



Organisation Studies Publishing is Racist: A Call for Change

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Abstract This paper aims to call out the culpability of academic publishing within the field of organisation studies, and our role as academics in contributing to the lack of ethnically diverse voices in the upper echelons of academic publishing. We provide a summary audit of the ethnic diversity of Management and Organisation Studies (MOS) based on direct responses from 20 journal editors, and the estimated ethnicity of 30,277 contributors. We also provide some potential solutions and discuss what anti-racist publishing could look like. We conclude with a call to act up, with a range of recommendations to be tried and tested to build a more representative and inclusive academe of organisation studies.

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"If you really want to help pass the mic please, Give up your platform let us speak, like Marlon Brando and Sacheen.

White folks have spoken for us for centuries, studied us, phrenology"

(Ross, 2016)

Science has a racism problem (Cell Editorial, 2020), which reflects the battle with racism humanity faces. This battle is waged in the trenches of hierarchical systems which favor the privileged. Racism is a structural process. There are established structures and hierarchies of academic publishing, which the field of organisation studies ascribes to. Management and Organisation Studies (MOS) is an interdisciplinary field that examines the structure, functioning, and impact of organisations, as well as the behaviour of individuals and groups within them. This field is represented by academic journals such as *The British Journal of Management*, and *The Academy of Management Annals*. This paper explores some potential aspects of racism that may manifest within organisation studies publishing and discusses potential solutions. Drawing on the work of Jones (2014) we aim to call out the system of racism in which we operate exploring the structures, policies, practices and norms in which racism infects publishing.

1 Definitions

Taking a social constructivist standpoint race can be argued to be societally constructed and defined (Appiah, 1985). This article takes the position that race is socially and politically defined and continually changing, the way society views race, brings those racial identities into our existence (Grimes, 2001). We consider race broadly as the social interpretation of our phenotype, or observable traits. We define the concept of racialisation as the process by which racial meanings are ascribed to individuals and enforce boundaries and impose racial meaning onto

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our lives (Murji & Solomos, 2005). Racism will be defined here as the differential assigning of value and structuring opportunity based on racialised identities (Jones, 2014). White supremacy and privilege form the foundation of systemic racism (Leonardo, 2004). This system establishes and maintains a racial hierarchy through acts, decisions, and policies that benefit white people while disadvantaging others. Importantly, whiteness extends beyond physical appearance to encompass power and privilege (Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014). Racial privilege refers to the advantages that accrue to individuals racialised as white, often through the valorisation of white appearance and culture. Another issue to be defined and critically analysed is the use of Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) samples (Henrich et al., 2010). Unrepresentative groups of undergraduates or WEIRD organisations that lack diversity provide the samples on which many studies base their ungeneralisable findings and subsequent theories on (Henrich et al., 2010). Academics then make broad claims about the behaviour of diverse individuals and organisations in the world's top journals based on unrepresentative samples drawn entirely from WEIRD populations.

2 Aims

The studies described in this paper were conceived during the societal outrage from the murder of George Floyd. An unarmed Black man, killed slowly in broad daylight by the police. The authors engaged in open discussion about systemic racism and the desire to understand and change the institutionalised racism that leads to the murder and criminalisation of a disproportionate number of marginalised people. The authors turned our focus on our own field. We asked ourselves, how does racism operate within academia? Which voices are heard and who's knowledge has value? Who retains power and privilege in academia and why? The issue of racial equality within academia is a historic problem which is intertwined with the history of racism within society. It is through academic debate that we can understand, critique and spark change in our field. The aim of this paper is to identify the extent of ethnic inequality in leadership of MOS publishing, to understand some of their systemic causes, and to propose potential solutions. We begin with an audit of the ethnic diversity of journal editors within MOS.

3 Reflexivity

This article is written from a western educated, middle-class perspective. As lead author RT approaches this research as a Black man, born in Ghana, but educated in a white dominated, English speaking, elitist British academic system. As co-author OR approaches this as a

white British man, born in Southeast England, and educated in an English speaking and selective education system (i.e., state funded Grammar School). Much of the authors early discussion focused on mutual experiences in the worlds of sport and academic psychology where we first wrote on the topic of decolonising our teaching in that area, building on the work of Moncrieffe et al. (2020). We continue to attempt to hold ourselves open to and accountable to other perspectives of knowledge, especially from the global south, recognising this is a voice that is most silenced in our field. Our citation choices and background reading have attempted to listen to and amplify diverse voices. We approached this work with a recognition that our formal education in psychology and experiences in other sub-domains such as sport and organisational psychology often left out diverse voices, and we are now attempting to rectify this omission for our future students.

4 Background

The historic legacy of segregation in society still plagues academia today. In the United States the first Black university graduate, Alexander Twilight, graduated in 1823, however many elite schools, such as Duke and Rice barred Black students from attending until the late 1960s (Slater, 1994)). In the United Kingdom the first Black professor, Sir Arthur Lewis was appointed to the Victoria University of Manchester in 1948. Race and gender intersect to create further inequality. This same (relatively) progressive university (now the University of Manchester) only appointed its first Black female professor, Dawn Edge, in 2019. There are many universities in the US and UK without even a single Black female full professor today.

Campaigns such as 'Why Isn't My Professor Black?' (Fereidooni et al., 2019) and 'Why is My Curriculum White?' (Peters, 2018) have renewed focus on the slow process to decolonise the academy. Senior academics are the gatekeepers of which voices are heard, valued, cited, and amplified. A recent field experiment from Auelua-Toomey and Roberts (2022) suggests that the diversity characteristics of academic journal boards influences the willingness of race scholars to submit, and belief that the journal would be interested in the value of research that highlights race. Psychological research is overwhelmingly white (Roberts et al., 2020); editors, authors and the selection of participants in psychological research lack diversity and exclude people who are marginalised.

Efforts to audit the racial and ethnic background of academic journals are relatively recent. This has been largely in response to recent commitments made by several journals, funding bodies, and learned societies to track

and reduce racial discrimination. Methods have ranged from manually classifying journal editors based on picture and other contextual clues such as surnames and membership of diverse associations (Else & Perkel, 2022) and computational audits based on names (Day et al., 2020). Here we wished to give those in positions of power within the field the option to report their own reflections on their ethnic identity as well as offer their own perspectives on other diverse characteristics.

5 STUDY 1

5.1 Method

The Chartered Association of Business Schools (ABS) Academic Journal Guide 2021 was chosen as an accepted reputable index of leading journals in MOS. The 32 journals listed under the Organisation Science subtopic as of September 2022 were selected, and all Editors, Co-Editors and Deputy editors were contacted (n=59) and invited to take part in a survey to share their diversity characteristics. The survey consisted of a multiple-choice selection of ethnic groups based on a combination of US and UK census options with some additions. Participants were also offered two options, followed by free text opportunities for further elaborating on diversity unconstrained by census definitions. Asking about ethnic diversity alone was considered by the research team to be too prescriptive. Responses were submitted between 20th October and 10th November 2022. Participants were given a 10 GBP voucher as an incentive. Ethical Clearance was granted by King's College London Research Ethics Committee (MRA-22/23-33984).

5.2 Results

Full responses were received from 20 academics (34% response rate). The respondents had been in an editorial role for between 1 and 25 years (mean = 6 years). 35% of Participants identified as female 60% as male, with 1 participant declining to state a gender identity. 100% were White:

Table 1: Census selected ethnic group of participants

	n	%
White - American	6	30
Other White background	6	30
White - UK	4	20
White - Irish	1	5
White - Italian	2	10
White - European	1	5

A note on resistance to racialisation: one participant selected (other) White, as a census option of ethnic group,

but in the free text choice stated that they did not identify as a specific ethnic group.

The participants chose to use the free text questions to share their diversity based on religion, disability, gender and class. Although this sample was 100% white, editors varied on many other characteristics of diversity. When asked if they would like to expand on the census definitions of their race 45% mentioned their nationality, 20% mentioned continental heritage, such as European, Eastern European and Scandinavian, and 15% mentioned their religion. When given the option to add any further parts of their identity, participants offered a wide range of comments. This included specific religious prejudices they have experienced, disabilities, being a multispecies being, first generation college graduates, identifying with a commitment to social justice, and the feeling that they do not need to identify with an ethnic group. One participant commented on the need for these open-ended questions to be able to fully express their identity.

6 STUDY 2

The data from study 1 offers a starting insight into the ethnic profile of journal editors in our field and asking these editors to self-identify and answer open ended questions offered insight into other factors that might contribute to their identity. However, it offered only a snapshot of the journals in our field and there was a need to expand to see how representative this sample was of the overall population. Methods other than direct primary self-reports are available for *estimating* the race of individuals based on their names (Longley et al., 2018; Mateos et al., 2011). Study 2 aimed to expand on study 1 by estimating the race of all contributors listed in the MOS journals of the ABS Academic Journal Guide.

6.1 Method

To provide a broader inclusion of the ethnic diversity characteristics of authors in a selection of highly reputable MOS journals contributor data was extracted from all the journals from study 1 which were indexed by Web of Science Core Collection (as of October 2022) were extracted. 17,635 unique journal articles were identified, across 29 out of the 32 journals from study 1 (*Tamara*, *Ephemera* and *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* were not indexed by web of science and therefore were excluded from this study). From these documents 34,269 author names were extracted.

Author ethnicity was estimated using the updated algorithm developed by Kandt and Longley (2018) which uses self-ascribed ethnicity for the entire population in England and Wales based on 2011 census data to provide an estimation of the ethnic diversity of each name. While

this census data only uses a UK sample, due to the large size of the dataset it is based on and diversity of the sample it is robust for estimating the ethnicity of international names however it does not split data into the 185 ethno-cultural categories of the original Onomap which is a set of algorithms and databases that analyse personal names to infer likely cultural, ethnic, and linguistic characteristics of individuals or populations based on unsupervised machine-learning algorithms (Mateos et al., 2011).

6.2 Results

Of 34,269 names extracted, about 30,277 were suitable for ethnicity estimation. The below predictions are probabilistic, where a single person can be particularly assigned to multiple categories.

Table 2: Estimated Ethnic group of authors

	n	%
White	22137	73.12
Asian - Chinese	2266.3	7.49
Other group (Including Arab)	1704.5	5.63
Asian - Indian	1434.2	4.74
Asian - Other	777.2	2.57
Black - Caribbean	673	2.22
Asian - Pakistani	663.5	2.19
Black - African	453.5	1.5
Asian - Bangladeshi	167.6	0.55
Total	30276.8	100

7 Discussion

These findings suggest that ethnic diversity at the top of the academic tower of publishing is still lacking. While it is recognised that we are examining English speaking journals based in countries where the population is a white majority, we are still falling far behind an ethnically diverse makeup of the power structures of academic journals. According to the last censuses around 38% of the US and 13% of the UK population being classified by census data as non-white, this provides an important target for equality that our currently white dominated academia should strive to represent. The effect of the ethnicity of journal editors is strong, Roberts et al. (2020) found that when editors-in-chief were White, 4% of all their edited publications highlighted race, and when editors in chief were identified as marginalised this proportion rose to 11%.

MOS research and teaching influences the education and management of many of the world’s most influential organisations, and if the voices and debates within academia surrounding our field do not represent the population’s diversity, we may be inadvertently silencing a section of society behind structural inequality. The lack of diversity in academic publishing is a flaw which limits our

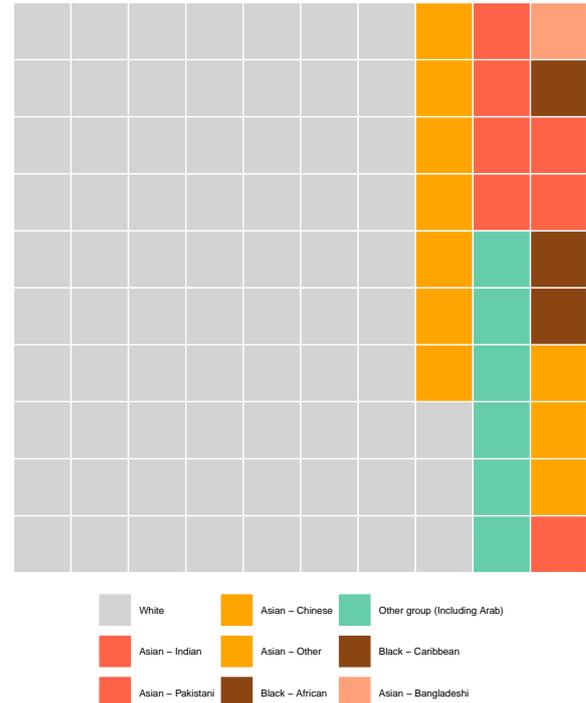


Figure 1: Waffle chart showing the estimated ethnic group of authors

ability to apply a diversity of thought to a diverse set of societal questions. Most importantly this lack of diversity is symptomatic of a deeply unethical expression of societal hierarchical racial structures of power and privilege. The social sciences have been profoundly influential in identifying and challenging societal inequality, we have encouraged society to move forward, and it is time we stepped up ourselves.

8 Act up: Stolen Tools

In response to the challenges faced by diverse authors, especially towards the start of their academic journey members of our faculty have started this journal to mentor and support marginalised authors and potential future academics. This journal is called *Stolen Tools*. The name is a response to the Lorde (1984) essay titled 'The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House'. As academics we fight to embrace and reclaim the tools of academic publishing as a tool to empower the marginalised and dismantle systemic racism. There are many areas of academic publishing which allow bias to infect our system of knowledge production. There is a large amount of unpaid work within academic publishing, such as unpaid research participants and voluntary research assistants. Journal editors usually see names of authors, academic networks may influence experts selected for peer review and potential authors may experience stereotype

threat when submitting to a journal which lacks a diverse board or previously published topics. We aim to respond to these issues by accepting people before papers, paying people for their academic work, and mentoring and seeking out future academics who may not have considered academic publishing.

The idea of a journal for marginalised authors is as old as the *Journal of African American History* or *Phylon*. However, we aim to build on traditionally Black journals by seeking out, mentoring, and paying diverse authors to create high quality, peer reviewed manuscripts that will potentially become the first in a long career of publishing.

8.1 Becoming good elders

Responding to the call of Dar et al. (2020) we aim to become good elders through establishment of a supportive, rather than adversarial system to empower future generations of academics who we hope will become the next Black professors and journal editors. By guiding them through the complex and confusing system of academic publishing we hope that a publication in *Stolen Tools* (or any other journal we review or edit for) will give authors the tools to publish in other journals and platforms. As reviewers, editors, and citers we can amplify the voices of marginalised academics by using our power and position to let the next generation of academics stand on our shoulders. We are custodians of the academic community, armed with the knowledge that many voices are excluded from academic discourse. It is our responsibility to create anti-racist spaces and practices for publishing, ensuring that diverse perspectives are heard and valued in our scholarly conversations. Many of the recommendations within *Stolen Tools* can be embraced by the journals you edit or review to fight systemic inequality. Consider fairer payment for academic labour and the impact this may have on poorer future academics without permanent academic positions. Consider mentoring unrepresented groups, embracing diversity in editorial boards and reviewers, open peer review, and continual auditing, reflexivity, and change to challenge yourself to be better custodians of the future of knowledge in your field.

8.2 Allyship

It is not the sole job of minoritised people to teach their oppressors or make them feel good. Racism hurts both the oppressor, and the oppressed (Fanon, 1968). The editors who responded to our survey and others who work in our field can act themselves to improve academic publishing. Allies recognise their own unearned privilege that is received from societal structures within which they operate. White people can work to end racism, men can work to end sexism, and heterosexual people can work to end homophobia. Allies do not just challenge but estab-

lish meaningful relationship with those they are supporting and are active in supporting social justice and in promoting the rights of others (Smith et al., 2016; Williams & Sharif, 2021).

Senior academics in these positions of power should educate themselves, acknowledge their own positions and privileges, be quiet and listen to feedback, bring diversity to the forefront of their journal's missions, and become a community of allies for the field (Melaku et al., 2020). Many of the open text responses in study 1 show other marginalised identities (such as gender, race, age, disability, sexuality, religion, caregiving, language and intersectionality) that can support the understanding of others who experience different forms of discrimination (Williams & Sharif, 2021). We must, however, be careful to notice performative allyship, where these endeavors to support are not helpful and can often be harmful when the ally is motivated merely by reward. Surface level gestures with the desire to maintain the credibility of the journals we work with should not be accepted.

9 Future research

Studies replicating those reported in this manuscript should not have to be done in future. There should be minimum standards of reporting of the diversity characteristics of editorial board members, peer reviewers and authors. This information should be collected and updated for any reputable journal and freely accessible online. It is only due to the lack of collection and reporting of this data that this study was needed. If we desire equality, transparency and auditing is the best way of seeing if we are meeting targets. MOS should hold itself to a high standard of egalitarian knowledge as we research and theorise about the organisations that make up society. Further studies which offer a path towards equality, providing an evidence base of what works to reduce inequality in publishing are sorely needed. Evaluations of equality interventions and novel ideas to amplify the voices of marginalised future academics will help use the tools of science to overcome the problems of inequality.

10 Limitations

Non-response bias may have influenced the results of study 1. While 34% is a typical response rate for an online survey, this study did not meet the goal of 60% response (Fincham, 2008). In gathering emails for inclusion to study 1, it was noted that at least 2 out of 59 editors were likely to have identified as marginalised. In future all diversity data of editorial board members and contributors should be collected as part of the appointment and submission process and reported publicly to avoid these methodological issues. Study 2 is merely

an estimation of ethnicity. While it remains a robust estimate for large samples, it does not consider the nuances of subjective, ethnic identity which would only be gathered from self-reported identification. However, this study was deemed necessary as this data were not publicly reported. In the future we call for more transparency. A larger list of journals could have been used, and analysis could have been split into journals originating from specific countries. However, due to the international nature of many of these journals and editorial boards, a country of publication would be hard to justify. Finally, study 2 lacked data on other aspects of diversity that would allow us to assess diversity through an intersectional lens.

11 Conclusions

It is rare for an academic paper in the field of organisation studies to boldly start with rap lyrics. We felt this was fitting as the rap music was a core part of the authors education on racial and ethnic equality, where our Eurocentric education system failed us. The potential philosophers of many marginalised communities have made a voice within rap as the other pulpits of society have excluded them. To achieve true equality in academia, we must actively seek out and amplify voices from underrepresented cultures and regions, particularly those from the Global South. This includes perspectives from Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and other regions often marginalised in Western-dominated academic discourse. We should strive for a pluriversal world (Escobar, 2020), where multiple ways of knowing and understanding are valued equally. In this context, a "pluriversal world" refers to a vision of academia that embraces diverse epistemologies, methodologies, and cultural viewpoints. This approach challenges the dominance of Western, Eurocentric knowledge systems and recognises the validity of indigenous knowledge, non-Western philosophies, and alternative approaches to research and scholarship. By amplifying these traditionally underrepresented voices, we can create a richer, more inclusive academic environment that better reflects the diversity of human experience and knowledge production globally.

While there are traditionally Black journals for marginalised authors, we hope that Black voices will not be academically segregated, and equity of opportunity can be created for a diverse range of authors to publish in impactful journals in every field. This will only happen through questioning the legacy of inequality and challenging the way unequal opportunity permeates academia today for a fairer intellectual debate tomorrow.

A lack of ethnic diversity in academic publishing can pose a danger to health. This lack of diversity can lead to biased research priorities and methodologies, poten-

tially overlooking health issues specific to minority populations. For example, medical research conducted primarily by and on white populations may fail to identify genetic factors or social determinants of health that disproportionately affect marginalised people, leading to inadequate treatments for us all (Dörr & Dietz, 2020; Gee & Ford, 2011). It represents a waste of human capital. By excluding or marginalising researchers from diverse backgrounds, academia loses valuable perspectives and innovative approaches to problem-solving. For instance, researchers from underrepresented groups might bring unique insights into community-based participatory research or have a deeper understanding of cultural factors that influence behaviour and social phenomena (Foster, 2010). There is still revolutionary work to be done in order to dethrone the 'emperor' (Nkomo, 2021) of MOS who is only starting to realise they are Eurocentric and far from the impossible race-neutral, quasi-scientific ideal that we have strived for historically. If we look across the intersectional highway (Crenshaw, 1989) of systemic racism and consider which other aspects of equality we seek to build a new path across (Jones, 2014), we should ask ourselves what are we doing to dismantle the power systems that perpetuate inequality and lift up the next generation of Black female MOS professors from working class backgrounds? The only way to achieve true equality is to call out and break down the existing power structures of race, class, and gender (hooks, 1981). While Black women should lead this change (hooks, 2000), men should use their privilege to ally with those that face further intersectional inequality.

Let's work together in a nurturing alliance, mentoring and supporting each other to overcome the system of hierarchies that allow white supremacy to prevail. As we focus on liberation, we must ensure that no group is left behind, recognising that true progress requires uplifting all marginalised voices simultaneously (Martínez, 1993).

12 Recommendations

Academics have identified a problem, now is the time for implementing solutions. We recommend the following steps to spark change in your own journals, research, teaching and citizenship:

- Publish and regularly audit diversity data. Many journals and publishers have committed to this practice (Else & Perkel, 2022). Has yours?
- Implement automated systems to estimate diversity characteristics of institutions, journals, and fields based on names. Make this information as important as impact factors or acceptance rates.
- Amplify diverse voices through intentional citation, collaboration, co-authoring, funding, and promotion

practices. Challenge yourself to seek out and value diverse perspectives, even when it might be uncomfortable.

- Mentor the next generation of diverse academics. Follow the example of *Stolen Tools*: take on board members in mentoring roles, establish diversity task forces, mentor PhD students and researchers of colour, provide scholarships, and engage with underprivileged communities.
- Set ambitious yet achievable diversity targets for your field, institution, or country. Lead by example.
- Listen and act. As a field dominated by privileged, Western, white males, we must actively listen to and stand with diverse academics (Swan, 2017).

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