

# Reception of Spanish sociology by domestic and foreign audiences differs and has consequences for evaluation

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In this article, we compare the reception of Spanish sociology by domestic and international audiences using citation counts as an indicator of audience interest. We compare papers highly cited in a national language database with those highly cited in the Web of Science. We find differences that might prove worrying within a national research evaluation system that emphasizes publishing in high impact factor, Web of Science indexed journals. We suggest that in the social sciences, such an emphasis may induce not simply more research excellence, but also narrower research agendas with long-term consequences for the Spanish sociology community.

**Keywords:** *Web of Science; IN-RECS; SSH; sociology; national research evaluation.*

## 1. Introduction

The more naturalized the evaluation criteria become, the less visible and less ‘real’ the things that are hard to express in this form become. (Dahler-Larsen 2011: 205)

In recent decades, governments have introduced national research evaluation systems in hopes of enhancing research excellence (Hicks 2012). To this end, publication in international, i.e. English language, journals is encouraged. In the sciences and engineering, the result may be as intended, better research. However, the social sciences and humanities have a more complex character with regional and national variation in the salience of topics and agendas (Hicks 2004). Therefore, domestic and international audiences will have different interests.

The differences between domestic and international audience interests were explored in a study comparing the publishing profiles of Polish sociologists in a Polish sociology citation index and in the Web of Science (WoS). Domestic audiences were found to value theoretical advances by Polish sociologists while international

audiences were primarily interested in Poland as a site of post-Communist societal transformation. Two papers on this work were published by Webster/Winclawska’s in the late 1990s. Her conclusions concerned the partial exclusion of Polish sociology from the international community, an exclusion that lessened after the transition away from communism. Although exclusion from the international community and associated distortions might be expected to be less today, their salience will have increased due to evaluation systems that reward publications indexed in international databases more highly than domestic language publications. Because of this reward structure, small differences between international and domestic emphases might exert strong pressure on the direction of scholarship in a country.

Unfortunately, the Polish studies are difficult to replicate because they require a national citation index. Spanish scholars have constructed such an index the *Indice de Impacto revistas españolas de ciencias sociales* (IN-RECS) or impact index of Spanish social science journals. In this article, we take advantage of this resource to compare the impact of Spanish sociology in IN-RECS with that in the

*Web of Science* (WoS). Like Poland, Spain has a strong scientific tradition in its native language. Here we use IN-RECS to examine domestic and foreign interest in Spanish-authored sociology papers, using citations as a marker of audience interest.

In what follows, we establish the background for the study by describing the Spanish social science and humanities citation index, IN-RECS; the Spanish university researcher evaluation system, the *sexenio*; and the predecessor comparison of the Polish sociology citation index with Polish sociology as seen in WoS. After this, we introduce our data and undertake our comparison of papers highly cited in the Spanish sociology citation index and in the WoS.

## 2. IN-RECS, a response to deficient database coverage of Spanish language social science

The inadequate coverage of non-English language SSH scholarship in literature databases has been discussed over several decades by a multitude of authors. Indeed, one of us has published multiple reviews of this literature exploring the consequences for evaluation (see Hicks 1999, 2004, 2006, 2013; Archambault et al. 2006; Hicks and Wang 2011). In short, there is consensus that coverage is partial, even after expansion of the databases in recent years, and that this compromises evaluation of social science and humanities that is based on the Web of Science or Scopus data.

One response to deficient coverage is to build a national language social science and humanities publication database for use in the national evaluation system. Norway and Flanders have done this. Using the Flemish database, Engels et al. (2012) compared the representation of Flemish social science in the domestic database with the representation in WoS. The strongest fields in WoS, as indicated by number of papers, were psychology, economics and business, and sociology. The strongest fields in the domestic database were law, theology, criminology, and literature (Engels et al. 2012, Fig. 2). These results point to differing tendencies to publish in English across fields, hinting at the complexity of understanding bilingual scholars' publication strategies (Li and Flowerdew 2009).

The Flemish database indexes papers, not citations. Because quality was a concern, criteria for journals to be included in the database were quite stringent and monitored closely (Engels et al. 2012). As a result, only social science and humanities output of verified quality was counted in the evaluation system, and because the count was substantially higher than the WoS count, the status of social science and humanities rose in the eyes of scientists.

However, without citations, reception of individual papers cannot be assessed. Because the resource requirements of a citation index are much higher, fewer have been built. In Spain, during 2004, Spanish information science

scholars began building one. In direct response to the deficiencies in WoS coverage of Spanish social science journals and the issues this creates in evaluation, the Grupo de Investigación EC3, Evaluación de la Ciencia y de la Comunicación Científica, Department of Information and Documentation of the University of Granada launched IN-RECS 'with the immediate objective of rectifying this bias'.

EC3 explains its rationale, in English, on its Web site (<http://ec3.ugr.es/in-recs/english.htm>, accessed September 25, 2014). EC3 notes that WoS represents 10% of Spanish social science. In all, 70% of citations to Spanish research in foreign journals are made by Spanish researchers, of which 40% come from 44 indexed Spanish journals. The group argued that social science is used by national communities, influenced by cultural peculiarities, and focused on local context and problems. Only a national index can accommodate these characteristics. By making visible the impact of Spanish language social science, the group hoped to make indexed journals more attractive for researchers and so improve their quality, as well as allow social science to be fully appreciated within the national scientific production. Additionally, the tool was meant to provide information for librarians, administrators, and Spanish science policy as a whole.

The database was built by:

- Identifying the population of Spanish social science journals
- Classifying journals by field using other databases as well as co-word analysis
- Selecting source journals that were in existence for a number of years, that used rigorous selection of papers, had a demonstrable impact at the national and international level, and were endorsed by researchers in a survey
- Building the database, including information on journal and paper citation counts

The group estimated that when finished the database would have some 70,000–75,000 citations to Spanish journals made by some 30,000 articles published in 100 journals that serve as the source for the generation of the impact indicators. The project was financed by Plan Nacional I+D+I and by the Dirección General de Universidades. Unfortunately, on 20 January 2014, the group announced that IN-RECS would cease operation due to straightened finances (<http://ec3.ugr.es/in-recs/COMUNICADO.pdf>, accessed September 25, 2014). The last year of updates was 2013.

## 3. The *sexenio*

In Spain, the national system of ex-post research evaluation has taken the form of voluntary, individual-level evaluations of research record conducted once every 6

years with successful outcomes resulting in a salary bonus. The system is referred to as the *sexenio* and includes government researchers as well as lecturers with tenure appointments. The system was introduced in 1989, and an agency was created to administer the process—the National Commission for the Evaluation of Research Activity (Comisión Nacional Evaluadora de la Actividad Investigadora, CNEAI).<sup>1</sup> The goal was to introduce incentives for research into newly autonomous universities with governance systems that led to little emphasis on research (Cruz-Castro and Sanz-Menéndez 2007; Rodríguez-Navarro 2009). There was concern to improve the quality of research and to promote internationalization (Osuna et al. 2011). Note that this is not the only national-level evaluation process nor the only one to use bibliometric tools.

The *sexenio* evaluation is conducted by 12 disciplinary committees and judgments rest largely on consideration of publication output. In common with other systems, a single evaluation protocol was devised for all fields of research, with flexibility at the discretion of experts for special circumstances (Jiménez-Contreras et al. 2002). Since 1996, the governing law specifically mentions the preference for high impact factor journals in assessing the quality of the research record, as translated in Jiménez-Contreras et al. (2002: 135):

*...preference will be given to those articles which are published in journals of recognized prestige, that is to say, those journals which occupy a notable position in the lists, organized by scientific field, which appear in the Subject Category Listing of the Journal Citation Reports of the Science Citation Index (Institute of Scientific Information, Philadelphia, PA, USA).*

Because the *sexenio* relies on Web of Science to delineate scientific quality, visibility in the Web of Science (WoS) has become central to being judged a productive researcher in Spain. The law recognizes that the Web of Science can be incomplete for parts of the social sciences and allows articles in other journals to be included if the journals have highly regarded experts on their editorial boards and are peer reviewed. Nevertheless, Spanish social scientists 'know that their research will automatically be evaluated favorably if it is published in a journal which occupies a notable position in the JCR lists of the SCI and the SSCI' (Jiménez-Contreras et al. 2002: 135). Such journals are English language, most often US based, and are viewed as defining the core of a discipline, that is they are not interdisciplinary.

#### 4. Webster/Winclawska's study of Polish sociology

Our work seeks to replicate that reported in Webster (1998) / Winclawska (1996) that compared the coverage of Polish Sociology in WoS, with coverage in a Polish

Sociological Citation Index (PSCI). Webster/Winclawska established that the two databases portrayed different aspects of Polish sociology. In the first analysis Winclawska began with a list of Polish sociologists and counted their citations in the international SSCI and the Polish index between 1980 and 1988. She found that of the top 10 most cited journals in the Polish index, only the three foreign ones were indexed in the SSCI.

In the second analysis, the author, now Webster, counted citations to Polish sociologists between 1981 and 1995. She found that lists of the top 20 most cited Polish sociologists in each index had 12 names in common. The most cited sociologist on the Polish list (with 253 citations) was ranked 41st in the SSCI (with 19 citations). The most cited sociologist on the SSCI list (with 254 citations) was ranked 20th on the PSCI list (with 41 citations). In addition, lists of the top 20 most cited documents by Polish sociologists in each index contained none in common. All but one of the WoS cited documents were in English; all the PSCI cited documents were in Polish. Webster/Winclawska's indicators based on foreign literature painted one picture of Polish sociology, and the Polish sociology index another.

Webster's work suggested that the ascendancy of an international social science may place small-country social scientists in the position of applying other's frameworks to their societies, recognized internationally mostly when their societies present picturesque episodes that become fashionable topics in big countries. National communities may develop method and theory, but big-country social scientists remain impervious. This conclusion was suggested by comparing the topics of the works most highly cited in the PSCI and SSCI. Polish sociologists highly cited (in articles published in the four Polish journals indexed in the PSCI) handbooks in general sociology by Polish authors, works on the social structure of Polish society, and works on interesting theoretical or methodological issues. Works highly cited in the SSCI included six dealing with theoretical issues, each at least 20 years old; and the rest dealing with social unrest in Poland in the early 1980s and the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe. Webster concluded that: 'the international sociological community does not notice Polish attempts to tackle universal issues in sociology; it is primarily interested in 'fashionable' topics and fads associated with the 'velvet revolution' and systemic transformation'. (Webster 1998: 23–4).

Impact in WoS reflects the interests of the international, English language audience. Webster summarizes this point well, concluding that the SSCI indicates the presence and the impact of Polish sociology on the international arena, focusing on areas of research done in Poland which are of interest to the international community and the 'best' Polish sociologists and Polish sociological works; but the SSCI 'does not allow for an in-depth analysis of the local dimensions of the discipline'. (Webster 1998: 31)



## 5. Data

We examine here scholarly papers written in Spanish and English that have been cited. Taking citation as an indication of audience interest, we ask if domestic and foreign audiences seem to be interested in the same things. To do this, we obtained lists of the most cited Spanish papers published in journals indexed in IN-RECS and WoS and classified as sociology.

We focus our study on papers published between 1996 and 2009. For IN-RECS, we downloaded the list of the 1% most cited papers in Spanish sociology journals (1994–2009).<sup>2</sup> We removed those published before 1996, leaving 255 titles with at least four citations. From WoS, we obtained articles that listed Spain in the address field, published 1996–2009, indexed in the *Social Science Citation Index* or *Humanities Citation Index* and found in journals listed in the subject area Sociology. We obtained 369 unique articles (excluding reviews, proceedings papers, notes, and letters). From this list we kept the 211 papers with at least one citation as of July 2011. Note that our study differs from Webster/Winclawska's in that she started with a list of Polish sociologists. In contrast, our sociology papers are those in journals classified as sociology by each database.

Using the database categories did create an anomaly. Half of the top 10 most cited WoS papers were published in *Annals of Tourism Research* (ATR). In WoS many journals are assigned to multiple categories. *Annals of Tourism Research* is classified in hospitality first and sociology second, and its most cited and citing journals are hospitality journals. Even in a transdisciplinary field like sociology (Small and Crane 1979; Glänzel et al. 1999), the inclusion of ATR is eccentric and unique to WoS. IN-RECS includes business and tourism journals in the economics category. Both Google Scholar and the Scimago classification based on Scopus position the field of Tourism and Leisure studies as a subfield of business. There was no tourism panel in the 2008 RAE; 40% of tourism submission went to the Business and Management studies sub-panel (Hall 2011). The Spanish scholars publishing in ATR are marketing researchers located in business schools. *Annals of Tourism Research* is ranked third among sociology journals by impact factor, which is likely due to the higher average citation rate in the business field.

Although we emphasize here the mention of WoS fields in Spanish law, the emphasis is on journals highly ranked in WoS fields. If Spanish sociologists never publish in ATR, they are not disadvantaged, there are 9 actual sociology journals in the top 10 WoS sociology journal list. Tourism researchers can point to the WoS field of Tourism and Leisure and the top ranked journals in that field. Because the WoS classification of ATR into sociology is eccentric and of no consequence, even in an evaluation system with a rule-based focus on WoS fields, we

eliminated papers in ATR from this analysis. We were left with 171 WoS papers.

In order to explore the different subject emphases in the two databases, we classified every paper into a subfield of sociology using the research committee structure of the International Sociology Association (ISA).<sup>3</sup> We examined every title and if necessary journal title, abstract or even the paper itself to find the ISA category that best matched the subject area of each paper.

## 6. Comparing IN-RECS and WoS

Echoing the results of Webster on Polish sociology, IN-RECS and WoS describe quite different versions of Spanish sociology. First, the people differ. Our IN-RECS papers list 293 authors, and our WoS papers 331 authors. These author lists overlap hardly at all - 20 authors are on both lists. Two of the top 25 most cited WoS authors are among the most cited authors in IN-RECS. Three of the top 25 most cited IN-RECS indexed authors are on the WoS list. In both cases authors ranked below 100 on the other list. As viewed through the databases of papers, the Spanish language sociology community looks like a different set of people than the English language sociology community with addresses in Spain.

Second, the topic emphases differ. Tables 1 and 2 list the top 10 most cited papers in each database. The most cited papers in IN-RECS are about migration, labor movements, work and family. The IN-RECS list includes two papers by scholars not working in Spain. Apart from migration, the topics on the WoS top 10 list differ. The differing topic emphases are confirmed in Fig. 1 which shows the distribution of IN-RECS and WoS cited papers across ISA categories. The top 5 categories in IN-RECS are similar to those appearing in the IN-RECS top 10 list: political sociology, migration, work, family and organization. The top 5 categories in WoS differ: social indicators, language and society, community research, religion, health. The correlation coefficient between the two lists is -0.04 that is in terms of frequency of ISA categories, IN-RECS and WoS paper sets are uncorrelated.

Although the papers we examine are all cited - the top 1% most cited in IN-RECS and cited more than four times in WoS - we can go a step further and look at which ISA research areas average the most citations per paper within these sets. Tables 3 and 4 report the total citations to papers in each area divided by the number of years the papers have been published. That is, instead of dividing citations by number of papers, we normalized also for the fact that the papers vary in age. Only areas with four or more papers were included.

Again the areas at the top of each list differ. The most cited areas in IN-RECS are: social transformations and sociology of development, science and technology,

**Table 1.** Top 10 most cited IN-RECS papers

Cites	Reference	ISA Category
25	Cachón Rodríguez, Lorenzo (2002) The formation of the “Immigrant Spain”: market and citizenship, <i>Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas</i> .	Migration
15	Baylos Grau, Antonio Pedro (1999) Globalization and Labor/Labour Law, <i>Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales</i> .	Labor movements
14	Roquero, Esperanza (1996) African salary earners working under plastics, <i>Sociología del Trabajo</i> .	Work
13	Solé, Carlota <i>et al.</i> (2000) Impact of immigration on receiving society, <i>Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas</i> .	Migration
12	Bazo, Maria Teresa and Dominguez-Alcon, Carmen (1996) Family health care for the elderly and social policies, <i>Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas</i> .	Family research
12	Gonzalez, Juan Jesus (1996) Classes, citizens and types of citizens: Post-socialism election cycle (1986-1994), <i>Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas</i> .	Participation, organizational democracy and self-management
12	Haraway, Donna (1999) The Promises of Monsters: a regenerative politics for inappropriate/ble others, <i>Política y Sociedad</i> .	Political Sociology
11	Boyer, Robert and Freyssenet, Michel (1996) Emergence of new industrial models: problems with the international program “gerpisa”, <i>Sociología del Trabajo</i> .	Organization
11	Castellanos Ortega, Mari Luz and Pedreño Cánovas, Andrés (2001) From El Ejido to Lorca’s accident: The bitter harvest of immigrant workers on the miracle vergels of Mediterranean agriculture, <i>Sociología del Trabajo</i> .	Work
11	Izquierdo Escribano, Antonio and López de Lera, Diego (2003) Foreigner population’s demographic trace in Spain, <i>Revista de Ciencias Sociales</i> .	Migration

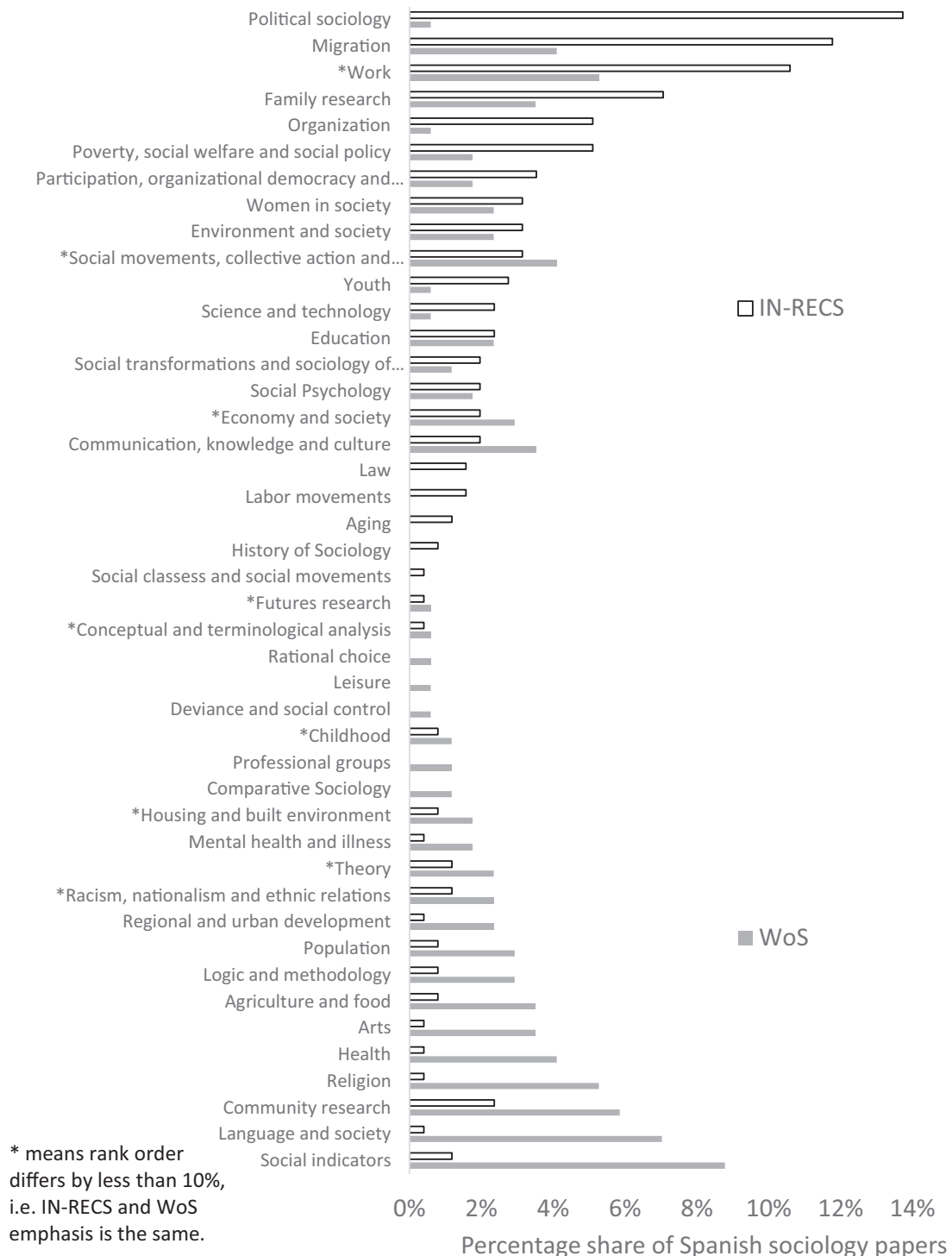
**Table 2.** Top 10 most cited WoS papers<sup>a</sup>

Cites	Reference	ISA category
86	Van der Ploeg, JD <i>et al.</i> (2000) Rural development: From practices and policies towards theory, <i>Sociología Ruralis</i> .	Regional and urban development
73	Eguiluz, VM; Zimmermann, MG; Cela-Conde, CJ; San Miguel, M (2005) Cooperation and the emergence of role differentiation in the dynamics of social networks, <i>American Journal Of Sociology</i> .	Community research
23	Navas, M; Garcia, MC; Sanchez, J; Rojas, AJ; Pumares, P; Fernandez, JS (2005) Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM): New contributions with regard to the study of acculturation, <i>International Journal Of Intercultural Relations</i> .	Migration
22	Van Dijk, TA (2006) Discourse and manipulation, <i>Discourse &amp; Society</i> .	Language and society
22	Batista-Foguet, JM; Fortiana, J; Currie, C; Villalbii, JR (2004) Socio-economic indexes in surveys for comparisons between countries, <i>Social Indicators Research</i> .	Economy and society
20	Martinez-Fernandez, J; Esteve-Selma, MA; Calvo-Sendin, JF (2000) Environmental and socioeconomic interactions in the evolution of traditional irrigated lands: A dynamic system model, <i>Human Ecology</i> .	Agriculture and food
20	Requena, F (2003) Social capital, satisfaction and quality of life in the workplace, <i>Social Indicators Research</i> .	Social indicators
18	Lopez-Sintas, J; Katz-Gerro, T (2005) From exclusive to inclusive elitists and further: Twenty years of omnivorousness and cultural diversity in arts participation in the USA, <i>Poetics</i> .	Arts
16	Navas, M; Rojas, AJ; Garcia, M; Pumares, P (2007) Acculturation strategies and attitudes according to the Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM): The perspectives of natives versus immigrants, <i>International Journal Of Intercultural Relations</i> .	Migration
16	Garcia, MFM; Ramirez, MG; Jariego, IM (2002) Social support and locus of control as predictors of psychological well-being in Moroccan and Peruvian immigrant women in Spain, <i>International Journal Of Intercultural Relations</i> .	Migration

<sup>a</sup>Excluding papers in Annals of Tourism Research.

community research, labor movements, migration, economy and society, family research, work, and poverty. The most cited areas in WoS are: environment and society, migration, community research, regional and

urban development, arts, education, work, and social indicators. Although community research is third on both lists, this is deceptive. The INRECS papers we classified into community research concern social capital while the



**Figure 1.** Distribution of IN-RECS and WoS papers across sociology subfields.

WoS papers examine social networks, and most are in the journal *Social Networks*.

One research area in Spanish sociology appears to be fairly strong in both databases –international immigration, or migration. Three such studies appear among the top 10 most cited papers in both IN-RECS and WoS. Migration is the second largest research area in the IN-RECS data

and the seventh largest in the WoS data (out of 44 in total). Migration is on average the fifth most cited area in IN-RECS and the second most cited area in WoS.

Topics can be closer to or further away from the core concerns of a discipline. We attempted to establish which set of topics is closer to the core of sociology. In neither case do the most popular topics align with the areas most

**Table 3.** IN-RECS citations to ISA areas\*

ISA research committee	Cites/year
Social transformations and sociology of development	<b>0.84</b>
Science and technology	<b>0.78</b>
Community research	<b>0.77</b>
Labor movements	<b>0.76</b>
<b>Migration</b>	<b>0.76</b>
Economy and society	<b>0.71</b>
Family research	<b>0.66</b>
Work	<b>0.65</b>
Poverty, social welfare and social policy	<b>0.64</b>
Participation, organizational democracy and self-management	0.62
Political sociology	0.61
Organization	0.59
Women in society	0.58
Social psychology	0.56
Communication, knowledge and culture	0.56
Education	0.54
Environment and society	0.53
Social movements, collective action and social change	0.52
Youth	0.50
Law	0.44
All areas	0.62

\*Figures in bold are above the average value for all areas

**Table 4.** WoS citations to ISA areas

ISA research committee	Cites/year
Environment and society	<b>4.38</b>
<b>Migration</b>	<b>3.87</b>
Community research	<b>3.54</b>
Regional and urban development	<b>3.24</b>
Arts	<b>2.67</b>
Education	<b>2.40</b>
Work	<b>1.71</b>
Social indicators	<b>1.64</b>
Logic and methodology	1.26
Agriculture and food	1.09
Family research	0.92
Communication, knowledge and culture	0.91
Population	0.88
Economy and society	0.85
Language and society	0.74
Social movements, collective action and social change	0.71
Religion	0.70
Racism, nationalism and ethnic relations	0.68
Health	0.67
Theory	0.48
Women in society	0.33
All areas	1.59

emphasized by the membership of the American Sociological Association (<http://www.asanet.org/sections/CountsLastFiveYears.cfm> accessed on October 1, 2014).<sup>4</sup> Since 2003, five areas have topped the membership counts,

collectively accounting for 19% of ASA members: culture; sex & gender; medical; organizations, occupations & work; race, gender & class. Only organizations, occupations & work papers appear frequently in IN-RECS. Sex & gender is difficult because it does not appear in the ISA list. We also classified the papers using the ASA categories, though we were unable to classify 13% of papers in each case. Sex & gender did rank as the 6th most frequent category of publishing in IN-RECS using that classification.

In addition to being more or less “core” to a discipline, topics can be more or less theoretical. The titles of the top 10 papers establish a more concrete focus among IN-RECS titles contrasted with greater abstraction in the WoS list. Specificity and people appear in IN-RECS titles: “immigrant Spain”, labor law, African salary earners working in plastics, family health care for the elderly, election cycle 1986–94, the Gerpisa program, and immigrant workers. In contrast, one WoS title mentions Moroccan and Peruvian immigrant women; another reports a study of American data; the rest are abstract: rural development, role differentiation in social networks, acculturation, socio-economic indexes, environmental and socioeconomic interactions, social capital in the workplace. The two very highly cited WoS papers offer theory and a theoretical simulation, and models are prominent in the rest of the top 10 list. Internationally cited work is either about America, or is abstract. In contrast, the specificity of the Spanish experience is of interest to the domestic audience.

## 7. The view from impact factors

Since Webster/Winclawska published her analyses, scholars have been increasingly subject to national evaluation systems and use of the Web of Science journal Impact Factor to judge their work. In the absence of citation data, analysts often use the perceived quality of the journal in which a paper is published to indicate a paper’s quality. Web of Science provides for every journal a calculation of its average citation rate called the “impact factor”. This measure has been widely used in evaluations although its use is controversial. Citation counts of papers in even highly regarded journals vary over orders of magnitude; impact factors are determined by technicalities unrelated to article quality; and impact factors depend on field – the highest impact factors are found in rapidly expanding areas of basic research with a short lived literature with many references in each article (Seglen 1997). At a deeper level, the very concept of a core set of journals is fast eroding as referencing spreads more widely with the greater journal access afforded by the internet (Larivière et al. 2009, 2014; Lozano et al. 2012). The concept of core journals has never been very appropriate in the social sciences and humanities where more citations go to non-elite journals than in science,



**Table 5.** Top 15 papers in highest impact factor journals

Impact factor rank	Cites	Reference	ISA category
3	73	Eguiluz, VM; Zimmermann, MG; Cela-Conde, CJ; San Miguel, M (2005) Cooperation and the emergence of role differentiation in the dynamics of social networks, <i>American Journal Of Sociology</i>	Community research
4	3	Valiente, C (2003) Central state child care policies in postauthoritarian Spain - Implications for gender and carework arrangements, <i>Gender &amp; Society</i>	Family research
6	5	Vermunt, JK; Rodrigo, MF; Ato-Garcia, M (2001) Modeling joint and marginal distributions in the analysis of categorical panel data, <i>Sociological Methods &amp; Research</i>	Logic and methodology
6	4	Greenacre, M; Pardo, R (2006) Subset correspondence analysis - Visualizing relationships among a selected set of response categories from a questionnaire survey, <i>Sociological Methods &amp; Research</i>	Logic and methodology
6	2	Gauthier, JA; Widmer, ED; Bucher, P; Notredame, C (2009) How Much Does It Cost? Optimization of Costs in Sequence Analysis of Social Science Data, <i>Sociological Methods &amp; Research</i>	Logic and methodology
7	86	van der Ploeg, JD <i>et al.</i> (2000) Rural development: From practices and policies towards theory, <i>Sociologia Ruralis</i>	Regional and urban development
7	7	Gonzalez, JJ; Benito, CG (2001) Profession and identity. The case of family farming in Spain, <i>Sociologia Ruralis</i>	Work
7	7	Yruela, MP (1995) Spanish rural society in transition, <i>Sociologia Ruralis</i>	Social transformations & soc. of development
7	4	Perez, JE (2000) The LEADER programme and the rise of rural development in Spain, <i>Sociologia Ruralis</i>	Regional and urban development
7	3	Palacios, SPI (1998) Farmers and the implementation of the EU nitrates directive in Spain, <i>Sociologia Ruralis</i>	Regional and urban development
7	2	Driga, O; Lafuente, E; Vaillant, Y (2009) Reasons for the Relatively Lower Entrepreneurial Activity Levels of Rural Women in Spain, <i>Sociologia Ruralis</i>	Women in society
7	1	Rioja, LAC; Redondo, RG; Aboitiz, RJ (2001) Death in town and country an analysis of urban-rural differences in mortality, <i>Sociologia Ruralis</i>	Population
7	1	Estrada, EM (1995) Farmers' unions and the restructuring of European agriculture, <i>Sociologia Ruralis</i>	Agriculture and food
7	1	Yanez, CJN (1999) Women and social mobility in rural Spain, <i>Sociologia Ruralis</i>	Women in society

engineering and medicine. The share of citations to non-elite journals in social science and humanities is now over 50% (Acharya *et al.* 2014, Fig. 3).

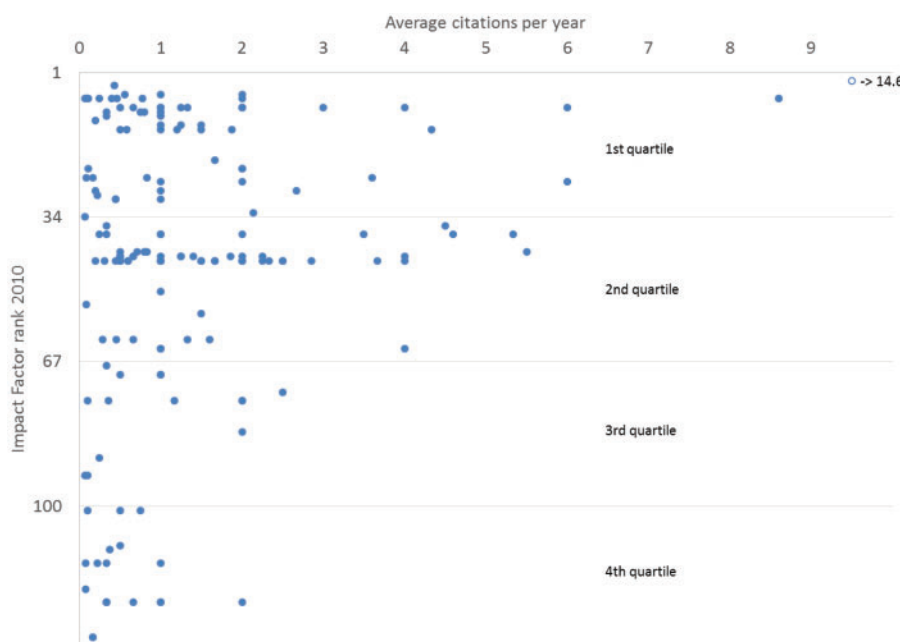
In spite of all this, the law mandates that Spanish researchers are assessed using the Impact Factor. So in Table 5 we present a fifth perspective on Spanish sociology, the view in WoS using journal Impact Factors rather than paper citation counts. The top 15 papers during the period examined here are listed in descending order by their journal's 2010 Impact Factor rank in the sociology field. The total citations to each paper are also given. The two most cited papers in the dataset are here. The first concerns the dynamics of social networks and role differentiation, a quite abstract concern linked to a hot topic and core theory. The second paper is about the theory of rural development (in *Sociologia Ruralis*). These two papers constitute the overlap with the top 10 most cited list in Table 2. But because 13 of the 15 papers are not on the top 10 list, the topics differ again. One paper

is about gender, a core topic for American sociologists. The rest are about methods, in *Sociological Methods & Research* and rural sociology, in *Sociologia Ruralis*. The papers in *Sociologia Ruralis* concern specifics of the Spanish experience and are lower impact.

Outside the two most cited papers, the Impact Factor view has no correlation with the citation impact judgments of the international community. This is confirmed in Fig. 2 which plots for each paper the Impact Factor rank of its journal in 2010 against average citations per year. The position of the most highly cited paper is denoted on the far right of the graph. The horizontal lines separate the quartiles of impact factor. Apart from the two most highly cited papers, the top two quartiles are equivalent in the span of actual citation impact achieved. The third and fourth quartiles fare less well, but are by no means devoid of citation impact.

Our view from impact factors illustrates once again why the Impact Factor is a poor proxy measure of





**Figure 2.** Journal Impact factor rank versus cites.

paper impact. However, this is the view of Spanish sociology given priority in the law governing the Spanish national evaluation system.

## 8. Discussion

In relation to the *sexenio*, the focus on Impact Factors has been criticized both for encouraging unimportant research (Rodríguez-Navarro 2009) and for shifting research agendas away from “research with potential practical applications, and research on topics that are local, regional and national in scope, [and towards] basic research in topics more likely to be better received by the international research community, and therefore more likely to have a greater impact in terms of citation counts” (López-Cózar et al. 2007). It is this last point that finds support in our citation analysis.

Like Webster/Winclawska who found that foreigners did not seem to pay attention to work on core topics by Polish sociologists, our analysis suggested that different topics are cited in the English language and Spanish language sociology literature produced by Spanish authors. Furthermore, beyond topics of local or national concern, we found a specificity in the subjects of highly cited Spanish language papers that contrasted with theoretical abstraction in the titles of highly cited English language papers written by Spanish authors. This aligns with the suggestion by López-Cózar et al. that the “international” audience is not simply broader, and more demanding of higher quality work, but that the interests of international readers and domestic readers differ.

Though international might seem to mean of interest to people in every country, in the social sciences and humanities, there is the danger that rather than expressing this enlightenment ideal of universalism, “international” in practice means American. Scholars of academic literacy are the first to appreciate the power of having a *lingua franca* for scholarship. The benefits of broader audience and higher quality attained through working in English are considerable (Bennett 2010). Yet, those who are sensitive to geopolitical location such as Canagarajah (2002) also argue that scholars working outside the Anglophone center struggle with the hegemony of American journals and databases in their fields. Stylistic and referencing conventions are set by the Anglophone journals; Anglophone scholars define paradigms and topics of interest. Thought is standardized (Bennett 2010).

*In contrast to the ‘global’ as an imagined universal community of scholars wishing to share their best research and understandings, ‘global’ and its proxy in academic publishing, ‘international’ become almost synonymous with the Anglophone centre, the prototype being the United States. The United States, through its considerable material resources, the large number of US-based high status journals and its key location in relation to knowledge evaluation (through powerful institutions such as the ISI), has considerable power in gatekeeping what counts as contributions to universal knowledge. (Lillis and Curry 2010: 137)*

In a telling example that emphasizes that Anglophone alone isn’t enough, centrality is also required, Gläser (2004) found the same international disregard of Australian scholarship. In 2003, as part of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the Australian Sociological

Association (TASA), members were asked to vote for the 10 books that have most profoundly shaped sociological scholarship in Australia. Gläser compared the ranking resulting from the vote and citation counts for the top 10 books. The correlation between the ranking and total citation count was -0.12. The correlation between the ranking and the count of Australian citations was 0.60. Thus, a book's influence on Australian sociology was not related to its total citation count. It was loosely correlated with its domestic citation count. The most influential books according to the vote addressed nationally specific topics. Gläser concludes:

*Publications of this type are bound to fare less well in citation rankings because most of the citing articles are produced in the USA, and hence only publications on US-specific or on 'decontextualized' topics have a chance of getting high citation scores. (Gläser 2004: 277)*

As Gläser might predict, one of the top 10 most cited Spanish WoS papers is a study of American data. Eight of the others are "decontextualized" in that they are abstract. Abstraction strips out the locality from one's work, making it more likely to find favor internationally.

Academic literacy studies find that locality is of little interest in Anglophone journals, even in fields that value "thick description" and context (Lillis and Curry 2010). Anglophone locations represent the default, of universal interest, while other places are 'local'—of interest by way of exotic contrast or dismissed as parochial. Webster/Winclawska observed that foreigners seemed interested in Polish sociology only because of recent events of international interest, the transition away from communism. Apparently to be of interest to the international audience, specificity must concern situations piquant to the American mind: US contexts, remote tribes, societal upheaval in Poland after 1989, or in recent years, mainland China (Li and Flowerdew 2009).

That foreigners cited theoretical Spanish sociology aligns with Gläser's conclusions about abstraction and decontextualization, and we might leave it at that except for Webster/Winclawska contrasting observation that foreigners ignored work on theory by Polish sociologists. We believe the contrast illuminates just how profound is American hegemony in intellectual work. Polish theory was ignored because Polish sociologists approached theory differently than Americans while contemporary Spanish sociologists, or at least some subset of them, work along the same lines as American theoretical sociology.

As Konecki et al. (2005) explain, Polish sociology has been empirically oriented from the beginning. The leading method was the gathering of autobiographical memoirs, originally through open competitions. The emphasis on memoirs as data traces to Poland being a nation without a state during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as to the destruction of Polish archives, libraries and other cultural resources

during the World Wars. Gathering narratives on a large scale offered the hope of filling the gap in historical documentation. Polish biographical analysis emphasized the individual perspective rather than the collective, or structural aspects of society. A romantic flavor resulted emphasizing change arising in freedom, agency, and individual vision against social norms. Induction was the favored approach.

In contrast, American sociology has been deductive, quantitative, statistical and interested in establishing structural aspects of society. WoS-cited Spanish sociologists working in a theoretical mode are doing the same type of theory as American sociologists: modeling, simulation, theorizing social networks etc. A Spanish sociologist may not be able to interest an American sociologist in the particulars of Spanish society, but a decontextualized approach, using the same type of theory as Americans, has produced work that became highly cited in WoS.

Polish theory of biographical analysis could be applied to any society, and thus could be seen as decontextualized theory. But to an American for whom abstraction means theory applicable to deductive statistical analyses of quantitative data, theory of biographical analysis will presumably appear "foreign" and specific to the Polish context. In this light, the property of decontextualized abstraction seems less an attribute of universality, and more a social construct equating to alignment with the approach favored by the hegemonic intellectual community.

## 9. Conclusion

Here we have taken advantage of a Spanish citation index (IN-RECS) to compare domestic and foreign interest in Spanish authored sociology papers. We used citations as a marker of audience interest and compared papers highly cited in the Spanish index with those highly cited in WoS. We presented five views of Spanish papers classified as sociology in the databases:

- (1) Top 10 most cited papers in IN-RECS
- (2) Top 10 most cited papers in WoS
- (3) Average citations to IN-RECS papers by ISA research area
- (4) Average citations to WoS papers by ISA research area
- (5) Top 15 papers in highest WoS Impact Factor journals

If the task were to identify the topic area of greatest strength in Spanish sociology, we would find no consensus among these depictions. Although if we eliminate Impact Factor, migration would be a strong consensus contender. The search for the strongest topic area serves in this paper as an arbitrary device to illustrate the different interests of domestic and international audiences.

If one were conducting an evaluation, one might instead look for the strongest authors. Only a few of the top 25

most cited authors in WoS and IN-RECS are among the most cited in the other list and each ranks lower than 100 on the other list. One could also look for the strongest institutions or collaborations; our data suggest that the answers will differ depending on where one looks.

In line with the literature on academic literacy, we find that specificity concerning Spanish society is of little interest internationally. Of most interest to the English language audience seems to be theoretical abstraction in the style of American sociology.

The diversity of Spanish sociologies visible here could be seen as a strength. Domestic audiences seek to understand the evolution of Spanish society while Spanish scholars also contribute to an international conversation advancing modeling and simulation techniques concerning social networks. Spanish sociologists work on a number of topics of interest to various audiences.

However, overlaid on this heterogeneous, evolving and quintessentially human system are incentives codified in the national evaluation process. Such processes seek not diversity, but quality. Quality in this context is relative and entails comparison using the Impact Factor measure of the Web of Science database. This single view of the system is privileged above all others in allocating resources.

This is problematic because databases require standardization. Papers, journals and fields must be classified to be counted in the correct category. An eccentric classification of a tourism journal as sociology in WoS could have consequences for resource allocation to sociology in Spain because WoS field based journal lists are mentioned in the law establishing the method used in the *sexenio*. This illustrates the danger of relying on an outside database constructed for other purposes. However, constructing a database for the purposes of an evaluation is not without peril. Classification can be various and arbitrary but when resources are at stake, it can become political (Lopez Piñero and Gimenez Toledo 2011).

The choice of which version of sociology to privilege in the evaluation system is also political. The various communities of Spanish sociologists may well be in dispute over which approach is best. In backing Impact Factor sociology with money, the *sexenio* chooses sides. Not all systems use the Impact Factor, but all systems do choose the same side in disputes over what type of social science and humanities scholarship should be favored with resources. Papers in journals indexed in WoS are always awarded more points than papers in journals not indexed in WoS.

The *sexenio* system constitutes an evaluation machine as defined by Dahler-Larsen (Dahler-Larsen 2011). It is codified, system wide and applied repeatedly over many years. The force exerted by the *sexenio* on the system may not be very strong in any single decision, but it persists over time. It can be anticipated and so incorporated into forward planning and long term career agendas. In this way, evaluation machines exert

constitutive effects on the systems they evaluate. In response, systems evolve to more closely align with the incentives of the evaluation. Over the long term, we predict that the variety of contributions offered by Spanish sociology will narrow to those visible in the Impact Factor view. Much will thereby be lost.

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## Conflict of Interest

None declared.

## Notes

1. ANEP evaluates projects for the granting of government research funding. ANECA provides accreditation of university teachers (teaching and researching). CNEAI will be merged with ANECA going forward. (Jefatura del estado. Ley 15/2014, de 16 de septiembre, de racionalización del Sector Público y otras medidas de reforma administrativa. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, n. 266, 17 September 2014. [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2014-9467](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2014-9467))
2. See <http://ec3.ugr.es/in-recs/ranking/Sociologia-Rank-Articulos.htm>.
3. The ISA research committee list is available at: <http://www.isa.sociology.org/rc.htm>
4. We could not find counts of members of ISA research areas.

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