

*New Scholars*

**SANDS OF CHANGE: OVERCOMING FIRST WORLD  
HEGEMONY OVER KNOWLEDGE**

**JUSTIN GAURAV MURGAI**

*The Chinese University of Hong Kong*

**CHARLES W. BAKER**

*Greenville Technical College, Greenville, South Carolina*

**ABSTRACT**

Today, a clear Euro-American hegemony can be seen in anthropological knowledge over what is published and read globally. Online databases such as the Web of Science and Google Scholar, where most published books and articles and works cited come from the Euro-American core, illustrate this fact. The issue is not simply a lack of funding in the developing world; instead, the question is raised whether the forces behind the dissemination of anthropological knowledge are reverting to ethnocentric sentiments reminiscent of the discipline's initial foundations. With technology such as the Internet easing communication between the developed and developing worlds, why has this hegemony persisted? How can technology be used to overcome this double standard within the discipline? The World Council for Anthropological Associations (WCAA) has recently engaged in a project to create a world list of publications, providing an equal platform for accessing research from lesser-known journals from the developing world. How effective has this model been? Is there a question of credibility with regard to lesser-known journals, whether or not they are refereed, if they offer free access to content? Open access to information and a rethinking of traditional publishing models is needed to encourage the inclusion of new scholars and those from the developing world. Indeed, the only way to experience cultural relativity in the world of publishing and the academic workplace, we argue, is to encourage conversation between anthropologists from both the developing and developed worlds.

### FIRST-WORLD HEGEMONY

Even with accusations of information overload and a seemingly endless supply of academic information available at the fingertips of anyone sitting in front of a computer keyboard, there are surprising and troublesome elements to scholarly research, amongst anthropology and various other disciplines, that preclude the very principles of inclusion upon which modern anthropological studies are based. Because of the first-world dominance seen in academic publishing and the self-imposed subjectivities of quality seen in current publication models, many potential and junior scholars, especially outside the Anglosphere of influence, are barred from the global discourse. In turn, such exclusionary factors make it difficult for new scholars and those from the developing world to obtain full-time, much less tenured, positions in an increasingly competitive market dominated by a “publish or perish” mentality and increasing financial constrictions. As entering scholars hoping to join an academic discussion and gain keys to the proverbial castle, we maintain that an evolution of thought, modeling, and access is needed to preserve the continuing progression of academic knowledge and fight against the entropic tendencies of blindly holding steadfast to traditional schemes created and maintained mainly by first-world thought.

A clear Euro-American dominance can be seen in anthropological knowledge today over what is published and read globally. Online databases such as the Web of Science and Google Scholar show this very clearly, the majority of published books and articles published, along with the works cited within them, come from the Euro-American core.

Many scholars suggest that the reasons for this are related simply to a lack of funding available in developing countries, and, indeed, in part this is true, as many libraries and university departments—particularly those in the social sciences and arts—lack sufficient funds and are thus unable to partake in real-time dialogue on contemporary issues. An editor of a journal recently suggested that authors from many of the developing regions are still writing about what anthropologists had thought to be important decades back because of the world of literary knowledge they live in. However, the issues are somewhat deeper and relate more generally to the structure of the publishing community, or more broadly, to issues involving a lack of concern for or flexibility with regard to printing works written with different cultural considerations in mind. With these structural—perhaps even better described as ethnocentric—barriers in place, how can we truly reach a global anthropology? Is the anthropological discipline perhaps fated to continue its double standard by promoting cultural relativism in its writings on the one hand, while rejecting the cultural dissemination of knowledge on the other?

There are, of course, no definitive answers here. One solution is perhaps to make use of technological opportunities provided by the Internet, particularly open access, in order to break through these barriers in communication. Along with this, we must take a look into the foundations of academic structures in order

to better facilitate a global anthropology through the workings of publishing schemes, the notion of what constitutes quality, and academic philanthropy.

### **A GLOBAL ANTHROPOLOGY THROUGH COMMUNICATION**

One of the core issues in overcoming first-world hegemony is a lack of communication between the developed and developing worlds, which keeps us from truly achieving a global anthropology. The World Council of Anthropological Associations (2012) has been working on a project to create a database of anthropological journals from all corners of the world. The project has received a considerable amount of attention and is the first of its kind, particularly as it is one that is hosted by a prominent organization in the discipline. There are, of course, other, similar projects such as the Latin American Scientific Electronic Library Online, or Scielo, which is a searchable journal database with access to full-text articles from the South American continent; other regional and topic-oriented databases, too, can be found on the Internet. No attempt, however, has been made to encourage global dialogue by placing the journals on a level playing field, regardless of the topic or region they cater to, in order to provide a chance for equal readership. The WCAA list is, of course, far from complete, with new additions being made to the number of journals every two to four weeks.

There have also been criticisms of the list, saying that it, like other databases, is still to a large extent oriented toward hosting information about journals from the Euro-American core. This, however, is simply a result of the fact that information about journals from the developed world is more readily available on the Internet, particularly as many of these journals are published in English and are thus more accessible linguistically. Because those who contributed to the initial list have a lack of language ability beyond English and a few other languages, many journals, particularly those written in African and Eastern European languages, have been left out—yet perhaps these are the journals that need the most help acquiring a readership. Granted, the lack of funding impedes many journals from having an online presence. For example, it was difficult to find Indian academic journals when creating the WCAA list, save for some major national journals.

### **OPEN COMMUNICATION THROUGH OPEN ACCESS**

Another issue with the list has had to do with the availability of journal contents and access to them. In order to encourage global dialogue and reach an equal readership of journals, and especially to bring anthropologists from the developing world up to date with current trends in publication and knowledge, developed-world journals have to start offering open access to their journal contents. This, of course, is against the will of a majority of publishers, whose main concern is to preserve copyrights and provide exclusive access to libraries at costly rates. Support from an increasing quorum in the anthropological community to provide

open access has begun to lead certain journals to offer subsidized costs to the developing world, but most publishers have chosen not to comply. In January, for example, the American Anthropological Association's Bill Davis submitted to the American Office of Science and Policy a letter about public access to the association's scholarly publications, downplaying the problem (quoted in Anderson, 2012):

We write today to make the case that while we share the mutual objective of enhancing the public understanding of scientific enterprise and support the wide dissemination of materials that can reach those in public who would benefit from such knowledge . . . , broad public access to information currently exists, and no federal government intervention is currently necessary. . . . We know of no research that demonstrates a problem with the existing system for making the content of scholarly journals available to those who might benefit from it.

With limited funds and a lack of open access to academic dialogue because of the problems described above, the developing world is placed in a vicious cycle, being unable to publish in Euro-American publications because of its inability to compete with the rapidly developing discourses in anthropological studies. Due to the current state of publication and access, the first-world hegemony continues its reign, a status quo that the current key bearers choose to defend.

Because of the ethnocentric and financial barriers to publication through traditional methods, the global community should look instead to a greater use of the open access world created through the Internet. In today's global environment, Internet access is becoming more universal. Granted, obviously not all areas of the globe, and perhaps especially some third-world areas under discussion here, have a readily available or affordable Internet service, but this argument becomes more and more moot as even the most traditional academic publications are moving to the choice of digital editions over their print counterparts. Indeed, a majority of the third-world journals that are part of the WCAA list have print editions but also have open access to their articles and translations. If an argument's main point is to allow a global discourse to occur, the electronic forum is by default the area in which to have this discussion, in that most academic information, proprietary or open access, resides online. Studies suggest that growth rates for Internet availability are at their peak through 2015, with global penetration at 89% of the world's population by 2030–2035 (Miranda & Lima, 2012). To further bolster the argument for open access publication, Antelman (2004: 379) argues that “across a variety of disciplines, open-access articles have a greater research impact than articles that are not freely available.” She goes on to assert that even Google, by far the world's largest search engine with nearly 200 national or territorial specific domains, works in favor of a user seeking open access material over restricted copies: “If an open copy of the article is available, and the article itself has been indexed by Google, that copy will appear ahead of the restricted copies in the

search results display” (Antelman, 2004: 379). Of course, it should be noted that Google’s search results structure is still skewed toward first-world journals as these journals are searched with more frequency. A more numerous search and click count results in a higher position on Google’s search list in that such sites are given priority as to relevancy. Nonetheless, this does not detract from the assertion that open access articles will lead to a larger readership; in fact, this structure would suggest that first-world journals allowing open access would be rewarded with an even greater research impact due to the spike in relevancy and readers that they gain.

In comparison, the user-friendliness of the WCAA’s project is a concern. While it is undoubtedly a commendable project, there is a lack of structure and freedom of access in the way the list is currently laid out. The journals in the list, at the moment, are simply laid out in alphabetical order according to their titles. A user can, through a simple keyboard search function or simply by scrolling down the list, look up the journal’s name, language, type of access, and ISSN numbers. How useful is this information when doing research, though? Because the title of journals rarely, if ever, hint at what their contents might be, this information is not particularly useful in truly engaging people in global dialogue. What is needed is a more comprehensive, searchable database that can provide links to articles by means of user-defined keywords. In other words, what needs to be created is an index of articles—complete with topical keywords, author details, and citation indexes—which, given the numbers of languages involved, one can imagine, is no easy task. The WCAA, along with the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the American Anthropological Association’s Committee on World Anthropologies, has considered such solutions, but the initial and maintenance costs along with the sheer scope of language coordination have proven troublesome. One proposal has been to encourage authors themselves to upload their own articles and enter keywords. Even if this is done, there remains a need to make sure that the databases are actually used. Many platforms exist, but the initiative is not publicized and stressed enough, so no one really knows about it. The Anthropological Index Online (Royal Anthropological Institute, 2010), which is a project supported by the British Museum, the William Buller Fagg Charitable Trust, and the University of Kent, for example, has tried to produce an indexed database for less-read journals, but there is a lack of impetus among people to look at them and a lack of publicity. While many of the ongoing projects are beneficial and seek to work toward inclusion, it can fairly be said that there are too many entities trying to work on the same types of projects, so how does a young scholar or one from a developing nation know which one to use? There needs to be one consensual body, a meta database of sorts, that brings these initiatives together, including the WCAA’s listings, the Anthropological Index Online’s database, Scielo’s databases, and so forth—though this requires considerable research and development costs that most funding organizations have thus far been unwilling to consider. Such a project is huge, and nothing like it has been attempted in the discipline

before. As it is unknown whether this type of resource could or would be used—which produces unclear results in a cost-benefits analysis—funding bodies have a fair concern. Nonetheless, the open access environment is a more productive path to the desired end than proprietary servers and would serve to greatly lessen the financial impact of offering a larger, more complete forum for global discourse.

### **GATEKEEPERS AND ACADEMIC BIAS**

Of course, this push toward open access involves its own barriers as well. As Willinsky (2006: ix) succinctly points out, open access does not equate to free access. However, he presents an excellent anecdote on the power of looking beyond the traditional academic gatekeepers for assistance in gaining the empowerment provided by open access to academic research and information:

By the dawn of the twenty-first century, the tidy but modest library that looks out on the gardens at the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) in Nairobi was able to subscribe to only five medical journals. As Nancy Kamau, the institute's librarian, explained to me, [she] had been forced to cut one journal title after another from its list of subscriptions, as prices kept jumping ahead of the budget allocation and the Kenyan currency fluctuated. The real shame of it, Kamau pointed out, was that the final five subscriptions, which they could barely afford, did not include the leading journals on the institute's principal research interest, tropical diseases. How could KEMRI properly support its current projects in biotechnology, leprosy, malaria, public health, and other areas with an inordinately small sample of the relevant literature? Then in July 2001 came a turning point. As Kamau went on to explain, the World Health Organization managed to convince six of the leading corporate journal publishers to provide developing nations with open access to the electronic editions of their medical journals. This meant that the online contents of a sizable number of medical journals were suddenly available at no charge to the faculty and students at KEMRI and elsewhere. The program, known as HINARI (the Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative), had grown since then to encompass over 2,000 journals in the health field, and it had not been long before the initiative had registered over 1,000 institutions from 101 of the world's less fortunate countries.

Hence, one answer to the first-world hegemony problem is to encourage cooperation from nongovernmental agencies, governments, and corporations to help in the effort to provide open access to academic publications and other sources. This, in concert with the construction of user-driven databases, online journals, and search schemes, can better facilitate precisely the global discourse the field of anthropology strives toward but has failed to achieve because of the barriers created by traditional access for those outside the Euro-American sphere of influence.

One key issue that all of these projects face, however, is an unfortunate bias among scholars from the developed world against works published in developing nations. Beyond the concerns of the editor quoted above, several students and academics spoken to on the matter also questioned the credibility of articles in lesser known journals that do not cite sources familiar to the first world's researchers, especially as many do not follow contemporary trends. A number of the developing world's journals are also open source, not to be confused with open access, which from their perspective gives them a better chance of gaining a readership. However, there also seems to be a stigma attached to open source articles, especially ones not refereed or vetted by traditional means. With new journals in the developed world such as *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* beginning to market their refereed-but-open-source policies, perhaps this stigma will soon disappear, but we have yet to see a major change. One reason for this is the fear of many new or developing-world scholars that they must adhere to already established norms, a fear that makes them less keen to publish in open access or open source journals for fear that they will not receive credit from universities and academic communities.

Perhaps a rethinking of the nature of academic journal publication needs to take place in order for progress to be made. As noted by Harnad (2008), the nature of academic journal publishing is distinctly different from that of trade or textbook publishing:

What, besides peer review itself, distinguishes the 2.5 million articles published every year in the world's 25,000 peer reviewed journals from everything else that is published? It is the unusual nature of the authorship of those journals. The authors are all scientific and scholarly researchers, and none of them publish their articles for the sake of earning royalty income or fees from their sale. They publish them for one reason and one reason only: so that their work will be read, used, applied and built upon by their fellow researchers worldwide. This is called "research impact." . . . It is for the sake of research impact that their institutions and funders mandate that researchers should "publish or perish." It is for the sake of research impact that citizens support research with their taxes. And it is research impact that drives scientific and scholarly research progress.

The key point to be noted here is Harnad's idea that journal publications are, first and foremost, meant to be read and used in the course of academic discussion, not necessarily to gain profits. Therefore, it makes little sense to cling to the old traditions of subscriber-based fees for access to this information, both in light of the relatively small financial gain realized by traditional journal publications and because if we are truly to invite all cultures to join anthropology's mission to study humankind in all its aspects, there must be viable, universal access to the discourse. Instead, Willinsky (2006: 227) correctly promotes open access:

The proposal for an open access publishing and archiving cooperative is intended to suggest a not-so-new economic model, given the long history of cooperatives, for increasing access to research on a sustainable basis. It would bring together research libraries, scholarly associations, and publishing bodies (such as university presses, publishers' research institutes, and groups of scholars), most of which have reason enough to collaborate on creating a wide-scale open access publishing model. The cooperative model is particularly suited to supporting journals in those academic disciplines, whether in the humanities, social sciences, or even the sciences, in which typical levels of grant funding cannot be reasonably expected to support an author fee approach to open access.

The question of the need for stringent controls on refereeing is perhaps too complex to be answered here, but Frey (2003: 205) is on the correct path in suggesting that "survival in academia depends on publications in refereed journals. Authors only get their papers accepted if they intellectually prostitute themselves by slavishly following the demands made by anonymous referees who have no property rights to the journals they advise. Intellectual prostitution is neither beneficial to suppliers nor consumers." Even here we are reminded of the first-world imbedded limitations and requirements placed on authors. Instead of suggesting freely styled works that may better express cultural attitudes and deliver fresh, interesting techniques to writing and research, we continue to be bound by publishing attitudes that are stale at best and archaic at worst.

One suggestion to solve the above issues, then, is a highly interactive social networking and media platform where anthropologists from all parts of the world can readily communicate, collaborate, and engage in the dialogue needed to promote global anthropology. The WCAA, as mentioned above, already has such a project in mind, and there are, of course, extant social media web sites such as ResearchGate.net and Academia.edu and databases such as the Anthropological Index Online that allow users to upload their research and communicate in such a way. Despite over 32,000 anthropology registrants on Research Gate alone, these platforms still are, unfortunately, not well known or at least readily used, especially by developing-world anthropologists. Maybe the solution is as simple as promoting the use of these existing platforms? With the Internet becoming widespread and available even in the remotest parts of the world, this method offers a relatively inexpensive but promising method for achieving such goals. However, the amount of motivation needed to engage the community cannot be overemphasized; achieving this is no easy task, in part because of the busy schedule many young scholars—the main users of the platforms—have because of their need to publish.

### ENCOURAGING CHANGE

Of course, the question must also be raised as to what need or motives scholars from the developed world truly have to accept articles from the developing world

that would simply add to the competition to publish. There are both practical and ethical answers to this question. Practically, the increase in open access would also suggest an increase in the total number of available journals or databases through which to publish. Because, as suggested earlier, the main impact of academic journal publishing is a research impact, achieved by being read and cited, the increased access naturally corresponds to an increased readership with greater chances of academic construction through new discourse added to already published ideas. Concern with quality may still exist, and this is a legitimate concern for the academic community. As noted by Vogel (2011), “89% of respondents [said] that open access is beneficial to their field. But that support didn’t always translate into action: Although 53% of respondents said they had published at least one open-access article, overall only about 10% of papers are published in open-access journals . . . 30% cited a lack of high-quality open-access journals in their field. Clearly, ‘journal quality and impact factor is most important—not [open access]—when deciding where to submit’ for the majority of scientists.” Clearly, there is no instantaneous solution to a concern as subjective as quality; however, there can certainly be open discussion, and quality standards can be set in place over time. Any worry over the poorest material, again acknowledging that this judgment is subjective, is partially alleviated by Wren’s (2005: 1128) conclusion that “decentralised sharing of scientific reprints through the Internet creates a degree of de facto open access that, though highly incomplete in its coverage, is none the less biased towards publications of higher popular demand.” In other words, the cream will still rise to the top.

Another impetus for acceptance of open access availability for all involved is financial. With a long-term strategy, research libraries and departments could save substantial amounts of money with open access online journals. This benefit, however, must be cooperative as well. At this point, it is again important to note the difference between open access and open source. Open access refers to the ability to read an archived publication online for free. Open source is the free use of an end product such as software design. The cost to each separate library or university journal of creating its own online publishing management software with the intention of allowing open, or free, access may be, although this has not been substantiated, the same or greater than the costs of the traditional print model. However, a cooperative effort that includes shareable open source software for creating, maintaining, and publishing online journals would remove many of the financial barriers and create a more universal and economically efficient model for publication. This idea is espoused by Willinsky (2006: 75), who also goes on to state future benefits beyond simply the economic:

An online management system does more than simply reduce costs. It allows energy and money to be reallocated from clerical tasks to editorial quality, including copyediting and proofreading, which can be an issue for small and struggling journals. The ease with which the editor can take care of business means more time and attention for working on manuscripts and otherwise

helping authors improve their research. The system's meticulous record keeping and reminders improve the journal's accountability to authors and readers, which should reduce some of the career-imperiling delays and confusion that are too often experienced with journal publishing.

There are also ethical implications involved in promoting the idea of inclusion of voices that currently lack the ability to be heard, whether through the ideals of open access or otherwise. If we accept the discipline of anthropology as including the idea of cultural relativism as a methodological and heuristic tool as well as a critical technique, then the comparison with moral relativism cannot be ignored. Considerable weight should be given to Benedict's (1959: 3) longstanding assertion that "the study of custom can be profitable only after certain preliminary propositions have been violently opposed. In the first place any scientific study requires that there be no preferential weighting of one or another item in the series it selects for its consideration." Unfortunately, such preferences currently exist in many publications and their models. It is academically and ethically beneficial to argue for as much inclusion as possible, especially when the technological means of doing so through open source and open access are readily available.

### **SUCCEEDING THROUGH ACADEMIC PHILANTHROPY**

Therefore, academic and resource sharing, an idea best described as academic philanthropy, should exist not just for the benefit of those scholars currently excluded from the anthropological discourse, but also for the betterment of the discipline as a whole, to enable it to fulfill the very definition of its pursuit. Certainly, this idea of high impact philanthropy—charitable giving in order to achieve the maximum benefits to society—is not a new idea, but thus far the majority of associations with this type of giving have made their calculations solely in monetary terms. While there are certainly financial implications, the main goal behind the push for inclusion through open access forums is to share ideas, facts, and greater knowledge for the academic good. There can be little argument that anthropology's struggle to share cultural knowledge for the maximum benefit to society is best achieved by actually including all cultures as they are, not simply by viewing all corners of the globe through an ethnocentric Euro-American set of lenses.

The concept of academic philanthropy, however, does not simply end with the push for open access to already published material. In order to be truly inclusive, there must also be a discussion about the current model for publication. There currently exist language and procedural barriers, both intrinsic to the current Euro-American model and procedural, that have been placed before many would-be authors. As noted by Gibson and Klocker (2004: 423), portions of academia have created an environment where "knowledges become normative, framed as universal and 'global,' and are distributed and absorbed via intellectual

‘scenes’ and an academic ‘celebrity’ circuit.” Even the expectations for publication too often follow this framework with regard to language and form. Even a cursory Wiki search for academic journals sheds light on the overwhelming predominance of English as the preferred language of publication. As of February 2012, a subsection for single-language academic journal articles listed 3,547 publications in English and only 163 publications in all other languages combined. Multilingual journals were counted at 263. This is in direct contrast to studies concluding that the percentage of the world’s population with English as its native language is declining. The very problem of exclusion because of the preference for English in academic publishing has also been noted in “a separate study [suggesting] that English’s dominance in the scientific arena will continue to expand. While this trend has encouraged international collaboration, researchers warn it could also divide the scientific world into haves and have-nots, determining who can, for example, publish in international journals” (Lovgren, 2004). In order to bridge this divide, one possible solution is to focus more on multilingual journals with versions of articles published in both English and the author’s native language. However, another tenet of academic philanthropy is the understanding that the language limitations of the authors themselves would necessitate the need for accurate translations offered by the journals, other authors, universities, institutes, and so forth, in order to maintain a needed lingua franca yet still be inclusive. Too often, the current system, especially in relation to young scholars or those trying to enter the field, means that authors basically have to fend for themselves in trying to get published in order to gain full-time employment or navigate the treacherous waters of the tenure track “publish or perish” mentality. More input needs to be provided by the universities, if not in money to buy journal subscriptions and books, at least in providing translation services. This will not only motivate the authors, but as university department rankings are often based on citations, it will be beneficial for the universities as well. Here again, cooperative efforts and open source software that entails fewer publication expenses for online journals would leave both capital and human resources available to provide translation services at a reduced cost or even free to the author. Even beyond the language problems faced by many authors, archaic and stringent rules for formatting are too often cause for confusion and rejection. In this case, there is a problem with managing the information. Again, a cooperative, open source form of online publishing software would help. Even without this, the current proliferation of gold and green open access journals and databases (Harnad et al., 2004) suggests the possibility of more inclusionary methods on the horizon, giving special hope to junior scholars both within and outside the current Western hegemony.

## CONCLUSION

There is no escaping the fact that new scholars entering academia and those from the developing world have more obstacles placed before them than are placed

before established and first-world authors. For many, surmounting these barriers is just part of the game of academic promotion. However, it must be asked if it is really fair to subject everyone to the same rules when the advantages and disadvantages are so unequally divided. A community of open access not only levels the playing field but expands it as well. There are no immediate solutions to the problem of exclusionary schemes that impede cultural relativism in the anthropological discipline and hold back new and developing-world scholars whose voices have yet to be heard. However, every effort to challenge and improve upon the current system is a grain of sand on the scales of academic justice, and eventually, those scales can tip in favor of those seeking an entrance to the academic workplace, the ability to create an impact on research, and an equal voice in the global discourse.

#### NOTE

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Direct reprint requests to:

Justin Gaurav Murgai  
10G, Kin Liong Mansion  
26 North Street, Kennedy Town  
Hong Kong  
e-mail: [jgmurgai@gmail.com](mailto:jgmurgai@gmail.com)