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Geographic Disparities in Knowledge Production: A Big Data Analysis of Peer-Reviewed Communication Publications from 1990 to 2019

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This study uses computational methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of geographic distribution of journal authorship in the field of communication. Using the Scimago Journal

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& Country Rank (SJR) database, we collected data on publications appearing in 400 communication journals between 1990 and 2019. Our findings demonstrate a *proportionate* decline in Northern American authorial dominance over time, although scholars from the region continue to publish far more often than scholars from any other part of the world. Further, scholars in Northern America and parts of Europe publish in higher-ranked journals and are cited at higher rates than their colleagues in the Global South, who are more likely to publish in lower-ranked and regional journals. Overall, these geographic disparities in journal authorship demonstrate the enduring colonial legacy of scholarly knowledge production in the field of communication.

Keywords: scholarly knowledge production, communication research, citational disparities, regional journals, journal authorship

Academic disciplines comprise fields of power wherein academic culture, publication practices, economic capacity, and linguistic diversity constrain the flow of knowledge and capital (Bourdieu, 1999). Previous research on scholarly knowledge production consistently has shown significant disparities between countries in the Global North—whose scholars are overrepresented in academic publications and, thus, establish normative expectations for "good" research—and countries in the Global South[2]—whose scholars are underrepresented in scholarly publications and whose methodological and theoretical innovations are largely ignored (Alatas, 2003; Cheruiyot & Conill-Ferrer, 2021; Connell, 2007). Such geographic disparities represent a form of epistemological hegemony in which knowledge systems endogenous to places outside of North America and Europe are devalued (Moreton-Robinson, 2011; Omobowale, Akanle, Adeniran, & Adegboyega, 2014; Puebla, 2014), which is both detrimental to local realities throughout the world (Arowosegbe, 2014) and creates barriers for scholars seeking to challenge these inequities (Mohammed, 2021).

This study contributes to the study of geographic disparities in scholarly knowledge production through a large-scale analysis of peer-reviewed journal publications within the field of communication. Although previous research of scholarly knowledge production in the field has found evidence of global disparities (e.g., Demeter, 2020; Lauf, 2005; Trepte & Loths, 2020), to dated, this work has largely relied on manual content analyses of relatively small data sets limited in number of years and journals analyzed. Our study, instead, uses computational methods and a "big data" approach to provide the most comprehensive analysis of global inequities in communication scholarship to date by analyzing more than 120,000 publications appearing in 400 communication journals between 1990 and 2019. Our computational approach allows us to consider a breadth of journals that are typically excluded from similar studies, such as regional journals, lower-ranked journals, and journals publishing in languages other than English. Our three decades of publication data also allow us to

[2] Although we believe any attempt to define the world in binary terms (e.g., developed/developing, core/periphery, Global North/South) is problematic, we recognize that such distinctions can be helpful shorthands for referencing global inequities. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Confraria, Godinho, & Wang, 2017; Demeter, 2020), we use "Global North" to refer to Northern America, Western Europe, and middle- to high-income countries in Asia, while "Global South" refers to Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Africa, and low-income countries in Asia.

examine change over a much greater time period than is feasible with traditional content analysis, because of the time-intensive nature of manual coding. Based on the country location of the first author's institutional affiliation, we examine overall geographic representation of authorship in communication journals as well as change over time, journal prestige, journal geographic home, and citation rates. Our findings demonstrate a growing proportion of authors based outside of the United States; yet, scholars in the Global North are still responsible for far more publications—particularly in higher-ranked journals—and receive many more citations than scholars in the Global South. Amid recent calls to decolonize the academy (e.g., Dei, 2016; Heleta, 2018; Smith, 2012), our research illustrates the resilience of global inequities in the field of communication.

Literature Review

Scholarly knowledge production both exists within systems of unequal power relations and contributes to structural inequities in the academy and beyond (Mohammed, 2021; Said, 1978; Willems, 2014). The field of communication, in particular, is built upon and perpetuates an enduring legacy of sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and ethnocentrism that privileges the perspective of White, cishet men from the Global North (Chakravartty, Kuo, Grubbs, & McIlwain, 2018; Hanitzsch, 2019; Mayer, Press, Verhoeven, & Sterne, 2017). Research on communication phenomena in the Global North is often positioned as universal, while phenomena occurring elsewhere are viewed as novel achievements of the "periphery" (Chan, 2014; Wasserman, 2018). As Smith (2012) argues, this tradition is based on an assumption that "Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings" (p. 58). Calls to decolonize the academy, specifically those made by indigenous scholars, scholars from the Global South, and scholars of color, critically examine systems of scholarly knowledge, production, and distribution to ensure that a multitude of voices, theories, methodologies, and epistemologies are included and valued (Dei, 2016; Heleta, 2018; Smith, 2012). One way of understanding how much work needs to be done to decolonize the academy is to examine disparities in scholarly knowledge production as evidenced by the quantity and impact of research published in peer-reviewed journals.

Studies of global knowledge production in the field have found a consistent overrepresentation of scholars located in the Global North and an underrepresentation of scholars located in the Global South. In a study of 40 communication journals published between 1998 and 2002, Lauf (2005) found that most published authors were based in the United States specifically and from English-language countries more broadly. In each of the 40 journals examined, at least half of the authors were located in English-language countries, and in most of the journals, most authors were affiliated with institutions in the United States. Similarly, Bunz (2005) found that a few American universities were overly represented in eight journals affiliated with the International Communication Association and the National Communication Association. Bunz found that current employees and alumni of seven universities in the United States were responsible for 87% of the articles published in these journals over a five-year period. More recently, in a study of 63 Q1-ranked journals, Demeter (2017) found that almost half of the 1,456 published authors were based in North America, while an additional 28% were based in Northern and Western Europe. Meanwhile, scholars in sizable geographic regions like Eastern Europe, Southern Africa, Northern Africa, Eastern Africa, and Central Asia made up less than 1% of the

articles in Demeter's data set. Reflecting on these findings, Demeter (2017) questions how we can call a field international, "when, practically, one nation from the 193 represents half of it, and the most successful 20 countries represent nearly 90% of the field" (p. 419).

At the same time, there is some evidence that the field is changing. For example, Demeter (2018) compared his more recent data to Lauf's (2005), finding that U.S. dominance has declined over time, while the number of published authors in Asia and Western Europe has increased. Although Global North scholars continue to be overrepresented in communication journals, there has been some movement toward greater internationalization. Therefore, our first two research questions focus on the overall geographic representation of journal authorship as well as its change over time:

RQ1: What is the geographic representation of authorship in peer-reviewed communication journals?

RQ2: How has the geographic representation of authorship in peer-reviewed communication journals changed over time?

Not all journals are valued equally within the academy. Not only are journals distinguished from each other by scope, submission type, and publication cycle, but they are stratified by perceived prestige. Journal prestige is a multifaceted construct that draws from several metrics (e.g., citation count, acceptance rate, editorial board construction) and is instrumentalized by administrators and peers when making decisions about hiring, tenure, promotion, funding, and awards (Chou, 2014; Collyer, 2018). As a result, journals with less prestige are more likely to be overlooked by commercial indexing services and ignored by scholars (Collyer, 2018; Tijssen, Mouton, van Leeuwen, & Boshoff, 2006).

Previous research has found that scholars in the Global South are particularly underrepresented in academic journals considered to be most prestigious (Jeater, 2018). For example, scholars in North America and Western Europe represented 82% of authors published in communication journals ranked in the top quartile by the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) between 2012 and 2017 (Demeter, 2019a). During the same time period, only 7% of published authors were based in Asia, and less than 1% were based in Africa (Demeter, 2019a). Further, only 6.7% of the 3,910 articles published in top quartile journals analyzed by Demeter (2019b) included one or more authors from the Global South. More generally, articles that focus on the Global South, regardless of author affiliation, are rarely found in high-ranking communication journals (Elega & Ozad, 2018; Wasike, 2017). Therefore, our third research question focuses specifically on the geographic representation of authorship as it relates to journal prestige, as indicated by journal ranking:

RQ3: What is the relationship between the geographic representation of authorship in peer-reviewed communication journals and journal ranking?

Journals are also distinguishable by their publication home, with most journal ownership concentrated in the Global North (Collyer, 2018; Gingras & Mosbah-Natanson, 2010; Sengupta, 2021). In their study of journals listed in the SSCI, Gingras and Mosbah-Natanson (2010) found that two-thirds of all journals were published in only four countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and

Germany. More recently, Sengupta (2021) found that of the 5,855 social sciences journals listed in the SCImago journal ranking, 83% were based in North America and Western Europe, while only 0.5% were based in Africa, 3.4% in Asia, and 3.9% in Latin America.

In recent years, there has been an increase in local and regional journals published outside the Global North. Although these journals provide a more welcoming home and shared discursive space for scholars in the Global South, many of these journals receive little attention outside of their home or regional context (Tijssen et al., 2006). This can lead to a "ghettoization" or "Balkanization" of research produced by scholars in the Global South in journals that are either ignored or viewed as insufficiently scientific (Ang et al., 2019; Collyer, 2018; Czerniewicz, Goodier, & Morrell, 2017). As a result, scholars in the Global North writing about the Global South often garner more attention than Global South scholars publishing research about their home contexts in journals that are lower ranked or missing from popular journal indexers (Sengupta, 2021). Because journals based in the Global South typically receive less attention than journals based in the Global North, it is worth analyzing authorship as it relates to the geographic home of the journal. Therefore, our fourth research question asks:

RQ4: What is the relationship between the geographic representation of authorship in peer-reviewed communication journals and geographic home of the journal?

Finally, citations are a key metric used to determine journal rankings, the "impact" of a publication, and a scholar's standing in the field (Meijaard, Cardillo, Meijaard, & Possingham, 2015). Indexing services like Google Scholar also use citation counts when determining search relevance; thus, the number of citations a publication receives can affect its visibility, or lack thereof, to other scholars. Previous scholarship has found significant relationships between citation counts and author demographics, with White men from prestigious universities largely benefiting from citational politics (Chakravartty et al., 2018; Dion, Sumner, & Mitchell, 2018). Similarly, scholars in the Global North typically receive more citations than scholars in the Global South, and they are likely to cite other Global North scholars more than their peers in the Global South (Collyer, 2018; Gingras & Mosbah-Natanson, 2010). That scholars in the Global North generate a larger amount of scholarship and are more likely to cite each other contributes to a system of dependency in which scholars in the Global South overvalue and disproportionately cite publications by authors in the Global North (Collyer, 2014, 2018; Danell, 2013). Further, research about the Global North is often presumed to have universal implications, while scholarship about the Global South is viewed as case studies, which are less likely to be cited (Baber, 2003; Cheruiyot & Conill-Ferrer, 2021). These practices lead to citation inequalities and disparities that favor scholarship published in the Global North over research published in the Global South. Therefore, our final research question focuses on the geographic representation of authorship as it relates to citation rates:

RQ5: What is the relationship between the geographic representation of authorship in peer-reviewed communication journals and citation rates?

Taken together, these research questions provide a broad overview of the geographic representation of peer-reviewed journal publications in the field of communication over the past three decades. Although

previous scholarship offers partial answers to these questions, the size and scope of our data set allow us to provide a more comprehensive and conclusive assessment of geographic disparities in our field.

Methods

To create our data set, we first identified communication journals listed in the SCImago Journal & Country Rank database, a publicly available portal that indexes journals found in Elsevier's Scopus database. SCImago journals are grouped into 27 subject areas and 313 subject categories. We selected all journals indexed in 2020 under the subject category of "communication," which resulted in a list of 399 journals. We cross-referenced this list with the journals affiliated with major associations in the field (i.e., International Communication Association, International Association for Media and Communication Research, National Communication Association, and Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication) to ensure all association-level, but not necessarily division-level, journals were included. We identified one association-level journal, ICA's *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, which was listed in the SCImago database under the computer science subject category instead of communication. We added this journal manually and adjusted the journal rankings of the remaining journals accordingly, resulting in a final tally of 400 communication journals included in our study. The SCImago journal data include information about each journal, including ISSN, SJR ranking, country of publication, and more. Journal rankings discussed below are based on SJR scores, which are calculated by averaging citations (weighted by journal prestige) of articles published in the previous three years (Guerrero-Bote & Moya-Anegón, 2012).

We then used a Python script to query the Scopus database for every item published between 1990 and 2019 in each of the 400 journals on our list. It is worth noting that most of the journals in our data set do not include 30 years of data; in fact, many did not exist or were not indexed by Scopus until after 2010. We also cross-referenced these data with our list of 400 journals to ensure each was represented in our data set. After combining our various searches, we created a preliminary data set with 152,993 records, each of which represented an item (e.g., article, book review, editorial) published in a peer-reviewed communication journal.

We then took several steps to clean this preliminary data set. First, we removed duplicate publications, which were largely a result of publications appearing once using the print ISSN and again using the electronic ISSN. We then cleaned the "publication type" category that labels publications as articles, book reviews, and so on. Because this column was based on manual entry data, entries were categorized inconsistently. To clean this category, we employed several strategies to distinguish between publication types and remove categories that were not relevant to this particular study, including Conference Review (i.e., summaries of conference proceedings), Erratum (i.e., corrections), Letter (e.g., letters to the editor), as well as Notes and Short Surveys (i.e., brief research reflections). We also cleaned data in other relevant columns to ensure consistency and accuracy. This reduced our data set to 140,735 entries.

Finally, consistent with previous quantitative studies of scholarly knowledge production (e.g., Chakravartty et al., 2018; Demeter, 2020), our analysis relies on the first/sole author only and does not consider additional authors for multiauthored publications. In addition, although some authors listed multiple affiliations, our analysis relies on the first affiliation provided for the first/sole author. We conducted supplementary analyses to ensure that our findings were consistent if additional affiliations were taken into

account. Finally, we removed any entry in our data set that either had no author listed or had missing author affiliation information to arrive at our final data set of 123,990 publications across 400 journals.

Our data set includes relevant information about each publication (e.g., title, volume, year, citation count), first/sole author (e.g., name, institutional affiliation, country of affiliation), and journal (e.g., title, ranking, country of publication). Finally, we appended additional geographic information so that we could conduct region-level analysis as well as country-level analysis. Specifically, we used the United Nations geoscheme to organize countries into the 17 subregions listed below:

- Australia and New Zealand, Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia
- Central Asia, Eastern Asia, Southeastern Asia, Southern Asia, Western Asia
- Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, Western Europe
- Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America
- Northern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa

Findings

Overall Geographic Representation

Our first research question concerns the overall geographic representation of authorship in peer-reviewed communication journals. To answer this question, we analyzed the country affiliation of the first/sole authors of publications in 400 communication journals between 1990 and 2019 (see Table 1 and Figure 1). Of the 123,990 entries in our data set, the largest-producing region was Northern America (N = 56,680; 45.7%) with the most represented country being the United States (*n* = 53,164; 42.9%). Scholars in Northern America published at three times the rate of the second-largest producing region, Northern Europe (*n* = 17,980; 14.5%), and scholars in the United States published at greater than four times the rate of the second-largest producing country, the United Kingdom (*n* = 12,475; 10.1%). These two regions, and these two countries specifically, make up more than half of the publications included in our data set. In other words, more publications were produced by scholars in the United States and the United Kingdom together than all other countries combined.

Table 1. Total Publications by Region.

Region	Publication Count	Proportion of Total
Northern America	56,680	45.7%
Northern Europe	17,980	14.5%
Western Europe	10,856	8.8%
Southern Europe	10,037	8.1%
Eastern Asia	6,575	5.3%
Australia and New Zealand	6,441	5.2%
Latin America and the Caribbean	5,218	4.2%
Western Asia	2,592	2.1%
Eastern Europe	2,091	1.7%
Southeastern Asia	1,981	1.6%
Sub-Saharan Africa	1,900	1.5%
Southern Asia	1,304	1.1%
Northern Africa	248	0.2%
Melanesia	52	0.04%
Central Asia	26	0.02%
Micronesia	6	0.005%
Polynesia	3	0.002%
Total	123,990	

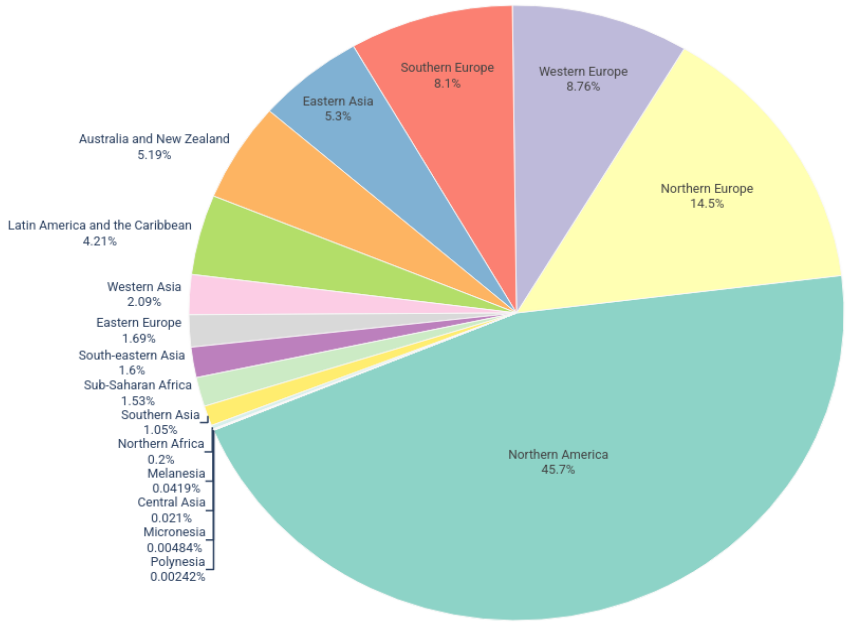

Figure 1. Pie chart of total publications by region.

Change in Geographic Representation Over Time

Our second question concerns the geographic representation of authorship over time. To answer this question, we looked at author country affiliations for each of the 30 years from 1990 to 2019. Before answering this research question, it is worth noting that the number of entries in our data set grew tremendously over this time period. Whereas our data set contains 1,539 publications from 58 journals in 1990, it contains 12,123 publications in 372 journals in 2019. This demonstrates a substantial growth in the number of outlets publishing communication research and the number of overall publications in the field. In fact, the growth in the number of publications has been exponential, doubling in number from 1990 (*n* = 1,539) to 2005 (*n* = 3,247) to 2011 (*n* = 6,463) to 2019 (*n* = 12,123). Thus, the overall composition of the data set reflects a clear recency bias.

Table 2. Total Publications by Region in 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2019.

Author Region	1990	2000	2010	2019
Northern America	855 (80.4%)	1,240 (66.3%)	2,594 (48.9%)	3,783 (33%)
Northern Europe	68 (6.4%)	272 (14.6%)	754 (14.2%)	1,559 (13.6%)
Western Europe	60 (5.6%)	103 (5.5%)	499 (9.4%)	1,111 (9.7%)
Southern Europe	14 (1.3%)	42 (2.3%)	349 (6.6%)	1,284 (11.2%)
Eastern Asia	11 (1%)	51 (2.7%)	272 (5.1%)	741 (6.5%)
Australia and New Zealand	12 (1.1%)	69 (3.7%)	347 (6.5%)	565 (4.9%)
Latin America and the Caribbean		13 (0.7%)	177 (3.3%)	814 (7.1%)
Western Asia	7 (0.7%)	30 (1.6%)	85 (1.6%)	349 (3.1%)
Eastern Europe	8 (0.8%)	10 (0.5%)	53 (1%)	424 (3.7%)
Southeastern Asia	4 (0.4%)	16 (0.9%)	41 (0.8%)	336 (2.9%)
Sub-Saharan Africa	23 (2.2%)	22 (1.2%)	73 (1.4%)	216 (1.9%)
Southern Asia	1 (0.1%)	1 (0.1%)	43 (0.8%)	219 (1.9%)
Northern Africa		1 (0.1%)	10 (0.2%)	48 (0.4%)
Melanesia	1 (0.1%)		6 (0.1%)	4 (0.03%)
Central Asia				4 (0.03%)
Micronesia				1 (0.01%)
Polynesia			1 (0.02%)	
Total	1,064	1,870	5,304	11,458

In reference to RQ2, the percentage of scholarship coming from Northern America and the United States specifically declined significantly over these three decades. To demonstrate this, Table 2 lists publication totals and percentages for the years 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2019. Of the 1,064 publications from 1990, 80.4% (*n* = 855) were published by scholars based in Northern America, including 78.2% (*n* = 832) from the United States. In 2019, these percentages dropped to 33.0% for Northern America (*n* = 3,783) and 30.0% for the United States (*n* = 3,447). During that same time period, other regions demonstrated substantial growth. For example, Southern European representation grew from 1.3% (*n* = 14) of publications in 1990 to 11.2% (*n* = 1,284) of publications in 2019. This growth was largely driven by authors from Spain, who accounted for only three publications (0.28%) in 1990 but grew to 819 (7.15%)

publications in 2019. Similarly, publications from Latin America and the Caribbean increased from none in 1990 to 7.1% (*n* = 814) of all publications in 2019. This growth was driven largely by Brazil, which accounted for only 17 publications between 1990 and 1999 but 448 (3.91%) publications in 2019 alone. The decline in Northern American authorial dominance also coincided with a notable growth in publications coming from scholars in Asia. If we combine the five regions of Asia included in our data set, authors in Asia accounted for only 2.2% (*n* = 23) of publications in 1990 but grew to 14.4% (*n* = 1,649) in 2019. This growth was most notably in China (from 1 publication in 1990 to 297 in 2019), South Korea (from 0 publications in 1990 to 226 in 2019), and India (from 1 publication in 1990 to 147 in 2019).

While several regions and countries experienced significant representational growth during the three decades included in our data set, others remained stagnant or declined. This is particularly true for Africa. In 1990, 2.2% (*n* = 23) of publications were written by scholars in sub-Saharan Africa. By 2019, that proportion had decreased slightly to 1.9% (*n* = 216). At the country level, Africa's most represented country, South Africa, accounted for 1.5% of publications in 1990 but fell slightly to 1.2% in 2019, despite the growth in raw number of publications from 16 to 137. Similarly, there was little change in the representation of scholars in Northern Africa, who never registered greater than 0.5% of the total publications in the field for any given year.

Overall, there has been a substantial *proportionate* decline in North American authorial dominance between 1990 and 2019. But in terms of raw numbers, scholars in the United States continue to publish far more than scholars elsewhere (see Figure 2). Even though U.S. authorial representation dropped from 78.2% in 1990 to 30.0% in 2019, the next-highest-producing countries in 2019 still accounted for substantially fewer publications. Whereas the United States produced 3,447 publications in 2019, the United Kingdom produced 944 (8.2%), Spain 819 (7.1%), Australia 482 (4.2%), and Brazil 448 (3.9%). In other words, over time, the field has seen scholars from several different countries increase their representational share, but it is clear that scholars in the United States still dominate journal publishing in the field.

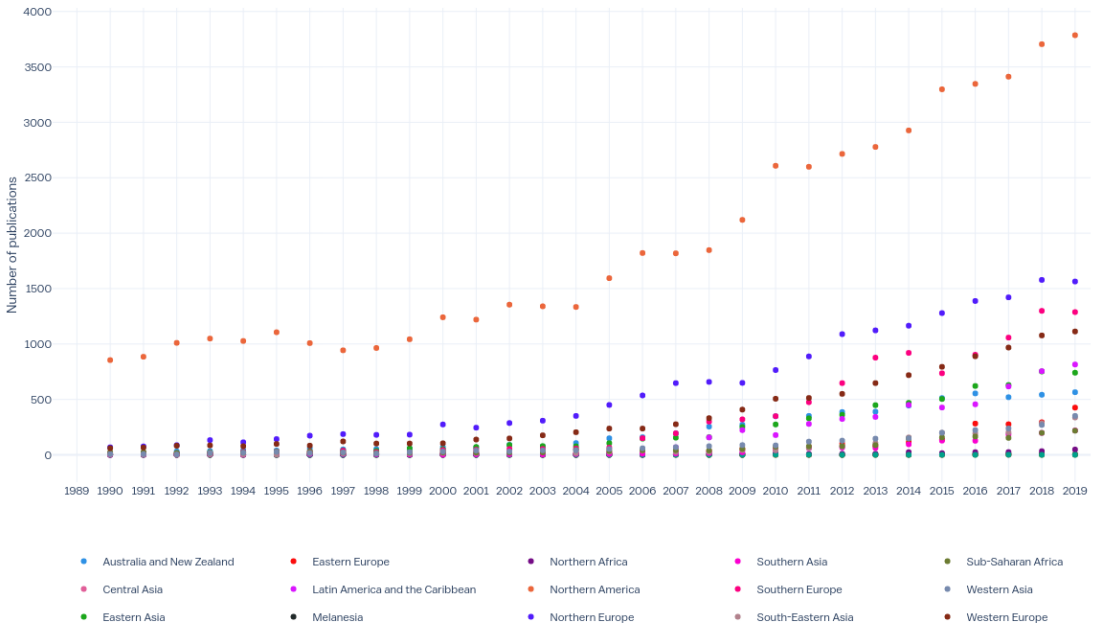

Figure 2. Total publications by region from 1990 to 2019.

Geographic Representation by Journal Prestige

Our third research question concerns geographic representation of authorship as it relates to journal prestige. To answer this question, we grouped the 400 journals in our data set based on their SJR ranking—the 10 highest-ranking journals, representing the most prestigious journals, and the 100 highest-ranking journals, representing the top quartile of our data set (see Table 3). First, looking at the 10 highest-ranking journals in our data set (*n* = 8,044), scholars in Northern America were responsible for 65.7% (*n* = 5,283) of publications followed by scholars in Western Europe (*n* = 755, 8.4%) and Eastern Asia (*n* = 354, 4.4%). In terms of specific countries, 63.6% (*n* = 5,094) of the publications in the 10 highest-ranking journals were authored by scholars based in the United States and 7.4% (*n* = 592) were by scholars based in the United Kingdom, meaning more than two-thirds of publications in the field's most prestigious journals were authored by scholars in these two countries alone. In contrast, scholars in Latin America and the Caribbean (*n* = 36, 0.4%), Northern Africa (*n* = 6, 0.1%), sub-Saharan Africa (*n* = 10, 0.1%), and Southern Asia (*n* = 14, 0.2%) were virtually absent from the 10 highest-ranking journals.

Table 3. Publications in Highest Ranking Journals by Region.

Author Region	Top 10 Journals	Top 100 Journals
Northern America	5,283 (65.7%)	34,168 (55.3%)
Northern Europe	863 (10.7%)	9,561 (15.5%)
Western Europe	755 (9.4%)	5,700 (9.2%)
Eastern Asia	354 (4.4%)	3,154 (5.1%)
Australia and New Zealand	278 (3.5%)	2,721 (4.4%)
Southern Europe	142 (1.8%)	2,547 (4.1%)
Western Asia	177 (2.2%)	1,392 (2.3%)
Southeastern Asia	95 (1.2%)	729 (1.2%)
Latin America and the Caribbean	36 (0.4%)	562 (0.9%)
Sub-Saharan Africa	10 (0.1%)	427 (0.7%)
Eastern Europe	29 (0.4%)	400 (0.6%)
Southern Asia	14 (0.2%)	297 (0.5%)
Northern Africa	6 (0.1%)	70 (0.1%)
Melanesia	1 (0%)	9 (0%)
Micronesia	0 (0%)	3 (0%)
Central Asia	1 (0%)	1 (0%)
Polynesia	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	8,044	61,741

When looking at the 100 highest-ranking (Q1) journals (*n* = 61,741), Northern America (*n* = 34,168, 55.3%) and Western Europe (*n* = 5,700, 9.2%) were again the most represented, while Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Southern and Central Asia, Northern and sub-Saharan Africa, and the Pacific Islands each represented less than 1% of total publications. The United States (*n* = 32,274, 52.3%) and the United Kingdom (*n* = 6,600, 10.7%) were again the most represented countries, with their combined dominance

dropping from 71% of publications in the top 10 journals to 63% in Q1 journals. Relative to the overall representation of scholars in the United States discussed in RQ1 (42.9% of all publications), U.S.-based scholars have an even greater representation in the 10 and 100 highest-ranked journals.

Taken further, Figure 3 illustrates the number of articles published by region in journals organized in groups of 25 from the 25 highest ranked to the 25 lowest ranked. For example, of the 18,093 publications found in the top 25 journals in our data set, 10,869 (60.1%) came from authors in the United States. In fact, the United States is by far the most represented in each of the first four groups of ranked journals, with their overrepresentation trailing off as the journal ranking declines. In comparison, Latin American and the Caribbean authors demonstrated their highest concentration in journals ranked 151 through 175 (n = 1,513; 19.2%) and 226 through 250 (n = 1,194; 22.1%). Similarly, authors in Southeast Asia were most represented in journals ranked 201 through 225 (n = 489, 8.2%), and sub-Saharan African authors were most prominent in journals ranked 275 through 300 (n = 452; 12.2%). Taken together, these findings indicate that authors in Northern America and Northern Europe, specifically scholars in the United States and the United Kingdom, are particularly overrepresented in the most prestigious journals in our field, while scholars from other parts of the world are more likely to be concentrated in lower-tier journals.

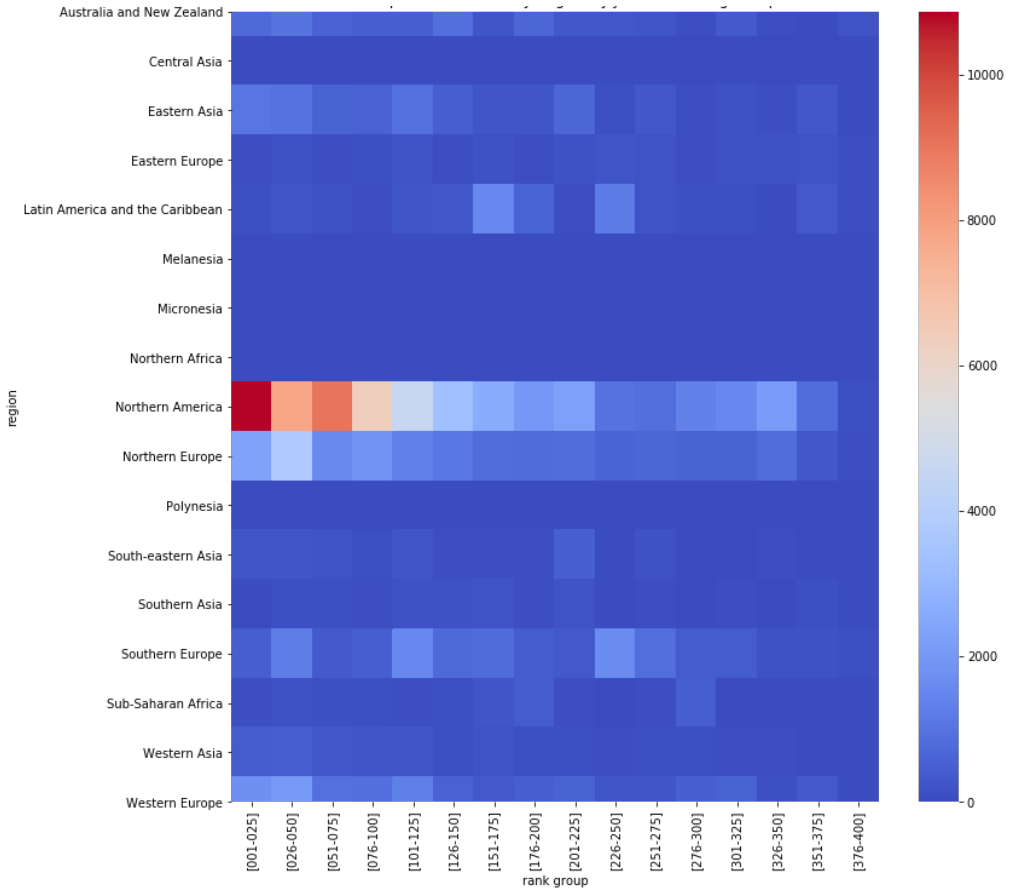

Figure 3. Heatmap of author region by journal ranking.

Geographic Representation by Journal's Geographic Home

Our fourth research question concerns the relationship between geographic representation of authorship and the geographic home of the journal. First, the geographic imbalance of the journal publishing industry in the field is notable (see Table 4). Most of the 400 journals in our data set were produced in Northern Europe (n = 155, 38.8%) and Northern America (n = 90, 22.5%). At the country level, the United Kingdom (n = 146, 36.5%), the United States (n = 87, 21.8%), the Netherlands (n = 27, 6.8%), and Germany (n = 20, 5%) account for more than two-thirds of the communication journals in our data set, which is consistent with Gingras and Mosbah-Natanson's (2010) finding concerning social science journals broadly. In fact, only 41 journals (10%) were based in a country outside of Europe or Northern America, and only one of these journals (*Digital Communications and Networks*, #54) was ranked in the top quartile of our data set. While this demonstrates the dominance of Global North journal publishing industries, it may also reflect that journals produced outside the Global North are less likely to be listed in indexing services like SCImago (Collyer, 2018; Tijssen et al., 2006).

Table 4. Regional Home of Communication Journals.

Journal Region	Journal Count	Proportion of Total
Northern Europe	155	38.8%
Northern America	90	22.5%
Western Europe	57	14.3%
Southern Europe	37	9.3%
Eastern Europe	20	5.0%
Latin America and the Caribbean	16	4.0%
Eastern Asia	7	1.8%
Australia and New Zealand	5	1.3%
Southeastern Asia	4	1.0%
Southern Asia	4	1.0%
Northern Africa	2	0.5%
Sub-Saharan Africa	2	0.5%
Western Asia	1	0.3%
Total	400	

To answer RQ4, we looked at the percentage of a region's journals that were authored by scholars based in that region (see Table 5). The goal was to identify regions whose journals demonstrated a large proportion of authors from that region and a small proportion of authors from outside of that region. For example, 590 entries in our data set were published in journals based in Southeastern Asia. Of that total, 513 (86.9%) were published by scholars in Southeastern Asia. Similar numbers are found in journals published in Australia and New Zealand (79.8%), Eastern Asia (80.3%), Latin America and the Caribbean (85.8%), and sub-Saharan Africa (84.3%). Of note, Northern Europe is home to the greatest number of publications in our data set (n = 57,908) including several high-profile journals published by Taylor & Francis, Routledge, and Intellect. Yet only 18.7% (n = 10,834) of the articles published in Northern European journals were written by authors based in Northern Europe, while 53.5% (n = 30,999) were written by authors based in Northern America. Northern America was the only region to have the largest proportion of authors in two regions' journals, having published the most (n = 21,706, 61.2%) in Northern American journals as well (see Figure 4).

Table 5. Publications from Authors in the Same Region as Journal.

Journal Region	Total Publications	Publications from Region
Northern Europe	57,908	10,834 (18.7%)
Northern America	35,483	21,706 (61.2%)
Western Europe	14,063	3,803 (27%)
Southern Europe	7,333	5,145 (70.2%)
Latin America and the Caribbean	3,878	3,328 (85.8%)
Eastern Europe	1,387	663 (47.8%)
Australia and New Zealand	1,360	1,085 (79.8%)
Eastern Asia	1,058	850 (80.3%)
Southern Asia	680	295 (43.4%)
Southeastern Asia	590	513 (86.9%)
Sub-Saharan Africa	83	70 (84.3%)
Western Asia	34	20 (58.8%)
Northern Africa	28	11 (39.3%)

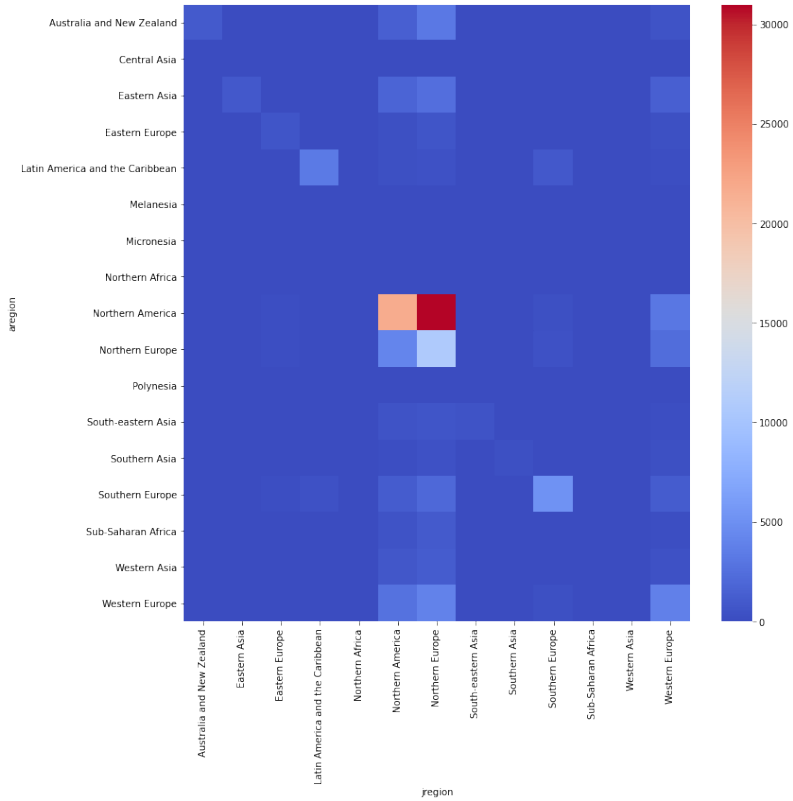

Figure 4. Heatmap of author region by journal region.

Overall, these data indicate that regional journals, particularly those published outside of Europe and Northern America, are popular venues for authors based in the same region but not necessarily for scholars elsewhere. This is further evident when looking deeper into the relationships between certain countries and journals in our data set. For example, 333 of the 747 (44.6%) publications authored by scholars in Malaysia were published in *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, a journal based in Malaysia that is ranked 204 of 400. Similarly, 1,253 of the 3,388 (37.0%) publications authored by scholars in Brazil appeared in the 154th ranked *Interface: Comunicacao, Saude, Educacao*. While regional journals may contribute to intellectual communities within their respective regions, they have limited reach outside of the region (Danell, 2013). If scholars outside the region are not publishing in these journals, they likely are not reading, citing, and assigning this research, lending credence to concerns about Balkanization of Global South scholars in regional journals (Ang et al., 2019).

Citational Rates by Geographic Representation

Our final research question concerns the relationship between citation rates and the author's geographic home. To answer this question, we first examined the total number of citations, average number of citations per publication, and the median publication citation total for all regions in our data set (see Table 6). Again, authors in Northern America demonstrated their clear dominance within the field (see Figure 5). Scholars in this region had the largest number of total citations (n = 1,089,099; 60.4%), average citation per publication (avg = 19.2) and median citation per publication (M = 6). Interestingly, publications by scholars in the Netherlands had the highest median citations of any country (M = 9), followed by scholars in the United States (M = 6), Singapore (M = 6), Switzerland (M = 5), and Canada (M = 4). In contrast, publications by scholars in Indonesia, Romania, and Brazil had a median citation count of 1, while publications by authors in Argentina and the Russian Federation had a median citation count of 0.

Table 6. Citations by Author Region.

Author Region	Total Citations	Average Citations	Median Citations
Northern America	1,089,099	19.2	6
Northern Europe	242,579	13.5	4
Western Europe	171,184	15.8	5
Eastern Asia	77,143	11.7	4
Australia and New Zealand	68,648	10.7	3
Southern Europe	64,385	6.4	2
Western Asia	29,968	11.6	4
Southeastern Asia	18,708	9.4	3
Latin America and the Caribbean	14,725	2.8	1
Southern Asia	9,594	7.4	2
Sub-Saharan Africa	9,239	4.9	2
Eastern Europe	6,796	3.3	1
Northern Africa	1,543	6.3	1
Melanesia	176	3.4	2
Central Asia	83	3.3	2
Micronesia	78	13.0	8
Polynesia	3	1.0	1
Total	1,803,951	14.5	3.0

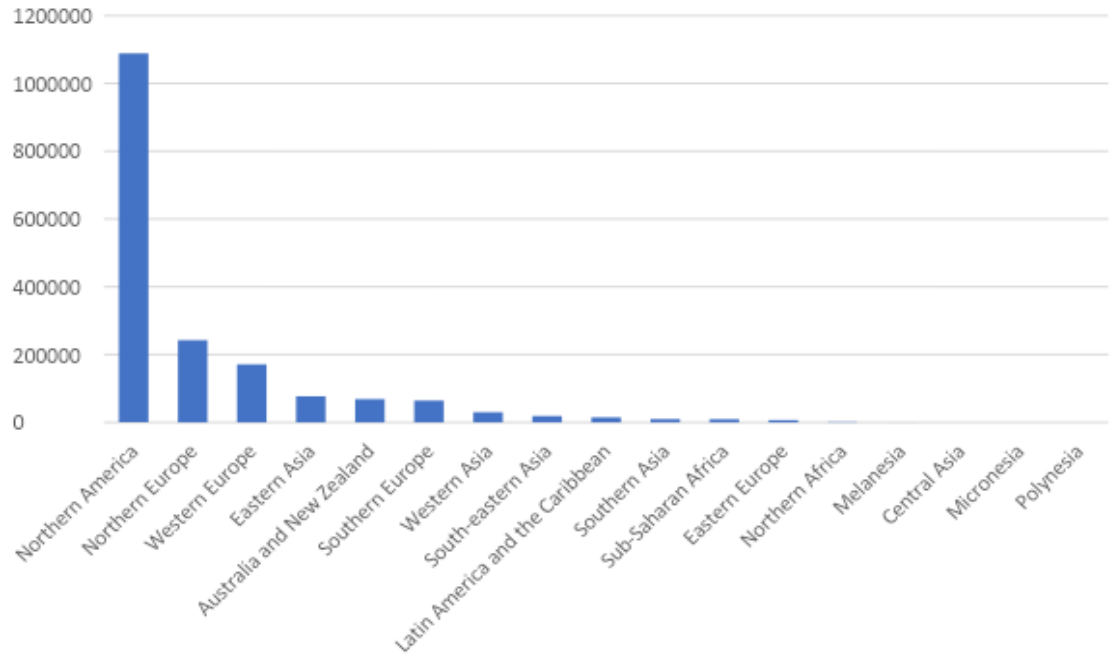

Figure 5. Total citations by author region.

Because citation rates are related to date of publication (e.g., an article published in 1995 has more opportunities to be cited than an article published in 2015), we also looked at total and average citations by region for three individual years in our data set: 1990, 2000, and 2010 (see Table 8). The results show that publications written by scholars from Northern America are consistently cited at greater-than-average rates, even if Northern America was not the most cited region in that particular year. Meanwhile, publications by scholars from Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Southern Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, consistently are cited less. Several other regions (e.g., Australia and New Zealand, Northern Europe, Southeastern Asia) had certain years with higher-than-average citation counts and other years with lower-than-average counts.

Table 7. Total and Average Citations per Publication by Year.

	1990		2000		2010	
Author Region	Total	Avg	Total	Avg	Total	Avg
Northern America	24,113	28.2	44,345	35.8	51,754	39.5
Northern Europe	980	14.1	7,440	27.4	13,416	43.3
Western Europe	1,382	23	3,997	38.8	10,446	20.9
Australia and New Zealand	273	22.8	1,589	26.1	4,242	3.4
Eastern Asia	418	38	753	14.8	3,656	2.2
Southern Europe	30	2.1	481	11.5	3,641	10.4
Western Asia	42	6	723	24.1	1,759	20.7
Latin America and the Caribbean			122	9.4	883	8.6
Southeastern Asia	20	5	520	32.5	633	15.4
Sub-Saharan Africa	37	1.6	92	4.2	472	6.5
Southern Asia	0	0	0	0	370	8.6
Eastern Europe	21	2.6	93	9.3	227	5.3
Northern Africa			12	12	61	6.2
Melanesia	8	8			19	4.6
Polynesia					2	2
Total	27,324	25.7	60,167	32.2	91,581	17.3

Citation rates also are impacted by journal prestige since higher-ranked journals are more likely to be read and cited. This can be self-reinforcing, as an increase in citations can improve a journal's ranking, and so on. To examine the effect of journal ranking on citation counts, we looked at total and average citations by regions for three groupings of journal rankings: 1–25, 101–125, and 201–225 (see Table 9). As expected, the average number of citations per publication decreases among lower-ranked journals. But again, publications by scholars in Northern America consistently received greater-than-average citations. This is especially true for the group of journals ranked 1 through 25 and 201 through 225, while Northern American average citations were close to the overall average for journals ranked 101 through 125. Again, publications by scholars from Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa consistently received below average citations, even when appearing in similarly ranked journals.

Table 8. Total and Average Citations per Publication by Journal Ranking.

	1–25		101–125		201–225	
Author Region	Total	Avg	Total	Avg	Total	Avg
Northern America	487,084	44.5	57,959	12.6	15,633	6.3
Northern Europe	67,124	29.0	21,144	13.4	3,480	4.2
Western Europe	60,157	33.6	24,099	18.4	2,347	4.0
Eastern Asia	29,617	27.7	12,377	13.4	2,008	3.0
Australia and New Zealand	21,171	27.4	5,847	11.9	833	3.0
Southern Europe	12,629	27.9	11,677	7.5	1,024	3.1
Western Asia	11,505	27.8	2,194	8.9	426	3.7
Southeastern Asia	5,520	25.1	2,976	13.7	1,199	2.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	2,078	19.4	1,706	7.8	113	2.6
Southern Asia	1,207	29.4	2,096	13.9	381	1.9
Sub-Saharan Africa	747	13.6	434	5.9	91	1.8
Eastern Europe	593	10.2	1,571	7.8	251	1.7
Northern Africa	298	27.1	180	7.5	16	1.5
Melanesia	36	9	12	12	0	0
Central Asia	1	1	2	1	0	0
Micronesia	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	699,767	38.3	144,274	12.4	27,802	4.5

Finally, we looked at total citations, average citations per publication, and median citations per publication based on the regional home of the journal (see Table 9 and Figure 6). Of note, publications in journals based in Northern Europe, Northern America, and Western Europe accounted for 97.7% of the total citations in our data set. Overall, publications in journals based in these regions were significantly more cited than journals based elsewhere in the world. Thus, not only do publications by scholars in the Global North receive more citations than publications by scholars in the Global South, but journals based in the Global North are more cited than journals based in the Global South.

Table 9. Total, Average, and Median Citations per Publication by Journal Region.

Journal Region	Total Citations	Average Citations	Median Citations
Northern Europe	920,413	14.2	4.0
Northern America	807,711	19.8	5.0
Western Europe	179,859	10.2	2.0
Southern Europe	24,298	3.1	1.0
Latin America and the Caribbean	7,130	1.7	0.0
Australia and New Zealand	4,475	3.0	1.0
Eastern Asia	3,928	3.6	1.0
Eastern Europe	3,050	1.9	0.0
Southern Asia	1,295	1.8	1.0
Southeastern Asia	1,013	1.6	1.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	285	2.7	2.0
Northern Africa	8	0.3	0.0
Western Asia	3	0.1	0.0
Total	1,953,468	13.9	3.0

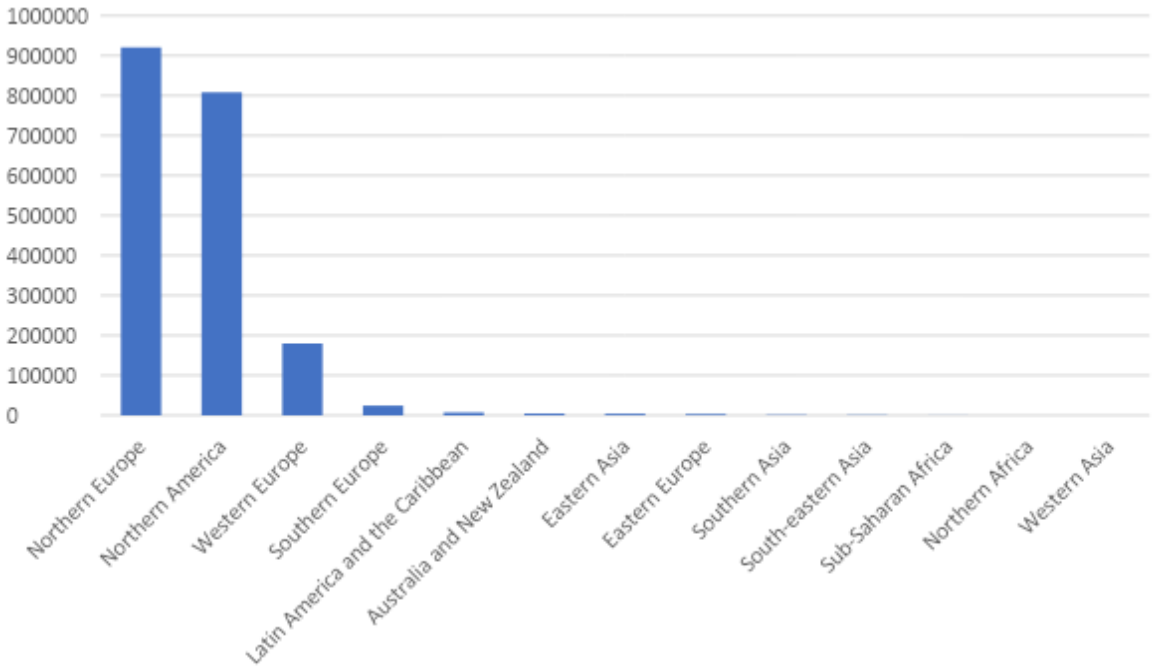

Figure 6. Total citations by journal region.

Discussion

Our examination of the geographic distribution of journal authorship in the field of communication found a substantial *proportionate* decline in North American authorial dominance in the past three decades; yet, in terms of raw numbers, scholars in the United States continue to publish far more than scholars in any other country. Similarly, Northern American and European scholars are particularly overrepresented in the highest-ranking journals in the field, while publications by scholars from the Global South are more likely to appear in lower-tier and regional journals. Overall, our findings show that scholarly knowledge production in the field, as evidenced by journal publication authorship, is becoming more geographically diverse, but most diversification is taking place "at the margins" in journals that are lower-ranked, regionally focused, and less cited.

While diversifying scholarly knowledge production should continue to be a priority for communication journal editors and reviewers, our findings demonstrate that authorship diversity is not sufficient for decolonizing the field. For one, our citational analysis found that publications by scholars in the Global North are more likely to be cited than those authored by scholars in the Global South, even when year of publication and journal ranking are taken into account. This finding is consistent with the critique that scholarship from the Global North is viewed as universally applicable while scholarship from the Global South is seen as only relevant to its specific local context (Chan, 2014; Smith, 2012; Wasserman, 2018). Further, the lack of attention received by regional journals indicates that the scholarly community views these venues less as forums for globally marginalized scholars to share epistemic, methodological, and empirical innovations and more as self-contained spaces for regional scholars to talk to each other. As such, regional journals contribute to the ghettoization of Global South scholarship (Ang et al., 2019), not because these journals publish research by scholars in the Global South, but because scholars in the Global North ignore them.

Our findings point to broader changes necessary to decolonize the field, which involves "delinking from a Eurocentric model of knowledge production and radically dismantling the existing hierarchies among different knowledge" (Stojnić, 2017, p. 105). While our findings illustrate the disparities of scholarly knowledge production in peer-reviewed journals, peer-reviewed journal publications represent only one form of knowledge production. Outside of journal publications, scholarly knowledge is disseminated through books, conference presentations, white papers, syllabi, classroom instruction, public scholarship, and so on. In addition, many forms of knowledge production and dissemination occur outside of the academy, ranging from community workshops to social media posts. Because of systemic exclusion through the traditional intellectual infrastructures of the academy, some Global South scholars have sought alternative venues for contributing to knowledge production (e.g., Takayama, Sriprakash, & Connell, 2017). While our study focuses specifically on scholarly journals, we recognize the limitations of viewing journal publications as a key metric in knowledge production rather than a construct that reinforces Eurocentric models of scholarly knowledge (Smith, 2012).

We also recognize the apparent contradiction of a group of scholars in the United States writing about geographic disparities in scholarly knowledge production. Even though our research team includes scholars with four different nationalities holding university degrees from our respective home countries, our methodology would lead us to code this article as originating from the United States. To that point, one limitation of our study is that it focuses on institutional affiliation at the time of publication as well as the institutional affiliation of the first/sole author only. Future studies should consider collaborations across

national boundaries (see Hanusch & Vos, 2018) as well as author nationality, which admittedly is much more challenging to code. At the same time, it is worth noting that being affiliated with an institution based in Northern America or Europe may have a considerable impact on how one's work is valued, regardless of one's nationality, as evidenced by our findings. Finally, our study relies on journals indexed by SCImago, which has been shown to exclude smaller, regional journals (Chou, 2014; Collyer, 2018; Tijssen et al., 2006). To account for this, future studies could manually append additional regional journals that are not already indexed by SCImago and similar indexing services.

Conclusion

Although previous studies of geographic disparities in scholarly knowledge production in communication have reached similar conclusions (e.g., Demeter, 2020; Lauf, 2005; Trepte & Loths, 2020), our computational data-gathering methods allowed us to conduct the most comprehensive analysis of communication journal publications to date. Our data set includes more than 120,000 publications from 400 communication journals published between 1990 and 2019. This size and scale of this data set are important because it captures all journals categorized under communication by SCImago in 2020, not just Q1 journals (e.g., Demeter, 2020) or a sampling of prestigious journals (e.g., Trepte & Loths, 2020). Included in our data set are journals published in 41 countries, journals published in languages other than English, and journals that have only existed for a few years. By including journals like *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*; *Interface: Comunicacao, Saude, Educacao*; and *Communicatio*, our analysis better accounts for the scholarly contributions of Global South scholars in the field broadly. The 30 years of publication information in our data set also allowed us to examine the field historically, recognizing that scholarly knowledge production is both entrenched and dynamic—rooted in deep-seated structural inequities but open to change. Further, because our analysis relied on country affiliation data, we did not have to rely on manual coding (e.g., Trepte & Loths, 2020; Wasike, 2017) or surname probability analysis (e.g., Chakravartty et al., 2018) to code authors.

To be sure, the geographic disparities detailed here are not unique to the field of communication (see Briggs & Weathers, 2016; Fonn et al., 2018; Gingras & Mosbah-Natanson, 2010), but that is no excuse. As Medie and Kang (2018) argue, "a diverse academy is more likely to pose a broader array of research questions, adopt diverse methods and have access to a greater variety of sources" (p. 41). We do the field a disservice by ignoring or perpetuating inequities in academia that allow for, for example, scholars in the United States to publish 1,266 times more frequently and be cited 7,055 times as often as scholars from Ghana (53,151 to 42 publications; 1,037,085 to 147 citations) over a 30-year period. Universities, journal editors, scholarly associations, and individual researchers must first recognize these inequities and then work together to change the system (Demeter, 2020; Ekdale, 2021; Mohammed, 2021). To that end, we urge continued research and engagement with these pressing issues to move our field toward more equitable knowledge production.

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