



# The Under-Representation of the Global South on Editorial Boards in Criminology

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## Abstract

Less than 5% of editorial board members across all 69 journals listed under the Criminology and Penology category of Clarivate's Web of Science database have affiliations with institutions in the Global South. Moreover, editorial board members from the Global South are significantly more likely to sit on lower "quality" journals than their Global North counterparts. The extreme skewness in regional representation of editorial board membership is symptomatic of a broader marginalization of the Global South in academia in general, and criminology specifically. The study's findings should be of importance (and concern) to all criminologists who believe that a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive representation of scholars across all phases of the academic publishing process is key to better understanding the context of crime: a global problem. A number of recommendations are outlined that can be used to increase the regional representativeness of editorial boards.

**Keywords:** Diversity; editorial boards; equity; Global South; marginalization; criminology publishing.

## Introduction

Issues surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within society have reached a zenith. Recent global political and societal movements, notably #BlackLivesMatter, have increasingly raised awareness of the racism, discrimination, and structural inequalities that continue to permeate throughout almost all sectors of society. Education as a whole, and higher education systems in particular, are not immune to these accusations. Indeed, a growing number of studies highlight the under-representation of certain groups within higher education, notably women and scholars from less developed countries (see Barber et al., 2020; Cummings & Hoebink, 2016; Dahdouh-Guebas et al., 2003; Montgomery, 2013). This under-representation is evident in the composition of academic staff (Breetzke et al., 2022; Kena et al., 2016; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2005), the disparities among those who receive grants (Erosheva et al., 2020; Hoppe et al., 2019), and publication and citation biases (Beaudry & Larivière, 2016; Kim, 2022; Maliniak et al., 2013), among numerous other areas. Analysis of the composition of editorial boards provides further insight into the under-representation of certain groups in higher education in general (notably women and scholars from less developed countries) and in the academic publishing process specifically. Bibliometric analyses of editorial boards have been undertaken across a range of disciplines (see Mauleón et al., 2013; Metz & Harzing, 2012; Morton & Sonnad, 2007; Schurr et al., 2020; Stegmaier et al., 2011;), with the majority of editorial board members found to be white (Chakravarty et al., 2018; Holman Jones, 2018), male (Cho et al., 2014; Mauleón et al., 2013), and affiliated to higher education institutions located predominantly in the Global North (Cummings & Hoebink, 2016; Faraldo-Cabana & Lamela, 2021; Hedding & Breetzke, 2021), with few exceptions.

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) to the purposive repression of certain groups (i.e., Global South, non-English-speaking



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countries; Sengupta, 2020). Arguably the most common reason provided for these disparities, however, is the dearth of “capable” scientists residing in the Global South (Habel et al., 2017). That is, there is simply not enough “qualified scientists” outside the Global North to fill various editorial roles. This argument is dispelled by Espin et al. (2017), among others, who note the dramatic growth in the number of scientists in the Global South, both in absolute terms and per capita (see UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2024), who are capable of acting in this capacity. Moreover, scholars from the Global South are increasing their research productivity (Smith et al., 2014) and their work is being cited more often (Albanna et al., 2021). Regardless of the reasons provided, there is a notable under-representation of certain groups of individuals and countries in editorial roles. This ultimately leads to what Shahjahan and Kezar (2013) refer to as a “national container” of higher education research, whereby knowledge production is aligned to more powerful developed countries. But why does this matter?

Examining the regional affiliations of editorial board members is important because it ensures diverse perspectives, global relevance, accuracy, and balance in the content produced by journals. It is increasingly acknowledged that diversity in general breeds more innovative science (Hofstra et al., 2020) and is essential to building solutions to challenges faced by all communities (Barber et al., 2020). Operationally, editors and their editorial boards largely determine which articles are published. In doing so, they also largely shape the “modes of communication, ideas, theories and interpretations of a specific discipline” (Faraldo-Cabana & Lamela, 2021, pp. 168–169) and define the disciplines’ trajectory of knowledge (Crane, 1967). Previous studies have found how diverse editorial boards also facilitate the publication of papers across a wider range of research paradigms, methods, and topics (see Braun & Dióspatonyi, 2005; Demeter, 2018; Harzing & Metz 2013; Kim, Merlot et al., 2018; Lauf, 2005; Rosenstreich & Wooliscroft, 2013). In particular, a study by Goyanes and Demeter (2020) examined whether the geographic diversity of editorial boards affected the diversity of research papers across 84 communications journals. Overall, the researchers found that journals with more geographically diverse editorial boards in their discipline tend to publish more diverse research articles. Other empirical research supporting this notion has been conducted by Lauf (2005) and Demeter (2018), among numerous others.

This descriptive study analyses the level of representation of individuals as editorial board members for journals listed under the Criminology and Penology category of Clarivate’s Web of Science (WoS) database. Specifically, the level of representation of academics located in the Global South is compared to the Global North.<sup>1</sup> The extent to which the regional representation of editorial board members is associated with journal impact factor—as an indication of journal prestige—is also examined. Previous research has investigated inequalities in editorial board composition in criminology and criminal justice journals in terms of gender (see Lowe & Fagan, 2019; Toro-Pascua & Martín-González, 2021) and race (Gabbidon et al., 2004; Young & Sulton, 1991). Far fewer studies have investigated the extent to which academics from certain geographic regions are represented on editorial journal boards. In fact, to the author’s knowledge, only one previous study has engaged with this topic specifically. Faraldo-Cabana and Lamela (2021) analysed the regional representation of membership on editorial boards for 10 journals in criminology, finding almost 70% of the 465 board members examined were from the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US), collectively. This study aims to provide a more exhaustive analysis of editorial board composition to determine how DEI is embraced within the discipline in terms of editorial board representation.

Importantly, in this study, DEI is defined as a collection of interrelated concepts that organizations and/or communities use to foster fairness, acceptance, and equal opportunities for all, regardless of background, identity, or perspective (Hinton et al., 2024). According to German (2020), DEI is seldom defined with any specificity in academia, leaving its meaning open to interpretation. Moreover, its pure implementation is often viewed as being in tension with the traditional values of academic freedom, free speech, and the pursuit of truth (see Murray, 2020). Within the context of this study, diversity is measured as the number of countries represented in any editorial capacity in criminology journals. I readily acknowledge that the DEI framework is considerably more nuanced and complicated to represent than I do here. My aim for this research is simply to examine editorial board representation using one measure of diversity, namely regionality.

## **Criminology and Diversity**

Crime is everywhere. The World Bank (2023) records crime trends in over 260 countries and territories while the United Nations Surveys on Crime Trends (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023) captures crime data for all of its 226 member nations and regions. Criminology—the study of crime and criminal behavior—seeks to understand the reasons *why* people commit crime and *how* crime can be reduced within society, as well as unpack the role of the criminal justice system. Despite not necessarily being at the “coalface” of crime prevention and reduction initiatives in the field, criminologists play a vital role in theorizing crime and informing policy aimed at addressing its causes and effects, with varying degrees of success (see Weisburd & Piquero, 2008). It is a discipline that prides itself on being multidisciplinary, positing that the knowledge generated can (or should) transcend disciplines and be transferable across local and global contexts. Exemplifying the latter, the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategy—used for manipulating the built environment to create

safer neighborhoods—was originally developed in the US by Jeffery (1971) and subsequent others but has been widely applied in several countries. These include Australia (Fisher & Piracha, 2012), South Africa (Kruger & Landman, 2008), Indonesia (Wahyudi, 2022), South Korea (Kim, Lee, & Jeong, 2018), and Malaysia (Shamsuddin & Hussin, 2013), among many others. A number of other crime theories developed in the US have similarly been used to inform various crime prevention strategies worldwide (see Akers, 1973; Sampson & Wilson, 1995; Shaw & McKay, 1942). In short, there are no literal nor figurative boundaries within which criminologists operate to advance knowledge about crime.

Despite this integrative global outlook, criminology has, however, traditionally been dominated by a group of six countries/regions (the US, the UK, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, and Australia). This group dominates key institutional mechanisms that play a vital role in the knowledge production process. This dominance and the concomitant marginalization of less developed countries in the criminological academe—notably in the Global South—has led, in part, to the development of Southern criminology. This theoretical perspective seeks to address the dominance of “Western”, particularly northern hemisphere, perspectives in criminological theory, research, and practice. Key publications by Carrington et al. (2019) and others have helped articulate the core principles of the perspective, and research networks and conferences have further solidified Southern criminology's growing presence in the broader academic discourse. However, this does not appear to have translated into obvious knowledge production roles for scholars in the Global South. This is important because the role that editorial boards, in particular, play in the development of any discipline is vital. Indeed, at their broadest level, editorial boards confer a sense of authority and legitimacy (Brinn & Jones, 2007) as well as largely determine the scientific agenda of a discipline (Hedding & Breetzke, 2021). Operationally, editorial boards determine what is published. Through a process of peer review, editors either reject a submission outright (i.e., desk reject) or send the submission for review, disproportionately to members of their editorial board. In doing so, editorial board members advise the editor/s, influencing which articles should be published, thus playing a vital role in the dissemination of scientific information to the broader research community. While editorial board members do not necessarily have the same authority as editors, their opinion of a paper should matter more to an editor than external reviewers who are not editorial board members. In doing so, editorial boards send powerful signals to the academic community concerning the types of research, and specifically the types of research methods and paradigms, that are preferred for publication.

A large number of studies have shown how various structural barriers and practices exist that limit the ability of alternate voices to be represented, heard, and published in criminology. Previous research has found stark differences in student enrolments (Frost & Clear, 2007; Toro-Pascua, 2020), paper authorship (Crow & Smykla, 2015; Khey et al., 2011), and scholarly productivity (del Carmen & Bing, 2000; Fahmy & Young, 2017; Potter et al., 2011; Snell et al., 2009) by gender, race, and country of origin. Also notable is the likelihood for universities to prescribe reading lists from overwhelmingly white and male authors to students enrolled in criminology degrees (Stockdale & Sweeney, 2022). Moreover, mainstream criminology is reluctant to include certain social constructs, particularly sexuality, in statistical analysis (see Gateley et al., 2024). Gateley and colleagues found that criminology journals' conceptualisations and operationalizations of sexuality, when it was measured as a variable, rarely fell outside of a binary measure. This, they argue, suggests that the measurement and inclusion of sexuality is still lacking, and that calls for inclusivity have not been fully heeded.

In terms of editorial board membership composition specifically, one of the earliest studies was undertaken by Eigenberg and Baro (1992). They examined editorial board membership across five “influential” journals in criminology (from 1975 to 1988), finding that only 9% of editorial representatives were women. In fact, females represented only 15% of the editors, 26% of the associate editors, and 6% of the members of editorial boards in the study. Interestingly, the researchers also found a relationship between the gender composition of editorial representatives and that of published authors. That is, journals with the highest proportion of females as editors and associate editors also published the highest percentage of articles authored by women. Almost 30 years later, Lowe and Fagan (2019) examined the gender composition of editorial boards in seven top criminology and criminal justice journals from 1985 to 2017, finding that just 14% of all editors were women. The researchers did find that, overall, the proportion of women on editorial boards was slightly increasing over time. Deviations from this trend were noted in the mid-1980s when there was a slight dip, and in the early-2000s when the percentage of women editorial board members slightly increased and then returned to an overall increasing trend. Another study by Toro-Pascua and Martín-González (2021) also found broad-based gender inequalities in the editorial committees of the main journals in criminology, with an overall low presence of women in editorial decision-making positions. They also found female representation decreased the higher the position of responsibility in the journal and the lower the quartile in which it was ranked in the Journal Citation Report. Only 14 journals out of the 63 examined had a higher number of women than men. The lack of female representation in different editorial roles in their study was seen as a reflection of the broader existing disparities in research productivity between men and women more generally (see Lowe & Fagan, 2019).

Few studies have examined racial disparities in editorial board membership in criminology. One such study by Young and Sulton (1991) found that only two of the 157 editorial board members listed in 10 of the leading refereed journals in criminology were African American. A follow-up study by Gabbidon et al. (2004) roughly 10 years later observed little change, finding only 16 African Americans had served on the editorial boards of the 10 leading journals in the discipline since 1992. More recently, Greene et al. (2018) found that only 18 African Americans had served on editorial boards of the 10 leading journals in criminology since 2004. An addition of only two members.

As outlined above, most previous research has investigated inequalities in editorial board composition in criminology by gender and race, with far fewer studies examining the extent to which academics from certain geographic regions are represented. Notable exceptions include Kim, Merlo, and Seo (2018), who examined the geographic diversity of editorial boards in three leading journals for research on women and crime, including *Feminist Criminology*, *Violence Against Women*, and *Women and Criminal Justice*. The researchers found the representation of non-US editorial board members in these journals ranged from roughly 9% to 23%. More recently, Faraldo-Cabana and Lamela (2021) employed editorial board and content analysis of 10 leading journals in criminology, finding almost 70% of the editorial board members were from either the US or the UK. They also found that the majority of the 10 journals had low levels of international involvement, coupled with high proportions of both Anglo-American authors and data. Whilst informative, the work of Faraldo-Cabana and Lamela is limited in a number of ways. First, only 10 journals (and 387 editorial board members) were included in their analysis. Second, they focussed their research on journals in the first quartile of the impact factor distribution. Third, only journals with an “international orientation” were included in their analysis, meaning a large number of journals were excluded based on their perceived prestige (or lack thereof) and/or their orientation. Focussing exclusively on these journals limits potential inferences regarding editorial board membership more generally within criminology and has the potential to perpetuate existing biases and disparities within the knowledge production process in the discipline.

In this study, I extend this literature by examining editorial board memberships of *all* 69 journals listed under the Criminology and Penology category of the WoS database. Moreover, I examine the extent to which the regional representation of editorial board members is associated with journal impact factor. My aim was to establish whether editorial board members that *are* affiliated with institutions in the Global South are equally represented on criminology journals, regardless of the perceived prestige of the journal. To my knowledge, that analysis has not been previously undertaken in research of this nature. Previous research has shown differences in editorial board membership by journal quartile by gender (see Toro-Pascua & Martín-González, 2021). Similar differences may be revealed when examining the regional representation of editorial board members by journal quartiles. Specifically, this paper seeks answers to the following two questions: (1) What is the regional representation of editorial board members in criminology and penology? (2) To what extent is the regional representation of editorial board members associated with journal impact factor as an indication of journal reach and prestige?

I believe this study should be of interest to all criminological scholars as it examines the way in which their discipline is being socially constructed and governed. More specifically, I believe it should be of interest to journal editors, given their responsibility for determining the social characteristics of their editorial boards and, by association, the trajectory of their discipline. Finally, academic publishers (i.e., Elsevier and Routledge) are increasingly promoting diversity and equality as part of their corporate social responsibility agendas. The results of this research may shine a sobering light on how far the discipline has to go to achieve true equality in this small but meaningful component of the knowledge generation process.

## Data and Method

In this study, the location (country) of editorial board member affiliations of journals listed under the Criminology and Penology<sup>2</sup> category of the WoS database was considered. While either of the two main academic literature collections—WoS or Scopus—could have been used, WoS was selected as it was the oldest and most established database available. The difference between the two is, however, negligible (see Chadegani et al., 2013) and choosing one over the other is most often due to personal preference. The Criminology and Penology category within the WoS database comprises 69 journals. It is readily acknowledged that criminology is a broad and diverse discipline and grouping all journals together in the analysis could potentially mask subtle variations in the composition of editorial boards across sub-disciplines within criminology (such as policing or criminal law). However, I wanted to provide a broader overview of editorial board composition in the analysis, at least initially. One journal (*Revija za Kriminalistiko in Kriminologijo*) did not list the composition of its editorial board and was thus excluded from the analysis. Data on editorial board members' affiliations were collected in February–June 2021. Following the method of Cummings 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). The resulting descriptive analysis is based on 2,627 editorial board member country affiliations obtained from 69 criminology journals.

It is important to note that the total number of editorial board members may include duplicate counts as a limited number of individuals may have been listed on multiple editorial boards. Moreover, a number of editorial board members had multiple affiliations, although these were regarded as a proportion of one when counted. A total of 52 countries are represented in editorial board member affiliations in criminology and 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). The percentage of regional representation was then calculated. It is also important to note that the quality of the data obtained on editorial member affiliations is limited by the accuracy of the information on editorial boards available on journal websites. If the information provided was inaccurate (i.e., outdated, incorrect), the subsequent results may contain errors, but that is out of my control. It is important to note that the data collected focus on the geographic location of the editorial board member affiliation(s) and not the country of origin, race, or gender of editorial board members. It is readily acknowledged 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. There is increasing evidence that scholars from the Global South that are geographically resident in the “Western” academy provide unique and new perspectives and experiences that enrich the academic departments in which they reside (Martin & Dandekar, 2022). Of course, I was not able to capture this using the quantitative measures in this paper but do acknowledge the nuanced realities that such metrics can obscure. While this may be considered as a limitation of the methodology, my 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 origin are less of my concern.

Descriptive statistics of the journals used in the study are shown in *Table 1*. The aim of the table is to provide an initial overview of the distribution of editorial board members by journal quartile in order to identify any possible trend in this regard. The final column shows the number of individual countries represented (as editorial board members) per journal quartile and provides an initial indication of the variability in country representation. The impact factor of each journal for 2021 was extracted from the WoS database, which enabled the calculation of the journal quartile of the indexed criminology journals. A marginal gradient was found between the journal quartile and the number of editorial board members, with higher ranked journals generally having larger editorial boards but also more variability. There is no obvious relationship between the number of different countries represented and the journal quartile. The impact factor of criminology journals ranged from 6.348 (for *Annual Review of Criminology*) to 0.233 (for *Monatsschrift für Kriminologie und Strafrechtsreform*) with a mean impact factor of 1.661. It is readily acknowledged that the use of impact factors to measure the “prestige” of journals provokes debate. Criticisms of the use of impact factors are myriad and include the fact that their construction is prone to manipulation (to increase a journal’s ranking; Hickman et al., 2019), abuse (such as coercive and self-citations; Fong & Wilhite, 2017), and fraud (such as the emergence of journals touting fake impact factors; Larivière, 2019). Statistically, a high impact factor may also be derived from relatively few highly cited papers (see Callaway, 2016 for an explanation), leading some scholars to argue for a more sophisticated bibliometric descriptor to be used such as the Eigenfactor (see Metze & da Silva, 2022). These issues notwithstanding, I agree with the succinct sentiments of Hoeffel (1998, p. 1225) who argues that “impact factor is not a perfect tool to measure the quality of articles, but there is nothing better, and it has the advantage of already being in existence and is therefore a good technique for scientific evaluation.”

Finally, I used the impact factor to determine the relationship between journal “prestige” and the regional representation of editorial board membership. This was done to determine whether certain regions are more likely to serve on the editorial boards of “higher” or “lower” ranked journals (based on their impact factor). To do this, the mean number of editorial board members for journals within each impact factor quartile (Q1–Q4) per region was initially calculated. Next, the mean number of editorial board members in Q4 (the lowest ranked journals) was divided by the mean number of editorial board members in Q1 (the highest ranked journals) to create a Q4:Q1 ratio for each region.

**Table 1**

*Editorial Board Members of Criminology and Penology Journals Listed on Clarivate's Web of Science (WoS) Database*

	Count	Min	Mean	Max	SD	Mean impact factor	Countries represented
All	2627	6	38.6	112	18.4	1.7	53
Q1	783	7	46.1	112	24.4	3.2	23
Q2	650	6	38.2	72	16.7	1.6	25
Q3	658	7	38.7	65	14.5	1.2	27
Q4	536	9	31.5	63	15.1	0.7	23

This ratio provided an indication of the mean number of editorial board members in Q4 journals, relative to the mean number of editorial board members in Q1 journals. A Q4:Q1 ratio below 1 indicated a higher mean number of editorial board members in Q1 journals (higher ranked), relative to the mean number of editorial board members in Q4 journals (lower ranked). A Q4:Q1 ratio greater than 1 indicated a lower mean number of editorial board members in Q1 journals, relative to the mean number of editorial board members in Q4 journals. The significance of this association was determined using a Spearman's rank correlation ( $r^2$ ). The correlation was run between the mean editorial board member affiliation and the impact factor quartile (Q1–Q4) by region.

More advanced methods exist to examine general editorial board membership representation. For example, Goyanes and Demeter (2020) used Simpson's reciprocal index of diversity for each journal (Hill, 1973) as a measure to operationalize the diversity of editorial boards. In their study, the researchers also used regression analyses to test various hypotheses related to editorial board representativeness, including predicting the first author's country of origin, the country of data collection, and the research approach employed. Other studies employing similar indices include those conducted by Lauf (2005) and Demeter (2018). The current study, however, is purely descriptive in nature, simply aiming to examine the extent to which different regions of the world are represented as editorial board members in criminology journals. Whilst identifying significant predictors related to editorial board representation is valuable, it was beyond the scope of this study. Similar to most prior research of this nature (see Faraldo-Cabana & Lamela, 2021; Garcia-Carpintero et al., 2010; Harzing & Metz, 2013; Hedding & Breetzke, 2021), this study provides a simple description of the composition of editorial boards by region. Future research could aim to use more advanced analytics to examine why (if any) over- or under-representations exist and attempt to align these differences to journal prestige.

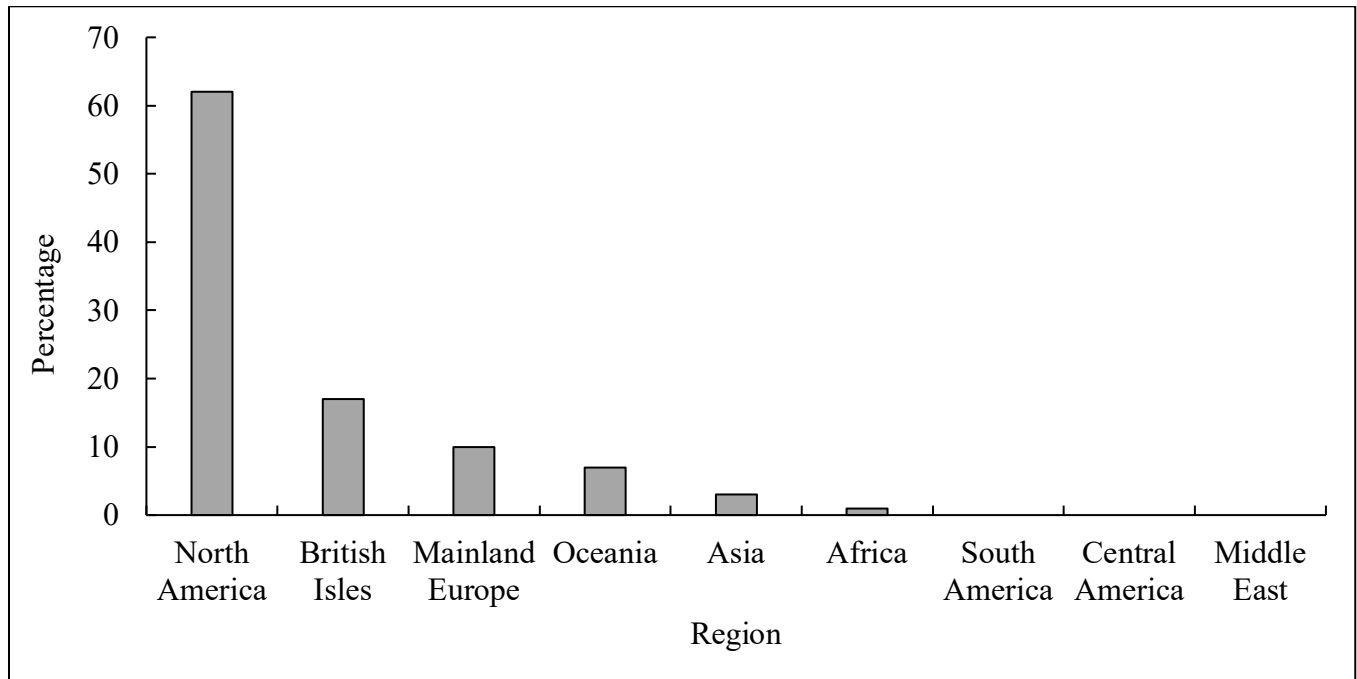
## Results

Figure 1 shows the representation of editorial board members by region under the Criminology and Penology category of the WoS database. The results indicate the extreme disproportionality of editorial board membership by regional representation, with almost 80% of all editorial board members located in just two regions: North America (62%) and the British Isles (17%). This shows the dominance of these two regions in terms of scientific knowledge production and dissemination in the discipline. They are followed by Mainland Europe and Oceania which have roughly 10% and 7% of editorial board members, respectively. Central America (0.2%), South America (0.4%), the Middle East (0.3%), Asia (2.4%), and Africa (0.6%) collectively account for less than 5% of editorial board memberships globally, despite containing over 80% of the world's population. The least diverse journals in terms of the regional representation of their editorial boards are the *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology* and *Journal of Crime & Justice* with all their editorial board members based in the US. All the editorial board members of *The British Journal of Criminology* are also based in the British Isles. The most diverse journal is the *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, with 17 different countries represented in their editorial board, although no editorial board members are based in Central America. There are also a number of editorial boards dominated by US academics, including *Crime & Delinquency* (97%) and *Annual Review of Criminology* (86%) as well as UK academics, notably *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology* (64%). Understandably, the country location patterns are strongly linked to the countries in which the journals were originally founded. For example, all the editorial board members of *Recht & Psychiatrie* are based in Germany. Similarly, 29 of the 45 editorial board members from the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* (now renamed the *Journal of Criminology*) are located in Australia or New Zealand. Whilst this may impact the results of this

study somewhat, it is interesting to note that the *Asian Journal of Criminology* has a relatively diverse editorial board, with members located across five different regions. This is more than the current top ranked journal (by impact factor), *Annual Review of Criminology*, which has editorial board members located in only two countries (the US and Canada), although there are only six editorial team members in total.

**Figure 1**

*Regional Representation of Editorial Board Member Affiliations (%) in Criminology and Penology Journals (in Descending Order)*

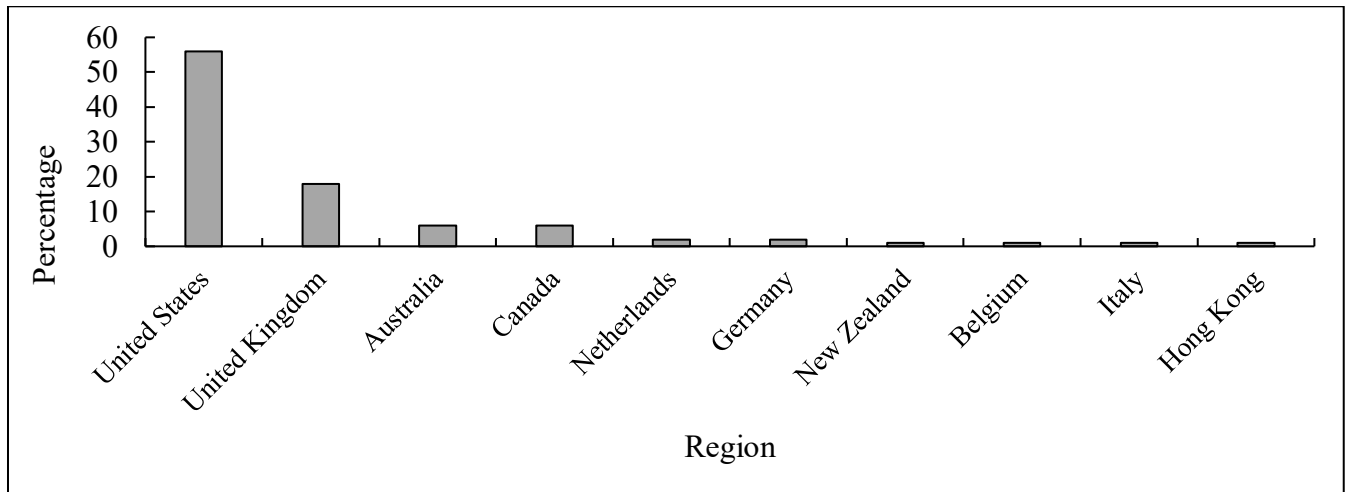


Remarkably, less than 1% of editorial board members have an African affiliation ( $n = 16$ ) but eight of these members are affiliated with only one journal (*Security Journal*). South Africa accounts for half of the total number of editorial board members affiliated with African universities. In fact, if you extract South Africa from the dataset, the percentage representation of editorial board members affiliated with African universities drops from 0.6% to 0.3%: a sad indictment of the representativeness of editorial board members. Also surprising is the lack of representativeness of Asia, which has witnessed a remarkable growth in the quality and quantity of academic research outputs in the past 20 years, notably from China (see Adams et al., 2019; Wagner et al., 2022). In fact, China now publishes the highest number of scientific research papers per year on average ( $n = 407,181$ ), followed by the US ( $n = 293,434$ ), and others (Japanese Science and Technology Indicators, 2022). China also now has the top 1% most highly cited publications, forging ahead of the US in 2019 and the European Union in 2015 (Wagner et al., 2022). This increase in productivity and citations has yet to translate into editorial board membership representation with less than 1% of editorial board members having a Chinese affiliation ( $n = 19$ ), with seven of these members being affiliated with only one journal (*Asian Journal of Criminology*). Similarly, if you extract this journal from the dataset, the representation of researchers affiliated with Chinese universities drops from 0.7% to 0.5%.

For finer analysis, *Figure 2* shows the representation of editorial board members by country (with the top 10 countries represented). Results, again, indicate the disproportionality of representation with just two countries/regions (the US and the UK) accounting for almost three-quarters of editorial board members. Meanwhile, the “group of six” countries/regions referred to earlier collectively account for almost 90% of all membership.

**Figure 2**

*Top 10 Country Representation of Editorial Board Member Affiliations (%) in Criminology and Penology Journals (in Descending Order)*



*Figure 3* shows the representation of editors by region under the Criminology and Penology category of the WoS database. These include any member that acts in a leadership position in a journal, including editors, editors-in-chief, or associate editors. Rather unsurprisingly, the results again indicate the disproportionality of editorial leadership position by global region. Over 50% of all editors are located in North America (52%), while just under a third of editors have affiliations in the British Isles (28%), largely mirroring the results on broader editorial board membership shown earlier. Again, this shows these two regions’ dominance in terms of leading scientific production in the discipline. They are followed by Mainland Europe and Oceania at roughly 8% each. Less than 1% of editors in criminology are based in Africa (0.5%) and South America (0.3%), and there are no editors based in Central America or the Middle East.

**Figure 3**

*Regional Representation of Editors’ Affiliations (%) in Criminology and Penology Journals (in Descending Order)*

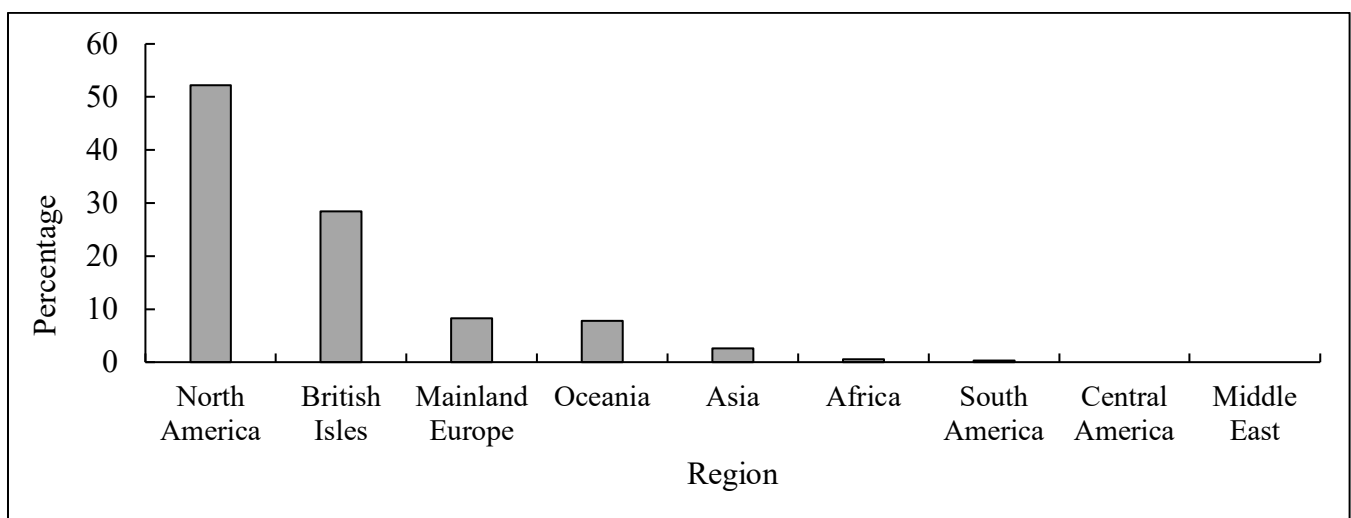




Table 2 shows the regional editorial board member affiliations by journal quartile. The mean number of editorial board members are indicated per journal quartile, with the Q4:Q1 ratio indicating the mean number of editorial board members in Q4 relative to the mean number of editorial board members in Q1. A number of results warrant attention. First, the Q4:Q1 ratios for North America and the British Isles are both below 1. This indicates that there are, on average, more editorial board members in Q1 journals, relative to Q4 journals, in these two regions. In fact, there is a noticeable negative gradient for editorial board members affiliated in these two regions. That is, editorial board membership from these regions increases across journals stratified by “prestige”. Simply put, editorial board members based in these two regions are more likely to be associated with journals with higher impact factors, although this trend is only statistically significant for North America. Second, the Q4:Q1 ratios for five other regions including Europe, Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Oceania are all above 1. This indicates that there are, on average, less editorial board members in Q1 journals, relative to Q4 journals, in these five regions. All these regions have higher representation of editorial board members for journals with lower impact factors. The strength of this relationship varies marginally between regions as the ratios of the mean number of editorial board members in Q4, compared with Q1, ranged from 2.18 (for Europe) to 6 (for Africa). These values suggest that the mean number of editorial board members is up to six times higher in Q4 journals than in Q1 journals in some regions. For Europe specifically, this number reflects the fact that a number of journals based in Europe have mainly European editorial board members and also low impact factors (e.g., *Recht & Psychiatrie*, *Deviance et Societe*, *Monatsschrift fur Kriminologie und Strafrechtsreform*). Finally, the Q4:Q1 ratios for Central America and South America are both 1, which indicates that these two regions have the same mean number of editorial board members across Q4 and Q1 journals. This is somewhat surprising, but the mean number of editorial board members are extremely low (ranging from 0.1 to 0.2) for both regions.

**Table 2**

*Regional Editorial Board Member Affiliations by Journal Quartile (Mean)*

	High			Low			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4:Q1	$r^2$	$p$ -value
<b>North America</b>	35.2	25.2	18	16.9	0.48	-0.35	<0.05
<b>Central America</b>	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	1	0.03	<i>ns</i>
<b>South America</b>	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	1	0.03	<i>ns</i>
<b>British Isles</b>	6.2	7	8.5	4.5	0.73	-0.05	<i>ns</i>
<b>Europe</b>	2.2	3.4	4.9	4.8	2.18	0.21	<i>ns</i>
<b>Middle East</b>	0	0.1	0.1	0.3	3	0.29	<0.05
<b>Asia</b>	0.4	0.4	2.1	0.9	2.25	0.11	<i>ns</i>
<b>Oceania</b>	1.7	2	4.5	3.3	1.94	0.19	<i>ns</i>
<b>Africa</b>	0	0.1	0.2	0.6	6	0.27	<0.05

## Discussion

The unequal dynamics of gender, race, and region that permeate throughout institutions of higher education is well known. Knowledge production has historically been the purview of the few. Mignolo (1993) refers to this as “academic colonialism,” whereby scientific knowledge within certain disciplines is “ring-fenced” and aligned to a certain group of elite countries. One of the many ways in which this inequality manifests itself is through editorial board composition. The results of this research indicate that almost 80% of all editorial board members in criminology are located in North America and the British Isles. Deeper analysis of the data indicates that a number of journals have editorial boards with members affiliated with only one or two countries, exclusively from the Global North. Worryingly, the regions of Central America (0.2%), South America (0.4%), the Middle East (0.3%), Asia (2.4%), and Africa (0.6%) collectively account for roughly 5% of *all* editorial board memberships. Moreover, those editorial board members with affiliations from these regions are most often members of journals with the lowest impact factors. Finally, the representation of editorial leadership positions by global region largely mirrors the editorial board membership representations more broadly, with roughly 80% of all editors having affiliations in either North America or the British Isles. The results of this research are supported by other studies which have found similar distributions. For example, in their quantitative investigation of the 10 top international journals of criminology and criminal justice’s editorial

boards, Faraldo-Cabana and Lamela (2021) found that over 80% of editorial board members had affiliations with institutions in the Global North. Outside of criminology, Goyanes and Demeter (2020) found that peripheral Global South regions were almost invisible within communications journals. This suggested that the power of Global South scholarship to challenge or modify existing theories and research approaches in communications was limited. Finally, another study by Hedding and Breetzke (2021) found that less than 5% of editorial board members within geography journals had affiliations with institutions in the Global South. The researchers also found that editorial board members in Mainland Europe (31%) and North America (29%) collectively accounted for approximately 60% of all editorial board members. A lack of regional diversity has also been found in accounting science (Dhanani & Jones, 2017), development studies (Cummings & Hoebink, 2016), psychiatry (Saxena et al., 2003), and management science (Harzing & Metz, 2013), among others.

The broader exclusion of the Global South within knowledge production in criminology is not new. Researchers have long lamented the intellectual hegemony of the Global North in the discipline (Carrington et al., 2019; Connell, 2007; Valdés-Riesco, 2021; van Swaaningen, 2021). Importantly, this limits theory development as Global South scholars use theories, concepts, or axioms developed in the “West” in their research without considering local alternatives. Consider environmental criminology, a school of criminology which argues for the uniqueness of “place” in explicating crime risk. Seminal spatial theories of crime housed within environmental criminology were developed exclusively in the US, often within a single city. These include social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942) and routine activities theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979). These theories may not necessarily be applicable in countries in the Global South, or even developed countries outside the US (see, for example, Aas, 2012; Breetzke & Horn, 2006; Ciocchini & Greener, 2021). Editor/s most often require that a manuscript submitted for possible publication be embedded within a theoretical framework—which is most often inherently a “Western” framework—before being sent out for peer review. While studies with an international focus have previously been shown to contribute to the advancement of criminological theory (see Agnew, 2015; Messner et al., 2007; Stein, 2010), these studies most often attempt to test the generalisability of various Western theories or concepts of crime in the Global South. Rarely do criminological scholars based in the Global North attempt to empirically test “African” or “Asian” criminological theories or concepts in their contexts. For example, do the neighbourhood crime control indicators of *tiao-jie* and *bangjiao* (China) reduce crime in London? Do neighbourhoods with greater *ubuntu* (South Africa) have lower crime levels in The Hague? Does the presence of *nyumba kumi* (Kenya) reduce crime in Baltimore? From a more practical perspective, the imposition of penal and policing systems during colonialism in a number of Global South countries has contributed to the erosion of traditional justice systems (Onyeozili, 2005), social fragmentation (Tamanaha, 2021), and, in some instances, increased crime and insecurity (Breetzke, 2012). Most often, these systems were modelled on those in the Global North. One way to seek redress—at least from an academic standpoint—would be to increase representation of scholars from the Global South throughout all steps in the academic publishing process, starting with editorial board membership. It is increasingly acknowledged that diversity in general breeds more innovative science (Hofstra et al., 2020) and is essential in building solutions to challenges faced by all communities, both marginalized and non-marginalized (Barber et al., 2020).

In truth, there is growing acknowledgement that things need to change within criminology, leading for increased calls to “internationalize” the discipline (Barberet 2007; Xenakis, 2021). In 2021, a new academic journal, *International Criminology*, was created with the aim to publish contributions that will “enhance and develop the field of international, transnational, comparative and global criminology and criminal justice.” Relatedly, the *Journal of Criminology* (previously the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*) have also taken a number of steps to diversify their editorial board. The journal has created a new Indigenous/First Nations Associate Editor position and has committed to other steps to increase the regional representation of their editorial board. Finally, it is important to note that there are several other high ranking criminology journals—not included in this particular list—that have extremely diverse editorial boards. This includes the *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, which has 64 members from 19 countries represented on their editorial board (including 56% from the Global South). However, it is clear that more needs to be done to diversify editorial boards across the discipline as a whole.

## Recommendations

Changing the composition of an editorial board is a long process. Being invited to join an editorial board is, and should remain, an honor reserved for individuals that have, usually over an extended period of time, built a suitable profile and reputation, based largely on their research outputs. So, what solutions can be offered? Importantly, I do not propose a double standard for the acceptance of manuscripts to increase the visibility of Global South scholars within criminology. Nor do I advocate for the “parachuting” of scholars from the Global South into editorial boards. Rather, I make a number of recommendations that could be considered. Consistent with Pourret et al.’s (2021) recommendations, these include first, setting up a diversity working group within each journal to identify potentially qualified future editorial board members and/or editors, while also targeting an increase in diversity. Second, existing editorial board members should be encouraged to act as mentors to potential future

editorial board members and editors who are of diverse backgrounds and identities. Third, journals should present an infographic of the diversity of their editorial board and/or the geographical scope of the published articles. This may attract attention from diverse researchers, as well as raise awareness of diversity/equity/inclusion in the scientific publishing space. Other recommendations include producing multilingual publications to increase readership, inviting DEI perspectives, and integrating DEI in the code of conduct for authors. While there is no “quick fix” to the problem of representation on editorial boards, a start needs to be made.

Finally, I am aware of numerous reasons provided for why a more representative editorial board is difficult to achieve. The first is that the two leading regions represented on editorial boards in criminology (North America and the British Isles) have more scholars, students, universities, and degree programmes in criminology and criminal justice. This would naturally translate into greater representation in broader criminological knowledge production across the board, including editorial board membership. Indeed, Pease (2021) argues that, since the US has roughly 470 universities offering first degrees in criminology and other countries have far fewer institutions offering the same, it is natural that there will be inequities across countries. This argument certainly has merit but I argue that these inequities are too great. For example, Japan has 10 editorial board members out of 2,627 (0.4%), South Africa has six (0.2%), India has three (0.1%), and Brazil has three (0.1%), to name just a few. Importantly, I am not advocating for a level of editorial representation in criminology based on the total number or percentage of scholars by nationality and/or global region necessarily. Indeed, it is unknown what an “appropriate” level of representation would be and/or whether that is even desirable. Rather, the fact remains that research output and capacity in the Global South has increased over the past decade (Cruz, 2023). Indeed, an increase in article publication and scholarly output across the Global South have been noted within criminology itself (Ceccato & Ioannidis, 2024; González Brambila & Olivares-Vázquez, 2021; Guzmán-Valenzuela et al., 2023). Moreover, broader criminology developments in the Global South have increased, particularly in Asia. New journals (*Asian Journal of Criminology*) and societies (Association of Chinese Criminology and Criminal Justice <http://accj.org/>) have been established, indicating broader expansion of the criminological academe in these areas. These developments have not yet, however, translated into increased representation of scholars from this region on editorial boards.

Editorial board homogeneity is also attributed to language barriers that restrict the ability of criminological scholars, particularly those from the Global South, to publish and, hence, be more fully involved in the broader criminological discourse. This limits their ability to gain some form of international profile and possibly be invited to serve on an editorial board. Again, there is merit to this argument, but this “othering” of criminological scholars fluent in languages other than those of most of the published literature serves no purpose. Increased language diversity of editorial boards increases the diversity of published articles (Goyanes & Demeter, 2020) and increases positive perception of the journal by race scholars (Auelua-Toomey & Roberts, 2022). Alternatively, authors could be permitted to submit articles to journals in their preferred language and use machine translation to convert the submission into the preferred language of the editorial board members (see Ignatans et al., 2023 for other potential solutions). The relatively recent introduction of *artificial intelligence (AI) large language models, such as ChatGPT*, in academia could potentially extend to *translations*. *While this is a viable option, the inherent risks of using these models—such as plagiarism and the lack of depth, critical analysis, and novel insights crucial for scholarly contributions—is readily acknowledged.*

## Conclusion

Scholars from the Global South, rightly or wrongly, regard editors and editorial boards as “guardians of knowledge” (Goyanes, 2019), in that they ultimately decide what is and is not published. These so-called “gatekeeping” practices can potentially restrict the ability of scholars from the Global South to meaningfully contribute to the greater criminological academe. Pease (2021) argues that “gatekeepers” only become relevant in academic publishing when someone knocks. This is partially true. Researchers from the Global South experience far greater challenges than their northern counterparts in conducting research (see Minai, 2018 for examples). They are largely confined to undertaking criminological research within a Western paradigm and submitting their work to journals whose editorial boards are axiomatically different to their context. Having a more representative editorial board could potentially allow for these voices to be heard, leading to richer and more comprehensive and inclusive coverage. I propose that criminology journals should proactively strive for DEI in their recruitment process for editorial board members and, in doing so, engender greater geographic representation on their editorial boards. Criminology is one of a few disciplines to have remained relatively unchanged, both in name and purpose, since it emerged as a field of study in Western Europe in the latter half of the 18th century. While the discipline does not necessarily need to change its purpose, the structures which direct and mould that purpose must be more equitable and inclusive.

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<sup>1</sup> By “Global South,” I refer to African, Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern countries who are also members of the Group of 77. The Group of 77 is a group of economically developed countries with high per capita gross domestic product that collectively concentrates most global wealth (Independent Commission on International Development Issues, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> From this point onwards, the Criminology and Penology category in the WoS database is also referred to as “criminology”.

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