

**‘Here be dragons!’ The gross under-representation of the Global South on editorial boards
in Geography**

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Abstract

One manifestation of the glaring lack of equality, diversity and inclusion in higher education relates to the underrepresentation of certain individuals and/or regions in the scholarly publication process. Here, we analyse the affiliations of editorial board members in 126 Geography journals. Specifically, we examine editorial board membership by region and determine the extent to which the regional representation of editorial board members is associated with journal impact factor as a measure of journal reach and quality. Of the 5202 editorial board members examined, almost 80% are located in Mainland Europe, North America and the British Isles while roughly five percent are located in Central America, South America, the Middle East and Africa combined. Moreover, editorial board members located in these four regions from the Global South are most often editorial board members of journals in the lowest quartile (by impact factor). These findings

highlight the outdated and exclusionary practices that pervade the scholarly publication process in science in general, and Geography specifically.

Keywords: Geography, editorial board membership; Global South; equality; diversity, inclusion

Introduction

Research examining the composition of editorial boards of journals is not new. A number of studies have examined the representation of certain groups of individuals and/or regions across a range of disciplines including educational psychology (Robinson et al., 1998), psychiatry (Saxena et al., 2003), management science (Metz & Harzing 2009), communication science (Goyanes, 2020), accounting science (Dhanani & Jones, 2017) and evolution and ecology (Fox et al., 2019), among numerous others. Without exception, researchers have noted the significant gender and geographic disparities that exist within editorial boards with males and the developed countries most often over-represented. Reasons provided for the lack of diversity among editorial board members are myriad and range from a lack of proficiency in English (Ramírez-Castañeda, 2020), and simple ignorance (Goyanes, 2020) to more malevolent reasons such as the purposive repression of certain groups (i.e., Global South; non-English-speaking countries) (Sengupta, 2020), ultimately leading to what Mignolo (1993) refers to as a form of ‘academic colonialism’ whereby scientific knowledge within certain disciplines is ‘ring-fenced’ and aligned to more powerful developed countries. Regardless of the reasons provided, there is little doubt that the composition of editorial boards is heavily skewed towards certain groups of individuals and countries. But why does this matter?

Academic journals are the messengers of scientific knowledge across any discipline and can, in many instances, determine the trajectory of a discipline. As such, editors of academic journals are the gatekeepers of scientific publishing and not only determine what is sent out for peer review but also what is published. If the editor is the ‘gatekeeper’ then editorial board members serve as their advisers motivating on which articles should be published and in doing so play a vital role in the dissemination of scientific information to the research community. While editorial board members do not necessarily have the same authority as editors, their opinion of a paper’s theoretical framework, methods, and findings should matter more to an editor than external reviewers who are not editorial board members. In short, both the editor and editorial boards members ultimately decide what is published and, in doing so, conjointly determine the direction and trajectory of a particular discipline.

In this paper we examine the level of representation of academics from across the globe as editorial board members for journals in the field of Geography. In doing so, we highlight the level of representation of academics located in the Global South compared to the Global North. The former refers to African, Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern countries who are also members of the Group of 77² while the latter refers to the group of economically developed countries with high per capita gross domestic product that collectively concentrate most global wealth (Independent Commission on International Development Issues, 1980). Previous work has primarily investigated inequalities in editorial board composition by gender (see Mauleón et al., 2013; Metz & Harzing 2012; Morton & Sonnad 2007; Stegmaier et al., 2011; Schurr et al., 2020) with fewer studies investigating the extent to which academics from certain geographic regions are represented on editorial journal boards. Notable exceptions include Cummings & Hoebink (2016) who found that only nine percent of editorial board members were based in developing

countries among ten ‘well-known’ journals in the field of development studies while Saxena et al. (2003) found that only 4 of 530 members of the editorial boards for 11 psychiatric journals were based in developing countries (see also studies by García-Carpintero et al., 2010; Harzing & Metz, 2013).

We believe this study will be of interest to journal editors and publishers given their responsibility for determining the social character of their editorial boards. In fact, the study is important to all Geographers given the potential implications of diversity and inclusivity for the future of the discipline.

Diversity and the Geography academe

Throughout history, Geography as a discipline has informed how people view the world. During the Enlightenment period, the prominent geographer, Immanuel Kant “advanced the definitive position that skin colour is a result of distance from the equator, and that those of darker skin colour are possessed of inferior moral, social and intellectual qualities” (Kobayashi, 2003, p. 544). This racialization of space has impacted subsequent generations of scholars with colonialism and globalisation continually perpetuating unequal power dynamics between the Global North and Global South¹ (e.g. Garcia-Roman, 2003). This dynamic has not only impacted the growth of Geography as a discipline throughout much of the world but also impacted higher education systems more generally with many institutions particularly in former European colonies in Africa having administrative and organizational structures, as well as disciplines of study and curricula based on a European model (Knight, 2018). Teaching in Geography has not been immune to this scourge with curricula in higher education systems in Africa in particular largely following a ‘colonized’ template and, at times, employing imported European staff (Wesso & Parnell, 1992;

Pietsch, 2011; Frankema, 2012; Visser et al., 2016). Thus, the discipline of Geography and geographical knowledge production has a geography (Jazeel, 2015) and post-modern studies (in Geography) should view knowledge and its production as situated (Garcia-Roman, 2003). Therefore, main research foci on power dynamics has largely centred on the hegemony of English within the discipline (e.g. Harris, 2001; Garcia-Roman, 2003; Kitchin, 2005) and the geography of geographical knowledge production (e.g. Gutiérrez & López-Nieva, 2001; Bański & Ferenc, 2013; Craggs, 2019). However, Paasi (2005) notes that the response of the Anglophone geographic community to the ‘internationalisation’ debate in Geography has been muted. To add to this growing discourse, this paper examines the representation of academics based in the Global South as editorial board members in journals published in the discipline of Geography because this is exactly when issues surrounding plurality and diversity within society more broadly has reached a zenith. Notwithstanding the recent broader political and societal movements protesting for equality and inclusivity (notably the #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall and #BlackLivesMatter movements), most scholars are now in favour of “more equal representation and diversification of scholars and studies from around the world in publications, conferences, and faculties” (Waisbord, 2019, p. 93). And rightly so, as the inequality that exists, and persists, in scientific knowledge production across the world is eye-opening. Researchers located in the Global South publish less (Mweru, 2010), collaborate less (Dahdouh- Guebas et al., 2003), are less likely to be editors (Cummings & Hoebink, 2016) or editorial board members (Burgess & Shaw, 2010; Lee, 1995) of any major journals, and are less likely to act as reviewers for top journals (McMichael et al., 2005). This perceived lack of participation, or rather, lack of representation of scholars based in the Global South of the global academe is (or should be) cause for concern, for science in general, and for Geography specifically.

Geography is everywhere. It is a discipline that prides itself on being inclusive and integrative as well as being able to transcend borders (real or imagined) in the pursuit for scientific knowledge. It is by its very nature ‘global’, focusing on patterns of phenomena and the processes that created them. Importantly, there is no specific subject matter which it studies but rather aims to describe and explain the Earth using the spatial perspective more broadly. Geographers aim to make sense of the world and our place in it to make a difference, as is illustrated by this statement from the American Association of Geographers (www.aag.org):

Geography asks the big questions — Where? How? Why? What if? — and gives you the perspective to answer them with advanced technology and a solid knowledge of the world in which we all live.

Despite this global and integrative outlook, the discipline is dominated by a small group of countries who are “in charge” of key institutional/structural mechanisms that play an important role in knowledge production and dissemination and the development of the discipline, notably editorial boards. The role that editorial boards play in the functioning of the academic community should not be underestimated. At a broader level, editorial boards determine the scientific agenda of a discipline. Moreover, they guide and determine the discipline’s trajectory and confer a measure of authority and legitimacy to the wider academic world (Brinn & Jones, 2007; Lindsey, 1976). Operationally, editorial boards determine what is ‘good’ and ‘legitimate’ research that is worthy of publication and who, in turn, is published (Dhanani & Jones, 2017). According to Endenich & Trapp (2018), the scholarly profiles of editorial team members sends a powerful signal to the academic community concerning the types of research, and specifically the types of research methods, preferred for publication. Therefore, journals, through the editorial boards they appoint, reap what they sow as the scholarly community chooses journal submission targets that reflect the

signals editors send (Sengupta, 2020). Katchelmeier (2018) presents an alternative to the signaling perspective of Endenich & Trapp (2018) and argues that editorial boards do not so much signal editorial preferences, but they rather *reflect* the preferences indicated by submissions entrusted to the journal. Either way, both influence the goal of enhancing scholarly diversity. In short, the predominance of the Global North in terms of editorial board composition of journals across all disciplines determines what is published and promotes a shared consensus around established ‘Western’ theories and a particular interpretation of the world (Braun & Dióspatonyi, 2005; Burgess & Shaw, 2010; Metz & Harzing, 2012). This, in its very essence, is anti-Geography.

While previous studies have examined the composition of editorial boards across a range of disciplines none have drawn from across the entire field of Geography. Some studies have focused on certain sub-sets within Geography such as Bański & Ferenc (2013) who highlight the dominance of academics from Anglo-American institutions on the editorial boards of the top tier of (mostly Human) Geography journals and Schurr et al. (2020) who examined the gender of editorial boards of 22 Geography journals and found the under-representation of women as board members with only six journals having at least half of their board positions occupied with women. Recently, Franklin et al. (2021) also examined the demographic structure and international diversity of the editorial teams of eight flagship quantitative Human Geography journals and similarly found the under-representation of women as editorial board members in their sample of journals. In terms of internationalization they found a dominance of North America in all journals examined.

In this study we extend this literature by examining editorial board memberships of 126 journals listed under the ‘Geography’ categories of the Clarivate Analytics’ Web of Science database and address the following questions: (1) What is the regional representation of editorial

board members in Geography? (2) Does the regional representation of editorial board members differ for ‘Human’ Geography versus ‘Physical’ Geography? And (3) to what extent is the regional representation of editorial board members associated with journal impact factor as an indication of journal reach and quality? Whilst existing hierarchies of knowledge generation and dissemination is relatively well-known in other disciplines, we aim to examine, for the first time, whether this extends, in part, to Geography.

Data and methods

In our study we consider the location (country) of editorial board member affiliations of Geography journals as indexed by the Clarivate Analytics’ Web of Science (WoS) database. The WoS database was used, ahead of the Scopus platform, because it comprises defined categories for Geography journals. The Scopus platform only lists the category ‘Geography, Planning and Development’ under Social Sciences subject area, while Physical Geography journals are scattered across several categories in the ‘Earth and Planetary Science’ subject area making it difficult to compile a structured list of dedicated Geography journals. The WoS database categorizes Geography journals into two separate research domains, namely Geography-Physical (Physical Geography) and Geography-General which is aligned with the sub-discipline of Human Geography. The Geography-General category comprises 84 journals (Supplementary Table 1) whereas the Geography-Physical category comprises 50 journals (Supplementary Table 2).¹ Owing to the multitude of sub-disciplines and overarching themes within the discipline, six

¹ We readily acknowledge that Geography is an extremely diverse discipline and stratifying the range of journals into two crude categories could mask subtle variations in the composition of editorial boards in sub-disciplines within Geography (i.e., such as Feminist Geography). We were however constrained by the categories listed by the Web of Science and also wanted to provide a broader overview of editorial board composition initially in our analysis, at least initially

journals are listed in both categories (i.e., *Landscape and Urban Planning*, *International Journal of Geographical Information Science*, *Journal of Maps*, *Erdkunde*, *Erde* and *Revista de Geografia Norte Grande*). Two journals (i.e. *Photogrammetric Engineering* and *Remote Sensing and Geography*) did not list the composition of the editorial boards and were, therefore, excluded from further analyses. Data on editorial board members' affiliations were collected in July 2020. Following the method of Cumming and Hoebink (2016), all members of the academic editorial boards of journals were included regardless of title (e.g. Editor, Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editor, Assistant Editor, Editorial Board, International Advisory Board). Thus, the resulting descriptive analysis is based on 5202 editorial board member country affiliations obtained from the 126 Geography journals.

It is important to note that a number of academics are listed on multiple editorial boards so the total number of 5202 includes duplicate counts. In addition, some editorial board members have multiple affiliations, and these were regarded as a proportion of one when counted. A total of 88 countries and territories are represented in editorial board member affiliations. These were divided into nine regional representations (i.e. North America, Central America, South America, British Isles, Mainland Europe, Middle East, Asia, Oceania and Africa). Rather than assess the raw number of editorial board members, the percentage of country representation of the total was calculated. Meadows et al. (2016) note a language (and by implication geographic) bias of Geography journals listed on the WoS database, but the spatial distribution of Geography journals examined here represents all regions apart from the Middle East and Central America while several journals are thematic and transcend regional boundaries. It is also pertinent to note that the quality of the data on editorial member affiliations is limited by the accuracy of the information on editorial boards available on journal websites. The data focuses on the geographic location of the

editorial board member affiliation(s) and not the country of origin, race or gender of editorial board members. Finally, we readily acknowledge that the institutional affiliation of an editorial board member may not necessarily reflect their nationality and as such the country location may be considered as a proxy. While this may be considered as a limitation of our methodology, prior research has successfully employed similar methods in research of this nature (see Ozbilgin, 2004; Burgess & Shaw, 2010; Cummings & Hoebink, 2017). Besides, our intention here is to provide a broad and descriptive overview of the representation of editorial board members by geographic region, issues of exogenous versus endogenous development is less of our concern.

Descriptive statistics of the list of journals used in the study are shown in Table 1. The 2019 impact factor of each Geography journal was extracted from the WoS database which also enables calculation of the journal quartile of the combined lists of indexed Geography journals. The impact factor of Geography journals ranges from 10.5 (for *Global Environmental Change - Human and Policy Dimensions*) to 0.19 (for *Mitteilungen Der Osterreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft*) with a mean impact factor of 2.5. We readily acknowledge that using impact factors to assess journal ‘quality’ is contentious. Previous research has highlighted both the intellectual and technical flaws inherent in their construction including, among others, a bias towards English language journals (Golder, 2008), the potential for abuse (such as self-citations) and fraud (such as the emergence of journals touting fake impact factors) (Fong & Wilhite, 2017; Larivière, 2019) and the fact that there is actually no formal model of ‘research quality’ that is obviously captured by the metric (Dowling, 2014). They also perpetuate a skewed, Anglo-centric notion of journal ‘reach and quality’ (see also Paasi, 2005; Kong & Qian, 2019). These issues notwithstanding, we felt that the use of an industry-standard (however flawed) metric assessing scholar publishing ‘quality’ globally would be most applicable in our analysis.

Table 1: Editorial board members of Geography journals listed on the Clarivate Analytics' Web of Science database

	Count	Min	Mean	Max	SD	Mean impact factor	Countries represented
All*	5202	5	41.3	149	22	2.5	84
Physical Geography	2097	5	42.8	117	23.8	2.7	69
Human Geography	3382	5	40.9	149	20.9	2.4	70
Quartile 1	1614	20	50.4	89	18.5	4.7	52
Quartile 2	1377	5	43	149	28.7	2.6	49
Quartile 3	1131	10	35.5	62	13.9	1.7	59
Quartile 4	1080	5	36	90	20.7	0.9	63

* Two journals had no associated information (*Photogrammetric Engineering* and *Remote Sensing and Geography*)

Results

Q1: What is the regional representation of editorial board members in Geography?

The regional representation of editorial board members from all journal listed under the Geography category of the Web of Science database is shown in Figure 1. Editorial board members are predominantly located in Mainland Europe (31%) and North America (29%) with these two regions collectively accounting for approximately 60% of all editorial board members. They are followed by the British Isles which have 19% of editorial board members. In fact, two regions (North America and the British Isles) collectively account for 48% of all country locations of editorial board members, providing initial evidence of the dominance of these two regions have in terms of scientific knowledge dissemination in Geography. The least diverse journals in terms of their editorial board composition are the *Journal of Geography* and *Area* with all of its editorial board members being based in the United States and British Isles, respectively. The most ‘internationalized’ or diverse journal in terms of its editorial board composition is the *Journal of Economic Geography* with 15 different countries (and four continents) represented in their editorial board, although no editorial members are based in Africa. There are a number of editorial boards dominated by US academics (*Professional Geographer* (82%) and *Physical Geography* (81%)) as well as UK-academics (*Scottish Geographical Journal* (88%) and *The Geographical Journal* (70%)). Understandably, the patterns of country location are strongly linked to the countries in which the journals were originally founded. For example, of the 89 editorial team members of the *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, some 70 (79%) are located in United States while 10 out of the 22 editorial board members of the *New Zealand Geographer* are based in New Zealand. Whilst this may skew the results of our study somewhat it is interesting to note that the only journal on the database that is based in Africa, *The South African*

Geographical Journal has a relatively diverse editorial board with members located in 10 different countries. This is more than the current top-ranked journal in Geography (by impact factor) - *Global Environmental Change - Human and Policy Dimensions* which has editorial board with members located in only eight different countries represented. Other interesting findings include the fact that only 83 editorial members (out of 5202) have an African affiliation but four members with African affiliations have dual affiliations (all from South Africa). In fact, South Africa accounts for 63 out of the 83 editorial board members affiliated with African universities (76%), with one particular researcher listed on eight separate editorial boards and another listed on three different editorial boards. If you extract these two researchers from the dataset, the percent representation of researchers affiliated with African universities drops from 1.7% to 1.5%; a telling indictment. The high proportion of South African affiliations within Africa may be related to the strong colonial history of the country where many universities have strong linkages with higher education institutions, particularly in the British Isles (Visser et al., 2016). Indeed, Knight (2018, p. 284) notes that an 'existential crisis' was experienced by Geographers in South Africa after democracy in 1994 due to its previous reliance on a colonialised curricula and content. The result, almost thirty years later, has been renewed calls for the decolonization and transformation of the Geography undergraduate curriculum in South Africa (Knight, 2018; Long et al., 2019), with varying measures of successful implementation thus far.

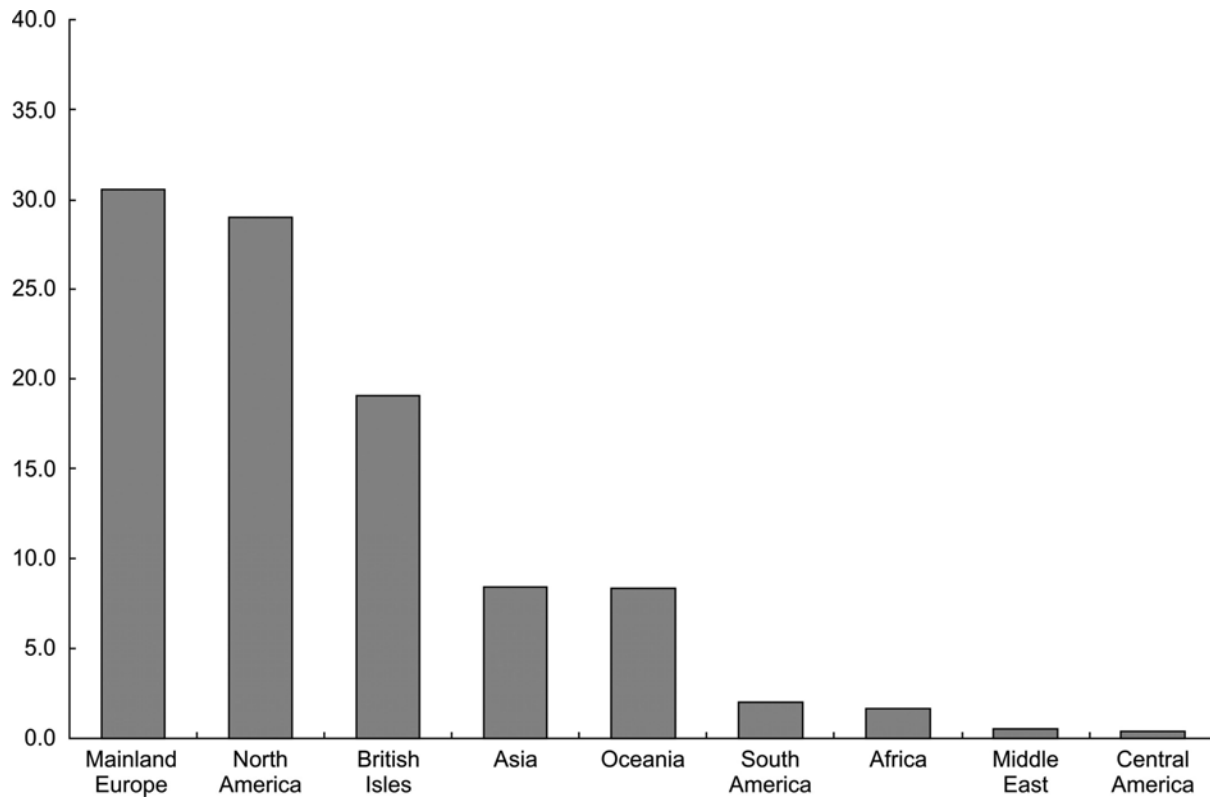


FIGURE 1. Regional representation of editorial board member affiliations (%) in Geography (in descending order)

Q2: Does the regional representation of editorial board members differ for Geography - General (Human) versus Geography - Physical?

The regional representation of editorial board members by Geography category is shown in Figures 2 and 3. Overall, trends are broadly similar across the two categories with fractionally more editorial board members located in North America for Human Geography (29%) compared to Physical Geography (28%) and less editorial board members located in Mainland Europe for Human Geography (28%) than Physical Geography (38%). Again, the dominance from North America and the British Isles, in terms of editorial board composition, is uniformly felt across the sub-disciplines. Collectively, these two regions account for 39% of all editorial board members for Physical Geography and 52% of all members for Human Geography. It is interesting to note

that Asia places third (12%), ahead of the British Isles, in representation on Physical Geography journals but fifth (6%) for Human Geography journals. Reasons for the increased presence of Asia on editorial boards in Physical Geography are speculative but could be related to the nature of research conducted in Physical Geography which tends to be more quantitative and analytical than Human Geography although more research is required to determine whether this is indeed the case.

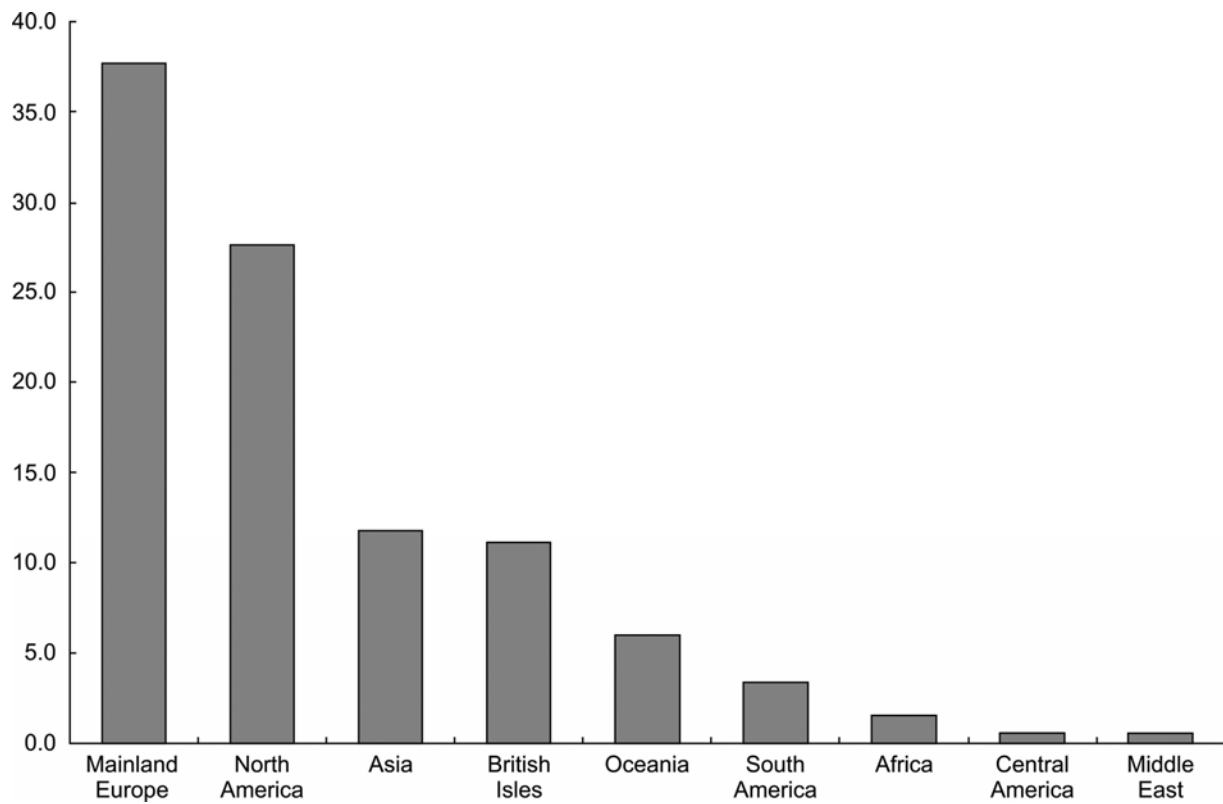


FIGURE 2. Regional representation of editorial board member affiliations (%) in Human Geography (in descending order)

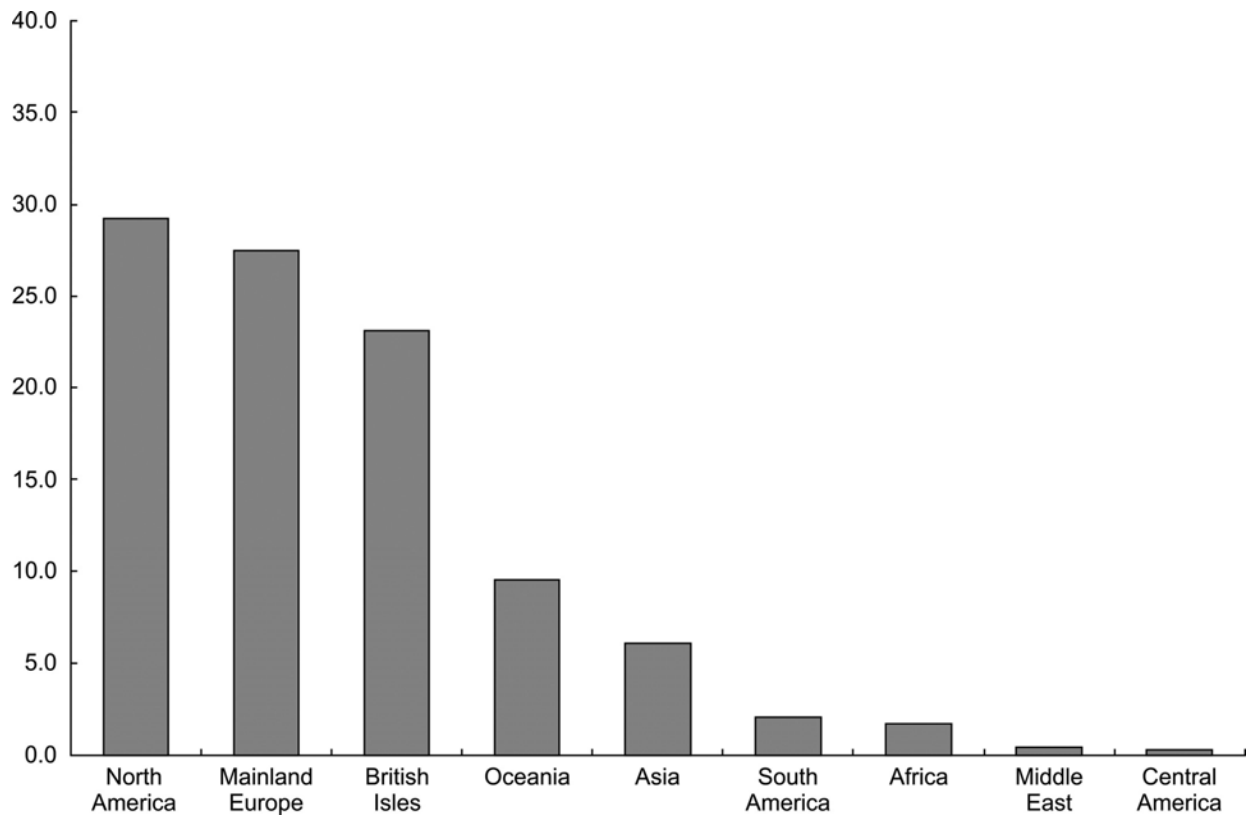


FIGURE 3. Regional representation of editorial board member affiliations (%) in Physical Geography (in descending order)

Q3: To what extent is the regional representation of editorial board members associated with journal impact factor?

An examination of the relationship between the regional representation of editorial board members and journal quartiles **of impact factor** shows a subtle but noticeable ‘**reach and quality**’ gradient for editorial board members affiliated with institution in North America and the British Isles (see Table 2). That is, editorial board membership from these regions increases across journals stratified by ‘quality’. Editorial board members based in these two regions are more likely to be associated with journals with higher impact factors. The same is also the case for editorial board members located in Asia although with lower raw prevalence. Interestingly, the opposite is true for Mainland

Europe which has a higher representation of editorial board members for journals with lower impact factors compared to journals with higher impact factors. This may be partly due to the fact that many ‘regional’ journals that are based in Europe have mainly European editorial board members and are have lower impact factors (e.g., *Mitteilungen Der Osterreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft*; *Zeitschrift fur Geomorphologie*; *Geodetski Vestnik*). Of greater concern is the fact that editorial board members that do have affiliations from Africa, Oceania and South America are more likely to be board members of journals that have the lowest impact factors further emphasizing not only the skewness of editorial board member representation by region but skewness by ‘quality’ too. A Spearman’s rank correlation (r^2) was used to determine the relationship between journal ‘quality’ – as measured by the impact factor quintile (1-4) – and the mean editorial board member affiliation by region. Four Spearman’s rank correlation coefficients were significant. In other words, positive correlation coefficients (Spearman’s rho) indicate that increasing rank in quartile (higher impact factor) is associated with increasing values in the region under investigation. Negative correlation coefficients indicate that increasing rank in quartile is associated with decreasing values in the region under investigation.

Table 2: Regional editorial board member affiliations by journal quartile (count)

	High		Low		Q4:Q1	r^2	p -value
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			
North America	36.0	31.4	28.9	19.2	0.53	-0.26	<0.05
Central America	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.54	-0.05	ns
South America	1.8	0.9	1.3	4.1	2.28	0.11	ns
British Isles	19.4	27.3	17.5	11.8	0.61	-0.20	<0.05
Europe	24.1	24.6	25.3	49.4	2.05	0.31	<0.05
Middle East	0.4	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.98	-0.05	ns
Asia	10.7	8.7	9.1	4.7	0.44	-0.19	<0.05
Oceania	5.6	5.0	14.9	7.7	1.37	0.13	ns
Africa	1.4	0.9	2.0	2.4	1.70	0.08	ns

Discussion

It is generally accepted by the scientific community that global knowledge production is unequal (see Hedding, 2020), dominated by the advanced economies of the Global North which have far superior and more sophisticated science systems. This acceptance is in itself surprising given the increasing acknowledgement of plurality and diversity as constitutive values of scientific progress (Goyanes, 2020) but it is still nonetheless real. Apart from China (Tollefson, 2018), academics in the Global South simply do not have the funding, access to resources and infrastructure to compete with their peers in the Global North and as a result they are much less research productive. The reality is, however, not that straightforward as academics in the Global South are in many ways beholden to the gatekeepers of knowledge production and dissemination in their discipline who are almost exclusively located in the Global North. Nowhere is this more evident than in the composition of editorial boards throughout almost all disciplines, including Geography. In this study we found that almost 80% of all editorial board members are located in Mainland Europe, North America and the British Isles. Of greater concern is the fact that the regions of Central America (0.4%), South America (2%), the Middle East (0.5%) and Africa (1.7%) collectively accounting for roughly five percent of editorial board memberships despite containing just under a third of the world's population. Worryingly, we found that the limited number of editorial board members with affiliations from these five regions are most often editorial board members of journals with the lowest impact factors. These gross inequities highlight not only the glaring lack of diversity in editorial board compositions in Geography but is also indicative of a broader systematic marginalization of the Global South that continues to perpetuate throughout academia in general with seemingly few opportunities for recourse.

Indeed, in order to be invited to sit on an editorial board a researcher based in the Global South needs to be scholarly productive, and hence impactful, yet one of the main mechanisms through which they are able to be so - through publishing - is restricted by the epistemic culture, norms and values of existing editorial board members, the large majority of whom are not from their part of the world. Previous research across multiple disciplines has shown that editors and editorial boards largely determine what types of research is published and by whom (Goyanes & Demeter, 2020; Harzing & Metz, 2013; Rosenstreich & Wooliscroft, 2013). In particular, Dyachenko (2014) has shown that 90% of journals in which the editor-in-chief is a United States citizen are dominated by publications from the United States, and for journals whose editors come from other developed countries, this figure approaches almost 60%. In this way, a chain reaction has been set in place, which has seen a self-reinforcing cycle in which the current composition of editorial boards has created a context that favours their perpetuation. When editorial boards are male-dominated, benefits accrue disproportionately to men, when editorial boards are dominated by the Global North, benefits accrue accordingly, and so the inequality in the scientific production of knowledge increases, including for Geography.

So, what are the implications of the inequities in editorial board representation in Geography journals? Why should we care? Low international diversity on journal editorial boards can influence multiple aspects of scholarly research and publishing. First, the lack of heterogeneity in editorial board membership restricts what types of research is published (Svensson, 2005; Tung, 2006) while increasing geographic diversity on an editorial board has been found to broaden the scope of theoretical and methodological approaches a journal publishes (Demeter, 2018). Interestingly, Goyanes & Demeter (2018) found that the age of the journal moderates the relationship between editorial board diversity and research approach diversity with newer journals

more likely to publish a range of different types of research approaches than older journals. Second, diversity on journal editorial boards can increase the level of internationalization of a scientific field. Scholars from different parts of the world differ in terms of their experiences, worldviews and values which can influence their research interests and, more importantly, their peer-review of research. Davison et al. (2005) notes that reviewers located in developed countries, for example, tend to take an overly academic line of critique in their review comments, with a tendency to reject if in doubt, whereas reviewers based in developing countries are often more sensitive to and appreciative of practical aspects of papers, with a tendency to encourage authors to develop their ideas further. Having editorial board members in the region where studies are conducted will also be more familiar with the environmental, social, and economic context and constraints under which they were carried out (Mammides et al., 2016). This seems especially relevant for a field-based discipline such as Geography.

Of course, there are a number of reasons provided for the lack of geographic diversity on editorial boards. Chief among them is the fact that the language barrier limits the level of involvement of scientists from the Global South in global science. The fact that English is the *lingua franca* for the exchange of scientific ideas is well-documented with 98% of publications in science being written in English, including researchers from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) country (Gordin 2015). However, it must be recognized that language is more than simply a mechanism of communication, it embodies a way of thinking, traditions and terminology (see Garcia-Roman, 2003). These differences should not only be acknowledged but should be embraced to prevent confusion when using terminology (see Hedding, 2016) and/or discussing key concepts within Geography. Despite the fact that 3445 geographical periodicals and serials had been published across 107 countries in 55 languages before 1980 (Harris & Fellmann, 1980),

English has become the dominant language in published Geography. The growing hegemony of English as a global language not only privileges the geographical discourse of the Anglophone world (Garcia-Roman, 2003) but has been found to limit the ability of non-Anglophone countries to engage and contribute to the academic discourse (see Garcia-Roman, 2003; Ramírez-Castañeda, 2020; Franklin et al., 2021) with concomitant implications for broader recognition via editorial board membership. Goyanes (2020) argues that there is a need to acknowledge the legitimacy of other languages (and interpretations of the world) for producing scientific knowledge. This can be achieved by publishers urging editors to improve the international coverage of journals or editorial board members producing policy statements encouraging article submissions on or from under-represented regions and integrating these policies in their guidelines for authors. Through mapping the global journal landscape, Bell & Mills (2020) highlight how little we know about non-English scholarly production, and how our views of the global landscape are skewed by the dominant academic databases, particularly the Web of Science and Scopus (see Tennant, 2020). As a result, researchers fall into the trap of what Žižek (2004) terms the ‘unknown knowns’: ‘the knowledge that doesn’t know itself’. These, for Žižek, are the ‘silent presuppositions we are not aware of [that] determine our acts’. The implication for Geography is that the Global North dominated discipline is largely unaware of theoretical and methodological developments occurring outside their particular sphere of influence. In many ways similar to the ‘Here be dragons’ moniker historically used by ‘Western’ cartographers to represent under-explored or ‘unknown’ areas on maps of the past. Geography’s histories are imperialist (Daya, 2019) but change can happen and in order to do so the discipline needs to perpetually extend itself in ways which are not yet known but are essential for its continued longevity.

There is also the notion that academics in the Global South are just not ‘qualified’ enough to be considered for editorial board memberships. This is simply not the case. Whilst certainly trailing behind their Global North counterparts, the Global South is steadily improving its contribution to global research over the past few decades through increased research productivity and willingness to collaborate (Livingstone et al., 2016; Mahali et al., 2018; Stocks et al., 2008). Their raw number has also increased in real terms (Habel et al., 2017) with the number of scientists now available to serve on editorial boards each year from the Global South now likely exceeding the number of open editorial board positions in global science (Espin et al., 2017). Research output from the Global South has also increased steadily over the past decade and currently comprises roughly seven percent of worldwide research publication (Tijssen & Winnink 2018). Admittedly low but an increase, nonetheless. It should be noted, however, that Tollefson (2018) has recently shown that China is now the world's largest producer of scientific articles. In addition, Kong and Qian (2019) demonstrate that research from the Global South (in this instance from urban studies on China) provides opportunities for generating cross-context dialogues.

A final more malevolent reason for the lack of geographic diversity on editorial boards could be the fact that editors are loathed to diversify their editorial boards as this could potentially increase the range of journal articles published, which would impact numbers of citations and the journal impact factor. With citations forming the backbone by which journals are ranked, the result could be a decrease in ranking and associated ‘status’ of the journal. Indeed, previous research has shown how articles written by authors based in the Global South are cited less (Briggs & Weathers, 2016). There is also the associated view that editorial boards need to be homogenous in order to function effectively (see Besancenot et al., 2012). The notion here is that homogeneity ensures the highest standard of scholarly article peer review, which in turn improves the reach and quality of

the journal. Conversely, the varying academic experience, nationality, country of residence, language, and education of diverse boards hinders the unanimity of the manuscript reviewers, which may lead to the publication of low-quality academic journal papers (Mazov & Gureev, 2016). However, this false dichotomy of ‘excellence or diversity’ must end. Diversity breeds innovative science (Hofstra et al., 2020) and is essential to building solutions to challenges faced by all communities, both marginalized and non-marginalized (Barber et al., 2020). Moreover, Tooth & Viles (2021) contend that, at a time of environmental, social and economic transition, addressing equality, diversity and inclusion are critical to ensure that Geomorphology remains relevant, vibrant and accessible to society. This is certainly true for all subfields of Geography and the discipline as a whole.

To address any biases in the selection of editorial board members, Geography journals should interrogate how editorial boards are set up and maintained to identify any potential biases. Journals should become more transparent when advertising and recruiting for vacant positions on editorial boards. This would require journals to openly advertise vacant positions and publish the criteria for such positions on journal websites, society/community forums, and so forth. In addition, journals should list when the terms of office of editorial board members expire. Such openness and transparency may alert potential candidates, particularly those from outside the ‘normal’ pool, to look out for advertised positions on editorial boards. Importantly, academics in the Global South do not advocate for proportional representation on editorial boards. We argue that large numbers of Geographers in the Global South have simply been overlooked when editorial board membership openings have arisen. Rather, the default for editors appears to be to look in-house for new board members rather than look for appropriately qualified ‘outsiders.’ Editors typically rely on networking at conferences and/or symposia or through published research to locate new

editorial board members for journals. Unfortunately, these direct networks can perpetuate the unequal representation of editorial boards. For example, academics from the Global South are most often more constrained in their ability able to attend international conferences or symposia due to the costs associated with attending (i.e., travel, conference registration and accommodation). Visa requirements also limit the ability of Global South academics to travel frequently and for long periods of time which make it comparatively more difficult to present research at international meetings and gain vital exposure. This could potentially explain why certain academics in the Global South are on several editorial boards because these select few may have had the opportunity to attend larger conferences and/or they may have been educated, or held sabbaticals in institutions located in the Global North and have retained those linkages. Nominations for editorial boards are most often solicited from within the editorial board itself and members are more likely to propose the names of colleagues they know and whose credentials they can vouch for (Espin et al., 2017). Over time, these preferences can perpetuate existing inequalities and make it less likely for academics located in regions outside the existing ‘circle’ to be nominated. With fewer Global South representation on editorial boards, editors need to therefore make a concerted effort to sound out scholars and academics they do not know who could provide unique, and novel insights into a particular topic. Geographers in the Global South are weary of trying to prove themselves amid historically-biased institutional hierarchies and are likely now to accept the status quo, biased as it may be. Diversifying editorial boards may also shine a spotlight on the unacceptable ‘colonial’ or ‘parachute’ research practices recently highlighted by North et al. (2020) in the geosciences.

This paper aimed to raise attention to the disparities that exist and persist in the discipline specifically related to editorial board membership. The good news is that these inequalities are gaining attention of some scholars, organisations and publishers across various disciplines

including the geosciences (see Bell, 2020; Dzombak, 2020; Franklin et al., 2021; Schurr et al., 2020) with a number of strategies being implemented to address these imbalances. For example, *Lancet* – one of the world’s oldest and most prestigious journals – launched its #LancetWomen project in December 2017 committing to reach gender parity on their editorial advisory boards by 2020. Significant strides have been made in this regard with women now representing 79% of the editorial staff across 14 journals in *The Lancet* group, including 57% of the editors-in-chief. For their Series and Commissions, *The Lancet* strengthened their preference for at least 50% Global South contributors, making it a requirement of all lead authors and editors to justify why such ratios are not met (Clark & Horton, 2019). Regarding Geography specifically, a number of civil society groups and organisations have recently emerged in an attempt to make the discipline more inclusive and diverse including *Black Geographers* (www.blackgeographers.com) which formed in 2020 as a collective of Black geography students and graduates who aim to transform the discipline and make it more inclusive and engaging, particularly for minorities. While these initiatives are encouraging, the reality is that significant gender, racial and geographic disparities still persist within Geography which have important implications for the academe in the Global South. These include among others, the signal that these inequalities send to students in the Global South that South-based scholars do not have a central role to play in knowledge production within their discipline (Medie & Kang, 2018).

One limitation of our work is that our data represents a ‘snapshot’ in time and we are unable to indicate whether the results we show are improving (or have improved) over time. On the one hand there is evidence that academics in the Global South are collaborating more with their counterparts in the US and UK (Färnman et al., 2016; Baker, 2020) where the majority of those acting in any editorial capacity in Geography are located. Rightly or wrongly, this provides

academics in the Global South with greater exposure increasing the likelihood of editorial representation. On the other hand, Craggs and Neate (2020) note that connections and teleconnections between geographers in the Global North and Global South are weaker now than they were in the past (with specific reference to Nigeria). Whilst the colonial epistemic scholarly editorial structure may be changing, it could also be changing in the wrong direction? Future research could aim to tease out the exact nature of collaboration between academics in Geography across the Global North and Global South and aim to determine whether greater (or less) collaborations necessarily translates into greater representation of editorial boards.

Conclusion

The recent rise of global social and civic movements has brought issues of diversity and justice to the fore and highlighted the need for equality, diversity and inclusivity across all spheres of society, including higher education. It is simply not good enough anymore to merely advocate for a level playing field, there is a need to end the systematic marginalization of groups (by gender, race or region) in global knowledge production and dissemination. This applies to the discipline of Geography too which shows gross inequities, at least when analysing the composition of their editorial boards. Unfortunately, Geography journals appear to remain largely unaware of the communities of practice which exist in locales outside the Global North (*viz a viz* ‘Here be dragons’), at least as far as input into the editorial process is concerned. Importantly, geographers from the Global South are not unfamiliar with their communities of practice and are not looking for special concessions—they simply want access to the same opportunities that have been routinely afforded their Global North counterparts. We motivate that Geography journals should proactively strive for increased openness and transparency with regard to the recruitment process

for editorial board members and greater geographic representation on their editorial boards. This will both increase the opportunities and benefits that accompany board membership for researchers located in the Global South as well as increase the number of role models and potential mentors for early-career scientists and students from these regions. Geography is one of a few disciplines to have remained relatively unchanged both in name and purpose since being studied by the ancient Greeks. By this we do not mean that the discipline needs to change its purpose necessarily but rather that the structures which direct and mould that purpose must be more equitable and inclusive. It is time for a change to the structural mechanism through which knowledge in the discipline is produced and disseminated. We are abundantly aware of the problem; it is now time for action.

Endnotes

1. These terms are often used interchangeably with ‘developing countries’ and ‘developed countries.’
2. The intergovernmental organisation of mainly developing countries is used to identify countries in the South.

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