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Postcolonial Possibilities of Sociological Theory

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INTRODUCTION

Disciplinary sociology emerged in the context of European high imperialism; yet, canonical sociological theory hardly acknowledges this origin or the ways in which it might influence its theoretical frameworks implicitly and explicitly. Postcolonial theory, on the other hand, emerged out of anti-colonial struggles in the colonized world, and provides an oppositional viewpoint to canonical sociological theory. The goal of this project is to bring these two divergent perspectives together in order to acknowledge and challenge the coloniality and Eurocentrism of canonical sociological theory, drawing from the contributions of postcolonial theory, in order to articulate the possibilities of a postcolonial sociology.

The opening chapter, "Sociology and Empire: Connected Genealogies," outlines the interconnected developments of European imperialism and sociological theory. By presenting an account of the development of sociological theory within the context of empire and examining how certain assumptions and ways of thinking become embedded into theoretical frameworks or implicitly influence them, this chapter aims to explore the imbrication of sociology and empire. The section 'The Imperial Episteme' highlights the knowledge production of early sociology as mired in European imperialism: as a discipline that sometimes functioned in service of imperial goals and benefited from imperialism, but has failed to adequately challenge the ways in which this imbrication has influenced its theoretical approaches, and thus embodying an imperial episteme. The next section, 'The Construction of the Sociological Canon' aims to destabilize the canon of sociological theory as a unified, coherent, historically sound designation, and argues that the elevation of certain thinkers as canonical is a relatively recent invention rather than an objective fact of the discipline's historical development. Then, this section explores how the canon is implicitly informed by the imperial context of the discipline's origins and how canonical

thinkers explicitly reproduced imperialist and Orientalist discourses about the colonized world. This section focuses on the 'founding fathers' of sociology —Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim—in order to invite greater scrutiny into the ways in which their work reproduces Eurocentrism, coloniality, and Orientalism. Then, narrowing in on modernity as a central concept of canonical sociological theory, the subsection 'Problematizing Modernity' explores the contestations that surround the term. Initially focusing on critiques of the term modernity that it obscures the Eurocentric assumptions embedded within the concept, then exploring contemporary debates on multiple modernities that seek to transcend this limitation, this section concludes by arguing for an approach to modernity that connects metropole and colony in its formulation rather than treating modernity as endogenous to Europe. The final section of this chapter, 'Empire in Sociology,' explores arguments in the field about the scope of sociology's engagements with empire and imperialism over the course of the discipline's history, noting the distinctions between discussing empire and using those discussions to challenge embedded imperial assumptions and center the role of imperialism in the construction of the discipline.

The second chapter "Postcolonial Challenges to Traditional Sociological Theory" outlines the emergence of postcolonial theory as a counter to colonialism, and highlights some key tenets that can serve as tools to deepen sociological engagement with its imperial origins. 'Colonized Subjectivity' articulates the postcolonial arguments about the functioning of colonialism to strip colonized people of their subjectivity and thus the imperative to center it in a postcolonial theoretical framework. The subsequent sections—'Decentering Europe' and 'Empire and Colonialism'—present postcolonial challenges to Eurocentrism and the imperative to treat coloniality as a constitutive force that structures the world. The chapter concludes with two sections on 'Colonial Racialization' and 'Postcolonial Feminism and the Coloniality of

Gender' that highlight postcolonial theory's contribution in framing the construction of race and gender as colonial constructs that emerged out of the colonial-capitalist interests.

The concluding chapter 'Reinterpreting, Reimagining, and Reapplying Sociological Theory' explores how canonical sociological theory has been taken up in the context of postcolonial theory. This section focuses primarily on Marx because his work has been the most significantly taken up already in the postcolonial context. Postcolonial theorists have extended his theory of capitalism to incorporate analyses of colonialism and racialization as co-constructions of capitalism. The way in which his work has been challenged and extended by postcolonial theorists despite the pitfalls of coloniality, Eurocentrism, and Orientalism that pervade his work demonstrate both the possibility and the value of scrutinizing and recuperating canonical sociological theory. In 'Rethinking the Canon: The Scholar Denied and the Outsider Within,' the works of W. E. B. Du Bois and Patricia Hill Collins are explored in order to chart two different ways of utilizing existing sociological work as an avenue to challenge dominant sociological theory and the sociological canon.

Finally, the conclusion 'Moving Forward: A Postcolonial Sociology' aims to synthesize the various critiques of canonical theory and the theoretical contributions of postcolonial theory in order to explore the possibilities of a postcolonial sociology. Challenging the mere inclusion of diverse thinkers or postcolonial theory within existing sociological teaching, this chapter argues for a more sustained engagement with the theoretical concepts of postcolonial theory, which requires both reading diverse scholars, scholars from the non-West, and postcolonial scholars, as well as a scrutinization of canonical sociological theory for its Eurocentrism and coloniality. Edward Said's contrapuntal strategy is proposed as the method to guide this sustained critical engagement. Ultimately, this project seeks to articulate the complicated entanglements of

sociology with empire, and to imagine ways to interact with the discipline and its imperial history that engage with a multiplicity of perspectives, even and especially when they are in tension with one another.

I. SOCIOLOGY AND EMPIRE: CONNECTED GENEALOGIES

The Imperial Episteme

Situating the origins of disciplinary sociology within its historical circumstances provides the background for the ideological conditions under which it developed, and contextualizes its foundational assumptions and theoretical inclinations. Examining the historical and political conditions of sociology's origin is therefore crucial in order to understand and scrutinize the ways in which hidden assumptions may persist and continue to shape current sociological theory and methods, and then to consider ways in which these are or can be countered in current sociological practice and pedagogy.

Contemporary postcolonial reflections on sociology see it as engaged with empire in a number of different ways: the discipline's origins, its central assumption, sociological examinations of empire, and its epistemic scope. The historical context of the birth of disciplinary sociology, according to Julian Go, is empire; indeed, he argues that "social theory was born in, of, and, to some extent, *for* modern empire" (2016, 1). This understanding of sociology firmly situates the birth of sociology as inextricably linked to empire and imperialism. Kemple and Mawani (2009) even refer to sociology as "a product of Europe's imperial reach and its colonizing gaze" (236), arguing that the discipline exists in its current formulation as a result of its entanglement with European imperial expansion.

The origin of disciplinary sociology can be pinned to the period of high imperialism in the late 19th century; the institutionalization of the discipline and expansions of European

imperial conquests abroad are not separate and parallel developments, but are deeply intertwined (Connell 1997; Go 2016). Go argues that some early sociologists defended and supported imperialism, and even benefited from imperialism. For instance, work by early sociologists such as Franklin Giddings and Charles Cooley overtly praised imperial conquests and colonial expansion, and other sociological studies drawing their topics of study from imperial projects or drawing on data collected for colonial control and management of colonized populations (Go 2016). Early sociologists contributed to the spread of imperialism by providing a social scientific justification for the legitimacy of conquest, and their comparative studies of various societies across the world were made possible by the reach of Western empires. As Connell (1997) argues, at its inception, "one of the major tasks of sociological research…was to gather up the information yielded by the colonizing powers' encounter with the colonized world" (1518-19). Early sociology and Western imperialism are interwoven in their development, and the relationship between the two serves to consolidate the spread of both. Some early sociological research thus performed the work of colonialism, and contributed to imperial expansionist projects. Sociology is implicated in empire, and early sociological research is inextricable from systems of colonial domination.

While sociologists today are not implicated in imperialism in the same manner, the charge from postcolonial sociologists is that the discipline, through its entanglement with empire at its inception, internalized an 'imperial episteme.' This means that the connected genealogies of empire and sociology indicate that sociology internalized an imperial way of seeing and apprehending the world. According to Go (2016), sociology "was formed in the heartland of empire, crafted in its milieu, and was thus embedded in its culture. It was part and parcel of the imperial episteme" (2016, 4). He argues that, although explicit support for imperialism may not

persist within the discipline today, the legacies of sociology's imperial origins continue to shape its theoretical and empirical frameworks and methodologies today. As Kemple and Mawani (2009) put it, the concern here is "the colonial gaze of sociology and the epistemic reverberations of its imperial unconscious which restrict its critical vision and inhibit its theoretical voice" (229). In order for modern sociology to proceed as a critical discipline, it must engage with its origins in empire, through empire, and even for empire.

Whether explicitly or implicitly, sociologists' "theories and research rendered empire and racial domination intelligible, providing an intellectual framework and rationale for the new imperial world order in the making" (Go 2016, 4). The imbrication of empire and sociology has important consequences for discussions of race, gender, and sexuality, all three of which are key to the functioning of colonial expansion, violence, and domination. Postcolonial theorists point out the centrality of the construction and reification of norms of gender, race, and sexuality as crucial in providing justifications for colonial domination. Sociology today is centrally concerned with intersectionality and issues of oppression; so, a sociology that explicitly challenges and critiques empire is also better equipped to engage with issues of gender, race, and sexuality.

While all of early sociology was not uniformly racist, and some thinkers (notably, W.E.B. Du Bois) have always challenged and critiqued racism, much of early sociological scholarship relied on essentialist assumptions of racial difference and hierarchy. Early sociological affirmations of imperialism relied on concepts of social evolution and "theorized the world in racial terms" (Go 2016, 4). Racist viewpoints abounded in early sociology, and in fact the first published sociology in the United States was a defense of slavery in the South (Ross 1991 cited in Connell, 1997). The notions of progress from barbaric or savage to civilized are also racialized

concepts, often reflecting ideologies about White European superiority and a justification for racial domination. Similarly, gender and sexuality were concerns for early sociologists insofar as their relationship with imperialism was concerned. Race, gender, and sexuality were in fact tied up with each other, particularly as it pertains to concerns of miscegenation. Connell (1997) points out that these eugenic concerns demonstrate a "pseudoscience of controlled evolution by selective breeding of humans" which "was then regarded as a reputable and even important part of sociology" (1523). The biological racism that pervaded the world at the time was thus expressed in the theories and viewpoints of early sociologists.

The Construction of the Sociological 'Canon'

Introductions to sociological theory often begin with a historical overview of the discipline's foundations in terms of the social, political, economic, cultural, and intellectual context. The origin of sociology is understood as an attempt to grapple with the transition from pre-modern feudal to modern industrial society against the backdrop of the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and the French Revolution. Marx, Weber, and Durkheim are introduced as the discipline's 'founding fathers,' and a canon of foundational, essential thinkers is established at the core of sociological theory.

However, the 'sociological canon' or classical theory, according to Connell (1997), is a "configuration of constructed memories" (1515), one that relies on assumptions that are not substantiated by the historical development of the discipline. So, while most undergraduate textbooks and theory classes present a particular 'foundation story' of sociology, the thinkers lumped together as foundational have not all been considered canonical in the same way, and their canonical status is often retroactive rather than historical.

The general view of the structure of sociological thought through history, according to Connell (1997), is that of a "foundational moment arising from the internal transformation of European society; discipline-defining texts written by a small group of brilliant authors; a direct line of descent from them to us" (1513). Connell diagnoses two issues in this formulation: first, that the prestige of classical theory in principle does not translate to its usefulness or relevance to current sociology and that much of sociological research ignores classical theory in practice; and second, that even in the classical period, sociologists did not believe this narrative. The notion of a well-defined canon is a more recent invention. For instance, with respect to the canonical status of Durkheim, Weber, and Marx, Connell (1997) argues that "Durkheim's and Weber's academic contemporaries did not see them as giants and often disregarded Marx" (1513). This critique is not to suggest that their theories have no relevance or value at all to contemporary sociology or that their work has not been taken up in important ways. Rather, it invites us to consider with greater scrutiny their elevation to canonical status, and the exclusions that this process engenders.

The imbrication of empire and sociology can be explored in terms of what we consider the discipline's core ideas as expressed by sociology's so-called 'canonical' thinkers. Examining the discussions of empires, imperialism, and the colonized world within these theorists' work can help trace persistent assumptions and attitudes in contemporary sociology. Understanding the ways in which the imperial episteme is embedded within their approach can improve how we apply and extend their theoretical frameworks in current sociological theory and practice. Focusing on Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber, who are widely considered and treated as some of the most important thinkers of early sociology, it is possible to scrutinize their

work for if and how empire, imperialism, and the colonized world implicitly shape their theoretical frameworks.

Marx argues that capitalism as a mode of production develops out of feudalism, and the conditions for this development are situated specifically within the context of European feudalism (Marx 1965). This Eurocentric framework means that the non-Western world, for Marx, is seen as having certain barriers to capitalist development, which he conceptualizes using the theory of the Asiatic mode of production. He distinguishes between European feudal modes of production and the Asiatic mode of production by contrasting the decentralized feudal system with the Asiatic mode's centralization of power in the state, wherein the state appropriates all economic surplus, landed private property is absent, and is characterized by an absence of class differentiation or struggle (Marx 1970; Marx and Engels 1974; Marx 1965; Alatas 2017). Viewing the Asiatic system as absent of class struggle and therefore of historical progression, this entire region of the world was framed as stagnant and lacking history (Alatas 2017). So, Indian society for Marx "has no history at all, at least no known history. What we call its history, is but the successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive basin of that unresisting and unchanging society" (Marx 1972, 81).

Marx's discussion of British colonialism in India reveals not just a Eurocentrism but an Orientalist division of East-West narratives of development mired in racial connotations that undergird justifications of colonialism. The examples of Marx's writing that "Indian society has no history at all. At least no known history" or that India's "social condition has remained unaltered since its remotest antiquity" (Marx 1972, 81; Marx 1853 quoted in Go 2016, 80) demonstrate the link of backwardness and even a lack of history with non-Western societies. With reference to the Asiatic mode of production in India, Marx states:

> "[W]e must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies...We must not forget that this undignified, stagnatory, and vegetative life, that this passive sort of existence evoked on the other part, in contradistinction, wild, aimless, unbounded forces of destruction, and rendered murder itself a religious rite in Hindustan" (Marx 1974, 40).

These notions of backwardness and the tendency to treat the colonized, racialized world as static and unchanging were used to create and justify colonial racial hierarchies, and to justify intervention in the colonies. This rhetoric of absence and lack in the non-West treat colonialism as the harbinger of progress and modernity, and has been used to bolster and justify colonial domination. For Marx, British colonialism in India would annihilate the old society and lay the material foundations for capitalism, a "mission of destruction and regeneration; regeneration in terms of developing capitalism in India" (Alatas 2017, 59), which would allow for class struggle and the eventual development of socialism in India.

Marx's views arguably changed later in his scholarship and wrote critically about British colonialism in India, noticing the violence and destruction of colonialism and that "[c]olonialism did not develop capitalism but rather made India backward by destroying indigenous industries and tying India to the world market as an agricultural rather than manufacturing nation" (Alatas 2017, 59). He critiques colonialism as destructive and extractive, and is sympathetic to the violence experienced by colonized populations.

However, as Edward Said argues in *Orientalism*, even when Marx demonstrates humanity and sympathy for colonized populations, that underlying Marx's work is "the idea of regenerating a fundamentally lifeless Asia" (1979, 154). Said argues that Marx typifies a 'Romantic Orientalist vision' wherein "even in destroying Asia, Britain was making possible there a real social revolution" (153). The notion of a part of the world 'without history' means that colonial intervention can then be positioned as bestowing this history.

Marx has also been criticized by postcolonial thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Aime Cesaire for his economic determinism; Marx's singular focus on capitalism as a central organizing force of society does not adequately address the connectedness of colonialism and capitalism. Indeed, Marx's theory of the development of the capitalist mode of production in Europe does not address sufficiently the central role of colonial expansion and extraction in the colonies, and rather finds the origin within the development of European feudalism. Colonialism is understood in postcolonial theory as involving not just material domination and extraction, but also the construction of racial and gendered inferiority, which are sidelined in Marx's theory in favor of an economically deterministic analysis.

Emile Durkheim, also touted as one of the foundational thinkers of the discipline, demonstrates a reliance on the constructed dichotomy and comparison between East and West. His argument that "comparative sociology is not a particular branch of sociology; it is sociology itself insofar as it ceases to be purely descriptive and aspires to account for facts" ([1894] 1964, 139 quoted in Connell 1523) both legitimates the distinction between the 'West and the Rest' and makes an appeal to the standpoint of the West as objective. The latter has been extensively critiqued and, arguably, sociology has significantly moved away from the conviction that objective fact must be aspired to or even that it is possible to achieve at all. The legitimation of

the distinction between the East and the West, however, evidences the unequal relationship of the researcher and the studied, which "rested on a one-way flow of information, a capacity to examine a range of societies from the outside, and an ability to move freely from one society to another—features that all map the relation of colonial domination" (Connell 1997, 1523). Sociologists were one of the earliest to conduct comparative research on the colonies, both relying on imperialism for access and providing information for colonial administration (Steinmetz 2014; Go 2016). Durkheim's insistence on the centrality of this form of study to sociology as a whole demonstrates the unquestioned internalization of an imperial world order as a backdrop and even necessary condition for sociological research.

Max Weber's theories about modernity and the state fail to acknowledge imperial domination and extraction as constitutive, and naturalize theorizing Western imperial societies without an analysis of imperialism. Weber's definition of the state, for instance, as "a form of political association that successfully claims the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence within a geographical territory" (Bhambra 2016, 1), understands the formation of states in Europe as divorced from the role of imperialism overseas. So, despite the states described using this definition being colonial and imperial states, they are not acknowledged as such (Bhambra 2016). The legitimation of violence is not only within the territory of the metropole itself; the extension of that violence onto the colonies is fundamental to the formation of European imperial states.

Additionally, Go (2016) levies a critique of Weber's treatment of the non-Western world, arguing that "Weber treated non-Western societies as spaces of lack" and that Weber wrote of the non-Western world as "forever backward" (80). Weber thus also puts forth the notion of essentialized distinctions between the West and the non-West, and reproduces Orientalist

discourses that treat the 'backwardness' as an essential feature of non-Western societies rather than a constructed dependency resulting from colonial processes of extraction.

The dangers of these Orientalist perspectives that inscribe the non-Western world as lacking history or being stagnant means not just a homogenization and reduction but also bleeds into a justification for colonialism; "given that Asian societies were intrinsically static, they could only change and develop through Western imperialism" (Go 2016, 81). As Go (2016) points out, "classical social theory painted non-Western societies as static and backward while reserving dynamism, social creativity, energy and enlightenment for European societies alone" (80). Naturalizing these distinctions between East and West mean that European modernity is treated as emerging out of an inherent difference between the structure of societies in the West and the comparative lack of development of the 'backward' non-Western world. The role of colonialism in creating and sustaining this imbalance is left unquestioned.

While a recognition of the Eurocentrism and coloniality of canonical sociology is not new, this recognition "has not meaningfully reshaped or restructured the ways in which we theorize the emergence of the classical sociological canon" (Alatas and Sinha, 2017, 5). Noticing the Eurocentrism and coloniality that implicitly inform and are baked into their scholarship means that there is a need for contemporary engagement with their work that challenges and critiques. Reading postcolonial thinkers from the non-West and colonized world can provide accounts of the world that do not sideline, erase, or justify colonialism, but rather understand its constitutive role in creating the social conditions of European modernity.

Problematizing Modernity

Modernity is often noted today as one of the central ideas of early sociology, since early sociological theorists were grappling with the shift from pre-modern feudal societies to modern

industrial societies in Europe. This perspective is challenged by some scholars, who shift the focus away from modernity as the foundational concept of early sociology, providing alternate concepts as the core of early sociology.

Notably, Connell (1997) argues that the geopolitical structure of colonial conquests and imperial expansion inscribed the ideas of 'global difference' and 'progress' as the central assumptions of sociological theory. Global difference, for Connell, refers to the "difference between the civilization of the metropole and an Other whose main feature was its primitiveness" (1516), and progress to the movement from primitive to advanced. The contrast of the metropole and "colonial Other" are not peripheral to sociology, and "the concern with progress was not a 'value' separable from the science; it was constitutive of sociological knowledge" (1520). Treating the framework of modernity uncritically hence replicates Orientalist and colonial categories of progress and backwardness as belonging to the West and East respectively.

Gurminder K. Bhambra advocates for a similar 'rethinking' of modernity, finding that 'rupture' and 'difference' underlie theories of modernity. Rupture refers to "temporal rupture that distinguishes a traditional agrarian past from the modern, industrial present" (2007, 1) and difference to the notion of a "fundamental difference that distinguishes Europe from the rest of the world" (1). These categories bring to the fore the underlying colonial assumptions of traditional approaches to modernity. For Bhambra, modernity rests on the notion of a "basic distinction between the social formations of the 'West' and 'traditional' or 'pre-modern' societies (2007, 3). Questioning the possibility of extricating a historical conception of modernity from a normative one, Bhambra (2007) argues that current definitions of what it means to be modern are drawn from the Western experience, and that this makes understanding traditional modernity separate from its Eurocentrism impossible. Hence, "the Western experience has been taken both

as the basis for the construction of the concept of modernity and, at the same time, that concept is argued to have a validity that transcends the Western experience" (4). Without acknowledging that the construction of modernity relies on Eurocentrism, sociological applications of the concept replicate implicit colonial assumptions.

Stuart Hall (1992) posits that Enlightenment social science reproduces discourses of 'the West and the Rest' to sustain binary oppositions and support the notion of a universal form of progress from savage to civilized, and asserts that these discourses persist throughout the discipline's development, albeit in changed forms. Hall further argues that 'the Rest' and its construction as the Other was in fact critical for Western social science, and that the representation of Enlightenment rationality as the peak of human advancement was only possible insofar as its negation and binary opposite exist in the Other or 'the Rest'.

Connell, Bhambra, and Hall destabilize an uncritical reliance on the centrality of the modernity framework within sociology, and invite alternate ways to theorize the conceptual core of early sociology.

Present-day sociology has largely moved away from this linear and limited modernity approach, which has been replaced or at least supplemented by theories of alternative, global, hybrid, entangled, or multiple modernities (Bhambra 2007; Steinmetz 2013). Bhambra (2007) examines the work of contemporary scholars engaging with modernity who recognize the ways in which modernity and Europe are tied, but argue for an understanding of modernity that is more nuanced, global, or has transcended the limitations of early sociological work on modernity. Delanty (2004), for instance, recognizes the critiques of Eurocentric modernity theory, but maintains that "while the subsequent history of modernity is said to bear the impact of its European origins, it has somehow extricated itself from these origins and now can be

understood simply as a global phenomenon that is inflected in diverse ways according to local traditions" (Bhambra 2007, 6). Multiple modernity scholars and contemporary scholars that draw on this concept aim to broaden the concept of modernity to be more inclusive and apply it to the world beyond the imperial core. Simultaneously, they attempt to move away from the narrow conception of traditional modernity.

Gaonkar (2001) argues for the indispensability of the modernity framework, because despite its origin in specific historical conditions of the West, "modernity is now everywhere," and that it is emerging "no longer from the West alone, although the West remains the major clearing house of global modernity" (1). For Gaonkar, to assert the end of modernity is to maintain a Eurocentric focus and "seems premature, if not patently ethnocentric, at a time when non-Western people everywhere begin to engage critically their own hybrid modernities" (14). Thus, modernity remains important to Gaonkar's understanding of society, and the shift is from traditional modernity that is reserved to the West to alternative hybrid modernities that are global, multiple, and decentralized. Viewing modernity from a specific cultural or national location and viewpoint is important for Gaonkar's work, because it aims to historicize and situate modernity within specific circumstances. He thus problematizes the notion that Western modernity can be uncritically extended to the rest of the world without modifications. He rejects the acultural convergence view of modernity that takes the view that modernity is simply the point towards which all cultures converge, and the West is only unique insofar as the site where this first occurred. Instead, Gaonkar holds that Western modernity in itself reflects a culture, and that the political and historical conditions of particular cultures and societies generate alternative modernities that need not converge: "modernity is not one, but many" (17).

However, Bhambra argues that many of these approaches inadvertently also remain bound with many of the same problems as traditional modernity, and suggests that such approaches remain Eurocentric. In examining Gaonkar's (2001) collection on alternative modernities, she critiques the implication that modernity 'traveled' from the West to the rest of the world, and the underlying assumptions therein that "there is an original modernity that was born in and of the West, and that the West is significantly different from the rest of the world such that while it can enjoy an original modernity everybody else has to do with a hybrid version" (6). This framework moves away from the distinction of modern and primitive, but the inclusion of 'the rest' within the framework of modernity is not sufficient to seriously challenge Eurocentrism. The decentering of the binary, oppositional, and linear narrative of traditional versus modern is certainly a meaningful endeavor undertaken by theorists who advocate multiple modernities. However, the failure to adequately disrupt the West as a point of reference is a significant drawback that maintains the notion of mainstream modernity as an endogenous development of the West and fails to adequately account for colonial relations.

Go (2016) also provides a criticism of the multiple modernities approach as a means to overcome sociological Eurocentrism. He argues that an approach that claims to differentiate modernities based on the culture fails to adequately counter the persistent imperialism of the modernity framework because "it does not transgress the imperial episteme's law of division" (109); he argues that "the theory cordons off distinct 'cultures' of the world, neglecting the relations of exchange, cooperation, or conflict—often through colonialism and imperialism—which contribute to the various ostensibly different modernities and civilizations in the first place" (109). For Go, then, the inadequacy of the multiple modernities approach lies

in its attempt to treat multiplicity as a matter of fact while failing to suitably acknowledge coloniality as a structuring force.

Thus, modernity is highly contested within sociology, and treating early sociological theory's focus on modernity without problematizing it sustains the Eurocentrism and coloniality baked into the concept. While multiple modernities approaches attempt to move beyond the limitations of traditional modernity, many such approaches also replicate a Eurocentric understanding of the world. It is important not just to challenge traditional conceptions of modernity, but also to acknowledge and challenge Eurocentrism and coloniality.

Empire in Sociology

There are differing perspectives on the extent and scope of sociology's engagement with empire and imperialism. While some theorists point to the history of sociological writing on empire and imperialism and the early focus on comparative historical research in the colonies as evidence for the discipline's significant scholarship on empire, others suggest that this attention has been limited, forgotten, or that a significant critique of empire remains theoretically marginal.

George Steinmetz notably puts forth the perspective that "sociology came late to the study of empire only because it was relatively late to emerge as an academic discipline" (2014, 78), but that "sociologists have analyzed empires throughout the history of their discipline" (2013, 1). According to Steinmetz, sociologists were involved in colonial research since the beginning of the discipline, and that they were some of the first to engage in research on the colonies through comparative sociological methods (Steinmetz 2013). However, he argues that "the genealogy of sociological research on empires is a largely hidden one" (2013, 1), and suggests the retroactive misattribution or assignment of colonial sociological researchers to other

disciplines as an explanation for this ‘disciplinary amnesia’. This disciplinary amnesia means that current sociological research on empires, colonies, and postcolonialism is emerging without sufficient acknowledgement or even awareness of both theoretical and empirical work within the discipline throughout its history and development (Steinmetz 2013).

However, Steinmetz does not distinguish between discussions of empire and critiques of empire, and treats all research on the subject as equally significant in suggesting sociology’s involvement with empire. This is contested by other scholars, who are interested not just in whether or not sociologists have conducted research about empires, but also in whether or not engaging with sociology’s entanglement with empire results in a more self-reflexive and critical sociology that questions how imperial modes of analysis have become integrated within sociology’s theoretical approaches.

Kemple and Mawani (2009), for instance, argue that even though sociology has paid attention to empire, that “this literature has had limited influence on (re)shaping the discipline’s boundaries and in revealing how its ontological moorings, categories, and modes of analysis have been fundamentally structured by imperial pursuits and formed within cultures of colonialism” (238). It is therefore important to examine the specific ways in which empire is discussed and analyzed within sociology, and how these contribute to or challenge the internalization of an imperial episteme. Kemple and Mawani (2009) suggest that it is important to consider “how colonial and imperial expansion has figured centrally in the production of sociological knowledge and the formation of its epistemic boundaries” (238).

Another account of the history of empire in sociology posits that the imperial standpoint of sociology resulted in “the *occlusion* of empire from sociological accounts” (Go 2016, 82). While acknowledging the ways in which early sociologists discussed empire, he argues that they

also marginalized empire, "treating it as an *outcome* of modernity rather than constitutive of it" (82). He uses the example of Durkheim's account of social solidarity and 'primitive' societies, arguing that by ignoring colonial invasions, "his conceptual apparatus obscures the messiness of colonial domination with an orderly schema that divides the world into only pristine 'tribal' societies or 'modern' societies. There is no such thing as a 'colonial society' or an 'imperial society,' even though in his time these were pretty much all there were in the world" (84).

Marx's writing on colonialism also reveals a complicated interplay of critique and justification, even as it arguably remains theoretically marginal to his theory of capitalism. As Go (2015) notes, "[t]ake out of his theory any discussion of plantation slavery or imperialism and the conceptual armature remains unscathed. But take out his references to the wage relation between white workers and white capitalist employers in the English factory and the entire theory falls apart" (66). Even when Marx does recognize colonialism, it is not meaningfully centered as a constitutive force of modernity.

Marx "praised imperialism as a modernizing force, a necessary evil" (Steinmetz 2013, 86), recognizing the violence upon the colonized population that is essential to the process but viewing it as a step towards 'progress'. Marx also criticized the British colonial project in India, but maintained that it would have a positive impact in the long run, that it would "unify the Indian state and revolutionize the country's moribund economic, social, and political structures" (Marx 1969 paraphrased in Steinmetz 2013, 86).

According to Go, classical sociologists "write colonialism out of its accounts, agenda, and analytic structure" (84). Colonialism and imperialism in the colonies are not apprehended as constitutive of society in the same way as changes within the metropole, and this "abstracts social relations from their wider relations, contributing to the persistence of a dubious

methodological nationalism wherein imperial or colonial relations have no place" (84). It is therefore insufficient that founding theorists referred to empire or colonialism, because they sideline their impact in the construction of modernity. They "neglect the ways in which the violence, exploitation, and racism of colonialism exist at the very core of metropolitan societies; at best treating them as aberrations in an otherwise normal course of development" (86). In failing to connect the colonies to the social formations in the metropole, these approaches claim to theorize imperial society without accounting for the constitutive role of colonial domination and extraction in the colonies. This excising of colonialism and imperialism from the theories of society in canonical sociology is an indictment of its conceptual frameworks and capacity to provide a comprehensive account of society.

II. POSTCOLONIAL CHALLENGES TO TRADITIONAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Postcolonial thought developed from decolonization efforts in the colonized world. Postcolonial theory puts forth the claim that empire and coloniality are embedded within not just the colonizer-colonized relationship but all conceptual frameworks and understandings of race, class, gender, sexuality, civilization, culture, modernity, history and even subjectivity. So, "if social theory was born from and for empire, postcolonial thought was born *against* it" (Go 2016, 1). A consideration of postcolonial theory in relation to sociological theory is about extending an understanding of colonialism to include the current political, economic, social, and cultural operations of power, which provides theoretical tools to challenge dominant sociological thought's treatment of empire as marginal. By de-universalizing the claims of dominant sociological theory and specifying their epistemic approach as deriving from a specific imperial location and orientation, postcolonial theory allows for a sharpening and clarifying of how

sociological theory can and has been used. Postcolonial theory offers not just the capacity for critique but also new concepts that can contribute to bettering the applicability of sociological theory.

Colonized Subjectivity

Postcolonial theoretical approaches emerged in direct response to colonial domination: extraction, violence, and control. To fully understand the impact these racialized processes of colonization and the dehumanization they engender, postcolonial theory centers the subjective experiences of the colonized. Many early sociological viewpoints, particularly positivist perspectives, prioritized objectivity and rationality as central to the social sciences. While this tendency has been problematized to a certain extent within the discipline, sociology's invocation of objectivity continues to be an ongoing debate. Postcolonial thought specifically contributes to an understanding of subjectivity and objectivity in terms of the colonial relation.

Particularly, the recognition that the 'rationality' touted by colonists was constructed in opposition to the barbarism, backwardness, and uncivilized colonized 'Other' is where the postcolonial theoretical insistence on centering, recovering, and giving voice to the colonized racialized subject originates. Early anti-colonial activist and scholar Aime Cesaire frames it in *Discourse on Colonialism,* "colonization = thingification" (1972, 42). Cesaire argues that colonialism is a system wherein "between colonizer and colonized there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses" (1972, 42). Colonialism functions through many means to generate the colonizer-colonized dynamic; material dominance, extraction, and exploitation are deeply important to sustaining this hierarchy. However, postcolonial theory provides a significant theoretical contribution in its

claim that subjectivity matters, particularly when it has been stripped, denied, and erased through the colonial process.

Frantz Fanon, another central figure in postcolonial theory, draws from the psychoanalytic tradition in order to assess colonialism as a process that operates not just materially but also affects the psyche of the colonized. He points to the generation of an inferiority complex in the minds of the colonized population as the outcome of a colonial double process that is both economic and the "internalization or rather epidermalization of this inequality" (Fanon 2008, xv). The historical, material, social conditions of colonial occupation, violence, and extraction are as important as the subjective experience of the colonized; in fact, the dehumanization of the latter is a crucial aspect of how colonialism is justified and sustained. As Fanon notes about his own experience, "below the corporeal schema I had sketched a historico-racial schema" (2008, 91). The individual, bodily, and psychological are structured and generated by the broader colonial structures of violence and domination.

Decentering Europe

Eurocentrism signifies not just early sociological theory's singular focus on continental Europe but rather the perspective that Europe and Europeans were the theorists while the rest of the world existed as 'objects of study'. The belief that the historical developments of Europe can be separated from its colonial relations is also part of the Eurocentric viewpoint, and postcolonial theorists challenge this abstracting of relations.

The Eurocentrism of early sociological theory is challenged by postcolonial theorists who point out that "[t]his Eurocentric culture relentlessly codified and observed everything about the non-European or peripheral world, and so thoroughly and in so detailed a manner as to leave

few items untouched, few cultures unstudied, few peoples and spots of land unclaimed" (Said 1994, 222). In light of this persistent Eurocentrism, Said calls for a contrapuntal reading of Eurocentric texts such that they can be situated within the global web of relations rather than siloed within a constructed imaginary of a Europe that is separate from its colonizing conquests. Said draws on the work of C. L. R. James's *Black Jacobins* to articulate contrapuntality as "a conscious effort not only to write history saturated in, taking maximum account of, the struggle between imperial Europe and the peripheries, but to write it in terms both of subject matter and of treatment or method, from the standpoint of and as part of the struggle against imperial domination" (Said 1994, 279). The standpoint and voice of those struggling against imperialism is crucial in combating Eurocentric perspectives that favor one side of the narrative of imperialism.

Bhambra (2007) asserts that, "[i]n contesting Eurocentrism, I contest the 'fact' of the 'specialness of Europe' – both in terms of its culture and its events; the 'fact' of the autonomous development of events, concepts, and paradigms; and, ultimately, the 'fact' of Europe itself as a coherent, bounded entity giving form to the above" (5). Treating Europe as a "coherent, bounded entity" that has its own economic and historical trajectory separate from the colonized world is a problematic tendency for postcolonial theorists, who point out the constitutive role of colonialism in the creation of Europe. European modernity does not develop endogenously, divorced from the rest of the world, but is constituted through its colonial occupation in the non-Western world.

This tendency of unquestioned Eurocentrism, however, has largely given way to a more global and delocalized sociology. Scholarship in the discipline today is produced all over the world and by scholars in the Global South, who are producers and not just objects of study.

However, as Dipesh Chakrabarty argues in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory,* Europe operates as "an imaginary figure that remains deeply embedded in *cliche´d and shorthand forms* in some everyday habits of thought that invariably subtend attempts in the social sciences" (2000, 4). Chakrabarty focuses specifically on political modernity in South Asia to articulate the continued persistence of conceptual categories formulated for and by European Enlightenment thinkers. In *Provincializing Europe,* Chakrabarty points out how Eurocentrism is sustained epistemically. The tensions between a postcolonial theoretical perspective that aims to challenge or transcend not just European material domination but also Eurocentric modes of thinking and a social scientific legacy that is built upon those ideals is central to his project; there is "no easy way of dispensing with these universals in the condition of political modernity. Without them there would be no social science that addresses issues of modern social justice" (Chakrabarty 2000, 4). For Chakrabarty, challenging the Eurocentrism of social theory is not incompatible with drawing from the conceptual categories of canonical theory; rather, he calls for a 'provincialization' of the universality attributed to Europe and Eurocentric theories.

Empire and Colonialism

Postcolonial theory aims to decenter the focus on Europe and its 'development' as an isolated phenomenon by framing this 'progress' as a result of colonial domination and extraction. The social, political, and material dominance of the West when understood as created through colonial plunder make clear the importance of a postcolonial analysis to sociological theory: the history, culture, economy, and society of the West is constructed upon a web of wider relations with the colonized world, and treating colonial societies as though they emerged independently provides an incomplete narrative.

Walter Rodney, a Pan-Africanist Marxist historian and activist argues that colonialism functioned as a system for underdeveloping Africa (2022). He challenges the notion of a "balance sheet of colonialism" whereby colonialism brought not only violence and oppression to the colonized world but also benefited Africa and developed it by building schools, railroads, and other infrastructure. On the contrary, according to Rodney, the capital required for this development itself was extracted from colonialism and the slave trade, "the colonies were the generators of the capital rather than the countries into which foreign capital was ploughed….because of the super-profits created by non-European peoples ever since slavery, the net flow was from colony to metropole" (1973, 332). This argument challenges many early canonical understandings that treat colonial societies abstracted from colonial relations.

Fanon similarly argues that "Europe is literally the creation of the Third World" (1961, 105). The dependence and underdevelopment of the Third World is the necessary condition through which Europe built and sustains its wealth:

> "...the European nations wallow in the most ostentatious opulence. This European opulence is literally a scandal for it was built on the backs of slaves, it fed on the blood of slaves, and it owes its very existence to the soil and subsoil of the underdeveloped world. Europe's wellbeing were built with the sweat and corpses of blacks, Arabs, Indians, and Asians" (53).

This is how colonialism continues its machinations of power even after formal independence, and the "formerly colonized territory is now turned into an economically dependent country" (55). Fanon shares with Rodney the claim that the violence and extraction from the colonies created the wealth of the colonizers, and that global capitalism sustains colonial divisions and relations of dependency (Rodney 2022; Fanon 1961). Fanon argues that "colonialism and

imperialism have not settled their debt to us once they have withdrawn their flag and their police force from our territories" (57), and that a complete restructuring of the world through redistribution of wealth is necessary to truly decolonize. The colonial project of creating dependence and weakness and establishing the colonist as the locus of wealth and power did not end with formal colonialism; it continues to function as a core structuring system of contemporary societies.

The material extraction and dependence that generates colonial dominance is thus fundamentally important to postcolonial theorists. However, far from being an economically determinist account of the world, postcolonial theorists also understand the ideological functioning of colonialism in the "creation of the Third World" (Fanon 1961, 105). Edward Said argues that Orientalism functions as a "style of thought" (2), one that works to provide justification for colonialism based on both ontological and epistemological distinctions between the Orient and the Occident. Said frames the Occident/Orient divide as a "European invention" (1979, 1). Orientalism is a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and Europe having authority over the Orient" (3). Both materially and ideologically, Orientalism invents the Orient in order to justify colonial expansion and violence. As Said notes, "the scope of Orientalism exactly matched the scope of empire" (104). Racial and civilizational inferiority are a key component of Orientalism, and are linked within the Orientalist framework: "theses of Oriental backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality with the West most easily associated themselves early in the nineteenth century with ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality" (206). Thus, the presumed civilizational backwardness of the colonized world is framed as a result of inherent biological inferiority; the civilizational backwardness justifies colonial occupation as a process to bring about progress and development while the essentialist biological dehumanization and

constructed inferiority serves to justify violence against the colonized population. As a result of this constructed inferiority through myths about the Orient, the West's superiority is also enshrined: the corollary of the Orient being defined as "eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself" (301) is the necessity of justifying the Western legitimacy in determining and defining the Orient, and framing this as "inevitable and even scientifically 'objective'" (301).

Colonial Racialization

Postcolonial theory provides an account of the construction of race that highlights race as a *colonial* construction. Racial categories cannot be conceptualized in isolation within societies; rather, processes of racialization operate under the global logic of colonialism and white supremacy. The construction of racial inferiority is in fact understood as necessary for the justification of colonialism: framing racialized people as inferior by highlighting their backwardness and barbarity serves to dehumanize entire swathes of the world such that the occupation of territories, immense violence, enslavement, and genocide can be justified.

Fanon explains the racial hierarchy in terms of an "inferiority complex that can be ascribed to a double process: First, economic. Then, an internalization or rather epidermalization of this inequality" (1952, xiv-xv). Thus, both the material and ideological functionings of capitalism work to generate racial inferiority among the colonized Black population, and the psychological alienation is directly connected to economic structures. Fanon centers the role of colonialism in generating racial inferiority, and states:

> "I start suffering from not being a white man insofar as the white man discriminates against me; turns me into a colonized subject; robs me of any value or originality; tells me I am a parasite in the world; that I should toe the line of the white world as quickly as possible, and 'that we are brute beasts; that we are a walking manure, a hideous forerunner

> of tender cane and silky cotton, that I have no place in the world'" (78; and Cesaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* quoted in Fanon 1952).

The dehumanization propagated by colonial-capitalism serves to deem colonized people as fundamentally Other. Generating racial hierarchies is an essential component of the functioning of colonialism. The construction of a colonized, racialized subject is essential for the functioning of colonialism because it legitimizes the immense violence and enslavement enacted upon colonized racialized people, the possession of land, and the extraction of wealth and labor power.

Postcolonial Feminism and the Coloniality of Gender

Particularly for contemporary sociological work on racialization and gender, the centering of empire and colonialism within postcolonial theory offer important theoretical contributions that can and do deepen existing analyses on the intersecting forces of colonialism and patriarchy. Postcolonial feminists center the experiences of women and feminist resistance in the Global South, recognizing the historical and lasting impacts of colonialism on former or current colonies as well as the ways in which global capitalism functions as neocolonialism to sustain imbalanced global relations of power.

While the social construction of gender is well-studied within sociology, post- and decolonial feminist scholars contribute an understanding of gender as *colonially* constructed. Argentinian decolonial feminist scholar María Lugones's work on the coloniality of gender is particularly important, and she argues that the notion of gender as binary and oppositional is a "colonial, Eurocentered, capitalist construction" (2008, 9), and that it does not reflect global pre-colonial understandings of gender that were broader and looser. Lugones's work builds on the Nigerian feminist scholar Oyeronke Oyewumi's (1997) analysis of Yoruba society, and both

Oyewumi and Lugones highlight Western colonial gender systems as created within the confines of colonial racialization.

Feminist postcolonial theorists also take up the issue of agency, and argue that women in the colonized world experience an erasure of their narratives because of the intersection of patriarchal and colonial violence. Spivak, in her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) examines the issue of how the practice of *sati* or widow-self immolation is negotiated in India, pointing out that this negotiation takes place between British colonials, who instrumentalize the issue for colonial goals, and elite Hindu Brahmins, who are interested in furthering a nationalist agenda. In both cases, women's voices are absent, "one never encounters the testimony of the women's voice consciousness...one cannot put together a 'voice'" (Spivak 1988, 297). Spivak points out the subjugation of women at the intersections of nationalist and colonialist patriarchies. Feminist postcolonial thought develops from critiques of Western feminism that privilege white women and the broader postcolonial challenge to colonialism.

Postcolonial feminists also complicate understandings of coloniality, racialization, and gender in terms of their operation between and within cultures. Uma Narayan, for instance, notes that "[c]olonialism as an historical phenomenon does not only connect and divide Westerners from subjects in various Third-World nations in a series of complicated and unequal relationships. It also connects and divides mainstream Western subjects from Others in their own societies whose unequal relationships to the mainstream are themselves products of Western colonial history" (1997, 44). For Narayan, colonial domination involves not just Western domination of non-West, and coloniality can also be observed in the construction and operation of racial hierarchies within Western cultures. Narayan also offers a critique of the 'backwardness and barbarity' rhetoric specifically as it is levied against practices deemed a result of culturally

distinct patriarchy in the Third World. She points out that “Western colonial powers often depicted indigenous practices as symptoms of the ‘backwardness and barbarity’ of Third-World cultures in contrast to the ‘progressiveness of Western culture.’ The figure of the colonized woman became a representation of the oppressiveness of the entire "cultural tradition" of the colony” (1997, 17). These discussions become sites for negotiation between colonialists and anti-colonial nationalists, and like Spivak, Narayan points out that women’s agency is erased and the “conflicts between male-dominated colonial governments and male-dominated Third-World nationalist movements often served to obscure the fact that women were clearly second-class citizens in *all* these cultural contexts” (18). Narayan and Spivak articulate women’s subjugation within their own cultures and by colonialists, and add nuance to broader postcolonial critiques of colonialism.

III. REINTERPRETING, REIMAGINING, AND REAPPLYING SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

An engagement with postcolonial theoretical perspectives need not necessarily mean a wholesale rejection of classical sociological theory. In fact, many postcolonial theorists themselves draw on, critique, and extend the work of classical theorists. Postcolonial theoretical contributions in relation to sociological theory can be understood as both a “critique and an invitation” (Go 2016, 64) to grow, change, and develop in consort with each other.

Marx in particular has been significantly taken up in postcolonial perspectives, and Marxist perspectives influenced not only postcolonial theory but also many anticolonial revolutionaries and resistance movements. Marx’s problematic and homogenizing tendencies toward economic determinism, failure to adequately challenge colonialism, and his class analysis being restricted by its failure to adequately account for colonialism are all acknowledged and

challenged within postcolonial theory; these critiques do not preclude meaningful engagement and application, but rather strengthen and sharpen its value and use. As Cesaire notes, “Marx is all right, but we need to complete Marx” (1972, 86). A postcolonial Black Marxist perspective treats race and class as co-constructions that are inseparable from the intertwined structures of capitalism and colonialism. “The colonized and enslaved, given their concrete experience of racialized existence past and present, do not have the option to overlook the race question” (Nielsen 2013, 347), and thus postcolonial writers center race and colonialism in a way that sharpens Marxist analysis and makes it capable of grappling with coloniality more deeply. Fanon argues that race and racialization are central to colonialism, and that “what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to” (2004 [1963], 5). Colonial racialization is embedded within the functioning and maintenance of colonial capitalism, so for Fanon, “a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue” (5). Marx’s focus on class is insufficient when addressing colonialism, and postcolonial theoretical engagement with his work highlights this drawback; “the ruling species is first and foremost the outsider from elsewhere, different from the indigenous population, ‘the others’” (5). Bringing in postcolonial perspectives to sociological theory means that colonialism can be understood as a constitutive force that created and, through neo-colonial structures and global capitalism, sustains unequal global relations between countries. In engaging with Marxist thought in the contemporary world, postcolonial contributions make clear a path to critiquing and recognising the limitations of both canonical sociology as well as the immense instrumental and theoretical value in deeply engaging with these approaches and “stretching” or “completing” them rather than rejecting them as unsalvageable.

In fact, Rodney argues that questioning the relevance of Marxism to Black people and to Black political thought is a misguided endeavor, because this notion assumes that "Marxism is a European phenomenon," without taking into account the ways in which Marxism has already been "utilized, internalized, domesticated in large parts of the world that are not European" (2022, 69). For Rodney, Marxism is relevant to postcolonial thought because of the ways in which it has already been taken up, expanded, and applied. Rodney also argues that the co-creation of colonialism and capitalism and the incorporation of the colonized world into a global system of capitalism is further evidence of the continued necessity of Marxism (2022). This does not, however, mean that the Eurocentrism of Marx's work can or has been disregarded. Rather, Rodney asserts that when Marx is taken up globally, it is with the understanding that "Marxism comes to the world as an historical fact, and it comes in a cultural nexus…method and factual data were obviously interwoven, and the conclusions were in fact in a specific historical and cultural setting" (79). The specific setting of Marx within the context of imperial Europe informs the trajectory of the theoretical implications of his framework, and Rodney contends that adapting Marxism to particular contexts is necessary to applying his theories to different societies. Rodney argues that this adaptation has already been occurring, referencing Amilcar Cabral's application of Marxist theory in the context of Guinea-Bisseau to note how Cabral is "making sure that Marxism does not simply appear as the summation of other people's history, but appears as a living force within one's history" (80). Thus, the importance of classical theory to postcolonial thought lies in de-universalizing and localizing; rather than limiting their broad applicability to other societies, it makes the frameworks more precise and allows them to be taken up and applied to other historical and cultural contexts.

Marx's work can also be employed in an analysis of settler colonialism, and Indigenous Dene scholar Glen Coulthard argues that the Marxist framework of primitive accumulation provides insights that link colonialism and capitalism (2014). His framework understands colonialism as "a form of structured dispossession" (2014, 11), and contends that Marx's writing on primitive accumulation and his theory on the violent transition from feudal to capitalist societies "identifies a host of colonial-like state practices that serve to violently strip—through 'conquest, enslavement, robber, murder'—noncapitalist producers, communities, and societies from theri means of production and subsistence" (Coulthard 2014, 11; Marx 1990 quoted in Coulthard 2014, 7). So, although Marx himself may not formulate his theory directly as a critique of colonialism, Coulthard proposes that extending his theory of primitive accumulation to colonialism has value for Indigenous studies, and critiques both the premature rejection of Marxism by some Indigenous studies scholars and the dismissal of Indigenous contributions to radical political thought by Marxists.

The processes of colonialism and capitalism are interwoven both historically and in the contemporary world, and theories of capitalism can be extended through Indigenous studies and postcolonial perspectives in order to address the ways in which they are co-constituted and sustained.

In light of the value of critical extensions of and engagements with canonical sociology, Bhambra and Holmwood (2021) assert that critiques of the canon from postcolonial perspectives need not reject the canon; rather, challenging sociology's entanglement with empire and situating it within the colonial context can "renew European social theory as an entity capable of learning from others and of contributing to general social theory, as one part of a global project" (25). Postcolonial theory provides an account of the construction of the modern world that centers the

role of colonialism in 'developing' modernity in the metropoles. Bhambra and Holmwood (2021) suggest that sociological concepts have been represented and deployed as universal, despite their claims embodying a particular political, social, historical and cultural context of the metropoles. Reframing them and de-universalizing the claims of sociological theory is crucial, and this process of accounting for the colonial context within the discipline can thus be "an opportunity for reconstruction" (14).

Rethinking the Canon: The Scholar Denied and the Outsider Within

The exclusionary and limited construction of the sociological canon also evidences a historical sidelining of Black sociologists and their work. Highlighting the critical contributions of marginalized thinkers and foregrounding them as central contributors to sociological theory is important in challenging the dominance of a White, Eurocentric canon.

W.E.B Du Bois was a foundational sociologist, writing in the late 19th and early 20th century at the same period as Weber and Durkheim. However, the racism and marginalization he experienced in his career and lifetime mean that his work has not been accorded canonical status in the same way. While Du Bois is now considered a key thinker of early sociology, examining the ways in which his scholarship has been historically marginalized is important in order to understand how sociology can move forward as a self-reflexive discipline aware of its historical centering of White thinkers. Aldon Morris (2015) argues that Du Bois is 'the scholar denied'—that Du Bois was the first to articulate a scientific sociology and was a pioneer in the discipline, but that the significance of his work has only begun to be adequately acknowledged in the last two decades. One of the reasons for this marginalization is that Du Bois's scholarship on the socially constructed nature of race and his challenge of scientific racism directly contrasted the dominant racist viewpoints regarding the biological and cultural inferiority of Black people at

the time (Morris 2015; Burawoy 2021). Morris (2015) argues that Du Bois and the Atlanta School of Sociology he founded are the originators of scientific sociology in the United States, and that the misattribution of this contribution to the Chicago School instead evidences a failure of the discipline to accord Du Bois appropriate credit.

While some of Du Bois's early work has been criticized for adopting an assimilationist attitude of advancement for African Americans, his later work on black socialism demonstrates a more radical Marxist perspective. Du Bois ties together the functioning of race and class, extending Marx's work to analyze the geographical division of the class structure in the United States, "how within each region global forces create racial divisions within class and class divisions within race" (Burawoy 2021, 550). His analysis of the "public and psychological wage" (1998 [1935]) that White laborers benefited from as a result of their race despite shared working class status also cements his analysis of working class fragmentation across racial lines, linking the goals and functionings of racism and capitalism. Du Bois's Marxist analysis is also clear in *Black Reconstruction in America* (1998 [1935]), where he argued that the division within the Southern working class between Black freedmen and poor whites meant that they could not form a united opposition against the White propertied class, and that this allowed for the development of Jim Crow laws and consolidate capitalist disenfranchisement (1998[1935]). While this text was, at the time of its publication, treated with ridicule by historians, it has since gained traction and has been deemed a foundational text on the Reconstruction (see: Foner 2013; Burawoy 2021).

Patricia Hill Collins's work on Black feminist thought and standpoint epistemology provides another approach to challenge canonical sociology. Collins argues that the marginalized status of Black women within academic institutions and intellectual space have a unique

standpoint due to their “outsider within” status. Collins argues that mainstream sociological thought would benefit from a serious consideration of Black feminist thought “because, for many Afro-American female intellectuals, ‘marginality’ has been an excitement to creativity,” and because bringing Black feminist scholars and other “outsiders within” into the center rather than the margins of sociological theory “may reveal aspects of reality obscured by more orthodox approaches” (1986, S15). The epistemic privilege of Black feminists within sociology as those that have “long been privy to some of the most intimate secrets of white society” (S14) make possible a ‘demystification’ of the structures of domination and oppression. The dominant White Western episteme can thus be challenged by Black feminist standpoint epistemology.

Collins contends that, in light of external overdetermination and dehumanization they experience, Black women need to develop self-definition, which involves “challenging the political knowledge-validation process that has resulted in externally-defined, stereotypical images of Afro-American womanhood” and a self-valuation, which “stresses the content of Black women’s self-definitions — namely, replacing externally-derived images with authentic Black female images” (S16-17). Black feminist standpoint epistemology presents another mechanism for challenging the assumptions of mainstream and canonical sociology, and subverting “the white male insiderism” that pervades the discipline (S26).

Both Du Bois and Collins present a challenge to the elevated status of Eurocentric, White canonical sociology. While Du Bois’s scholarship is contemporary with many ‘founding fathers’ of sociology, his historical marginalization in the discipline and the relatively recent elevation of his work as indispensable and foundational invites a reconsideration of the canon itself. It invites a consideration of whether his work should be included into the canon, or even replace the traditional canon (see: Itzigsohn and Brown, 2020). Collins, on the other hand, counters the

historical marginalization of Black women and other 'outsiders within' by mainstream sociology by proposing the imperative to "conserve the creative tension of outsider within status by encouraging and institutionalizing outsider within ways of seeing" (S29). She calls for a dismantling of the focus on the "allegedly unbiased, objective social scientist" (S29) in favor of recognizing the value of experienced reality as a source of knowledge for sociological thought. These challenges demonstrate the internal tensions and immanent critique within sociology of the Eurocentric canon, and when brought together with postcolonial theoretical critiques, they allow for the discipline to challenge its embedded imperial, White, Eurocentric episteme.

CONCLUSION

Moving Forward: A Postcolonial Sociology

The challenges emerging from postcolonial perspectives provide an opportunity to theorize the future of a postcolonial sociology, and to chart current moves towards such a future. Existing engagement with empire within sociology must be scrutinized, given the assertion that critical engagement and not just a replication of Eurocentric discourses on the non-West is necessary for a truly postcolonial sociology. Postcolonial theorists point out not just that canonical social theory focuses on the metropole, but specifically that it treats colony and metropole separately, rather than as fundamentally intertwined in their development by the colonial process. A postcolonial sociology would thus follow postcolonial theory in formulating a theory of the world that connects the societal processes of Western imperial societies with colonial processes, the metropole with the colony.

One significant challenge posed by postcolonial perspectives to sociological theory is what Go (2016) terms 'analytic bifurcation,' and which has been referred to by Said (1993) as a 'law of division'. This division or bifurcation insists not just that "there is an 'us' and a 'them,'

each quite settled, clear, and unassailably self-evident" (Said 1993, xxxviii), but that this separation is sustained within the imperial episteme and functions to fabricate a history of the West that does not account adequately, if at all, for the colonial violence that shapes it. Said (1993) proposes the strategy of a 'contrapuntal perspective' as a means to challenge and transcend the logic of the law of division, and to emphasize the interconnectedness and mutual constitution of colonizer and colonized. According to Said, "we must speak of overlapping territories, intertwined histories common to men and women, whites and non-whites, dwellers in the metropolis and on the peripheries, past as well as present and future; these territories and histories can only be seen from the perspective of the whole of secular human history" (1993, 61). Thus, the contrapuntal strategy resists the universalizing tendencies of some canonical social theory and challenges the application of social theory without situating it, because it neither posits an ahistorical, transcendent theory of society that exists divorced from the particular context, nor does it treat European modernity as emerging independent of the colonial violence, possession, and extraction in the colonies.

Said argues for an approach that treats the societies of the metropole and colony as having "intertwined histories" that cannot be understood when disentangled from each other. While Said writes from a comparative literature approach and uses contrapuntality as a strategy for reading texts wherein "contrapuntal reading must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded" (1993, 66-67), Said argues that the contrapuntal strategy can also be used to craft new narratives about identity and history, and has immense political value. The contrapuntal perspective is "an orientation in history that sees Western and non-Western experiences as belonging together because they are connected by imperialism"

(279). This means that imperialism is treated as constitutive of both European societies and the societies they colonize, and in fact as the process that links development in Europe with dispossession and extraction in the colonized world. As Go (2016) points out, "contrapuntality adumbrates how colonized peoples have helped constitute 'the West' and, indeed, modernity itself. It serves to incorporate the subaltern into historical narratives without resorting to essentialism or claims of an authentic subaltern consciousness" (2016, 113). As a strategy to read canonical social theory and as a method of engaging with critique, contrapuntality provides a way to complete the picture that is left incomplete if only accounting for traditional canonical sociology.

Even as sociology syllabi and textbooks are becoming more diverse—adding more Black sociologists, sociologists of color, and women sociologists—they often do not go beyond what feminists have critiqued as an 'add women and stir' approach of inclusivity. Attempts to simply include Du Bois's scholarship within syllabi, for instance, can end up as "gestures of tokenism" (Go 2016, 13) or an "emblem of diversity" (Katznelson 1999, 468) if it is simply tacked onto the end without questioning the construction of the canon, who we elevate as 'foundational,' and the exclusions this engenders. Connell (1997) refers to this practice as a "kind of affirmative action" that adds, for instance, W.E.B. Du Bois to the "familiar list of founders"; however, she argues that this does little to "change the way of *using* the past that is embedded in the concept of 'classical theory' and the pedagogy of classical texts" (1512).

It matters not just that Du Bois be included, but that we question his historical exclusion and marginalization within the discipline and the erasure of his significant contributions to the discipline. Moreover, Go (2016) points out that even when Du Bois is included, only his concepts of 'double consciousness' and the 'veil' are usually included, and that his more radical

critiques of conventional sociology and analyses of systemic racism, colonialism, and slavery are frequently left out.

As the critiques of the 'add women and stir' approach point out, the mere inclusion of women does not challenge the patriarchal structures that generated their exclusion in the first place and continues to sustain their subordinate status, nor does it allow women agency (see: Bernard 1983; Cosstick et. al 1979). Merely adding marginalized or postcolonial thinkers is insufficient, particularly if they are merely tacked on to the end and treated as separate from canonical theory, and are not used as a way to contend with Eurocentrism and the coloniality of the sociological canon.

Alatas and Sinha (2017) introduce a textbook for sociology attuned to the Eurocentrism of the canon, and provide an applied contrapuntal approach to sociological theory. They argue that canonical social theory is both Eurocentric and Androcentric, and that for a sociological theory to go beyond the canon, it should account for theories of colonization and decolonization. Alatas and Sinha point out that a canonical theoretical perspective on industrial capitalism in Europe is left incomplete if it is not accompanied by a discussion of colonial capitalism. So their text aims to bridge this absence by including critical discussions of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim's scholarship in terms of their Eurocentric and Orientalist assumptions as well as including non-Western scholars that analyze colonialism and Whiteness. Burawoy's (2021) work similarly calls for a contested canon, one that puts canonical social theory in conversation with oppositional readings.

A contrapuntal approach can provide a way to include postcolonial theory beyond mere 'add and stir,' and a truly postcolonial sociology calls for the incorporation of postcoloniality as an orientation to reading sociological theory that pays attention to coloniality, Eurocentrism, and

Orientalism. Critiques, extensions, and applications of Marxist theory should be read as a companion to Marx and as a genuine consideration of the continued value of Marx to the struggles of racialized and colonized groups. The conceptual armature of sociological theory cannot and should not be left untouched and intact, and must be challenged and disrupted for the development of a postcolonial sociology.

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