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# Toward a Postcolonial Comparative and International Education

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This article, which serves to introduce the special issue on “Contesting Coloniality: Rethinking Knowledge Production and Circulation in Comparative and International Education,” brings to the fore the rarely acknowledged colonial entanglements of knowledge in the field of comparative and international education (CIE). We begin by showing how colonial logics underpin the scholarship of one of the field’s founding figures, Isaac L. Kandel. These logics gained legitimacy through the Cold War geopolitical contexts in which the field was established and have shaped subsequent approaches including the much-debated world-culture approach to globalization in education. The article then reviews decolonial, postcolonial, and southern theory scholarship as an intellectual resource upon which CIE scholars and practitioners can draw to tackle these active colonial legacies. We situate the contribution of this special issue within this larger intellectual movement and call for a major collective rethinking of the way CIE knowledge is produced and circulated on a global scale.

## A Moment of Deep Reflection

We have put together this special issue to initiate dialogue about the active colonial legacies within the field of comparative and international education (CIE), and to show ways of working beyond them.<sup>1</sup> Readers might wonder how CIE, which celebrates and tries to understand the diversity of education around the world, can continue to be influenced by colonial histories and Eurocentrism. In this extended introduction, we explain why coloniality remains a significant challenge to the field and how articles in this collection engage with this challenge. We hope readers will join us in a major rethinking of the norms and knowledge about difference, comparison, and research that have been inherited from the field’s history.

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<sup>1</sup> Our discussion focuses on the English-language CIE, with an acknowledgment that the critiques of the field developed herein might not be applicable to non-English-speaking and non-Western CIE societies around the world.

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Respect for others, and concern not to be Eurocentric, have been matters of pride for CIE since its inception. One of the field's founders, Isaac L. Kandel (1881–1965), remarked in 1933: “In order to understand, appreciate and evaluate the real meaning of the educational system of a nation, it is essential to know something of its history and traditions, of the forces and attitudes governing its social organization, of the political and economic conditions that determine its development” (1933, xix). Comparativists consider it one of their responsibilities to provide fully contextual knowledge of other countries' educational practices, especially because superficial accounts of them are often mobilized to justify policy options at home. A widely used textbook in the field claims that in teacher education programs and professional development courses, CIE “serves to combat provincialism and ethnocentrism” (Phillips and Schweisfurth 2008, 25).

Comparison was also thought to be key to understanding one's own society. Another CIE founder, George Bereday (1920–83), argued in 1964: “It is self-knowledge born of the awareness of others that is the finest lesson comparative education can afford” (1964, 6). Bereday further argued that “As its final aim, comparative education hopes to relax national pride to permit events and voices from abroad to count in the continued reappraisal and re-examination of schools” (7).

Epstein (1988) and Epstein and Carroll (2005) suggest that these founding scholars embraced a relativist epistemology—the view that knowledge, or the truth, is always relative to the particular conditions of knowing. In the context of CIE, it is expressed as a belief that “one cannot adequately understand education (or any institution) apart from its social and cultural environment” (Epstein and Carroll 2005, 66). It is most notably displayed by the founding scholars' embrace of the concept of “national character.” For instance, Kandel's moderate relativism is demonstrated in his assertion that “the direction of education in democratic nations ought to be ‘borrowed and adjusted’ within the cultural context of each nation” (Epstein and Carroll 2005, 68). As will be discussed further, much of Kandel's discussion of comparative methodology centered on understanding the nationally unique natures of education systems, though he did not view national character as so binding as other more strongly relativist scholars did (Epstein and Carroll 2005, 66). A similar relativist epistemology has been adopted by more contemporary comparative scholars (see Epstein 1988; Bray 2003). CIE distinguishes itself within education scholarship through its internationally inclusive approach to educational issues and its respect for different national values, practices, histories, and systems.

This inclusiveness is further reflected in the work of the World Congress of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES), an umbrella body established in 1970 to recognize the “common interests and uncommon goals” of about 40 comparative and international education societies around the

globe (Masemann et al. 2007). Those who play an active role in WCCES highlight, and celebrate, the different institutional histories and intellectual traditions represented in the linguistically, regionally, and nationally based CIE societies of the world (Bray 2002, 2003; Manzon and Bray 2006; Bray and Manzon 2014).

While we acknowledge the importance of difference, we argue that CIE's effort of description and celebration is powerfully constrained by its way of understanding difference itself. Here we agree with Ninnes and Burnett (2004), who stated more than a decade ago: "Comparative Education as a field has . . . almost always been concerned with an engagement with an 'Other.' For most of the last 150 years, such an engagement has not been problematized" (196). We intend to push this critique further and argue that the field has given little attention to the politics of its own concepts about difference, the critical role that uneven power relations play in the constitution of its comparative knowledge. Structural inequalities between the researcher and the researched, and between the home country of the researchers and the targeted countries, are constitutive for the very difference that CIE researchers are to uncover. The idea of cultural and social difference itself has roots in the colonial division of the world, which played a formative role for the social and educational sciences created in the global metropole. Such a critical perspective has been put forward by education scholars and comparativists who draw on postcolonial theory,<sup>2</sup> and yet its impact has been largely limited within a small circle of scholars.

Furthermore, comparativists, including those who draw on postcolonial scholarship, have given little attention to the geopolitics of knowledge in the disciplines from which their theories and concepts are derived. There is an intimate relationship between the creation of modern science and the imperial advances of European states. As the philosopher Paulin Hountondji ([1994] 1997) shows, European colonial expansion set up an intellectual division of labor as well as a material economy, and global peripheries served as data mines for the accumulation of knowledge and the development of theory in the global North. This happened on a planetary scale, and in social as well as natural science. Recent scholarship has been concerned with the consequences of this history, and the forms of knowledge marginalized or excluded by the mainstream knowledge economy (Alatas 2006, 2014; Connell 2007, 2014; Chen 2010).

This epistemological legacy of colonialism (which includes the intellectual work of the imperial center as well as the periphery) is manifest in many ways. One striking example is the way the colonized or semicolonized world

<sup>2</sup> Willinsky (1998); Hoffman (1999); Tikly (1999, 2004); Ninnes and Burnett (2004); Takayama (2011); Baker (2012).

is interpreted by notable European thinkers as a land of absence (Turner 1992). Karl Marx, for instance, characterized China, India, and Islamic societies through what he called the Asiatic mode of production, in which class struggle is absent. Given that class struggle is the source of social progress and dynamism in his theory, Asiatic societies are destined to stagnate. Max Weber was equally dualistic in his discussion of Islamic societies. He identified ascetic forms of religion, rational forms of law, free labor, and the growth of cities as the essential conditions for the transition to capitalism and modernity. All these characteristics are missing in Islamic societies, according to Weber (Turner 1992). As Bhambra (2007, 52) maintains, Weber's theoretical project was driven by his desire to "establish the nature of the specific and peculiar rationalism" that characterized the modern West and to "explain the absence of those characteristics in other civilizations." For Weber, hence, "Europe represents the cradle of civilization and culture," and it is from Europe that the "signs of evolutionary advance and universal validity" were created (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2010, 55). Bhambra (2007, 2014) and Go (2013) conclude that modern social theory in general has ignored the underside of Western modernity—coloniality—and its intricate linkages to Western modernity. Uncritical application of social theories to non-Western societies has historically generated inaccurate and depoliticized understanding of the "Rest" (Chen 2010).

This critical discussion matters for CIE, because the field has drawn much of its methodological and theoretical apparatus from sociology and cognate social sciences. When such influential figures as Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, and more contemporary scholars such as Luhmann, Foucault, Bourdieu, Giddens, and Beck, are shown to lack an understanding of coloniality and thus have a flawed and parochial understanding of modernity,<sup>3</sup> the scholarship in CIE that has used their theories is also called into question. When social-scientific models of globalization are seen to be Eurocentric, and when it is recognized that flawed and parochial understandings of modernity have been projected upon the rest of the world, a moment of deep reflection seems warranted for our field.

Perhaps the most illuminating case concerns the "world-culture" approach to globalization, which has become "one of the most widely used (or at least widely cited) theories in comparative education" (Waldow 2012, 423). This body of scholarship, with ideas drawn from neoinstitutionalist organizational sociology, is grounded in a truncated reading of Weber's work (Carney et al. 2012). As Takayama (2015) has pointed out, the world-culture approach uncritically accepts the Eurocentric premises of Weberian sociology—including the notion of the West as a coherent, bounded entity that has given rise to

<sup>3</sup> Bhambra (2007, 2014); Connell (2007); Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. (2010); Chen (2010).

special events, concepts, and paradigms that are now diffused throughout the world. As a result, the differences recognized in much of the CIE scholarship drawing on the world-culture approach are treated as a manifestation of absence, or as a variation or inflection of the culture supposedly diffused from the West. By conceding national and regional inflections of world culture, this approach keeps intact the Eurocentric conceptualization of modernity—and modern schooling (Carney et al. 2012; Takayama 2015). A Eurocentric concept becomes “the point of observation and classification of the rest of the world” (Baker 2012, 7), which Walter Mignolo (2007) argues is the underlying logic of the Occidental epistemology.

The existence of about 40 CIE societies belonging to WWCES is potentially a valuable resource for a non-Eurocentric approach in comparative education research. The discipline of sociology suggests how this may be the case: the International Sociological Association, the equivalent organization, has used the different intellectual traditions of its members to commence the reconstitution of disciplinary knowledge (see Patel 2010; Bhambra 2014). In the CIE literature there is considerable celebration of the diverse histories and goals of the WWCES member societies (Bray 2002, 2003; Masemann et al. 2007; Bray and Manzon 2014). But this celebration is mostly a parallel presentation of their diverse institutional histories and intellectual traditions. It obscures the uneven power relations among WCCES members and leaves unexamined the way these relations shape the production and distribution of comparative education knowledge.

Some leading comparativists have been aware of this problem, in particular those who advanced a critical approach to comparative education. Nearly 40 years ago Kelly et al. (1982, 506) stated: “the field remains dominated by the English-speaking world and scholars in the United States, Britain, Canada, and Australia. The major journals in the field are in English as are most of the research studies.” Ten years later, Altbach (1991, 494) raised the same issue in his CIES presidential address: “the field’s knowledge base is highly unequal”; the field’s flagship journals are all based in the United States and Britain so the “gatekeepers of knowledge are in major English-speaking countries.” The same concern was also expressed by Arnove (2001) a decade later in his CIES presidential address.

The recent analysis of the field by Manzon (2011) most clearly identifies the problem, when she points to the existence of “a hierarchical structure in the field of knowledge production, wherein some countries occupy a central ‘paradigmatic’ position for other countries located at the periphery” (45). North American, British, and some western European CIE societies, which virtually monopolize the editorial teams and reviewers of the most influential journals of the field—including *Comparative Education Review*—set the theoretical and methodological agenda. Researchers in peripheral societies are generally expected to emulate them, though the hegemony of the Anglo-



European comparative education discourse is from time to time contested in the periphery (Takayama 2015).

A glance at English-language textbooks on CIE reveals where this problem begins. The four major textbooks in the field are *Comparative Education: The Dialectic of the Global and the Local* (Arnove and Torres [1999] 2013), *Comparative Education: Exploring Issues in International Context* (Kubow and Fossum 2003), *Comparative and International Education: Issues for Teachers* (Mundy et al. 2008), and *Comparative and International Education: An Introduction to Theory, Method and Practice* (Phillips and Schweisfurth 2008).<sup>4</sup> These four texts present a remarkably similar foundation story for the field, starting with Marc Antoine Jullien as the founding father, followed by familiar names from the global North—Michael Sadler, Isaac Kandell, Nicholas Hans, Friedrich Schneider, Edmund King, Brian Holmes, George Bereday, Harold Noah, and Max Eckstein.

Mundy et al. (2008) is the only one of the four that questions the Eurocentric foundational history of the field and recognizes non-English-language comparative education scholarship. In this text, a discussion of Chinese comparative education is added to the usual foundation narrative.<sup>5</sup> The Chinese scholarship, however, is treated as a separate development; it does not challenge or complicate the Eurocentric lineage of the field, nor does the book explore possible interactions between the Chinese and the English-language scholarship.

In these textbooks, as well as countless reviews and mapping exercises, the field is unquestioningly assumed to be interchangeable with the CIE scholarship of North America and select European countries.<sup>6</sup> Even accounts that recognize a plurality of comparative educations (Epstein 1988; Cowen 2000) see methodological and epistemological diversity primarily within the English-language comparative education, paying little attention to diversity in the global community of CIE. The mainstream conception of the CIE field has not been shaken by occasional acknowledgments of different, non-English-speaking comparative education scholarship (Altbach 1991; Ninnis and Burnett 2004; Manzon 2011), or acknowledgment that an exclusive focus on English-language publications is a limitation (Nordtveit 2015).

<sup>4</sup> According to Wiseman and Matherly (2016), Arnove ([1999] 2013) and Phillips and Schweisfurth (2008) are two of the three most assigned readings in CIE programs in the United States.

<sup>5</sup> The same pattern is witnessed in many textbooks in the comparative education scholarship in other countries. For instance, in many comparative education textbooks in Japan, the identical historiography of the field is presented along with a separate and much condensed discussion of the history of the Japanese comparative education scholarship (Takayama 2015).

<sup>6</sup> We are aware that the scholarly traditions and orientations in comparative education in North America and Europe are not identical. The former tends to focus on historical and philosophical work, while the latter is more strongly influenced by the new social science disciplines, including sociology, economics, and psychology (see Kelly et al. 1982, 515; Altbach 1991, 495).

More than a decade ago, Arnove (2001), then president of the CIES in North America, predicted that “The growing body of literature from different regions of the world, whether in English or not, will continue to expand the existing theoretical and conceptual framework of comparative and international education, eventually transforming the very boundaries of the field” (493) and that it will “help offset the hegemony of European and North American scholarship” (494). He had already called for “a multidirectional flow of scholarship and ideas” across the globe (494). Why is it that these noble ideas have not been realized, despite 2 decades of globalization of the field’s research imaginary?

The existing literature on the international plurality of CIEs, then, risks perpetuating what Sharon Stein in this volume calls “thin inclusion,” or cosmetic multiculturalism—incorporating plurality without questioning the very terms of inclusion. If we assume that the methodological, epistemological, and ontological premises of comparative education research are globally homogeneous, we lose a very important possibility: to use epistemological and ontological differences as a starting point for new ways of conceptualizing the object of knowledge. As some recent scholarship argues, methods, epistemology, and ontology are all open to question from postcolonial starting points (Baker 2012; Rappleye and Komatsu 2015; Takayama 2015, 2016). We need not only to recognize the global plurality of comparative education knowledge projects, but also to deploy them for examining tensions and contradictions within the globalized field of comparative education.

### **Forgotten Entanglements**

How was the Eurocentric narrative of CIE constructed? The conventional story focuses on the comparative methodological advances made by the foundational scholars, while removing them from particular historical and geopolitical contexts. Specifically, it erases the field’s deep entanglements with colonialism at the turn of the twentieth century and with neocolonialism during the Cold War.

As historical research has shown, education was central to colonial administration in the British and French control of Africa and South Asia, as well as the work of minor colonial powers such as Belgium (Altbach and Kelly 1978; Kelly 1979, 1984; Mudimbe 1994). From the late nineteenth century onward in particular, education scholars, including those with expertise in foreign education and education policy transfers, that is, comparativists, played a role in establishing education systems in the colonized world. Various technologies of social control through education were field-tested in the colonial peripheries and then brought back to the imperial centers, or vice versa (Coloma 2004; del Moral 2013). In the case of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, “lessons learned in earlier colonial territories, like the



Hawaii Americanization projects, informed national school projects for African American and Native American communities” (del Moral 2013, 45). This is what Hayhoe and Mundy (2008, 5) call “a darker side to comparative education,” characterized by “the increasing use of comparative research in the design and reform of colonial education.” We believe that this prehistory of entanglement with colonialism and neocolonialism warrants careful investigation, because it has conditioned the foundational knowledge of the field.

Here, a closer look at one of the most celebrated founding fathers, Isaac L. Kandel, is illuminating. Kandel, a professor at Teachers College (TC), Columbia University, and a lead researcher at the university’s International Institute (founded in 1923 and funded by Rockefeller), is the key figure in the CIE tradition of historical functionalism. In Epstein’s (2016, 199) words, “no one gave shape to early 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship in comparative education more than Kandel.” His book *Comparative Education* (1933) “set the stage in Europe and North America for the field’s scholarly development in the years and decades that followed” (Epstein 2016, 199). He is lauded as having practiced internationalism and cultural relativism, a scholar who “saw each nation as one which uniquely forged its own way” as opposed to “viewing one nation’s education system as superior to another’s” (Pollack 1991; see also Blake [1982], Epstein [2016], and Kazamias [2009] for extensive reviews of Kandel’s legacy).

Largely ignored in these celebratory accounts of Kandel is the particular geopolitical context under which his work, particularly his writings about education in colonial dependencies, was produced. The United States had been an imperial power from its foundation, conquering indigenous lands through its dramatic “Westward expansion” through the nineteenth century. In the second half of the century, the United States joined the race for overseas colonial acquisition and exploitation, in 40 years acquiring Alaska, Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. The Great Depression intensified competition between imperial powers, in the course of which the governance of education systems in colonial dependencies became an issue between the powers (Coloma 2004; Komagome 2008).

The TC’s International Institute,<sup>7</sup> directed by Kandel’s colleague Paul Monroe and later by Kandel himself, was involved in the administration and assessment of colonial education systems introduced by the US government. The Institute published reports on education in the Philippine Islands and Puerto Rico (Kandel 1936, 411), with Monroe playing a critical role in the production of some of these reports. Kandel (1924) edited *Twenty-Five Years of American Education* as the twenty-fifth-year commemoration of Monroe’s

<sup>7</sup> According to Kandel (1936, 411), the Institute was established to “(a) to conduct investigations into educational conditions, movements and tendencies in foreign countries, and (b) to make the results of such investigations available to students of education in the United States and elsewhere in the hope that such pooling of information will help to promote and advance the cause of education.”

services to TC. It included an introduction written by Monroe as well as the last section titled “Education in the United States Possessions,” two chapters—written by former TC students—that detailed education in the Philippine Islands (Masso 1924) and Puerto Rico (Osuna 1924). These chapters accepted the US imperial logic; benevolent US rule replaced negligent Spanish rule to provide free, universal, and modern education to assist the uncivilized natives to move up the evolutionary scale (del Moral 2013), though both of the authors recognized more work had to be done to realize American idealism.

It was out of this context of TC’s involvement in colonial education that Kandel (1932) edited the 1931 issue of *Educational Yearbook*, published by the Institute, on education in colonial dependencies. As he explained in the preface to the issue, this was the time when “The education of backward or indigenous people in colonial dependencies is beginning to receive attention to a degree never manifested before” (v). His introductory chapter was guided by a Eurocentric conception of progress and civilization: “the civilized world is gradually extending its boundaries and the significance of educating vast millions of people who have hitherto been isolated and content with their own customs, traditions, and occupations is being realized” (Kandel 1932, xiii). Because of the considerable “civilizational gap,” Kandel (1932) cautioned readers about what he called a “policy of assimilation,” an attempt to transplant modern education systems to “the native living hitherto under primitive conditions” (xiv). Instead, he called for adaptation, modification of theories, practices, and policies imported from home (colonizing) countries to “the needs of the peoples concerned” (also reproduced in Kandel 1961). In his mind, the difference in cultural levels explained the failure of introducing American education systems—which Kandel (1932) regarded as “the most advanced experiment in democratic education” (xi)—into the Philippines and Puerto Rico. In a later publication, Kandel (1936) reiterated the same point, explaining that modern education introduced to “the backward peoples of the Near East and in colonial dependencies” must be adapted to their cultures, folkways, and needs so that their “rich body of culture” would be “reshaped to meet modern conditions” (404). This call for adaptation, Kandel (1936) argued, relates back to his mentor Michael Sadler’s dictum about the uniquely national nature of education systems: “It [a national system of education] has in it some of the secret workings of national life” (405). Sadler’s work had formed the basis of the relativist epistemology out of which Kandel’s discussion of “national characters” developed.

Kandel’s call for adaptation can be interpreted as a sign of his respect for national differences, but when considered in relation to his acceptance of the Eurocentric narrative of civilizational stages, a rather different connotation can be seen. It fits with the racialized scheme of stages of maturity or civilization wherein colonial subjects were placed at the bottom of an evolu-

tionary progression (del Moral 2013). Kandel's relativist epistemology, disconnected from any analysis of the larger geopolitical context, complemented the colonial logic of difference. It helped reinforce the hierarchy of culture, race, and civilization upon which the notion of a benevolent US empire was premised.

Furthermore, despite the considerable civilizational gap, Kandel (1932) recognized scholarly value in studying policy borrowing in colonial dependencies. They served as "laboratories in which the new philosophy of education can be tested, perhaps better than under the complicated conditions of Europe and the United States where certain traditions have long become established" (xiv). In this logic, colonial peripheries were places where data could be extracted for export to the theoretical mills of Northern institutions. Comparative education was one of the beneficiaries.

Such views about the civilized and the primitive were common among Northern intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s. But it is notable that Kandel maintained the same views through to the 1960s. In his last publication in *Comparative Education Review*, he discussed policy borrowing in the third world as a way to lift newly independent countries from "their almost primitive level to the civilization of the twentieth century" (Kandel 1961, 134). The introduction of a modern education system in that context required a complete change in the spirit of education, a departure from traditional canons and practices, "a leap from primitive to modern cultures" (131). Hence, despite his much celebrated recognition of national characters in education,<sup>8</sup> Kandel remained committed to what Baker (2012, 12) calls "the planetary will to civilize," or—to put it bluntly—a colonial worldview where modern education systems were a means to aid natives who could not mature on their own.

Kandel's colonial entanglement is further illuminated by recent research about an elite Taiwanese scholar, Bo-Seng Lim (1887–1947). Lim received a Japanese government scholarship to pursue his masters and doctoral degrees with Monroe and Kandel at TC in the late 1920s (Komagome 2008). Upon returning from his studies to Taiwan, Lim was involved in education policy development under the Japanese colonial regime (1895–1945). He initially viewed the introduction of modern education by the Japanese colonial authority as a way to introduce new culture, modern Western civilization. Having witnessed discrimination against the Taiwanese and been influenced by the rising Taiwanese nationalism, however, he became critical of the elimination of native culture and language from the school curriculum.<sup>9</sup> His proposal to

<sup>8</sup> See Blake (1982); Pollack (1991); Kazamias (2009); Epstein (2016).

<sup>9</sup> Komagome (2008, 149) points out the vague idea of native Taiwanese language and culture used by Lim. Komagome suggests that the notion of "old Formosan culture" in Lim's discussion refers to the Chinese culture and the Fukienese and Cantonese dialects of the Chinese language, ignoring the indigenous population in Formosa.

use Taiwanese as a complementary educational language was ignored; the local language was removed from the school curriculum by the mid-1930s.

In the course of this struggle, Lim attempted to use Kandel's work on colonial education, but in vain. This was because, as Komagome (2008, 157) explains, Kandel discussed colonial education from the point of view of the imperial power. His influence is clear in Masso's chapter on education in the Philippines, which was included in Kandel's 1924 volume already mentioned. In justifying the adoption of English as "the main integrating agency," Masso (1924, 450) stated: "The native languages are numerous and diverse, and there is no literature worthwhile in any of them." This would provide no support for Lim's struggle to keep the local language as part of the school curriculum under Japanese colonial rule. The volume on education in colonial dependencies that Kandel (1932) edited 8 years later included "Education in Formosa and Korea" written by Shigetaka Abe (1932), who was commissioned by the Japanese Ministry of Education to investigate the condition of education in Japan's colonies. Abe stressed the egalitarian nature of Japan's colonial education in Formosa (Taiwan) and Korea, a view that Lim entirely rejected (Komagome 2008). It is unclear what role Kandel played in the selection of this manuscript, but he certainly offered no critique.

Missing from Kandel's discussion of education in colonial dependencies is an understanding of the larger economic and geopolitical context of the time: how modern education systems instituted by the US colonial government in the Philippines and Puerto Rico supported the integration of the peripheries into a global capitalist system and maintained dependent relations with the United States (Coloma 2004; del Moral 2013). Building public education in US colonial peripheries was central to the legitimation of the American state as the benevolent agency assisting the colonial subjects' path to civilization. We agree with Kazamias (2009) that the detail of Kandel's legacy has been forgotten in the field (see also Epstein and Carroll 2005). But it is a different kind of legacy, not the liberal-humanism but the colonial entanglement, that most needs to be remembered.

The colonial entanglement of CIE remained, though taking new forms, during the Cold War. In the 1960s and 1970s, developing countries became the superpower battleground for ideological as well as economic and military influence. This led to a dramatic expansion in certain academic fields in the United States, including area studies, political science, and sociology. Comparative and international education also benefited, because "education was a 'fourth lever' of American foreign policy" at the time (Kelly and Altbach 1981, 21). US comparativists of this period found their work of interest to the government, and national security funds became available to support it (Steiner-Khamsi 2016, 223). The Ford Foundation and Carnegie Corporation funded the establishment of CIE graduate centers in many major US universities. As Kelly and Altbach (1981, 21) explain, "much of the funding

provided to the field, directly and indirectly, was related to the foreign policy interest of the United States and to the dominant paradigms of development at the time.”

The dominant paradigm that guided comparativists’ research at the time was modernization theory. Like the colonial logic of the earlier generations, it rested upon an implied dualism of tradition (uncivilized) and modernity (civilized). It posited traditional societies “as stagnant, static unchanging entities that required intervention to enable them to undertake an effective transition to modernity” (Bhambra 2014, 25).

Within the US Cold War geopolitical strategy, comparative educationists were regarded as experts who could be sent out to reform education systems in developing countries. Rolland G. Paulston provides the following sardonic recollection of his consultancy with the Peruvian Ministry of Education:

We [Paulston and another past president of CIES, Joseph P. Farrell] both joined hands and went to Peru to be part of the Teachers College team in the Ministry of Education. We didn’t know much about Peru. We had to go to the library and read books about Peru. But yet we were sent as instant experts to reform the Peruvian educational system. The assumption was that we use the model of the American educational system. Actually, you take the ideal, not just the model but the ideal, and then you subtract the Peruvian practices. The difference is then the ‘aid project.’ You know, we could play that game too (cited in Steiner-Khamsi 2016, 224).

Paulston’s discussion of the model, ideal, and subtraction is logically indistinguishable from Kandel’s call for adaptation to local culture, condition, and needs. Many comparativists played the same game during this period, without realizing the colonial legacy in the game itself.

According to Rappleye (forthcoming), CIE’s entanglement with Cold War geopolitics began soon after the end of World War II. In the 1950s, the US State Department contracted 53 universities to work in 33 underdeveloped countries worldwide. In education, TC worked in Afghanistan, Brigham Young University in Iran, Indiana University in Thailand, Vanderbilt University in Korea, University of Oregon in Nepal, and Stanford in the Philippines. Rappleye (forthcoming) details the work of Oregon University professor Hugh Wood, a TC graduate (Ed.D awarded in 1937), who played a paramount role in the establishment of modern education systems in Nepal in the 1950s. Wood’s genuine belief in the supremacy of the American education system and its pedagogic theory and practice underpins much of the education development work he undertook there. In all these cases, comparativists operated as the experts who “both legitimized and spread—through the mechanism of normative educational borrowing—the values of Western Enlightenment in the name of ‘progress’” (Silova 2012, 235).

With the Cold War over, this kind of ideologically charged engagement has gone. But comparative education as an intellectual field retains a deeper

connection with global power. Hayhoe (2000, 426) argues that “comparative education has been an integral part of the modernity project in the West” (cf. Silova 2012). If we acknowledge the field’s historical entanglement with modernity, then coloniality—now recognized in postcolonial and decolonial scholarship as a constitutive component of modernity—must also be recognized as foundational to the field’s knowledge formation.

### Postcolonial Perspectives in Social Science

It is a familiar point that comparative education has always been influenced by intellectual trends in other disciplines of social science. The field may, then, learn from the current critical reassessment of other social science disciplines’ entanglement with Western colonial expansion, and the global economy of knowledge created by worldwide empire (Reuter and Villa 2010; Danell et al. 2013; Steinmetz 2013).

Raewyn Connell’s *Southern Theory* (2007) is one of the influential works questioning the foundation of social science, documenting the relationship between late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European imperialism and the formation of sociology as a field of knowledge. As she states, “sociology was formed within the culture of imperialism, and embodied an intellectual response to the colonised world” (Connell 2007, 9). This historical background has shaped “the content and method of sociology, as well as the discipline’s wider cultural significance.” Connell argues that the continuing hegemony of the global North has seriously impoverished sociology, by disregarding powerful thinkers and profound debates in the colonized and postcolonial world, and has led to characteristic weaknesses in Northern social theory itself.

This is not an isolated case. The postcolonial and decolonial turn in other social sciences traces back to anticolonial struggles and the intellectual work generated from them (e.g., Fanon [1961] 1968). It includes the scholarship of minoritized intellectuals in the North (e.g., Du Bois 1945; Collins 1991), expatriate scholars working in the North (e.g., Said 1978; Mohanty 1991), and a wide variety of scholars working in the global South (e.g., Alatas 1974; Nandy 2004). From these sources have come many challenges to the universalizing premises of disciplines such as history, psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Chakrabarty 2000).

These attempts to challenge conventional views and even reconstitute the foundational knowledge of the disciplines have been extended in current discussions. Contemporary scholars have proposed knowledge projects that decenter the global North in knowledge production, undermine the uneven power relations that naturalize the intellectual division of labor, provincialize the universalist ontology and epistemology that underpin official knowledge, and revalue knowledges that have been subjugated by global hegemony.



This work has taken several directions, as there are multiple knowledge projects relevant to building a truly inclusive social science. The most clear-cut alternative to the mainstream economy of knowledge is provided by indigenous knowledge. Except in cases of absolute genocide, elements of precolonial knowledge formations survived colonial conquest. Contemporary indigenous groups have been building knowledge projects and educational programs from these starting points. The Kaupapa Maori project in Aotearoa New Zealand is a notable example. It has produced an influential text on social-science research, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's ([1999] 2012) *Decolonizing Methodologies*, which shows how colonized people can become the subjects of their own knowledge projects and educational practices.

An indigenous-knowledge approach has been most vigorously endorsed in Africa, going back to the 1940s and 1950s celebration of "African philosophy." The idea has also been very vigorously contested (Hountondji [1976] 1983; Odora Hoppers 2002). The concept of "Africa-centered knowledge" has more recently emerged (Cooper and Morrell 2014). Indigenous knowledge has been important for the decolonial school that is focused on Latin America and has developed an important critique of European modernity and its basis in colonialism (Mignolo 2007). To the decolonial school, the culture of the colonized provides a point of purchase for critique of the coloniality of knowledge.

Indigenous knowledge projects assume what might be called a mosaic epistemology—akin to relativist epistemology discussed earlier—in which separate knowledge systems sit beside each other like tiles in a mosaic. Each is based on a specific culture or historical experience, and each has its own claims to validity. However, a mosaic approach faces major difficulties, pointed out by Bibi Bakare-Yusuf (2003) in her careful critique of a well-known Afrocentric text about gender. Cultures and societies are dynamic, not fixed in one posture. Precolonial societies were not silos but interacted with each other over long periods of time, absorbed outside influences, and had internal diversity.

These arguments are reinforced when we recognize the massive disruption of existing societies by colonialism and postcolonial power. Much contemporary research in the postcolonial world is done in conditions where "relative chaos, gross economic disparities, displacement, uncertainty and surprise" are the *norm*, not the exception (Bennett 2008, 7). Hountondji is one who is critical of a silo approach to indigenous knowledge. His concept of "endogenous knowledge" emphasizes active processes of knowledge production that arise in indigenous societies and have a capacity to speak beyond them: the emphasis is communication, not separation (Hountondji [1994] 1997, 2002).

The hope of new connections between knowledge projects in the postcolonial world is at the center of discussions about what Gurminder Bhambra (2014) calls "connected sociologies." It is, of course, important to establish

that there *are* different sociologies to connect! An important step here is the documentation of multiple traditions in social science, presented by Sujata Patel in her *ISA Handbook of Diverse Sociological Traditions* (2010). Farid Alatas in his *Alternative Discourses in Asian Social Science* (2006) shows in detail the wealth of social science resources from the Muslim world and from the colonized cultures of the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. As João Maia (2011) shows in the case of Brazil, intellectuals of the settler/creole populations also produced social knowledge that had different themes and sensibilities from those of European social science.

This work provides important evidence of the heterogeneity of social knowledge projects around the postcolonial world. They are not only local knowledge systems. For instance, Alatas shows how the universalism of Islamic thought gave rise to powerful social theories—his key example is the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun (Alatas 2014)—which have applications far beyond their place of birth.

Yet framing the issue in terms of diversity or alternatives leaves us with a problem: the overwhelming and (under neoliberalism) *growing* authority of the global North alternative, which is very much more than just another variant. Here the contribution of the decolonial theorists is important, because their work has involved a critique of the formation of European modernity within imperialism. The Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (2000) produced the important concept of the coloniality of power, which names the way dependence on the global metropole persists in postimperial times. It is a short step to the concept of the coloniality of knowledge. Connecting sociologies from different parts of the world requires a profound *critique* of the Northern-centered global economy of knowledge, as we have argued for the field of comparative and international education. Kuan Shin-Chen's (2010) *Asia as Method* and Boaventura de Sousa Santos's (2014) *Epistemologies of the South* are influential contributions to this work.

The exploration of Southern theory starts with critique of the dominant knowledge formation (Connell 2007, 2014; Epstein and Morrell 2012). Key categories of Northern social science (class, the nation-state, modernity, postmodernity, etc.) arise from the experience of the societies of the global metropole and their position in the history of imperialism. So do characteristic moves in Northern social theory, such as the claim of universality, reading social experience from the global center, and the grand erasure of colonial experience. Such moves can be found even in specialized areas of social science, such as the study of disability (Meekosha 2011). Questions about disability look very different when seen on a world scale, prioritizing the experience of the colonized.

Of course, colonized peoples sought to understand what was happening to them, when invaded and subordinated by the colonizers. They had their own cultural and intellectual traditions to build on, as well as the ideas of the

colonizers. A Southern-theory approach frontally denies the assumption in the mainstream economy of knowledge that powerful theory is only produced in the metropole. Southern theory is often written in genres different from Northern academic publications. The circumstances of Northern research universities were never reproduced in the colonial world, and rarely in the postcolonial world. Yet only a very blinkered view of knowledge would deny the power and originality of Heleith Saffioti, Ashis Nandy, Paulin Hountondji, Samir Amin, Ali Shariati, Celso Furtado, Paulo Freire, or Bina Agarwal, to mention only a few important twentieth-century thinkers in the postcolonial world. There is a tremendous resource here for contemporary researchers to build on.

### **Comparative Education in Postcolonial Perspective**

The articles in this special issue draw their theoretical insights from some of the postcolonial/decolonial knowledge work reviewed above. They address, in different ways, the concerns we have raised about the coloniality of knowledge in CIE. They mobilize theoretical literature that allows us to understand modernity and education from outside the modern Euro-American framework of interpretation. We see these articles as continuing a longer dialogue about the politics and ethics of our field, and we invite readers to engage with the different theories, tools, and histories informed by the expanding decolonial, postcolonial, and Southern theory scholarship they present. This special issue is less about staking a claim for a new foundational narrative of CIE than it is about acknowledging and challenging the field's enduring coloniality, and imagining our scholarship and practice as it could be without global North epistemic dominance.

This project of reconstruction is taken up in the opening article by Sharon Stein on the history and politics of curriculum internationalization in higher education. Identifying academic institutions as a key site of knowledge production for comparative education, and one where Western epistemic dominance is embedded in current understandings of "internationalization," Stein considers how curriculum decolonization might be imagined. The challenge is to move away from "thin inclusion" or selective incorporation of "diverse" scholars and texts. Such additive models do little to challenge the prevailing hegemony. A "thick inclusion" of Southern, postcolonial theories and scholars in higher education, on the other hand, moves closer toward epistemic reflexivity, a focus on how things can be known. The challenge to which Stein alerts us is the strong pressure to turn back to the center: the reproduction of internationalization as Western epistemic dominance.

Indeed, Stein asks a question that is taken up by the second article in this issue: the extent to which it is possible to know, imagine, and be "otherwise"

when working in institutions that are so tightly organized around colonial forms of knowing and being. Riyad Shahjahan, Gerardo Blanco-Ramirez, and Vanessa Andreotti offer insights into how a site of knowledge production, namely higher education institutions, can be imagined differently. They focus on global university rankings, an example of context-free rationality in higher education. The authors draw on Dagara teachings to think anew about the justifications and effects of such rankings, and illustrate how starting from a point of radical difference can make us think differently about educational rationalities. The case study of global university rankings has lessons for the field of CIE, which draws extensively on metrics and often assumes a context-free rationality. This essay challenges us to decolonize the tools of our comparative work.

The interruptive potential in this line of thinking is continued in the article by Iveta Silova, Zsuzsa Millei, and Nelli Piattoeva on postsocialist histories and their significance for knowledge hierarchies in comparative education. A key contribution of this article is its historical reconstruction of the logics of coloniality in the (post)socialist spaces of southeast/central Europe and the former Soviet Union. Resonating with Bhabra's (2014) "connected sociology" approach, the authors show how different historical pasts and presents are closely intertwined. They draw on "border thinking" to make visible the multiple relations of power (e.g., the racialized constitution of expertise) within the field of CIE. The authors draw on voices other than the academic voice to speak from different positions, and to imagine otherwise the history of postsocialist knowledge production.

The body politic of knowledge alluded to in this piece is taken up more fully by Robert Aman in his examination of interculturality in the Andes. Aman asks us to consider both the geopolitical and body-political aspects of knowledge production—where and by whom knowledge is produced. He takes this to his analysis of the concept of *interculturalidad*, used by indigenous movements in the Andean region of Latin America, as different from Western and global concepts of intercultural dialogue. Aman's analysis shows how global discourses of intercultural dialogue need to be accountable for their own coloniality (e.g., when such dialogue is held in imperial languages). His research reveals how the concept of *interculturalidad* is not premised on a notion of cultural plurality and exchange in aid of social cohesion (as supposed in intercultural dialogue), but on a notion of *epistemological* rights. As one of his interlocutors says, "it isn't a concept that solves humanity, rather it permits debating what the human is." At the center of this theory, and an argument that Aman raises, is the possibility for norms to be transformed by difference. This pushes forward an agenda of interculturality that is, following *interculturalidad*, interepistemic and not simply intercultural. Such an interepistemic project is a fundamental concern in building a postcolonial comparative and international education.

The pedagogic possibilities of decolonizing knowledge are taken up in the final two articles of this special issue. In their article on “Pedagogy of Absence, Conflict, and Emergence,” Miye Nadya Tom, Julia Suárez-Krabbe, and Trinidad Caballero Castro explore nonformal educational practices that emerge from communities marginalized through colonialism. Focusing on Native American communities in the United States, Romani communities in Spain, and hip-hop cultures in Portugal, the authors consider what it means to learn from the global South *in* the global North. Their analysis shows how pedagogic projects that engage with “difference,” in terms of people, knowledge, and history, produce potential decolonizing processes. The analysis serves as a reminder for the field, so often focused on formal sites of learning, to consider the “nonformal” and everyday ways in which pedagogies of decolonization can occur.

The question of decolonial praxis is also taken up by Shenila Khoja-Moolji in her reflective article on designing teacher professional development in Pakistan. She considers the possibilities and limitations of decolonizing knowledge by identifying internalized “extraversion,” engaging with histories and selves, and “twisting” the models available within colonial-modern institutions. In doing so, she draws attention to processes of subversion that seem key to our call for comparativists to think differently about difference.

Taken together, these articles offer a different way for comparativists to relate to the rest of the world. They show how the “Rest” can be conceptualized as a source of radical difference and a basis for confronting the active legacy of colonialism that constraints our imagination about pedagogy, policy, and research. In particular, the South American literature on decolonizing knowledge has provided a central intellectual resource for their critical appraisals of educational knowledge, policy, and practice. In so doing, the usual division of labor in the global knowledge economy, where Southern data are processed by Northern theory, is disrupted; the South is actively sought as a source of intellectual inspiration. Insights generated in the peripheries of global North and South are fed back, to provincialize rather than universalize Northern educational policy discourse and practice.

But the task of decolonizing knowledge, as our contributors indicate, is not straightforward, either. The modern-colonial nexus is deeply engrained in the environment we inhabit as university researchers. An attempt to step outside it can cause trouble, from both scholarly and professional points of view. Realizing this has made many of the contributors highly reflexive about the contradictions and limitations of their decolonial projects. They have expressed and practiced their epistemological diffidence through alternative textual practices and the reflexive discussion of the located nature of their knowing and the particular politics of knowing that they choose to advance. In so doing they have attempted to explicitly delink their knowledge projects

from the universalist aspiration, all-knowing subject positions and the associated epistemic violence that have characterized the modern Euro-American knowledge project.

We hope this special issue will encourage other decolonial/postcolonial knowledge projects in the field of comparative and international education. The field urgently needs its scholarship to understand the relations between CIE knowledge and colonialism, and draw out epistemic connections and distinctions in the global peripheries. This special issue has emphasized the decolonial knowledge work emerging from South America, but there are important postcolonial knowledge projects in other peripheries of the world (see Alatas 2006, 2014; Hountondji [1994] 1997, 2002; Chen 2010). As more comparative researchers pursue the line of research suggested here, the more decentered and provincialized the existing English-language comparative education and its theoretical toolkit will appear. Recognizing the global plurality of CIEs can serve this end, when the difference is reconceptualized as colonial rather than simply cultural (see Aman's article). Then the WCCES can facilitate the process of decolonizing CIE knowledge and relationships.

A postcolonial CIE is about a collective rethink of the field, not about dividing paradigmatic Anglo-European comparativists and other comparativists in the global peripheries. As this introduction, as well as many contributors, have shown, even scholars who have never experienced other epistemologies due to their lack of foreign-language skills can still contribute to this deep reflection by critically revisiting the foundation of the field. As suggested by Kuan Hsing Chen (2010, 200), most decolonizing knowledge and practice have been generated in the former colonies, but this project cannot be complete without corresponding effort and change in the imperial center.

The ideas proposed here, and the perspectives from which they grow, have far-reaching implications for the way comparativists do research. A postcolonial perspective requires comparative researchers at universities worldwide to rethink what they teach undergraduate and graduate students—including the place of foreign-language training within the graduate courses and the selection of “canons” in the field—and how they relate to the country and region of their specialization and researchers from such areas. Likewise, a postcolonial perspective compels non-university-based researchers, policy actors, and practitioners to interrogate the historical and contemporary geopolitics of relations with foreign-aid-dependent countries that structure—though never determine—their development work (see Khoja-Moolji's contribution). Ultimately, a postcolonial perspective forces us to think deeply not just about the epistemological but the ontological question of what it means to be comparativists (Rapple and Komatsu 2015). It confronts us with questions about what we know as well as what we do not know, how we come to know as well as how we come not to know, and how we relate with one another in producing comparative knowledge on a planetary scale. To answer these



questions we must come to terms with the active legacy of the field's colonial past. We sincerely hope that this special issue will offer inspiration and tools with which to address epistemic injustice in the field of comparative and international education.

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