

EDITOR'S COMMENTS: INTERNATIONALIZING THEORY—HOW “FUSION THEORY” EMANATES FROM DOWN UNDER

In these comments I set out to give a personalized perspective of how an “Aussie” (i.e., an Australian) sees theory development and its internationalization in the fields of management and organization. Although I will refer briefly to the U.S.-European theory debate, I do not intend to go into this topic in detail since it will be dealt with in a future Editor's Comments; in the meantime, I refer readers to Grey's (2010) and Meyer and Boxenbaum's (2010) articles, published in the thirtieth anniversary commemorative issue of *Organization Studies*. Instead, I begin by drawing readers' attention to the explosive growth in international representation in the Academy of Management meeting program and how this is beginning to have an effect on the makeup of both the editorial board and the content of *AMR*. I conclude with a discussion of how the world looks different from Down Under and how we Antipodeans are managing to fuse different scholarly traditions from around the world with a view to formulating new and innovative approaches to theory development, which I refer to as “fusion theory.”

The Academy of Management was established in 1936 by Charles Jamison (University of Michigan) and William N. Mitchell (University of Chicago) as “an organization of educators to advance the philosophy of management” and has grown from the original 10 members to a worldwide membership of some 20,000.¹ Although its emphasis on scholarly development dates back to 1940, the Academy has focused for most of its existence on developing theory and conducting studies in the context of U.S. and (to a lesser extent) Canadian practice. Up until twenty years ago, with a few notable exceptions, scholars from outside the North American

continent were notably absent, and those non-North American scholars who regularly attended the annual meetings tended to have deep U.S. connections. For example, Cary L. Cooper, Dov Eden, and Andrew M. Pettigrew are Academy Fellows based outside the United States, but all either received their doctorates in the United States or worked in U.S. institutions for extended periods. Other non-U.S. Fellows, such as Royston Greenwood and Bob Hinings, are U.K. expatriates working in Canada. From a personal viewpoint, I still recall vividly my first Academy meeting (1991) in Miami Beach, where I met up with my four Aussie colleagues and we sat in the bar of the Hilton Hotel bemoaning the lack of international representation in the Academy program.

Since 1991, however, things have changed greatly. The late Carolyn Dexter, after whom (most deservedly) the Academy's award for “the paper that best meets the objective of internationalizing the Academy” is named, was a major driver of the Academy's early internationalization. I recall chairing a subcommittee for Carolyn, where we were asked to recommend ways and means to make the Academy more open to papers submitted by the international scholarly community. The subcommittee's recommendations subsequently were acted on by the Academy, especially through establishment of the Academy's International Theme Committee (ITC). One of the subcommittee's recommendations was for the Academy to permit papers to be submitted on A4 paper (an international standard for paper size) rather than U.S. letter size paper. This was seen as a big deal at the time (before the days of electronic submission), and the subcommittee was henceforth nicknamed “The A4 Committee.”

We have well and truly moved on from the A4 debate today, however. Reflecting the huge extent of internationalization, the program for the 2012 Academy meetings in Boston listed 9,369 participants representing 95 countries. Most no-

My thanks to Rick Delbridge, Cynthia Devers, Peer Fiss, and Roy Suddaby for their constructive suggestions on earlier drafts of these comments.

¹ See <http://www.aom.org/About-AOM/History.aspx?terms=history>.

tably, only 4,297 (45.8 percent) of those gave their country as the United States, and this percentage only topped 50 percent when the 513 Canadians in the program were added in to fill out the North American contingent. Of the other countries represented, the largest representations were from the United Kingdom (641), Germany (406), Australia and New Zealand (377), the Netherlands (369), and China and Hong Kong (353). Although still decidedly lopsided (there is as yet not enough representation from Africa, much of Asia, and South America), this was still a paradigm-shifting change, and the effects were clearly evident right across the whole program. Note in particular that the largest groups were not necessarily from English-speaking countries.

One of the most contentious issues we ITC subcommittee members dealt with in formulating our recommendations was whether internationalizing meant, in essence, that our international colleagues should be educated in the "U.S. Model," which was seen as traditional, positivist, and quantitatively oriented (Burrell [1996] referred ironically to this model as "NATO"—the North American Theory of Organization). This was in contrast to the "European Model," which was seen as critical, interpretivist, and qualitatively oriented (Grey, 2010).² But I argued that the feared "colonization" of U.S.-style theory into other domains, while undoubtedly occurring, especially in East Asia and to a lesser extent in Europe, may be tempered to some extent, at least for European scholars. Indeed, and on the contrary, my observation is that the Academy is also changing to accommodate the European model—as a cursory glance at this year's Critical Management Studies division program will reveal.

This internationalization is also starting to become apparent in the makeup of the editorial team for this journal. The editor of *AMR*, Roy Suddaby, is a Canadian critical management theorist, and two of the eight associate editors (Rick Delbridge and me) are based outside the United States. Moreover, associate editor Peer Fiss, a German expatriate based in the United States, maintains strong links with colleagues

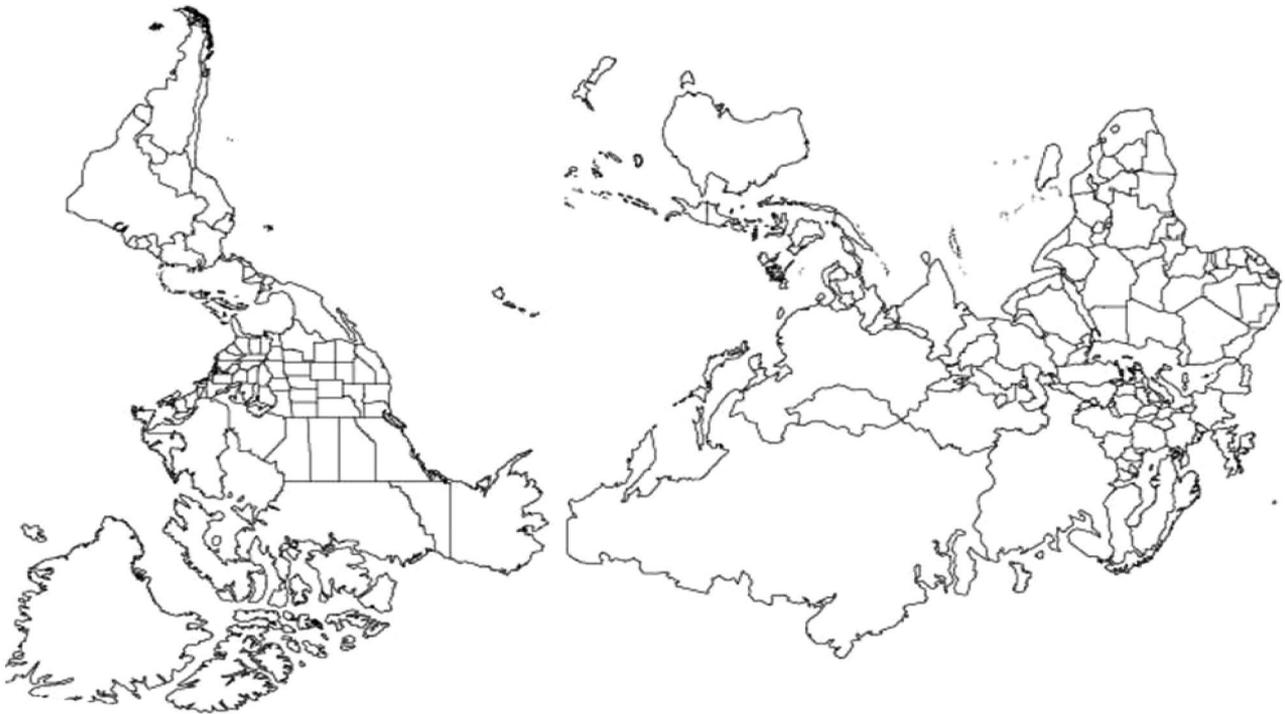
in Europe. Non-U.S. representation on the *AMR* editorial board is about the same as for the editorial team: 35 of its 135 board members (26 percent) come from countries other than the United States, and many U.S.-based members maintain strong links with their home regions. Clearly, this representation has a long way to go to match the state of internationalization for the Academy as a whole, but it's a start.

In terms of the academic content of articles, I refer readers to Grey (2010) and especially Meyer and Boxenbaum (2010), who provided a detailed assessment of "European" content in leading management and organization journals based on references to social philosophers of organization (e.g., Durkheim, Foucault, Goffman, Habermas, Kahn, Parson, Weber) and found that only ten such articles have been published in *AMR* to date. On the other hand, articles such as Thompson's (2011) and Voronov and Vince's (2012), which are decidedly in the European tradition, are starting to appear more regularly. Moreover, the recent *AMR* Special Topic Forum on Theory Development (Suddaby, Hardy, & Huy, 2011) was dominated by scholars writing in the European tradition (e.g., Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011; Boxenbaum & Rouleau, 2011; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011), and these are already attracting citations (eighteen in the SSCI at the time of writing).

So I conclude from this (albeit cursory) analysis that while *AMR* is still U.S. centric, there are strong indications that scholarship from outside the United States (and North America) is beginning to be more influential. But, hey, I am not a European! I am from the other side of the world—Down Under, no less. So why is this relevant? It's a matter of perspective. Although world atlases in the Northern Hemisphere typically depict Australia on the right-hand edge of the world, atlases produced in Australia depict Australia in the middle. And, indeed, we are in the middle: Africa and Europe lie to the west, Asia to the north, and the Americas to the east. Moreover, the North-up model of the world is a European-centric notion. There is no reason that the world should not be represented with the North-down perspective depicted in Figure 1. I suspect that most readers would be surprised to see this representation of their world. It's a new perspective that probably lies outside their mental model, but this is exactly the perspective that we Antipodeans have.

² This differentiation can be easily experienced if one attends (as I did for the first time this year) the annual colloquium of the European Group on Organization Studies (EGOS), which publishes *Organization Studies*.

Figure 1
A Different View of the World



The point I make in the previous paragraph (and Figure 1) is that there are other perspectives out there, and some of them might be radically different from what AMR readers have been accustomed to. In a similar vein, all theories are not necessarily North American or European, nor are they Confucian or Hindi or Muslim, for that matter. Humans share a wide range of different perspectives, and some lie totally outside of our consciousness. As Australians and New Zealanders, we see a world view that represents an amalgam of Old World views (and I include North America in the "Old World" here). It is no surprise, therefore, that we are so well represented at conferences on both sides of the Atlantic. The number of Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) participants in the Academy program is now nearly 380, and that number is increasing each year. I like to think that my colleagues and I bring new and fresh perspectives to the work of management and organization theory, too.

So what new dimensions of theorizing can the Antipodean perspective add? To answer this, I digress to another favorite Down Under activity: eating fine food. Australians refer to their na-

tional cuisine as "fusion," which the *Oxford Shorter Dictionary* defines as "food or cooking which incorporates elements of both Eastern and Western cuisine." Much like our food, then, management and organization scholarship in Australia represents a fusion of Eastern and Western cultures and traditions (although, remember, to us Antipodeans, the Americas lie to the east!). Indeed, you can see this any day by taking a stroll down any main street in Sydney or Melbourne. Thus, despite our rather ambivalent attitudes toward other traditions and cultures, which I (Ashkanasy, 2007) refer to as "the Australian Enigma,"³ Australians (and our neighbors in New Zealand) have a different world view than our colleagues from the Northern Hemisphere. This willingness to adopt new ideas and perspectives is even reflected in ANZ people's persona, much like our strange flora and fauna. It is also reflected in the editorial

³ Examples of the Australian Enigma (Ashkanasy, 2007) include a deeply embedded conservatism that overlies a national ethos of inclusion and a "fair go," as well as an ambivalent attitude toward charismatic leaders, who are expected to be inspirational but not "tall poppies."

content of the *Journal of Management and Organization (JMO)*, the publication of the ANZ Academy of Management (ANZAM). A recent editorial by (then) editor Charmine Härtel and board member Felix Arndt (Härtel & Arndt, 2012) is indicative of this approach. Härtel, an expat from the United States, collaborated with this young scholar from Germany, who completed part of his doctoral studies in New Zealand, to give fresh perspectives on the journal reviewing process reflecting the fusion of different ideas and perspective I outline in this article.

Australian academic departments in general and business schools in particular also reflect this fusion of different cultures and approaches. I am aware that colleagues from around the world populate academic departments in other parts of the world too, but it is especially noticeable in ANZ schools, largely resulting from our geographic positioning and high standard of living. This heterogeneity also means there is a constant intermingling of new ideas and fresh perspectives that inevitably results in the creation of new ideas, or fusion theory.

But I don't want to be seen as Antipodean-centric either. Scholars from other parts of the world also have different perspectives that they inevitably bring to bear in their scholarship and theorizing. At the time I was writing this essay, I was attending the quadrennial International Congress of Psychology (ICP), which this year was held in Cape Town, South Africa, and where the congress organizers went out of their way to emphasize that Africans also have a different perspective and that this is beginning to have an effect internationally.⁴

On my trip, in addition to EGOS and the ICP, I attended the biennial meetings of the International Association for Chinese Management Research (IACMR), held in Hong Kong in June; the Institute of Work Psychology (IWP), held in Sheffield, United Kingdom, also in June; and the International Conference on Emotions and Worklife (EMONET), held in Helsinki in July. At each of these international conferences, I was struck by the way each group of scholars interacted and presented their ideas in contrasting yet complementary ways. For example, while

most research presented at the IACMR conference was clearly based in a U.S. positivist approach, the overall approach was just as clearly different and reflected a Confucian perspective that could not be more differentiated from the Western view.

After Cape Town, I headed to Boston for the 2012 Academy meetings and, in preparing for my participation, noted that a roundtable discussion session I was to be chairing involved five papers, all from different countries (Canada, the Netherlands, Pakistan, United Kingdom, United States). As we discussed each paper, there was inevitably a melding of different approaches, cultures, and perspectives. While the nature of this blending is inevitably complex (and beyond the scope of this piece), the underlying processes are what I refer to as "theoretical fusion."

So are there already examples to be found in the pages of this journal? Indeed there are. One needs to look no further than the articles in the *AMR* STF on Theory Development I referred to earlier. The guest editors were based, respectively, in Canada (Suddaby), Australia (Hardy), and France (Huy). Moreover, Hardy hails from the United Kingdom, where she also completed her doctorate, while Huy comes from Vietnam and completed his doctoral studies in Canada. The two articles I cited are by Swedes (Sandberg and Alvesson), one of whom is based in Australia, and Tsoukas is a Greek who received his doctoral training in the United Kingdom and is currently based in Cyprus. As such, the articles in this STF represent a prototype of the kind of fusing of different perspectives I refer to in these comments.

In conclusion, in these brief comments I have attempted to provide *AMR* readers with a view from Down Under, where we lie at the center of a rapidly internationalizing world; well, at least from our point of view we do. The Academy is only beginning to move on from the NATO model, but there is emerging evidence that this process is now well under way. Who would have thought in 1991 that more than 50 percent of the names in the Academy meetings program would come from institutions outside the United States? Moreover, there is evidence that a new kind of international theorizing—fusion theory—is emerging. It will be interesting to see how the merging of different perspectives and theo-

⁴ And, of course, the Academy is planning to run its first Africa Conference early in 2013; see <http://www.aom.org/Meetings/AOM-Africa-Conference.aspx>.

ries will eventually end up changing our mental models of organization and management.

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