods between 1983 and 1986, and then again in 1989 when authors with North American affiliations dominated in percentage the total count of authors published each year, authors with European affiliations tend to be most represented.<sup>4</sup> From 1990 onwards, the percentage of authors with European affiliations was more or less stable around 60%, and the percentage of authors with North American affiliations around 25%.

### General Echo of *Organization Studies* in Academia

To track *Organization Studies*' impact, we analyzed the overall pattern of citations of *Organization Studies* articles and its evolution over time. This analysis enabled us to assess the general echo of *Organization Studies* articles in the broad academic community. Between 1980 and 2008, more than 8,200 academic articles had cited one or more articles published in *Organization Studies*. While the citing articles were published in over 900 different journals, a subset of 20 journals accounted for more than 42% of the total citations. Table 1 lists the subset of journals as well as the cumulative number of *Organization Studies* articles cited per outlet.

The four journals citing *Organization Studies* articles the most, namely *Organization Studies*, the *Journal of Management Studies*, *Human Relations* and *Organization*, were European journals.<sup>5</sup> They accounted for 19.6% of the total citations of *Organization Studies* articles. Self-citations (i.e. citations of

Table 2.  
*Organization Studies*  
 Citations across the  
 Top 20 North  
 American Journals,  
 1980–2008

Journal name	Number of articles citing (one or more) <i>Organization Studies</i> articles
<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	194
<i>Organization Science</i>	174
<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	151
<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	121
<i>Journal of International Business Studies</i>	112
<i>Journal of Management</i>	89
<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	82
<i>Management Science</i>	35
<i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i>	30
<i>MIS Quarterly</i>	26
<i>American Sociological Review</i>	24
<i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>	24
<i>American Journal of Sociology</i>	14
<i>Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes</i>	9
<i>Social Forces</i>	9
<i>Research in Organizational Behavior</i>	7
<i>Journal of Health and Social Behavior</i>	5
<i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>	2
<i>Psychological Bulletin</i>	2
<i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i>	1
	Total = 1,111

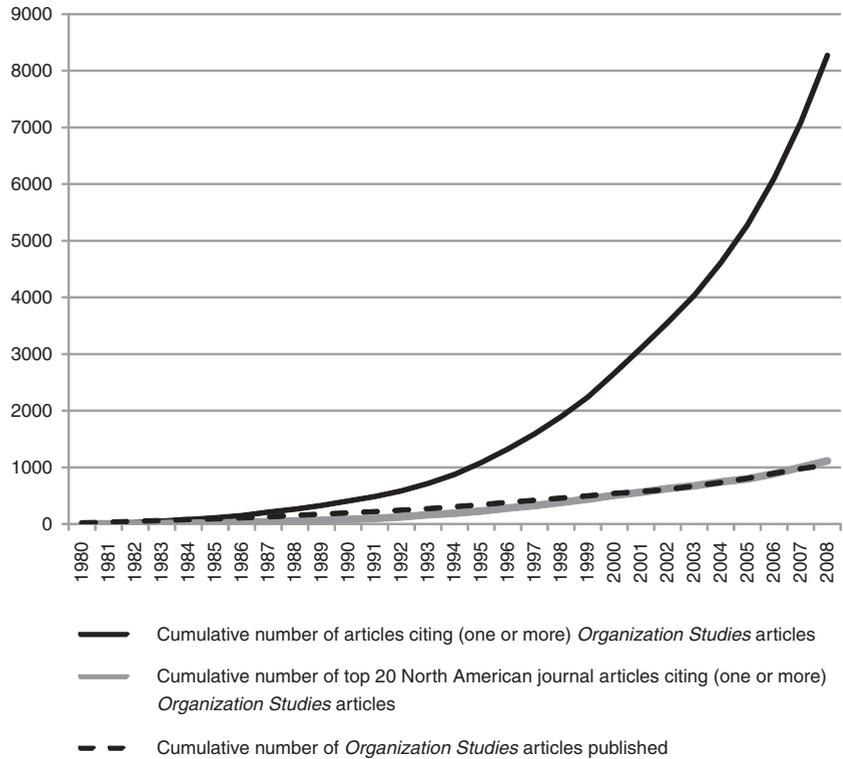
*Organization Studies* articles in *Organization Studies*) accounted for more than 8% of the overall citations of *Organization Studies* articles. After dropping *Organization Studies*, the other three journals still accounted for 11% of the total citations of *Organization Studies* articles.

### Specific Echo of *Organization Studies* in North American Academia

Because we aim to unpack the impact of *Organization Studies* in North American academia, we paid particular attention to *Organization Studies* articles' citations in the top 20 North American journals. This step allowed us to assess the more specific echo of *Organization Studies* articles in the North American academic community. Among the 8,271 academic articles published between 1980 and 2008 and citing one or more *Organization Studies* articles, 1,111 were published in what we defined as the 20 top North American journals (identified according to the procedure described earlier). This combined number is only roughly 40% more than the number of self-citations of *Organization Studies* articles in *Organization Studies* (686). Interestingly, the top North American outlet most citing *Organization Studies* is one that stresses theory, namely the *Academy of Management Review*. Mainstream management journals seem to most echo *Organization Studies* articles (991 citations), followed by sociology journals (71 citations), and social psychology journals (49 citations). Table 2 reports the number of articles citing one or more *Organization Studies* articles in each of the top North American journals included in our list.

While the echo of *Organization Studies* in the broader academic community has gotten increasingly louder over time (i.e. more citations), the strength of the

Figure 3.  
Cumulative Number of  
Articles Citing  
*Organization Studies*  
Articles, 1980–2008



echo appears to be differentiated across academic communities. Between 1980 and 2008, the top 20 North American journals accounted only for 13.4% of the total citations of *Organization Studies* articles. In comparison, as we highlighted above, the top three journals in terms of total *Organization Studies* citations (excluding *Organization Studies* itself) alone accounted for 11% of the total citations. All three were European journals. Overall *Organization Studies*' echo thus appears to be much stronger or louder within the European academic community (as measured by citations across outlets) than within the North American academic community.

The difference across these two communities is particularly pronounced in the evolution of *Organization Studies*' impact over time. The number of top 20 North American articles citing *Organization Studies* articles has not increased as fast as the general number of articles citing *Organization Studies* articles. Figure 3 shows the cumulative number of articles citing one or more *Organization Studies* articles, as well as the cumulative number of top 20 North American journal articles citing one or more *Organization Studies* articles. This figure suggests that the top 20 North American journals might not be as receptive as other outlets at citing, and therefore diffusing, *Organization Studies* articles. Put differently, while cumulative impact of *Organization Studies* increased in both communities over time, the North American academic community is much less likely to embrace the articles published in *Organization Studies* compared to the European academic community.

## A Selective Echo in North American Academia?

In an effort to better characterize the impact of *Organization Studies* within the North American community, we conducted an in-depth analysis of the 50 most cited *Organization Studies* papers across all journals and of the 49 most cited ones across the top 20 North American journals that we identified above.<sup>6</sup> We compared these two lists to better understand what might explain any variation in *Organization Studies* articles' impact (or echo) within the North American academic community. To systematically compare the two groups (that is, the most cited *Organization Studies* articles across all journals and across the top 20 North American journals), we used simple *t*-tests to evaluate whether a specific parameter was significantly larger or smaller in one group.<sup>7</sup> Though the following analyses are only suggestive, they highlight the fact that the authors' background, including the geographical region of the university they were affiliated with and their level of seniority (both at the time of publication), might explain some of the variance in *Organization Studies* articles' overall echo versus their echo in Northern America.

Because 19 articles appeared both in the list of most cited *Organization Studies* articles in the top 20 North American journals and in the list of most cited *Organization Studies* articles across all journals, the total sample consisted of 80 unique articles (appearing in one of the two lists or in both of them), which contained 112 unique authors. Of these authors, 47 had written articles that appeared in the list of the most cited *Organization Studies* articles in the top 20 North American journals only, 40 had written articles that appeared in the list of the most cited *Organization Studies* articles across all journals only, and 25 had written articles that appeared in both lists. Out of the 112 unique authors, the majority (81%) were male authors.

A breakdown of the geographical region of the university with which the 112 unique authors were affiliated can be found in Table 3. The UK and North America alone represent more than half of the geographic affiliations of the authors. In the list of *Organization Studies* articles that are most cited in the top 20 North American journals only, 68% of the authors are affiliated with a North American institution and 4% with a British institution. In the list of *Organization Studies* articles that are most cited across all journals only, 18% of the authors are affiliated with a North American institution and 38% with a British institution. Finally, in the list of *Organization Studies* articles that appear as being most cited both in the top 20 North American journals and across all journals, 44% of the authors are affiliated with a North American institution and 36% with a British institution.

The systematic comparison of the authors' affiliation in the lists of most cited *Organization Studies* articles in the top 20 North American journals, and of most cited *Organization Studies* articles across all journals, revealed that there was a significantly larger number of authors affiliated with a North American institution in the authors only present in the top 20 North American journals group (68% versus 18%,  $p < .000$ ), whereas there was a significantly larger number of authors affiliated with a British institution in the authors only appearing in the all journals group (38% versus 4%,  $p < .000$ ).

Table 3.  
Breakdown of the  
Countries of  
Affiliation of the  
Authors at Time of  
Publication in the Top  
20 North American  
Journals and All jour-  
nals Groups, and in  
Both

Author country of affiliation	Top 20 North American journals only	All journals only	Both	Total
<b>Europe</b>				
Denmark	0	2	1	3
France	4	2	1	7
Germany	2	3	0	5
Italy	0	3	0	3
Netherlands	3	1	2	6
Poland	1	0	0	1
Spain	0	2	0	2
Sweden	1	0	0	1
UK	2	15	9	26
	<i>13</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>54</i>
<b>North America</b>				
Canada	3	3	5	11
USA	29	4	6	39
	<i>32</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>50</i>
<b>Other</b>				
Australia	0	2	1	3
Hong Kong	1	2	0	3
Israel	0	1	0	1
New Zealand	1	0	0	1
	<i>2</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b><i>47</i></b>	<b><i>40</i></b>	<b><i>25</i></b>	<b><i>112</i></b>

In an effort to look into these results more closely, we did an in-depth comparison across the two full sets of articles of cases where at least one co-author was affiliated with a North American institution or a British institution. The analysis revealed that there is a significantly larger proportion of cases, nearly three times as much, where there is at least one co-author affiliated with a North American institution in the top 20 North American journals' group (61% versus 22%,  $p < .000$ ). On the other hand, when it comes to instances with at least one co-author affiliated with a British institution, the proportion is significantly higher, slightly above twice as much in the all journals group (50% versus 24%,  $p = .008$ ). The rest of the cases, where there is not at least one co-author affiliated either with a North American or a British institution, account for only a small proportion in each group (16% in the top 20 North American journals and 28% in the other).<sup>8</sup>

Taken together, the above results above suggest that *Organization Studies* articles (co-)authored by authors affiliated with institutions located in English-speaking countries (in particular, Canada, the UK, and the USA) are more likely to be cited and, hence, have a larger impact. The UK and North America combined represent more than half of the geographic affiliations of the authors in both groups, yet UK-affiliated authors' and North America-affiliated authors' influence differ sharply across the top 20 journals and all journals' lists. On the one hand, *Organization Studies* articles are more likely to have an impact within North American academia when they are written by people affiliated with North American institutions. On the other hand, *Organization Studies* articles are more likely to have an impact outside North American academia when they are written by people affiliated with British institutions.

In addition to the geographic affiliation of the authors in the group, we looked more in depth at the authors' seniority at the time of publication for authors affiliated with

US institutions.<sup>9</sup> We were able to obtain data on the position of only 21 authors (out of 39 who were affiliated with US institutions) at the time of publication. Despite the small sample size, the results are illuminating. The comparative analyses that we conducted, using this small subset, revealed that there was a significantly larger proportion of US-affiliated authors with tenure, at the time of publication, in the list of most cited *Organization Studies* articles in the top 20 North American journals than without (64% versus 0%,  $p = 0.086$ ). This finding suggests that the *Organization Studies* articles that got picked up within the North American community were written by already recognized North American scholars.<sup>10</sup> The level of seniority of the authors is an important variable, as it might increase the legitimacy of their writing in the eyes of locals within the North American academic community. It also may explain why they opted to publish in an 'exotic' outlet like *Organization Studies*. With tenure, these authors perhaps had the freedom of chiseling any type of beads that they deemed valuable.

The results that we presented above suggest that authors' affiliation with a North American institution, together with their level of seniority, are key factors in understanding the level of impact of *Organization Studies* articles within the North American community. Out of the 49 most cited *Organization Studies* articles in the 20 top North American journals, only 19 did not have any (co)-authors affiliated with a North American institution. These 19 articles were likely to be perceived as the most exotic ones within the North American community because they were not only published in *Organization Studies* but they were also written by authors who were not affiliated with North American institutions. We explored what, if anything, made these particularly exotic articles more likely to have impact within North American academia. To do so, we analyzed the content of the 19 articles more in depth. Out of these 19 articles, only two were empirical papers, both dealing with cross-national comparisons of organizational functions and structures. The remaining 17 articles encompassed three main topics: (1) review articles examining an existing stream of research and developing a roadmap for future research; (2) articles on the modernity versus post-modernity debate in organization studies; and (3) articles about comparative international research.

Overall, the results of the content analysis suggest that, when citing *Organization Studies* articles that were not written by scholars affiliated with North American institutions, North American scholars are more likely to cite theory articles. This is in line with the observation that, as mentioned above, the top North American outlet most citing *Organization Studies* is the *Academy of Management Review*, an outlet that stresses theory. Theory articles published in *Organization Studies* that deal either with comparative international research or with the modernity versus post-modernity debate in organizations studies, in particular, seem to appeal to North American scholars. It is important to note that the works of European scholars such as Foucault and Derrida have come to play a key role in this debate (Parker 1992).

## Discussion

Before further interpreting the findings presented above, we want to insist again on the exploratory nature of the analyses, which have yielded results that are

only suggestive of trends in the evolution of the general echo of *Organization Studies* over the last 29 years, on the one hand, and of its more specific echo within the North American community, on the other hand. We also conducted an in-depth content analysis only of a restricted set of *Organization Studies* articles; we thus cannot provide an exhaustive overview of content-related patterns. In addition, we realize that in focusing on the number of citations of *Organization Studies* articles as a proxy for the impact of *Organization Studies* within the North American academic community, we captured only one (limited) dimension through which the level of impact of the journal could be assessed (Golden-Biddle et al. 2006). However, because articles' level of citation has become a key metric in assessing their impact in the field of organization studies, we believe that the reported analyses should be instructive.

Four main sets of findings emerged out of the exploratory analyses that we conducted. First, authors affiliated with North American and British institutions appear to be more likely to publish articles in *Organization Studies* that will achieve higher impact. This observation suggests that differences in authors' language and cultural background might affect the visibility of the articles that they publish in *Organization Studies*. Native speakers undeniably have an important advantage when it comes to writing in English. Beyond language, being familiar with the Anglo-Saxon standards of research and academic writing is necessary for authors to be able to write papers in English according to the dominant academic format. All authors affiliated with North American and British institutions were not necessarily born in the country where they worked at the time of publication, but their affiliation probably gave them access to useful knowledge and resources for writing in English and adjusting to the constraints of the dominant academic format.

This first set of findings suggests that the use of the English lingua franca mandate, stipulating English as a common language for submission and publication in *Organization Studies*, may put authors affiliated with Anglo-Saxon institutions at an advantage when it comes to publishing articles in *Organization Studies* that will achieve higher impact. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) conceptualization of language as symbolic power, recent research about the influence of a lingua franca mandate within organizations shows that it affects internal power dynamics (Neeley et al. 2009). In suggesting that the lingua franca mandate for academic publications may put authors affiliated with Anglo-Saxon institutions at an advantage, our work contributes to research exploring how differences in language backgrounds might affect power dynamics in global work environments.

Secondly, the findings emerging out of the exploratory analyses that we conducted suggest that *Organization Studies* articles written by scholars affiliated with North American institutions may be more likely to be picked up by locals within the North American academic community than other *Organization Studies* articles. In other words, articles written by scholars affiliated with North American institutions may be more likely to achieve the status of precious beads within the North American academic system. This finding thus reveals that, when picking up *Organization Studies* articles, locals tend to re-import ideas that were initially exported through their publication in *Organization Studies*.

In uncovering this specific pattern of idea circulation, our study contributes to research on the diffusion of ideas by documenting a previously neglected process, namely the re-import of exported ideas. The diffusion of ideas across

communities and geographies has long interested social scientists. Whether studying architectural trends, theories, managerial fashions or sports, varied instances of diffusion have been documented (Westney 1987; Guillén 1997; Abrahamson and Fairchild 1999; Mizruchi and Fein 1999; Boxenbaum and Battilana 2005; Kaufmann and Patterson 2005; Molnár 2005; Djelic 2008). An implicit assumption across many of these studies is that diffusion entails some kind of translation (Appadurai 1996; Guillén 2001; Watson 2002). Translation occurs when actors adapt a foreign practice to their own context, modifying it or combining it with local practices (Czarniawska-Joerges and Sevón 1996; Sahlin-Anderson 1996; Djelic 1998; Hargadon and Douglas 2001; Campbell 2004). For instance, the ingredients of similar-looking food served by McDonalds in Europe and the USA might vary. Similarly, Asian managers might label a work-group arrangement a 'self-managed team' when Swedish managers use the same label to describe something very different. In brief, traveling ideas are slightly modified in the process of local acculturation.

The literature on diffusion has, however, mostly neglected the fact that exported ideas can also get re-imported into their originating setting. In other words, ideas can get 'retranslated' into their originating environment. Most studies indeed stop at the first step of diffusion (namely, the initial import). The re-import of exported ideas echoes the notion of 'gray market goods' used by scholars of international trade. 'Gray market goods are brand name products that are initially sold into a designated market but then resold through unofficial channels into a different market' (Autrey and Bova 2009: 1). Such a phenomenon is sufficiently widespread in many industries operating globally to warrant regular concern (Assmus and Wiese 1995; Ahmadi and Yang 2000; Li and Robles 2007). Examples of gray market goods might entail a luxury goods manufacturer noticing 'exported goods' being re-sold (usually at a discount) in the originating territory, or a car manufacturer realizing that the total sales in a given country are much smaller than the number of vehicles exported to that country (i.e. re-export must be occurring). Scholars studying the diffusion of ideas might want to pay more attention to the sequential translations of ideas, particularly their re-translation after re-importation into the exporting community.

Thirdly, our results suggest that *Organization Studies* articles written by tenured North American scholars may be even more likely to achieve the status of precious beads than other *Organization Studies* articles. One explanation is that the quality of articles written by tenured authors might simply be higher, and therefore their writing commands greater attention. Another explanation could be that the level of seniority of local scholars increases the legitimacy of their writings (independent of the outlet where they publish their ideas) in the eyes of other locals. Whereas publishing in an 'exotic' outlet like *Organization Studies* is more risky for untenured North American scholars, it is also likely to be much more rewarding for tenured North American scholars, who will be praised for attempting to circulate their ideas beyond their own local academic community. Our study thus suggests that higher-status scholars might get more reward for publishing in an exotic outlet like *Organization Studies* than lower-status ones. This allocation of rewards exemplifies the Matthew Effect, which 'consists in the accruing of greater increments of recognition for particular

scientific contributions to scientists of considerable repute and the withholding of such recognition from scientists who have not yet made their mark' (Merton 1968: 3). The Matthew Effect may actually be stronger for articles published in exotic journals than it is for articles published in more mainstream journals, because while publishing in such exotic outlets is more rewarding for higher-status scholars, it may negatively affect the reputation of lower-status, new scholars who need to prove their 'value' in the tenure process. Articles published by the latter in exotic outlets are perhaps more likely to be categorized as second-tier articles, no matter what their content was and what the motivations of their author(s) may have been.

Fourthly, and finally, our results suggest that when citing *Organization Studies* articles that were not written by scholars affiliated with North American institutions, North American scholars seem to be attracted to theory articles dealing either with comparative international research or with the modernity versus post-modernity debate in organizations studies. This finding suggests that North American scholars deem *Organization Studies* a particularly legitimate source of knowledge when it comes to comparative international research and debates that involve European scholars (such as Foucault and Derrida).

## Conclusion

As scholars spanning the European and North American academic communities, we care about establishing bridges between these communities to facilitate the circulation of ideas and enrich research within each community. *Organization Studies* is ideally positioned to help build such bridges. In their editorial statement, Courpasson et al. (2008) explained that *Organization Studies* was meant to facilitate 'more cosmopolitan and engaged conversations across different research communities' (Courpasson et al. 2008: 1386). In exploring the impact that *Organization Studies* articles have had within the North American academic community over the last 29 years, our motivation was to try to understand better how *Organization Studies* has helped bridge the divide between European and North American academic communities.

It might seem reassuring that an outlet such as *Organization Studies*, aimed at promoting 'the understanding of organizations, organizing, and the organized in and between societies', stands at the crossroads of double translations (i.e. re-importation of exported ideas). From a North American academic perspective, the journal might allow North American authors to export more contested or innovative ideas that then get re-imported into the originating culture. As such, *Organization Studies* might have helped reinvigorate North American organization studies more than previously noted. The re-importation of exported ideas may, however, prove problematic if it ends up being the only mechanism through which locals (here, North American scholars) import ideas within their academic community. If so, the risk is for academic communities to become closed systems, thereby negatively affecting their ability to innovate. Our study thus raises the question of the level of permeability of academic communities to outside ideas. What impact do North American institutional academic dynamics (most

notably the tenure system and journal rankings) have on the level of permeability of this community to outside ideas? Have these dynamics become institutional barriers to idea circulation?

These questions are, in fact, not specific to the North American academic community. Every community, as it gains strength and matures, runs the risk of becoming too much of a closed system. Yet, as White (2003: 10) reminds us, communities will remain vibrant through 'some peculiar balancing of interpenetration' that allows ideas to circulate from one community to another. Journals like *Organization Studies* that aim to bridge different academic communities play a crucial role in helping to prevent academic communities from becoming too closed. By allowing for the re-importation of exported ideas, *Organization Studies* might strengthen the North American academic community in a fairly counter-intuitive manner, namely by allowing locals to re-import their 'exotic' ideas into their more mainstream outlets. In that sense, exotic beads may also allow some Wonderland inhabitants to be heard locally.

## Notes

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- 1 As Courpasson et al. (2008) explain, *Organization Studies* is deeply embedded in the EGOS (European Group for Organizational Studies) community. Moreover, the journal was founded in Europe and most of its editorial board is still based in Europe.
- 2 We acknowledge that academic review processes entail more than simply counting the number of publications in given outlets, but assume a 'simplified' assessment model for the purpose of our argument.
- 3 We excluded two journals whose impact factor are superior to 4.0 but whose content was out of the scope of *Organization Studies*, namely *Information Systems Research* and *Information & Management*.
- 4 We coded Canada and the USA as 'North America', all European Union and Schengen Agreement countries as 'Europe', and all remaining countries as 'Other'.
- 5 All of these outlets have a majority of editors based in Europe. For a discussion of the geographical affiliation of journals, see Truex et al. (2009).
- 6 In the list of *Organization Studies* articles most cited by the top 20 North American journals, there were eight articles with the same number of citations after the article ranked 49th. Including these eight articles would have inflated the total number to 57, making it less suitable to compare with the 50 articles most cited overall. Neither would it be useful (let alone grounded) to arbitrarily choose one of those eight articles. Hence, for most cited *Organization Studies* articles in the top 20 North American journals, we focused on the top 49 articles.
- 7 The *t*-tests yield higher *p*-values the higher the probability that the values are similar across two groups. Hence, the lower the *p*-value obtained in the analysis, the more the two groups are said to be statistically significantly different from each other in terms of a given parameter. In the analyses below, *p*-values of less than 10% ( $p < .10$ ) were deemed to be statistically significant.
- 8 In order to account for redundancies in both groups, we then reran these analyses on articles that were only present in each respective group. Since there are 19 articles that appear in both lists, the comparative analysis was performed on 30 non-overlapping articles in the top 20 North American list and 31 non-overlapping in the all journals' list. The results of this comparison were quite similar to the ones we obtained when comparing the entire set of articles in the top 20 North American journals and all journals groups, with slightly more significant differences.
- 9 We focused on the USA for this analysis, as it is the academic community within which the tenure system is the most institutionalized. For simplicity, and given data restrictions, we assumed that a faculty member was 'tenured' if she or he was an associate or full professor.
- 10 This observation may also partially capture the fact that, as in other outlets, it takes time to write an article and go through the review process. Yet, the results are qualitatively identical even if we focus on tenure at the time of submission instead of at the time of publication (assuming a two-year difference between the two).

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