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Toward Theoretical Liberation: Challenging the Intellectual Imperialism of the Western Race Paradigm

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Abstract

We hope to encourage the development of decentered, decolonized, ground-breaking theory about ethnic and racial exploitation in the 21st century world-system. To accomplish that, we contend that academics and activists need to liberate themselves from the historical and ideological confines of the western race paradigm. Consequently, we have shaped this essay around that goal. In Section 2, we explore the dangers of universalizing the western race paradigm to the entire world. Section 3 investigates 21st century trends that challenge the western race paradigm, with particular focus on the significance of semiperipheries, transnational capitalist classes and nonwestern states. In Section 4, we argue that western race theory dominates scholarship globally through strategies of intellectual imperialism that need to be acknowledged, dismantled and overcome. In the Conclusion, we offer strategies for decentering and decolonizing knowledge production.

Keywords

race – ethnicity – universalization – intellectual imperialism – decolonized mind – western race paradigm – semiperiphery – transnational capitalist class – nonwestern state – reflexivity – racialization

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It is theory which decides what can be observed (ALBERT EINSTEIN IN HEISENBERG, 1971: 63).

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1 Introduction

Since the late 1990s, western scholars and activists have “steamrolled historical, social and geographical differences into a single discourse” (Malik, 2000: 158) to conceptualize the modern world-system as a “troubled relationship between the white European world and the world of those defined by whites as the ‘dark others’” (Vera and Feagin, 2007: 1). This thesis and the conceptualization of race/ethnicity that derives from it now predominate in western social science, and they are increasingly reflected in western mass media coverage, in international policy formation, in the mission statements of international NGOs and activist organizations, and in the curricula of nonwestern universities (Jhappan, 1996; Alatas, 2000; Malik, 2000; Barot and Bird, 2001; Taylor and Orkin, 2001; Winant, 2001; Gilroy, 2002; Goldberg, 2005; Wimmer, 2015; Gonzalez-Sobrinho and Goss, 2019). Four pivotal theses predominate in this perspective. First, “white supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today” (Mills, 1997: 1). Second, “power structures are based on white privilege and white supremacy which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color” (UCLA School of Public Affairs, 2015). Third, there are only “two unambiguously defined statuses: whiteness at the top and blackness at the bottom” (Washington, 1990: 224). Fourth, “the majority of Euro-Americans adhere to a Eurocentric perspective founded on covert and overt assumptions of White supremacy” (Delgado-Bernal, 2002: 111). Gernot Kohler (1978: 264–266) coined the phrase *global apartheid* to explain world inequality. Constrained by “barriers of *complexion*” and “racial antagonisms,” global apartheid is a “structure of world society,” he explained, in which “a minority of whites occupies the pole of affluence while a majority composed

of other races occupies the pole of poverty.” Kohler’s concept gained little traction for two decades, but it is currently very popular among western scholars and activists (e.g., Richmond, 1995; Alexander, 1996; Ansley, 1997; Sharma, 2007; Mazrui, 2007). Recently, sociologists have argued that the global apartheid structure of the 21st century world-system emanates from the logic and power of a “white master race” (Marable, 2009).

We hope to encourage to encourage the development of decentered, decolonized, ground-breaking theory about ethnic and racial exploitation in the 21st century world-system. To accomplish that, we contend that academics and activists need to liberate themselves from the historical and ideological confines of the western race paradigm. Consequently, we have shaped this essay around that goal. In Section 2, we explore the dangers of universalizing the western race paradigm to the entire world. Section 3 investigates 21st century trends that challenge the western race paradigm, with particular focus on the significance of semiperipheries, transnational capitalist classes and nonwestern states. In Section 4, we argue that western race theory dominates scholarship globally through strategies of intellectual imperialism that need to be acknowledged, dismantled and overcome. In the Conclusion (Section 5), we offer strategies for decentering and decolonizing knowledge production.

We acknowledge our western bias in using the terms race and ethnicity throughout our essay. We are sensitive to the concern raised by Taylor and Orkin (2001), Smith (2012) and Rathore (2020) that there are many nonwestern and indigenous groups that experience and/or cause inequality that are not encompassed by these concepts. Regrettably, the intellectual discourse is so dominated by these Eurocentric concepts that they are, at the moment, the only common ground for scholarly understanding (a problem that we discuss in Section 4). In an attempt to decolonize our survey of the literature, we have made a particular effort to see beyond the list of acknowledged western race scholars in order to integrate the voices of nonwestern, indigenous and minority status scholars.

2 Dangers of Universalizing the Western Race Paradigm

Nearly a decade ago, Omi and Winant (2013: 963) raised concern about the “wobbly social scientific status of the race concept.” We would like to begin with this point because it is the most dangerous aspect of universalization of the western race paradigm. While the western race scholarship may be “empirically rich,” it is “theoretically thin.”

From the very start, and in recent decades more than ever, there has been a grossly uneven development of theory and research in race studies and an ensuing (and predictable) decoupling of one from the other. . . . Despite the outpouring of empirical research, there have been no comparable advances at the level of theoretical insight. . . . Much of our best work no longer tells us how to understand or reconstruct racial dynamics but simply gives us concrete proof of their continuing significance (EMIR-BAYER AND DESMOND, 2015: 2–3).

This theoretical fogginess and inconsistency is the most dangerous aspect of universalization of the western race paradigm. To complicate matters, the growing body of critical scholarship about the conceptual weaknesses of the western race paradigm has had little impact on how western race scholars employ their “theoretically thin” paradigm to analyze nonwestern contexts. One explanation lies in the failure of the university education process. In most theory courses, students are exposed to critiques, but that essential background is absent from most teaching about race theory. Indeed, most race courses and textbooks fail to educate students that there is an accumulated body of scholarship that addresses theoretical biases, flaws and ethnocentric assumptions. Even those university courses which claim to take a “global” perspective apply American race and ethnicity concepts and theories to nonwestern contexts, without question or critique. Furthermore, textbooks about race and ethnicity that are marketed outside the United States employ American approaches, and they do not include a survey of existing critical literature.¹ To overcome the lack of knowledge of many readers, we will explore in the following sections the ideas of scholars who call attention to the biases and flaws of the western race paradigm.

2.1 *Orientalism and Essentialism*

White supremacy arguments are particularly orientalist (Said, 1978) because they “herd people under falsely unifying rubrics,” and they “invent collective identities for large numbers of individuals who are quite diverse” (Said, 2003: 18). In the western race paradigm, “the category of the Other is ahistorical and takes little account of the specificities of time and place in the creation of the discourse of race” (Malik, 2000: 158). However, proponents of the

1 We reviewed 35 syllabi posted as “exemplars” by the American Sociological Association at www.trails.org. We also reviewed the contents of the textbooks used in those courses and the tables of contents and indexes for twelve race/ethnicity theory textbooks that have been published since 2010.

white supremacy thesis also adhere to the *reverse orientalist* claim that “every European is a racist, an imperialist and almost totally ethnocentric” (Said, 1978: 204), when it comes to their assessments of and actions toward non-Europeans.

Clearly, white supremacy arguments have the same inherent troubling qualities as racial stereotypes. They demonize and reduce the world’s racial/ethnic inequalities to stark caricatures of peoples that do not really exist. The dichotomization of peoples of color as *victims* and whites as *perpetrators* homogenizes both the objects of racism and the exploiters (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992: 15). However, there are, “extensive differences that must be borne in mind, and neither the West nor the Rest should be considered unified or homogeneous” (Grainger, 2008: 229). Such orientalist thinking allocates all power to the core, reducing peripheral “dark peoples” to a homogeneous victimized position. Contrary to Bethencourt (2014) who points out that there has not been one continuous tradition of racism in the west, white supremacy arguments posit a singular European colonial past. However, the “master race” countries (Mazrui, 2007) are not characterized by the white racial solidarity that this model suggests. Indeed, each of these countries has a history of oppressing white ethnic minorities. Moreover, white supremacy arguments reduce all colonizers to Europeans, overlooking nonwestern colonialism and imperialism (e.g., Russia, Japan, China), as well as the aggressive contemporary development imperialism of Southern semiperipheries (e.g., China, Russia, India, South Africa, South Korea, Brazil) toward peripheries.

2.2 *Conceptual Fuzziness About “Whiteness”*

Is there widespread identity among western white groups? Indeed, “international white solidarity” is neither a geopolitical identity nor a transnational reality across different European nationalisms (Bonnet, 2004). Europe is itself too fragmented to be unified around any ethnic or racial identity, including “shared whiteness.” Gerard Delanty (1995: 3) argues that

What we call Europe is, in fact, a historically fabricated reality of ever-changing forms and dynamics. Most of Europe is only retroactively European and has been invented in the image of distorted modernity. . . . European identity. . . is a doubtful construct, given the apparent irresolvable conflict of national cultures and oppositional collective identities.

Second, the white/nonwhite dichotomy that predominates in the western race paradigm offers little explanatory traction in a majority of the world's countries where such "color" categories are not employed as the markers of difference or inequality. Indeed, western scholars conceal far more than they explicate when they arbitrarily apply the white/nonwhite dualism to societies where people do not employ such concepts to justify discrimination or exploitation.²

Research by the United Nations (2003) indicates that the commonly used terminology of western race scholarship rarely appears in the census data collected by a majority of the world's countries. Two-thirds of national censuses ask questions about group identities, but a majority of those censuses employ identity categories that involve neither race nor color. Only 15% of national censuses employ *race* as a category while less than 2% employ *color* designations; and most of those countries are situated in the Americas. In her analysis of the United Nations database about national census taking methods, sociologist Ann Morning (2010: 32–33) observes that "the United States is virtually alone in treating "race" and "ethnicity" as different types of identity. . . . One unintended effect of this practice may be to reinforce essentialist biological understandings of *race*, since it is presented as distinct from culturally-delineated and socially-produced ethnicity."

In contrast, a majority of national censuses enumerate their populations by ethnic group, nationality, cultural, religious or linguistic group or indigenous status. While these census categories are sometimes a reflection of nation-building myths and agendas set by elites, they are more often the outcome (a) of the changing sociopolitical construction of groups that do not identify themselves in terms of color or race and (b) of pressures on states from international development agencies, NGOs and courts to account for vulnerable minorities (Lucassen, 2005; Morning, 2010). Despite the popularity of *white* as a pivotal identity group among American and British scholars, that category is rarely employed in national census taking methods. Indeed, only six national censuses enumerate the number of "whites" among citizens: Brazil, Haiti, South Africa, England, United States and Zimbabwe (Dunaway and Clelland, 2017: Table 10). Even in the Americas, people outside the United States are far less likely to identify themselves as "white" than with a specific

2 Such ethnocentric errors are not rare. For instance, Roman (2002) conceptualizes Russian biases against non-Russians as "making Caucasians Black." There is growing controversy about scholarship that casts the Israel/Palestine conflict in white/black terms; see <http://www.thecrimson.com/column/dining-on-sacred-cow/article/2012/11/16/Lispon-Israel-race/> and <http://mondoweiss.net/2016/08/palestinian-struggle-supremacy/>.

European nationality or as *mestizos* or *creoles* (with mixed European/indigenous or European/African heritage).

Moreover, the racial dualism of “European modernity versus dark coloniality” (Mignolo, 2011) is challenged by historical realities. On the one hand, the global white supremacy thesis silences the histories of many Europeans who were colonized and victimized by the same forms of ethnic/racial oppression that a few European countries inflicted on the Americas and nonwestern territories.³ In the early 21st century, the European core and semiperiphery are closing their borders against Eastern Europeans, and animosities toward some European ethnic minorities are as nasty as those toward nonwestern migrants. Yet these oppressed Europeans are silenced victims in an approach that focuses narrowly on “the ‘colonial’ axis between Europeans/Euro-Americans and non-Europeans” (Grosfoguel, 2008: 6–7). On the other hand, this dualistic model forces us to treat as historically inconsequential the imperialistic histories of nonwestern colonizers. Well into the 20th century, the combined reach of the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, China’s Qing Dynasty, the Japanese Empire and the Soviet Union encompassed most of 21st century Asia, the Middle East/North Africa region, Post-Socialist Eastern Europe, most of the countries that comprise Oceania, parts of Western Europe, and territory that now comprises five states on the Pacific coast of the United States. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Russia, China, Japan and Vietnam captured large territories, exterminated thousands, and resettled lands (Elkins and Pederson, 2005).

In the 21st century, at least half the world’s population bears legacies of (and animosities toward) those ethnic/racial oppressions. Since the fall of the USSR, for example, 25 million Russians reside in non-Russian countries without clear citizenship rights (Delanty, 1995), and their presence is the basis for ethnic conflicts and political power struggles in countries like Ukraine. To complicate matters, there are indicators of new forms of colonialism that are not addressed by the European/non-European dualism. Questions are being raised about the degree to which China and the fastest-growing nonwestern semiperipheries are constructing neo-colonialism through their development activities in non-western peripheries and weaker semiperipheries (Gallagher and Porzencanski, 2010; Kurecic and Bandov, 2011; Carmody, 2013; Nel and Taylor, 2013; Bond and

3 Every European country was itself the historical product of conquests of resistant peoples, and there are still numerous ethnic minorities throughout Europe. Moreover, Eastern Europeans have endured multiple historical eras of imperialism and settler colonialism (e.g., the Austrian Empire, the Habsburg Empire, the British Empire, the Russian Empire, the German Nazis, the Ottoman Empire, the Soviet Union). Wolff (1994) calls attention to white/white enslavement of Eastern European peasants at the same time that African enslavement was occurring in the New World.

Garcia, 2015; Garcia, 2016). Furthermore, nonwestern states are now routinely engaging in tactics of *regional subimperialism* and *internal colonialism* to capture the lands and territories of minority and indigenous peoples to fuel their economic growth (Dunaway and Clelland, 2017: Table 8).

2.3 *Multiple Meanings and Rancorous Transnational Debates*

Trouillot (2003: 105–106) points out that there is little agreement on the definition of race and “the absence of a conceptual core.” Consequently, there is a deep ideological schism between European and American scholars with respect to the conceptual utility of “race” when it is grounded in color and biological differences. Indeed, race has very different meanings in the United States than in Europe (Gilroy, 1991; Bethencourt, 2014). Overwhelmingly, scholars who define race in color terms are primarily based in the United States. For that reason, several scholars (e.g., Malik, 2000; Barot and Bird, 2000; Gilroy, 2002) have called for western sociologists to stop using race as an analytical concept. Some European race theorists are convinced that race is a “folk concept” applicable only to the “exceptional” situation in the United States (Gilroy, 1991; Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Fish, 2015). Michael Banton (2012: 1180) contends that “perceptions among both social scientists and the general public in America are clouded by a conception of race that is rooted in the history of the USA.”

In this paradigm, observes Kenan Malik (2000: 158), “the category of the Other is ahistorical and takes little account of the specificities of time and place in the creation of the discourse of race.” For that reason, he insists, “the use, in sociology, of the ordinary language word race is an obstacle to intellectual advance” and “should be “superseded in sociology.” Similarly, Barot and Bird (2001: 601) consider race to be an “empty signifier,” an “intellectual error,” and “part of lapsed history.” European scholars are equally critical of *racialization* (Miles, 2014) which they contend is a poorly conceptualized concept that is employed “to side-step the issue of the validity of racial theories” (Barot and Bird, 2001: 613, 616). For instance, Deniz Uyan (2021: 14, 2) contends that “racialization functions as a tautological descriptive rather than an agenda-setting theoretical framework for scholars.” Moreover, he insists, “the concept cannot locate the agents or *racializers* who instigate the process.”⁴

4 Uyan (2021) and Murji and Solomos (2005) provide overviews of scholars who have criticized the racialization concept.

3 21ST Century Trends that Challenge Western Race Theory

Radha Jhappan (1996: 34) contends that “race essentialist positions that hold only whites accountable for racial oppression are overly simplified, miss the complexity of the issues involved, and encourage a focus on one side of villains.” White supremacy theorists are guilty of “the principle of universal reduction” because they “seek in every case to reduce the wide variety in the modes of racist expression to a more basic, underlying, singular social condition” (Goldberg, 1994: 14). According to Gonzalez-Sobrinio and Goss (2019: 506–507), “the majority of the sociological research on race has focused solely on black and white racial identities and experiences. . . . Yet there is a profound need to explore the experiences of new (and old) racial and ethnic groups that transgress the colour binary.” In this section, we move beyond the white supremacy binary by exploring three major global actors that are silenced by the western race paradigm: nonwestern states, nonwestern semiperipheries, and transnational capitalist classes.

3.1 *Nonwestern States and Minority Group Oppression*

Conceptualization of an “international color line imposed from above” (Marable and Agard-Jones, 2008: 42) defines a bifurcated world in which nonwestern states neither act to resist white supremacy nor to “otherize” their own citizens along ethnic lines. The western race paradigm silences the key role that national elites and co-opted compradors play in structuring oppression of peripheral minorities. Indeed, many of the actors who codify and structure themselves into superior racial/ethnic positions and use military force to exploit and repress ethnic minorities are nonwestern state elites (Fanon, 1965; Rodney, 1973; Goldberg, 2001) who are arbitrarily defined to be oppressed victims by the western race paradigm. The Minorities at Risk Project identifies 283 groups that face threats of ethnic conflict, and a majority of these Southern peoples are at risk from their own states.⁵ Disadvantaged Southern minorities are routinely marginalized by states that construct ethnic subordination along many lines other than biological characteristics (Rex, 1996). Subordination and domination are quite often constructed to separate those who advocate national agendas of “civilization,” “progress” and “development” from those

5 For an analysis of minorities at risk list, see <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessments.asp?regionId=99>. The Minorities at Risk Project defines “ethnic conflict” as (a) groups that are politically and/or collectively resisting state policies, (b) groups at risk of or that have been victimized by serious state repression, (c) violent or nonviolent collective conflict between groups, and (d) groups that engage in separatist movements.

who are stigmatized as “backward” and “lacking in modernity.” Moreover, states codify definitions of ethnic groups and territories, and they generate a “mythical nationalism” to justify oppression and exploitation of those minorities (Abdel-Malek, 1982: vol. 1). The western race paradigm ignores these complex dynamics. On the one hand, the white supremacy thesis essentializes all peoples of color into a homogeneous construction, carelessly lumping the vast majority of the world’s indigenous groups with nonwhite ethnicities with which they have no more in common than they do with western whites (cf., Smith, 2012). On the other hand, the global apartheid thesis silences the continuing indigenous struggles for autonomy from nonwestern states that seek to dispossess them in order to exploit their lands and natural resources (Dunaway, 2003; Hall and Fenelon, 2009).

More often than not there is an economic basis for this political and cultural oppression. In many Southern countries, dominant elites treat numerous ethnic groups (and other groups for which there is no universal concept) as external peripheries or colonies. Incorporation is the historical process by which external territories and peoples that have been outside are brought into the system through colonization, conquest, or economic and political domination (Hall, 1986, 2001; Dunaway, 1994). Governance is centralized, and separate peoples are “unified” into nation-states (Dunaway, 2003). Most typically, external zones are integrated as peripheries of the world-economy; and the affected peoples quite often devolve from economic and political autonomy into dependence on a world-wide network of production (Dunaway, 1994, 1996). Economic production is transformed so that the zone is “dominated by capitalist relations of production” (Wallerstein, 1979: 162) and inextricably articulated through complex commodity chains with the capitalist world-economy (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1987: 773). That is, the land is captured by state elites who reorganize the local economy to prioritize export commodities. First, natural resources are rationalized and homogenized, land is commodified into property that can be owned and redistributed, and the ecosystem is reorganized for capitalist production (Dunaway, 1994, 1996). Second, ethnic and indigenous minorities are aggregated into a commodity-producing *work force* that is situated in semiproletarianized households that subsidize capitalism through unpaid or underpaid labors (Dunaway, 2001). Through their capitalist development projects, state elites incorporate (more often than not, forcibly) ethnic and indigenous communities into these *global dark value chains* in order to extract from them low-paid labors and/or ecological resources and to externalize to them costs and risks associated with export production, like ecological degradation and new health dangers (Clelland, 2013, 2014, 2015).

3.2 *The Missing World Majority: Why is the Semiperiphery Overlooked?*

From a world-systems perspective, the white supremacy argument is a clumsy bipolar substitute for the structural relationship of the exploitative core to the impoverished periphery. This color-line dualism is flawed in two ways. First, white supremacy is depicted as a permanent, inflexible characteristic, but capitalism is a “continuously evolving historical system” (Wallerstein, 2000: 253, 307–308). Consequently, “what guarantees a particular set of hierarchical social relations today may not work tomorrow.” Historically, there has been “a cyclical rhythm marked by the rise and fall of hegemonic powers” and the rise and fall of nation-states (as well as regions within states) across the tiers of the world-system (Wallerstein, 2000: 253–263). Thus in the second half of the 20th century, several states rose from the periphery, and some European countries like Portugal and Spain slid downward to look less like the core countries they once were (Terlouw, 2002). Significantly, Japan rose to the core, making this tier of the world-system a lesser degree of “white” than the western race paradigm claims (Dunaway and Clelland, 2017: Tables 1 and 4). Second, white supremacy arguments silence an important third tier of countries, the *semiperiphery*, identified by world-systems analysts as an important intermediate position between the core and periphery (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1977; Chase-Dunn, 1988; Terlouw, 2002).

The semiperiphery is crucial to the study of race and ethnicity in the modern world-system in several ways. Semiperipheries are exploited by the core, but they, in turn, exploit poorer countries. Indeed, the worldwide process of “expropriation of surplus value” is a structural relationship in which “the *middle tier* both participates in the exploitation of the *lower tier* and is exploited by the *upper tier*” (Geschwender and Levine, 1994: 80). Second, semiperipheral elites act in their own behalf to drain surpluses from peripheries through *subimperialism* (Marini, 1972). From a world-systems perspective, a “subimperial” state exerts “a regional hegemony akin to the global dominance of an imperial power but at a subsystemic level.” Consequently, subimperialism often “produces ethnic opposition within local spheres, both within the *semiperipheral* state itself and within the wider regional periphery” (Shaw, 1979: 348–351). When they act in a subimperialist fashion, semiperipheries often employ strategies that target, marginalize and oppress ethnic minorities in other countries (e.g., Martin, 2008; Bond, 2012; Misoczky and Imasato, 2014). The most common form of subimperialism is not the application of military force, but rather the routine operation of global value chains that exploit ethnic communities (Clelland, 2015).

Even though these countries lie on the “colored” side of the white supremacy paradigm, several semiperipheries have exhibited higher growth rates than

the core since the 1980s (Korzeniewicz and Moran, 2009: 64–68). The “new international division of labor” that resulted from the transfer of core manufacturing to the semiperiphery was an historical shift in the structure of the world-system (Robinson, 2014). Not only is the majority of the world working class now within the semiperiphery, but also a large share of the competitive segment of the transnational capitalist class and its managerial cadre (Dunaway and Clelland, 2017). Semiperipheries have achieved their economic development through national agendas that target and exploit the laborers of ethnic communities and dispossess them of their ecological resources (Boele et al., 2001). Semiperipheral agriculture and industrialization are grounded in intense exploitation of ethnic minorities to secure low-paid and unpaid labor for national export agendas (e.g., Clelland, 2013, 2014; Dunaway and Ferolin, 2013). Many American scholars emphasize *racial exclusion* from opportunity structures (e.g., Goldberg, 1994), but semiperipheries force exploitative *inclusion* of ethnic groups. In many nonwestern societies, much of the damage of ethnic policies is not in keeping minorities *out* but in forcing them *in*, even when they resist being incorporated as cheap labor and providers of natural resources.⁶

Fourth, semiperipheries now host a majority of the world’s population and most of the world’s diverse array of ethnic groups. Western race scholars (e.g., Richmond, 1995; Sharma, 2007) focus on the immigration policies of western Europe and the United States as part of a global apartheid system, ignoring the degree to which southern semiperipheries are magnets for transnational migration. In 2013, two-thirds of the world’s transnational migrants resettled in 25 countries, and sixteen of those destination countries were Southern semiperipheries.⁷ Migration into the South accounts for more than 44% of transnational labor migrants and nearly 82% of refugees (Dunaway and Clelland, 2017: Table 9), and the vast majority of this migration is to Southern semiperipheries. Recent scholarship about immigration contends that “racial minorities and immigrants of color are experiencing a racial backlash all over the Western world,” most of that backlash supposedly coming from whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2015: 202–203). On the one hand, this argument fails to recognize (a) that the greatest numbers of immigrants into western Europe in the early 21st century are whites from eastern Europe, central Asia and the Middle East and (b) that minorities of color in those European countries are also part of the backlash against those white immigrants. On the other hand, western scholars are so

6 See the previous discussion of dark value extraction in the nonwestern state section.

7 Analysis of Migration Policy Institute (2013).

preoccupied with how western states are “closing borders” that they ignore attempts by semiperipheral states (e.g., Mexico, South Africa, India, Brazil) to prevent the influx of transnational laborers from adjacent peripheries. Indeed, semiperipheral states are just as involved in regulating migration flows and restricting citizenship rights as western core countries. Reactionary politics, xenophobia and discrimination against “foreign aliens” are routinely documented in Southern semiperipheries.⁸ Moreover, the United Nations World Value Survey (1981–2014) indicates that there is far greater racial/ethnic intolerance of immigrants in these Southern semiperipheries than in the western core.⁹

Fifth, we should state an obvious point that is usually ignored by western race scholars. The numbers of peoples impacted by semiperipheral ethnic exploitation and forced displacement far exceeds the incidence of racial discrimination in western core countries. Much like the European core, semiperipheral states construct legal definitions of ethnic minorities in order to target them for marginalization and exploitation in relation to domestic and foreign development agendas (e.g., Li, 2010). Moreover, every semiperipheral country has its own marginalized ethnic communities that are treated like internal peripheries (e.g., Sturgeon et al., 2013). In 2011, forced displacements were concentrated in the world's semiperipheries where the lands of ethnic minorities were reallocated to large export producers.¹⁰

Finally, white supremacy is not the totalizing racial force in the modern world-system that western race scholars claim it to be. “Elites in the North are prepared to collaborate with non-white elites if that facilitates economic gains in the South” (Falk, 1992: 631). Global capitalism provides privileges (e.g., cheap goods, technology) to many nonwhites in all three tiers of the world-system, but the greatest expansion of middle class consumption is occurring in nonwestern semiperipheries. Semiperipheries often act in the interests of the core, sometimes putting them in ethnic conflict with other semiperipheries or peripheries. Southern semiperipheries (e.g., South Africa) are significant exporters of arms to areas of the world in which ethnic conflicts are occurring (Holtom et al., 2013). Thousands of peripheral males transnationalize themselves to become low-paid “contract laborers” for semiperipheral industries,

8 For information about ethnic tensions around migrant flows across national borders, see case studies at the websites of the Migration Policy Institute (www.migrationpolicy.org) and Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative (<http://citizenshipprightsinafrica.org>).

9 Analysis of World Value Survey databases, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>. For a map of the world's most and least tolerant countries, see Fisher (2013).

10 For an analysis of minorities at risk list, see <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessments.asp?regionId=9>, UNHCR (2012: map 2) and Walker (2013).

plantations and ocean vessels (Barrett and Roediger, 1997; Migration Policy Institute, 2013; International Organization for Migration, 2014). The “international division of reproductive labor” operates to transfer female nurses and domestic servants from Nigeria, India, Myanmar, South Korea, China, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Pakistan to work for low wages in middle class and elite households in Middle Eastern and Asian semiperipheries (Yeates, 2013).

3.3 *Why Are the World-Economy and the Transnational Capitalist Classes Ignored?*

The white supremacy paradigm ignores both the world-economy and the capitalists who control it. In sharp contrast, Oliver Cox (1948: 179, 184) points out “racial antagonism” is driven by “an exploitative interest — the peculiar type of economic exploitation characteristic of capitalist society.” Joe Feagin and Eileen O’Brien emphasize that “there are real *material and power interests* dividing oppressed and oppressor” (Feagin and Deane, 2010: 48). “The essence of the contradiction between core and periphery is economic despite the fact that it has often been defined in racial terms” (Geschwender and Levine, 1994: 79). Without a focus on the economic base of differentiations, scholars will be “unable to explain those racist exclusions that are calculated, brutally rational and profitable,” argues Goldberg (1994: 15). Because they pay insufficient attention to political economy, white supremacy arguments omit important class differentiations among racial/ethnic groups. The western race paradigm masks class distinctions between exploiters and exploited, essentializing all members of an ethnic/racial group as equally inferior/powerless or superior/dominant. However, the world-system is choreographed by transnationalized capitalist classes who seek to exploit racial and ethnic minorities to expropriate wealth. Despite western economic dominance of the world-system, there are “multiple poles of intensive accumulation” outside the west, and transnational capitalists represent every racial/ethnic group in the world (Robinson, 2014: 64). When describing early 21st century multinational corporations, The Economist (2008) points out that “global business investment now flows increasingly from South to North and South to South, as emerging economies invest in the rich world and in less developed countries.” Indeed, Southern firms now account for one-third of world FDI flows (The Economist, 2011). Clearly, these Southern capitalists are not white in the sense of the western race paradigm, but they do share the pro-capitalist class interests of core capitalists. Indeed, nonwhite capitalists “are as much committed to control and repression of the global working class as are their Northern counterparts” (Robinson, 2015: 18).

Claims that “pursuit of white supremacy” lies at the heart of the operation of the world-system belies the pursuit of wealth accumulation that drives all

capitalists, no matter their skin color (Robinson, 2014; Dunaway and Clelland, 2017). While white supremacy arguments present the world-system as a vast gulf between a majority of exploited “dark others” and a dominant wealthy white minority, those who directly exploit workers in the semiperipheries are “dark” capitalists who may share the “color” of their workers, but not usually the same ethnicity. These extractors of economic surplus are the elites of the semiperiphery who act in their own behalf and as compradors to foreign capital. Compradors are the capitalists and state elites who do the hard work for their transnational class. They make production possible through strategies to capture labor and resources as cheaply as possible from ethnic communities. One task of these dark capitalists is to drain economic surplus from cheap labor and from the natural resources in ethnic communities (Clelland, 2015). Through support from state elites, Southern transnational capitalists subject ethnic minorities to super-exploitation. More often than not, such “ethnic others” are integrated into global value chains as cheap laborers that are reproduced and sustained by unpaid household laborers who provide hidden subsidies to capitalist commodity chains (Dunaway, 2012).

World-systems analysts argue that the USA is in hegemonic decline, making this an historical period in which semiperipheral competition is intense (Arrighi and Silver, 1999; Bornschier and Chase-Dunn, 1999; Wallerstein 2003). “The history of hegemonic successions shows that the slipping economic dominance of a hegemonic state weakens international order and opens the door to competition from other states” (Bergesen and Sonnett, 2001: 1606). One indicator of the emerging role of semiperipheries is the change over time in the racial/ethnic composition of the transnational capitalist class (hereafter TCC). Between the 1950s and 1980, decline in American economic hegemony was evidenced by a sharp drop in the number of American corporations that were ranked among the world’s 500 largest transnational corporations. In 1956, American corporations accounted for 84% of the Global 500 list.¹¹ By 1980, more than half the list consisted of corporations in countries that the western race paradigm situates among the victimized “dark” peoples (Bergesen and Sahoo, 1985: 597). By 1998, there were almost as many large transnational corporations in Japan and twelve semiperipheries as there were in the United States (Bergesen and Sonnett, 2001). In the early 21st century, there is a growing semiperipheral presence in the TCC, as evidenced in the list of the largest 2000 transnational corporations in the world (Dunaway and Clelland, 2017: Table 6). By 2015, nearly half the world’s largest corporations were based in countries that the western race paradigm essentializes as victimized and oppressed.

11 See <http://fortune.com/global500/>.

Over the last two decades, the number of Southern semiperipheral states with large corporations increased 150%, indicating that the ethnic diversity of corporate ownership is widening geographically.

There is another empirical indicator we can employ to measure the growing ethnic complexity of the TCC. Since 2000, the numbers of wealthy billionaires have expanded faster in semiperipheries (Morison et al., 2013). Contrary to the bifurcated white/colored world portrayed by the western race paradigm, 51% of the world's wealthiest capitalists resided in Japan, 47 semiperipheries and three peripheral countries in 2015 (Dunaway and Clelland, 2017: Table 7). More than 88% of the world's billionaires reside in twenty countries. Western race theorists count eleven of those countries and 45% of the world's billionaires as "colored" victims. China, India and Russia have more billionaires than the combined total for all western core countries except the United States. Brazil has more billionaires than France, Canada or Australia while South Korea and Turkey have more billionaires than Australia or Italy.

Each of the nonwestern countries represented among the lists of billionaires and largest transnational corporations has a cumulative history of marginalizing and exploiting ethnic minorities. Even though the core countries dominate the world-system and structure inequalities for their own benefit (Wallerstein, 1980, 2000), nonwestern corporations, billionaires and state elites should not be made to disappear into the wide pool of "victims of color" defined by the western race paradigm. It is crucial to realize that semiperipheral capitalists and state elites are not innocent bystanders of the globalized economic processes that sustain world inequality. On the one hand, nonwestern corporations, billionaires, and state elites form the transnational capitalist class fractions in their own countries. On the other hand, these capitalists and state elites service core capitalists, so they are complicit in creating and sustaining the inequalities of the world-system (Amin, 2011). Moreover, they have accrued their own economic and political power through ethnic super-exploitation and oppression.

4 The Intellectual Imperialism of Western Race Theory

In the early 1990s, Portugal's Gulbenkian Foundation drew attention to "the emerging need for 'contextualization of universalisms'" which would require an increasing theoretical dialogue among cultures (Wallerstein, 1996: x). In sharp contrast to that lofty mission, some European scholars (e.g., Gilroy, 1991; Barot and Bird, 2001; Banton, 2012) have contended that American sociologists have been running a hegemonic project to force application of the western race

paradigm everywhere. Jefferson Fish (2015: 3) points out that American race scholars behave as though “the only ways of thinking about race are American ways; [that] the concept of race in all cultures is the same as the current American concept.” Deniz Uyan (2021: 14) criticizes “the tendency to impose American conceptualizations or theorizations” universally even though they reflect the “uniquely American logic of racism, a logic that requires a biologically essentialized understanding of race.” Academics and activists who are quick to condemn racism and racialization elsewhere seem not to be introspective enough to recognize their own Eurocentrism or neocolonial knowledge production.¹² In this section, we will investigate six strategies of intellectual imperialism through which the western race paradigm has been universalized.

4.1 *The Political Economy of Universalization*

Trafficking in intellectual paradigms is big global business! Scholarly ideas are globalized from the United States and western Europe through the operation of what we term the international *knowledge export-import industry*. “The ways in which the production and circulation of knowledge are organized generally produce metropolitan dominance and peripheral marginality in social science” (Connell, 2008: 219). Universalization of the western race paradigm has been effected by the many types of international activity of western organizations, including research and philanthropic foundations, academic publishers, transnational activist organizations, professional academic organizations, international think tanks, international conferences, universities that recruit and educate international students (who go home to be knowledge brokers), progressive and left-leaning journals, global development organizations (especially the United Nations and the World Bank which credentialize “experts”), as well as US embassies and programs that provide funds to nonwestern countries. The western race paradigm owes much of its power to the fact that its generalizations appear simultaneously and repeatedly from a multiplicity of these contexts which appeal to academics, activists and public officials of a broad range of political leanings. Moreover, knowledge imperialism “never imposes itself better than when it is served by progressive intellectuals (or by “intellectuals of colour” in the case of social inequality) who would appear to

12 Emirbayer and Desmond (2015: 29) warn that race scholars have paid too little heed to *reflexivity*. Race theory and scholarship, they contend, “will remain unsatisfactory so long as we fail to turn our analytic gaze back upon ourselves, the analysts of racial domination, and inquire critically into the hidden presuppositions that shape our thought.” While we agree with their argument, their study is western-biased and does not extend to the need for intellectual reflexivity about race scholarship in nonwestern contexts.

be above suspicion of promoting the hegemonic interest of a country against which they wield the weapons of social criticism" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1999: 51).

4.2 *Epistemic Racism and Colonization of Knowledge Production*

Samir Amin (1989: 100–103) has argued that western universalization of theories is a normal part of the operation of the modern world-system.

Once it became capitalist and developed the power to conquer, Europe granted itself the right to represent others — notably “the Orient” — and even to judge them. . . . It is even necessary to go further. “The Orient” was incapable of representing itself with the same force as Europeans. . . . In imposing itself on a worldwide scale, capitalism, born in Europe, created a demand for universalization at the level of scientific analysis of society.

Regarding knowledge production, contends Rathore (2020: 27), the relationship between North America/ western Europe and the Global South is top-to-bottom, patrimonial, patron-client and researcher-informant. In colonial fashion, too many Southern university curricula and researchers are dependent upon “transatlantic theorisation and conceptual hegemony.” Carl Pletsch’s (1981: 588) admonition is timely, perhaps more so now than in the 1950–1975 period that he analyzed.

Our challenge is not merely to cast aside this conceptual ordering of social scientific labour (into three worlds), but to criticise it. . . . We must, in other words, overcome the limitations that the three worlds notion has imposed upon the social sciences as a matter of course.

Historically, many nonwestern educational systems were products of colonialism, and those systems banned indigenous languages, making it impossible for knowledge to be produced in nonwestern languages (Rodney, 1973; Alatas, 2000; Dabashi, 2011; Africason, 2021; Nkwi, 2021). In the 21st century, neoliberalism has taken further control of nonwestern educational policies, establishing western content, standardized curricula and testing into both prior colonies and areas that were not colonized by the west (Gupta, 2018; Sharonova et al., 2018; Angulo, 2020; Portnoi, 2021). According to Rathore (2020: 27), “transatlantic academia is still very much in the business of manufacturing and exporting theory and Indian academia remains in the business of its import and distribution.” Academic standardization includes incorporation of the western race paradigm into textbooks and into requirements for training of educators (Sharanova, et al., 2018; Portnoi, 2021).

4.3 *Marginalization of Alternate Knowledge Production*

In theorizing of race for the 21st century, two elements make the concept increasingly bound to USA and western European specificities. On the one hand, scholars continue to conceptualize race in terms of skin color and physical traits historically derived from western colonialism. Consider, for example, the sweeping universalization of this declaration which erroneously associates colonialism with one color. According to Boatca (2017: 471), “racism in the world-system is premised on colonially enforced whiteness.” On the other hand, “race must be analyzed with a keen awareness as to what is politically at stake in the use of this concept” (Slocum, 2013: 25–26). In other words, scholars risk being stigmatized as “not politically correct” if they challenge the intense focus on localized identity politics as solid footing for a theory that claims to be applicable all over the world. Our own experience has been that journal reviewers have accused us of being “racist” and “politically incorrect” and have recommended “rejection” on those grounds for articles like this one that call for critical reassessment. While we are senior academics with established reputations, such pressures are far more career-threatening for junior scholars who have told us they fear never being published and risk future tenure if they disagree with the dominant race paradigm. As Thomas Kuhn (2012) has pointed out, challenges to established paradigms have always met with attempts to constrain interlopers. Historically, ground-breaking theory has emerged from an academic minefield that protects the “conventional wisdom” and deters cutting edge explorations by scholars who are trying to foster different lines of theory and praxis. Such “normal” resistance to change is made more palpable by rancorous identity politics in the United States. In such a context, few can afford to expend the time and energy it requires to challenge scholarly gatekeeping (Kuhn, 2012) or to battle the “disciplinarian straightjackets” (Coates, 2002: 7).

However, the geopolitics of western social science (Wallerstein, 1999) also silence or deter alternate epistemologies from nonwestern intellectuals and activists. Raewynn Connell (2008: 219) argues that social science knowledge production has historically been organized to generate *theoretical hegemony*. “The ways in which the production and circulation of knowledge are organized generally produce metropolitan dominance and peripheral marginality.”¹³ If the pressures to adhere to the dominant paradigm are strong in the

13 Even when projects claim to have a “worldwide scope,” American and western European interests disproportionately dominate the knowledge product. For instance, the Gulbenkian Foundation funded a blue-ribbon commission to study “the state of social sciences world-wide,” but the final report focused on the disciplines within western universities (cf., Wallerstein, 1996).

United States, they can be even more overwhelming in nonwestern contexts. Many Global South academics need to earn additional income from western research contracts, and their salary increases and scholarly rankings can depend on their capacity to be published in western journals. In these situations, academics are evaluated against the bias that “significant knowledge can only come from the West.” More often than not, “the societies of the periphery, however respectfully studied, function as sources of data to be fitted into” the western theoretical paradigm (Connell, 2008: 66). Consequently, any nonwestern scholar faces a context in which the western race paradigm holds monopolistic dominance over “scientific wisdom” (Alatas, 2000: 26–27). The colonizing discourse displaces, subdues and marginalizes knowledge production that contradicts the imported western model. While the western race paradigm is derived from European colonial otherizing in the Americas and South Africa (Winant, 2001: 3), a majority of the world’s population lies in Asia (disproportionately in China and India). The “wobbliness” of the race concept that Omi and Winant (2013: 963) complained about becomes clear when scholars apply the concepts of *race* and *racialization* to Southern contexts in which group exclusion is grounded in non-physical factors. White supremacy arguments “privilege one particular form of racism while ignoring the historical and contemporary oppression of populations who have been treated as distinct and inferior. . . *without reference to skin color*” (Darder 2011: 121, our emphasis). As a result, western theory may prevent uncritical Southern scholars and activists from asking the appropriate research questions about the societies in which they live, resulting in knowledge production that is “contaminated by exclusions and subordinations” of exploited peoples (Smith, 1982: 127–128). Even worse, nonwestern scholars can be so indoctrinated that their attention is displaced from local particularities that differ from the universal claims of the western model, causing them to force-fit errors or falsifications onto local groups (Alatas, 2000; Taylor and Orkin, 2001; Smith, 2012; Rathore, 2020).

4.4 *The Role of Knowledge Brokers*

The belief that humans “belong to races was an invention of the Anglo-Saxon Protestant West that has been spread wherever it had influence. In this sense, Westerners have made races” (Banton, 2005: 58–59). We extend that argument to point out that intellectuals have served as knowledge brokers to spread the imperialism of race-thinking all over the world. Several scholars have described “colonized minds” and “colonized intellectuals” who serve as cultural brokers and informants during decolonization to “translate” the colonized to the colonizers (Memmi, 1965; Fanon, 1965; Cesaire, 2001; Smith, 2012). Because they function like their economic counterparts in the 21st century, “race experts” are

intellectual compradors because they profit either through financial remuneration or through career aggrandizement (Alatas, 2000; Dabashi, 2011).

By the late 1980s, a new neoliberal policy elite had emerged in nonwestern countries, consisting of academics and public officials who participate in western-controlled international think tanks and/or were educated by western universities. These “idea brokers” foster analysis utilizing arguments and concepts of the western race paradigm in universities, government programs and activist organizations (Smith, 1991; Taylor and Orkin, 2001; Ahmed, 2017). By applying the western race paradigm, some of these academics become recognized within professional organizations as “experts” on racism in particular countries (Smith, 1991; Alatas, 2000; Taylor and Orkin, 2001; Dabashi, 2011). Then they are recruited by organizations like the World Bank, the United Nations, and philanthropic organizations as project consultants or independent experts on race-related policy formation.¹⁴

However, nonwestern scholars also serve as knowledge brokers or “native informants” (Spivak, 1999), serving to cement the global hegemony of dominant western theories. While functioning inside the western-controlled discourse, these brokers/informants act “without a self-conscious reflection on themselves.”

They are identifiable yet without a ‘voice’. . . . Their voices are heard, but they speak the language of the dominant. Their own voices are forever effaced in this absolute otherhood as an identity and as a non-identity in the foreclosure within the political economy of reproduction of western discourses (BHATTACHARJEE, 2001: 1197).

4.5 *Western Racialization of Nonwestern Contexts*

We are convinced from reading numerous studies that most western analysts, no matter how well-intended, racialize the nonwestern societies they study (e.g., Dikötter, 2002; Law, 2012), that they socially construct definitions of racial groups for those societies that fit the parameters of western categories (cf., Smith, 2012; Rathore, 2020), and that they engage in “race making” of the western variety (cf., Taylor and Orkin, 2001). Western race scholars are preoccupied with “white supremacy” in a 21st century world-system that is disproportionately populated by nonwhite peoples whose economic positions are shifting significantly. The Chinese context demonstrates why western scholars should question that “race” has worldwide applicability. In China, the superior status of “Han” is not tied to skin color, but to mythologized historical

¹⁴ For example, see www.un.org/en/letsfightracism/minorities.shtml.

ancestry and to ideological nationalism. In contrast, minority ethnic status is recognized by the degree to which a group fails to “eat bitterness,” in order to move toward “Han-ness” and to help the state to achieve its development goals (Manning and Wernheuer, 2012). Currently, there is state-led promotion of Han culture, language and identity, accompanied by the political construction of inferior ethnic statuses (Law, 2012). However, the word “race” cannot be written in Chinese linguistic characters (Muller, 2011), and Mao Zedong officially abolished the race doctrine in China in 1949 (Law, 2012). Why, then, should we assume that state elites or Chinese citizens in their everyday lives think in *racial* terms to otherize citizens? Indeed, social constructions of otherness are routinely produced by nonwestern societies without reference to race or color (Law, 2012: 99). These realities have not prevented western scholars from applying western notions of race to China (e.g., Dikötter, 2002; Law, 2012). More often than not, those writers ideologically demonize China against their biased social constructions of a “less racist” West.

Herein lies the investigator’s ethical dilemma. In societies where there are no locally-defined races, possibly no word for race, is *racialization* possible? Or is the researcher importing external generalizations about race and racism? As David Goldberg (1993: 12, 32) contends, such knowledge construction “den[ies] all autonomy to those so named and imagined, extending power, control, authority and domination over them.” In addition, this externally-established “social science of the Other” determines “the limits of knowledge about the Other,” for “the Other” is only known and understood in terms constructed by “the racialised social science.” The notion of *racialization* can be employed (a) as an analytical tool to be applied by or (b) as a criterion against which to assess the biases and impacts ideas of the cross-cultural researcher. We will turn this notion on its head to help the reader see how the western scholar engaged in cross-cultural research may actually *racialize* the society being studied. To examine this process dialectically, we will pose questions about possible researcher actions, followed by scholarly explanations of the process of racialization.

When does the ingrained frame from the researcher’s own society become such a bias that (s)he engages in a social construction of race or racism that imposes from outside the historical lens of theories derived from European colonialism? According to Omi and Winant (2013: 10, our emphasis), “racialization or ethnicization is the process of ascribing ethnic or racial identifies to a relationship, social practice, or group that *did not identity itself as such*.” As Angela Davis (1996: 61–63) observes, “race” is both an analytical and an experiential frame for western analysts, so it is difficult for a sociologist to recognize when (s)he slides from objective to subjective interpretations of racial

phenomena. Since an objective, dispassionate derivation of meaning is so difficult in the researcher's home society, it becomes even more complex to interpret when (s)he crosses into the unfamiliar territory of a nonwestern society.

At what point, then, does the cross-cultural researcher engage in *race making* (Taylor and Orkin, 2001; Banton, 2012) force fitting *race* and *racialization* onto groups that do not share those words or cultural meanings?¹⁵ Omi and Winant (1994: 9, our emphasis) describe racialization as "the extension of racial meaning to a *previously unclassified relationship*, social practice or group." It is also "an ideological process. . . constructed from *pre-existing conceptual elements*." Bonilla-Silva (1997: 469) examines racialization as "the placement of actors in *racial categories*." Indeed, the cross-cultural researcher who assigns such arbitrary categorizations seems to us to be engaging in racialization of the society being studied, in the very same ways that racists negatively stigmatize groups. At what point does the cross-cultural researcher stop being "objective" analyst to become a "race-making" actor who silences local voices and imposes an external concept-word? When misinterpretations are made, the researcher may negatively affect the society being studied by racializing the situation in ways that become official national and international rhetoric (e.g., Taylor and Orkin, 2001).

4.6 *Western Domination of International Policy Formation*

The best evidence we can offer that race is not a universal category is an examination of the outcomes of international policy formation at the United Nations between 1948 and 1963. Against the backdrop of Nazi pseudoscience about race that had justified the Holocaust, UNESCO (1950: 1) undertook the task of developing a universal definition of "race" that could be used to battle "race prejudice." While UNESCO was lauded for its position that group differences are not genetically determined, the statement emphasized that only physical characteristics can be used to classify races.¹⁶ At the same time, UNESCO (1950: 6) pointed out that "national, religious, geographic, linguistic and cultural" traits should be associated with term *ethnic group*. Through these distinctions, UNESCO universalized western definitions, and those notions formed the backdrop for the next stage of the UN anti-racism agenda (Hazard, 2012). In the early 1960s, the United Nations commissioned working papers from western

15 For a case study of political and scholarly "race making" in South Africa, see Taylor and Orkin (2001).

16 Reflecting the committee's lack of knowledge of nonwestern societies, UNESCO (1950: 9) posited Brazil as the model to be emulated for its "lack of race prejudice," thereby silencing that country's long history of slavery and continuing oppression of indigenous peoples.

scholars to begin the process of developing the “International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination” (ICERD). Ultimately, the convention reflected US race theories so closely that it ingrained four key exclusions that make it an ineffective policing mechanism. On the one hand, it excluded *caste*, *religion* and *immigrant status* as markers of discrimination. On the other hand, it did not distinguish between its specified racial terms, so UN experts assumed that these terms objectively existed and had similar meanings everywhere. Those oversights allowed many countries to claim exemptions on the grounds that specified categories did not occur in their societies (Lérner, 2003). In addition to the United States Congress, most European and nonwestern countries objected to international policing around one or more of seven concepts— six derived from US theory: *race*, *ethnic group*, *color*, *majority group*, *minority group*, *racial prejudice*, as well as *hate speech* introduced by European scholars to encompass anti-Semitism.¹⁷ As a result, this convention has been ineffectual. To date, the only policing action by the UN General Assembly on this convention has been utilization of the article to criminalize South African apartheid and impose economic sanctions. Even though a majority of signatory states have passed legislation outlawing racial discrimination, several European and most nonwestern countries do not police those statutes because they claim that *races* and/or *racism* do not exist in their societies (Human Rights Watch, 2007, 2014).¹⁸

In the 21st century, there is an even more significant way in which the western race paradigm dominates international policy. Since the bombings of 11 September 2001, American national security policy has centered on *global ethnonationalism*. David Goldberg (2005: 98–100) explains that

Racial Americanization has come to combine domestic with foreign design. In the wake of 9/11, Americanization became exportable to those ethnoracially conceived countries or (sub)continents deemed to threaten its security. . . . Until the American Dream of living free is internalized in those civilizational places most resistant to it. . . they need to be quarantined, segregated into containable and controllable cantons, movement of human and economic capital to and from them constrained and conditioned.

17 Our analysis of the ICERD historical database, available online at https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=treaty&mtdsg_no=iv-2&chapter=4&lang=en.

18 For example, Human Rights Watch (2007) was forced to use the convention's article about *apartheid* to try to get the UN to hold the Indian state responsible for discrimination against the Dalits, a caste which is not encompassed by the terms *race* or *ethnic group*.

Paul Gilroy (2002: 8) warns that it will be difficult to escape “the dangers of race-thinking” because of the geopolitical dominance of the United States. The powerful appeal of the western race paradigm, he insists, “can be repudiated only if we break the restraining hold of nationalist history and its frozen past upon our political imaginaries.”

5 Conclusion: Directions for Future Liberated Theory

As we have demonstrated, there is a growing body of western and nonwestern critical thinking and about theoretical shortcomings of the concepts of race and racialization and about universalization of the western race paradigm. The western race paradigm is a product of *methodological nationalism* (Wimmer and Schiller, 2003; Chernilo, 2011), but it has been mythologized to be *methodologically cosmopolitan* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1999; Goldberg, 2005). Though the western race paradigm is only a presentation of western historical patterns as though they were universal (Hall, 1980: 338–339; Wallerstein, 1999: 172), it has been established worldwide as “conventional wisdom” through several strategies of intellectual imperialism. In order to confront the intellectual imperialism that has entrenched the western race paradigm, scholars need to make significant changes.

5.1 *Changes Needed by Western Scholars*

Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2003: 35–36, 72) raises concern about the careless deployment of concepts he terms “North Atlantic universals.” Because they are grounded in “a historically limited experience” in terms of time and specific societies, these concepts are “as difficult to conceptualize as they are seductive to use.” Even though race is universally applied by many scholars, he points out that “there is more conceptual confusion about race [at the beginning of the 21st century] than there was at the beginning of the last century.” When it is applied outside the societies in which it was created, race “disguises and misconstrues the many Others” it claims to represent, and it erases “the Other’s historical specificity.” For example, people did not “become Black” in France or Australia the same way they did in the United States. We concur with Andreas Wimmer (2015: 2201) that “a truly global analysis. . . needs to go beyond an Atlanto-centric view, take other patterns of domination and exploitation not associated with race into account, and critically assess their respective roles in the generation and transformation of hierarchies of exclusion.”

Second, western scholars need to recognize that *race* and *racialization* do not explain everything about any instance of social inequality, despite the angry identity politics to the contrary. Most particularly, researchers need to stop filtering and packaging nonwestern contexts through the lens of western race categories that ignore many layers of complex underlying causes that are not captured by those concepts. On the one hand, the western race paradigm makes no attempt “to disentangle ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ from other factors,” and research questions do not seek causative explanations beyond racial/ethnic differences. Moreover, the western race paradigm views societies in terms of “totalizing concepts of group identity which tend to deny ‘internal differences and cross-cutting commonplaces, mask diversity and multiple identifications, and conceal the contingency and ambiguity of every identity” (Taylor and Orkin, 2001: 68). As a result, western race concepts silence and erase more realities about nonwestern groups than they explain. To move forward in the future, “what is needed is an adequate un-erasure of the history and experience of non-White and non-European populations as well as non-European regions from social scientific theory-building” (Boatca, 2015: 231), most especially to end the force fitting of nonwestern groups that do not belong in the categories of race or ethnic group (Taylor and Orkin, 2001; Smith, 2012; Rathore, 2020).

We are quite aware that the western race paradigm dominates graduate education in western (and many nonwestern) universities and that the current generation of junior academics have been indoctrinated to accept universalization of the western race paradigm. As we have previously pointed out, their graduate educations fail to expose them to the accumulated scholarship that criticizes the flaws of the western race paradigm. For that reason, the third strategy that is needed to confront intellectual imperialism is “critical emancipatory self-reflection” (Taylor and Orkin, 2001: 78), but most especially by younger scholars who do not yet have established publication careers to protect. In his roadmap for 21st century social science, Immanuel Wallerstein (1999: 155) warns that “We must most of all lower our arrogance decibels.”

When a western scholar studies a nonwestern context, Benedict Anderson (2016: 7) warns: “Look at what is in front of you, but think about what is missing.” We need to be more dialectical in our thinking and search for the particularities that can occur within universal trends. Even though he is author of grand world-level theory, Immanuel Wallerstein (1999: 244–245) insists dialectically that

there are no concepts that are not plural, that all universals are partials, and that there exists a plurality of universals. . . . We must learn how to deal with the universal and the particular as a symbiotic pair that will

never go away, and that must inform all our analyses.

Dorothy Smith (2007: 411) advises that we need “to discover and map the world so that how it is being put together (in people’s activities and doings) can be made observable from the point of view of those caught up in it.” To put that in our own words, we should search for the different worlds that exist within the world-system, and we need to expect those explanations to require investigation of several complicated layers of inquiry.

5.2 *Changes Needed by Nonwestern Scholars*

Indian scholar N.K. Singhi (1987: 2–5) was concerned that “dominance of conceptual categories and theoretical orientations emanating from Western scholars has led to intellectual colonialism and trained incapacity to construct cognitive alternatives.” Moreover, western intellectual imperialism leads nonwestern scholars to ignore the theories that have emerged in their own societies. In line with Singhi’s alarm, we have gleaned advice from nonwestern scholars and from a few western scholars who support decentering social science theory. First, recognize that theoretical universalism is “a gift of the powerful to the weak” (Wallerstein, 1974: 215). Australian scholar Raewyn Connell (2008: viii–x) observes that “when the claim of universal knowledge is made from a position of privilege, it is likely to serve hegemony not liberation.”

Alatas (2000: 44) insists that “the emancipation of the mind from the shackles of intellectual imperialism is the major condition for the development of a creative, autonomous social science tradition in developing societies.” In the spirit of Amin (1990) and Spivak (1999) we recommend the difficult strategies of *delinking* from the western race paradigm, deconstruction of the western domination of the social sciences, and movement toward locally-derived critical theory that focuses more on particularities that vary from the western model.¹⁹ Connell (2008: 206) offers two points of advice to nonwestern scholars. First, “reject the deeply entrenched habit of mind. . . by which theory in the social sciences is admired exactly in the degree to which it escapes specific settings and speaks in abstract universals.” Second, “sink roots into the mud of particular landscapes.” Bhattacharjee (2001) recommends that nonwestern intellectuals reject the “dominant lie” that it is productive and prestigious to function as a knowledge broker. To liberate knowledge production, nonwestern scholars also need to reclaim their own indigenous languages, especially when

19 For example, indigenous scholars need to step back from the ways in which western race and ethnicity concepts have been force-fitted onto nonwestern groups (e.g., Taylor and Orkin, 2001; Smith, 2012; Rathore, 2020).

assessing the accuracy of the western race paradigm against local conditions (Thiong'o, 1986; Sharonova et al., 2018; Africason, 2021).²⁰ While delinking does not mean refusing to participate in world science and knowledge production, it does require "thinking big from the periphery" (Puntigliano, 2017) in terms of pursuit of local theory construction. Most importantly, delinking requires decolonization of scholarly minds and universities so that western knowledge is no longer uncritically transmitted, imitated and taught.

By offering a sophisticated analysis of how South African social science was purposefully racialized to construct apartheid and subsequently to define national political goals, Taylor and Orkin (2001: 77–78) conclude that

The way forward requires the development of a critical methodology tied to more sensitive and sophisticated forms of empirical analysis. . . . Centrally, we must refine methods that do not bypass the question of 'meaning' but. . . plac[e] diachronic focus on the process and politics of subject formation. In addition, the limitations of conventional survey research can be transcended by exploring the relation of respondents to non-racial, non-ethnic understanding. . . . What is required, to escape racialization [of social science and of respondents] is a deeper level of theoretical analysis in which empirical social research must be placed in a broader meta-factual content where we seek 'a unity of knowledge combining moral and political with empirical understanding.'

Adhering to a Maori perspective about knowledge production, Linda T. Smith (2012: 19) advocates the preparation of indigenous scholars who will "work with, alongside and for communities who have chosen to identify themselves as indigenous."

5.3 *Are We Ready for the Battle?*

Shall we continue to tilt, Don Quixote style, at the ethereal windmill of *globalized white supremacy*, which offers momentary catharsis through rhetoric of outrage, but ultimately offers no viable path toward effective theory or praxis? Are we willing to put aside the academic drive to universalize and to "overgeneralise" the western paradigm of race-centrism (Wimmer, 2015)? Wallerstein (1999: 246) warns that "the protection of one's turf in the face of new ignorances is the worst of scholarly sins, and the greatest possible deterrence to clarity," Can we find the courage to ignore the paradigm gatekeepers

20 For example, Sirohi and Gupta (2020: 408) carefully distinguish between the concepts and race and caset.

(Kuhn, 2012) in order to “unthink” (Wallerstein, 1991) our racialized social science (Goldberg, 1994; Taylor and Orkin, 2001)? It is only through such a difficult intellectual and activist process that we will be able to reveal—and to combat—the multiplicity of locations at which 21st century semiperipheral states, elites and transnational capitalist classes are inventing patterns of exploitation and marginalization that are concealed by race concepts and silenced by the international policies grounded in the western race paradigm.

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