

BETWEEN HEGEMONY AND ENLIGHTENMENT:
UNTHINKING THE GLOBAL NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE IN
SOCIOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Cornell University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

by

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August 2024

USE STATEMENT

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This dissertation comprises three chapters that foreground, reconceptualize, and empirically examine the uneven global landscape of social science. Chapter 1 begins with a cross-disciplinary literature review and proposes *a sociology of global academic inequalities* as a research program. I characterize current scholarship as a “fruitful chaos”—rich in insights into multifaceted global knowledge production disparities but fragmented and marginal within mainstream academic discourses. I argue for sociology as an ideal disciplinary anchor for this research topic, given other disciplines’ reliance on sociological literatures, this research area’s connection to core sociological concerns, its potential to illuminate disciplinary differences, and the importance of reflexive sociology for credible knowledge making.

Building on and expanding Chapter 1, Chapter 2 aims at a theoretical overhaul regarding global academic hierarchies. Distinct from the traditional focus on top-down exclusions from Anglo-American countries and static Global North-South disparities, I advance a *relational and dynamic approach*. This perspective underscores the agential roles of all countries—particularly peripheral ones—in shaping these hierarchies and the evolving status of a country’s rank as it fulfills conditions for

intellectual ascendancy. Historical accounts of American sociology from 1860 to 1950 show its initial stagnation, post-1910s indigenous growth and eventual post-WWII global preeminence. Statistical analyses of texts published in flagship Chinese-medium sociology journals between 1980 and 2021 reveal higher valuations of Anglo-American versus local scholarship, as well as a flattening of English-language advantages overtime.

Chapter 3 uses mixed methods and Chinese-English bilingual sources to scrutinize two parallel strands pertaining to non-Western sociology: postcolonial sociology led by First World-based Anglophone scholars and national sociological development primarily authored by Global South-based sociologists. The analyses uncover an “*exclusion paradox*”: postcolonial sociology not only overshadows local traditions in mainstream visibility; it also contrasts with the latter regarding moral and epistemic standpoints. While postcolonialism centers on anti-Eurocentric critiques and grievance, local scholars often acknowledge their “backward” status and emphasize “self-improvement” through Western learning, precisely shaped by their past encounters with Western imperialism and colonialism. This chapter highlights how perspectives from the Global South expand sociological imagination and pave pathways for an integrative future that bridges Western and non-Western sociologies.

(word count 350)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Xuewen (Shelley) Yan is a sociologist who seeks to understand the origins, contours, and implications of social norms and valuation. Her inquiries explore questions such as: How do certain practices and outcomes come to be deemed more legitimate and valuable within a social field under specific historical and social contexts? Why do individuals and groups from different national and social backgrounds converge on certain evaluative beliefs while diverging on others? How do people occupying varying social positions within evaluative hierarchies make sense of and navigate their lives? Do intellectuals play a special role as both participants in and analysts of these processes?

Shelley has conducted research in social networks, the sociology of knowledge and science, the sociology of health and medicine, and global studies. She adopts an eclectic methodology, integrating quantitative, qualitative, and theorizing approaches. Her work has been published in journals such as *American Behavioral Scientist*, *Chinese Sociological Review*, *Social Science & Medicine*, *Family Relations*, and *SSM-Population Health*. Prior to her Ph.D. studies at Cornell, Shelley received her MSc from the University of Oxford and her BA from Fudan University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No dissertation is an island; it spans a network in which each node helps illuminate the final intellectual product. My acknowledgment goes first to all the scholars I interviewed and spoke with during my fieldwork, who served as both expert co-creators and data providers that enable this work. The completion of my doctoral training and this dissertation would not have been possible without the continuous encouragement and guidance of my chair, Ben Cornwell, as well as each of my committee members: Malte Ziewitz (STS), Will Hobbs (Human Ecology), Filiz Garip (Princeton), and Marty Wells (Statistics). Other faculty members from Cornell and Oxford have also actively inspired and advised this work, including Richard Swedberg, Barum Park, Cristobal Young, Trever Pinch, Dan Hirschman, Landon Schnabel, Jamie Budnick, Mabel Berezin, Anna Haskins, Colin Mills, Charles Rahal, and Man-Yee Kan. I extend my gratitude to these teachers and to my graduate student colleagues at Cornell, particularly Tiaoyao Qu, Wanheng Hu, Nan Feng, Mary Beth Morrison, Jackeline Ho, Shumeng Li, and Lisha Liu. Special appreciation is also due to my close friends Nicolette Wonka, Nathan Sperber, Zhang Peng, and my husband and best friend, Yang Zhou, for their exceptional intellectual and emotional support during my doctoral journey. I dedicate this work to sociologists Robert K. Merton and Robert E. Park, whose intellectual brilliance and moral dedication have been a lasting source of inspiration, light, and awe throughout my dissertation research and writing.

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Chapter 1 Studying global academic inequalities in social sciences: sociological significance and promise

Introduction

In 1957, Merton (1957) delivered a presidential address at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Society focused on the sociology of science, where he described the field as a “spacious area of neglect” among sociologists of his time. “Trevelyan of 2050”, as he humorously referenced future-generation historians, “will doubtless find it strange that so few sociologists of the twentieth century could bring themselves, in their work, to treat science as one of the great social institutions of the time”.

Amazingly, fast forward to 2025, much of Merton’s characterization remains true to today’s sociology—depending on the stringency of the criterion one uses to define “so few”. On the one hand, entire disciplinary fields such as science and technology studies (STS) and scientometrics have flourished since the turn of the century, with sociologists making foundational contributions through both critical revisions and fruitful expansions of Merton’s original emphasis on institutional analyses of science (Latour and Woolgar 1979; Sooryamoorthy 2020). Yet the fact that new disciplines had to emerge to anchor sociologists interested in the dynamics of science may itself illustrate the continued marginality of the field within the discipline (Abbott 2001).

On the other hand, relevant works do exist in mainstream sociology and often with brilliance and celebrity, such as Bourdieu (1988) on the French intellectual scene, R. Collins (2000) on the networked circulation of ideas among philosophers, Abbott (2001) on the nature and evolution of academic fields, Moody (2004) on the cohesiveness of sociologists' collaboration network, and Lamont (2009) on the evaluative culture of American interdisciplinary grant panels. Yet analogous to the situation during Merton's lifetime, these instances often appear more as discrete exceptions than the routinized norm. If the long-term growth of an academic field requires both the regular work of researchers and the originality of a few ingenious minds (Kuhn 2012), one significant gap in the sociology of science and knowledge is a relative dearth of coherent, cumulative knowledge that assembles empirical investigations for the advancement of ambitious theoretical programs.

This chapter endeavors to fill this gap, not in the large but by foregrounding one demonstrably central aspect of disparity in modern academia that has largely escaped mainstream sociology's attention: the worldwide leadership or hegemony of Anglo-American scholarship in current social science and the attendant global inequalities in sociological knowledge production and valuation (Demeter 2020). I first summarize the cross-disciplinary literature on this issue, juxtaposing the profound import of the subject with the scattered and fragmented ways it has been studied by scholars across varying fields. Noting particularly how the literature in other fields often explicitly relies on sociological theories and scholarship to advance their inquiries, how this topic has consistently been an essential concern for sociologists from and interested in the Global South and how it connects to and extends recognized

scholarship in sociology of knowledge and science, I argue for the promise and calling of a sociology of global academic inequalities that deserves a more visible place in mainstream sociology.

A cross-disciplinary literature review

Facets of global inequalities in academia

Since the second half of the 20th century, increasingly more newly independent former colonies and non-Western countries began seeking the establishment of sociology in their lands (Platt 1998; Dufoix 2018). Their participation in the global production of knowledge, nonetheless, has very much paralleled the periphery or semi-periphery status of their embroilment in the global political economy (Wallerstein 1976). Furthermore, this core/periphery structure is compounded by the spread of English as the world's first-ever global language, a process that began in the early 19th century with British colonial expansion and was further accelerated by the post-war ascendance of the US as a superpower (Northrup 2013). Broadly, echoing the struggles faced by ethnic-racial minority groups within North America, scholarly communities from the Global South—particularly those whose native or primary language is not English, occupy a relatively marginal position in the global knowledge system (Smith 2021; Morris 2022).

Such a North-South divide operates in a myriad of ways and across material, cultural and cognitive planes (Demeter 2020). A familiar fact is the predominance of Anglo-American countries in quantitative metrics such as university rankings, journal ownership, research outputs and citation (King 2004; Mosbah-Natanson and Gingras

2014; Pardo-Guerra 2022). Also frequently noted is the unequal division of academic labor, wherein Northern scholars develop paradigms and make supposedly generalizable knowledge claims whereas Southern regions supply data and test Northern-origin theories for context-specific applications (S. F. Alatas 2003). Material resources play a non-negligible role here. This relates not only to costly expenses such as campus facility, faculty pay, data collection and access, and laboratory equipment but also rudimentary necessities such as electricity, recorder, internet access, and safe living conditions (Canagarajah 2002).

Disparities are particularly salient in cultural, institutional and linguistic dimensions. For example, with Western Europe and the US being respectively the historical originator and current leading center of the sociology discipline (Zhao 2018), there is a dramatic asymmetry in the international flow of students and scholars across national borders: talents from (semi-)peripheral regions flock to these core countries to obtain training and employment, whereas countries outside of the core attract far less interest in international student and faculty recruitment (Macranders 2017). Similarly, with increased globalization and the rise of standardized metrics for scholarly excellence, social science departments in numerous countries explicitly valorize doctoral degrees, work experience and publications from “internationally” renowned places in their hiring and promotion practices (Pardo-Guerra 2022; W. Liu 2022)—with “international” essentially implying closer integration into and recognition from US-led and English-medium global centers of their discipline (Boussebaa and Brown 2017).

Moreover, the dominance of English as the academic lingua franca has created manifold challenges for non-native English-speaking scholars across disciplines. This issue has been extensively researched in the natural sciences and medicine (Amano et al. 2023; Carlsson et al. 2024), but it may be even more profound in the humanities and social sciences that often require considerable discursive articulation (Bourdieu 1988; Contesi and Terrone 2018). Also, insofar as the assumption prevails that valuable knowledge invariably appears in higher-impact outlets written in English, mainstream scholarship also risks overlooking significant knowledge preserved and created in local, non-English languages (Becker 2019; Amano et al. 2021).

Finally, an emerging literature on the decolonization of social science knowledge underscores the epistemic and cognitive-level inequalities induced by Western-dominated global knowledge structures (Bhambra 2007; Connell 2007; de Sousa Santos 2007; Go 2017; Meghji 2021). This literature is informed by the postcolonial turn in academia, pioneered by diaspora literary scholars like Said (1978) and Chakrabarty (2000), who elucidate the entanglement of modern organized knowledge with European Enlightenment and imperial projects and the devaluation of non-European subjects as legitimate knowers. Within the social sciences, the accumulation of knowledge in the North is intricately linked to the attempts of the French, British, and US empires to study and control their colonies (Steinmetz 2013; Stuchey 2005). Likewise, assumptions commonly found in Western theories—such as a linear transition from pre-modern to modern societies (Skocpol 1977), the inherent tensions between the individual and the state (Scheidel 2013), and the tendency to view issues in black-and-white terms (P. Collins 1986)—often fail to apply to non-

Western contexts yet are still treated as steps towards universal knowledge-building (Connell 2007). In contrast, concepts that are central or even commonplace in the Global South yet distinct from Western epistemologies—for instance, the state as an isomorphic extension of the family (Du 2021), modernization as a forced response to colonization (Huntington 1996), and a cyclical view of time (Zhao 2018)—remain much lesser known on the Western-dominated global stage.

Reminiscent of how Black women with unique sociological insights may work as secretaries, teachers, journalists, and novelists with tangential or no access to academia (P. Collins 1986), knowledge from the South can be less legitimated despite its potential novelty (de Sousa Santos 2015). One reason is Northern academia's selective and sporadic interest in non-Western topics (Torres and Alburez-Gutierrez 2022). More subtly, even as Northern publishers commit to opening up to global concerns, local scholars may adopt writing and knowledge-making practices that diverge from Northern norms. In Sri Lanka, for example, academics use fewer words to explain their main contributions, emphasize humility over critical argumentation toward existing scholarship, and draw more liberally on anecdotal stories rather than systematic data for evidence (Canagarajah 2002)—all hidden factors that could hinder the acceptance and recognition of their work in the North.

The fruitful chaos of the literature

The apparently rich discussions above may convey the impression that the topic at hand is a well-developed domain of research at least for interdisciplinary

studies, if not already an established subfield within sociology. The reality, however, is inconsistent with either imagery.

Outside of sociology, dedicated treatment of Anglo-European and/or English-language hegemony in social sciences appears in various neighboring disciplines including education (Macedo, Dendrinos, and Gounari 2015; Macrander 2017; Díaz 2018), communication (Demeter 2020), geography (Aalbers 2004; Timár 2004; Kitchin 2005), anthropology (Ribeiro 2014), linguistics (Phillipson 1992; Canagarajah 2002), management (Tietze and Dick 2013), economics (Boussebaa and Brown 2017), and cultural studies (Dulley and İşcen 2024). And the list could be longer if one includes, on the one hand, the broader themes of knowledge decolonization and knowledge contributions from the South that attract theorists across the humanities and social sciences (Lin and Law 2019; Comaroff and Comaroff 2012; Menon 2022; Burawoy 2024) and on the other hand, the growingly visible literature in natural sciences that grapples with the downsides of Anglophone biases for individual scholars' career development and the scientific community's collective knowledge discovery (Carlsson et al. 2024; Arenas-Castro et al. 2024).

However, as can be illustrated by a closer examination of the sources cited in my previous review, these scholarships remain highly departmentalized and fragmented. There is little cross-disciplinary referencing, communication or collaboration between the scholarly works I assemble, even as they converge in substantive concerns (e.g., global academic inequalities) and epistemological commitments (e.g., increasing global inclusivity in knowledge creation). Whereas the establishment of a research field involves the presence of “invisible colleges” where

groups of scholars with common interests are aware of, exchange with, and reference each other (Crane 1972; Abbott 2001), there is little indication that such a research community coheres around the topic between disciplines.

Sociologists' work also constitutes many of my cited sources and can be divided into two types of literature. One type is again arguably scattered, consisting of a miscellaneous assemblage of works from which I draw insights for analogies, backdrops and substantive examples (Skocpol 1977; P. Collins 1986; Zhao 2020; W. Liu 2022; Pardo-Guerra 2022; Morris 2022), while these works often do not originally intend to address global inequalities in knowledge production. The other, more coherent strand is an established literature on "decolonising sociology" (Meghji 2021), which pertains to the broader enterprise of knowledge decolonization in academia and connects in varying degrees to Wallerstein's world-system theory and its extensions in Latin America regarding the worldwide status of social sciences (Wallerstein 1976; Wallerstein et al. 1996; Quijano 2000). This scholarship is "established" in the sense, as already noted (Abbott 2001), of a high rate of internal referencing and exchanges among scholars who both self-identify and are mutually recognized as members of a community with shared interests. Several of these scholars, notably Connell, Bhabra, and Meghji, occupy central positions in Australia and Britain. They are joined by other influential voices such as de Sousa Santos in Portugal, Julian Go in the US, Sooryamoorthy in South Africa, Syed Farid Alatas in Singapore, and Sujata Patel in India.

Despite these scholars' commendable efforts to look from and at the Global South, this decolonial literature exhibits at least two weaknesses. First, it has received

much less recognition in the US, the discipline's leading center and the ultimate shaper and arbiter of "mainstream" sociology. In American sociology, apart from certain theory-oriented sociologists clustered around cultural, historical and global studies, as well as scholars concerned with decolonization related to racial and/or feminist issues internal to the US (ASA 2020), it is rare to find sociologists whose work engages with this decolonial literature. Second and relatedly, likely given this literature's theoretically focused and politically charged leanings, empirical studies have been sparse, within the US or internationally, that test or validate its various theoretical propositions (exceptions: Qi 2017; Torres and Alburez-Gutierrez 2022). Given that sociology today is largely defined by substantively delimited subfields where most scholars conduct empirical analyses rather than theory construction (Swedberg 2014), this lack of integration with empirical research further marginalizes decolonial scholarship from the mainstream.

[Towards a sociology of global academic inequalities](#)

This variegated but inchoate state of the prior literature across disciplines calls for the development of and more sustained attention to *a sociology of global academic inequalities* that promises to simultaneously fulfill the triple visions of 1) tackling an issue of paramount societal importance by exercising sociologists' forte of integrating theory with empirical research, 2) expanding the relevance of the sociology discipline in the between-field competition for intellectual territories by claiming and filling this under-circumscribed research area as specifically sociological (Abbott 2001), and 3) advancing answers for fundamental sociological questions interfacing power,

globalized place, language, and knowledge manufacturing by marrying related subfields such as the sociology of knowledge and science, Third World development studies, and inequality research.

Sociology as a fundamental disciplinary anchor

There are reasons to suggest that these goals are both worth pursuing and obtainable. A noticeable pattern in the literature surveyed is that studies in other disciplines often rely on sociological theories and scholarship to advance their inquiries. For instance, communication scholar Demeter (2020) monograph on disparities in global social sciences draws his main theoretical frameworks from Bourdieu's concepts of academic capital and the field, and Wallerstein's world-system perspectives on center-periphery and dependency relations. Similarly, education scholar Cho (2022) traces the historical origins of the English vs non-English status binary within current Korean academia, also guided by Bourdieu's theorizing of habitus and symbolic capital. In comparison, applied linguistics has its own scholarly lineage of sociolinguistics and language education, with influential contributions to topics like the sociohistorical construction and genre conventions of academic discourses, as well as second language learners' English-language practices (Bazerman 1988; Swales 1990; Atkinson 1998). Linguists who explore global knowledge inequalities thus commonly prioritize scholars in their own fields for primary intellectual sources. Despite this, sociologists frequently appear in their citations. Dua's (1994) book on the influence of English hegemony in modern India draws on Bourdieu for theoretical interpretations and the Chicago sociologist Edward

Shils for arguments on language policy planning. Likewise, Canagarajah's (2002) monograph on the experience of academic writing from Sri Lanka refer to Wallerstein, Bourdieu and Merton for the geopolitics and norms of academic production, and Goffman for the performative aspects of genre moves.

These examples provide a cursory incursion into the broad spectrum of cross-disciplinary literatures that engage with sociological work. I have included only theorists who primarily identify as sociologists with institutional affiliations in sociology. Other key figures sociologists often deploy, such as Gramsci and Foucault, are also regularly adopted for theoretical framing in this literature (Macedo, Dendrinos, and Gounari 2015; Boussebaa and Brown 2017). I have also excluded citations of STS scholars and cultural critics, for instance Donna Haraway, Sandra Harding, and bell hooks, who are similarly familiar to many sociologists.

Furthermore, in the specified examples, the authors explicitly associate with sociology and often attribute it as an authoritative origin for their arguments. Demeter (2020) considers his approach “sociological” and mentions “sociological” or “sociology” 21 times in his main text. Cho (2022) describes Bourdieu as influential “not just in sociology but in other disciplines such as education”. In applied linguistics, more specifically sociolinguistics and foreign language pedagogy, Joshua Fishman (1968) and William Labov ([1964] 2006) have been leading proponents and implementers of “the sociology of language” dedicated to studying the interactions between language use and social contextual factors. In effect, the research program was once institutionally endorsed by the sociology mainstream—with Fishman’s (1985) review article appearing in *Annual Review of Sociology*. Yet today, the

popularity of the sociology of language in anthropology, linguistics and language education contrasts with its minimal visibility in sociology. In the US, the enterprise has not reached beyond a niche group of cultural sociologists working on meaning and networks under the influence of Harrison White's turn to linguistics and grammar for generalized social theorizing in *Identity and Control* (Kirchner and Mohr 2010).

A classic notion in science studies posits that a discipline X that “applies” the laws and insights discovered by discipline Y is generally considered less “fundamental” or “pure” and therefore ranked lower in the prestige hierarchy of disciplines (Anderson 1972; Bourdieu 1988). Sociology is usually characterized as the most generalist or the least “pure” among established social science disciplines (Abbott 2001; Habermas 2015). However, for the study of global academic inequalities, sociology is credited with a high degree of intellectual authority and resources. This creates ample opportunity for sociologists to synthesize and lead intellectual discussions in this topic area. Sociologists could exercise their strengths in systematic empirical research while bridging relevant theoretical traditions across disciplines.

One example can be sociological studies of linguistic inequality. On one hand, despite Bourdieu's fame in sociology, his concentration on language as a key site of symbolic power struggles (Bourdieu 1991) circulates more widely in anthropology, applied linguistics, education and communication (Hanks 2005) yet it receives less attention in sociology outside of theoretical specialties (Swartz 2013). Similarly, British sociologist Bernstein, while lesser known today in mainstream sociology, has had a profound impact on education and sociolinguistics with his research on social

class and language, particularly the distinction between elaborated and restricted codes for middle and working classes (Moore 2012). On the other hand, a celebrated classic in American sociology, Lareau's (Lareau 2006) study of social class inequalities in American parents' childrearing styles highlights, among other things, differences in language exposure and usage between children of working and middle-class families. Lareau's findings are rarely quoted in linguistics but directly resonate with Bernstein's postulations and broadly align with sociolinguists' focus on the socioeconomic foundations and motivations for language practices. In short, there are considerable overlaps between sociologists' and sociolinguists' studies of language-in-use, with both fields viewing language as fundamentally shaping and reflecting societal status differentials. The sociology of global academic inequalities, therefore, stands to benefit from a cross-fertilization of these fields, which could begin with an interdisciplinary search that enables the rediscovery of and engagement with fellow sociologists' hitherto neglected contributions.

It is clear at this point that sociological theories and frameworks fundamentally inform the interdisciplinary literature on global academic inequalities. Sociologists are uniquely positioned—perhaps even obligated—to pursue a research program in this area. Nonetheless, the rationale for envisaging a sociology of global academic inequalities extends beyond this. As shown in the literature review, this topic implies obvious substantive relevance for sociological research of inequality, globalization, science and knowledge, and the undeservingly peripheral domain of language studies. Here, I further elucidate the connection of the topic to established areas within sociology. I focus not merely on the possibility of applying sociological literatures to

the study of global academic inequalities, but also the ways in which the subject at hand could rejuvenate, enrich and expand mainstream sociological scholarship. Indeed, the study of global academic inequalities has consistently been an essential concern for sociologists from and interested in the Global South (Connell 2007) and extends recognized scholarship in multiple areas of mainstream sociology.

Prime focus on the discipline of sociology

The current prime focus of this sociology of global academic inequalities is on the social sciences, most prominently the discipline of sociology itself. Undoubtedly, cross-disciplinary analyses are fascinating for understanding the formation of academic cultures and grasping the academic profession as an interactive whole (Lamont 2009; Abbott 2001). However, as a modest first step, analyses focused on the home discipline of sociology offer critical benefits.

First and methodologically¹, in line with Bourdieu's reflexive sociology (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), a primary yet challenging task for sociologists is to examine the structure of their own discipline and profession. Reflexivity or a "sociology of sociology" stands at the core of Bourdieu's approach to sociology. He insists that only through the critical examination of accepted findings and tenets, combined with continuous contemplation and experimentation with new epistemologies, can sociologists produce reliable knowledge. As individual

¹ My use of the word "methodology" here differs from its usual association with specific tools and techniques (e.g., quantitative "methods") for data collection and analysis. Instead, by "method" I mean foundational or epistemological-level principles and approaches one adopts to study a particular problem or domain at hand. Such a use is common in social theorizing, such as Max Weber's "methodological individualism" and Bourdieu's "methodological relationalism". It is also frequently seen in qualitative researchers' reflexive discussions on questions like ethics and positionality.

researchers, sociologists are influenced by their own social origins and environments, as well as the intellectual, political, and institutional positions they occupy in the academic field, all of which could introduce biases or “myopia” in knowledge building (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Moreover, the myopia can be particularly severe, as Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1988) demonstrates in *Homo Academicus*, when the object of reflexive analysis is the sociological academic field itself. In such cases, reflecting on the socio-political underpinnings of one’s knowledge formation not only involves (re)evaluating the analyst’s relationship to the object under study, but more crucially and challengingly, such (re)evaluations can reveal uncomfortable realities or inconvenient facts that confront the sociologists’ practical interests and their self-understanding as impartial and earnest pursuers of truth.

For our purpose and as an illustrative example, the study of global hierarchies in sociological academia is a fertile terrain to apply these Bourdieusian insights. Consider the opening anecdote in (Macedo, Dendrinos, and Gounari 2015) *The Hegemony of English*, where they recount that a senior faculty member in linguistics at Harvard did not know the word “hegemony”. Analogously, reflecting on my fieldwork and past observations, I note a tendency among many sociologists to deny the presence of Anglo-American hegemony in sociology, especially those occupying more privileged positions in the discipline’s US center.

During my time in US academia, I encountered a telling incident in this regard. A faculty member at a top-tier sociology program expressed immediate skepticism and demanded further justifications when I introduced the topic of global “hegemony” and hierarchy in scholarship. Ironically, within the same discussion, this professor advised

strongly against a graduate student's career contemplation to pursue a postdoc in Latin America due to their love of the Spanish language and culture, remarking (paraphrase), "It would indeed be a *terrible* idea, because once you leave the US you can never return." Similarly, disbelief and prolonged pondering were common reactions among American colleagues when I discussed a comment about "US hegemony" (exact quote) in sociology made by a senior professor at UK's top university.

As such, a global hierarchy of the field constitutes part of the common-sensical reality of all sociologists today, US or non-US. Yet precisely due to our embeddedness in this pervasive reality, the myopia can be greater to "exoticize the domestic" (Bourdieu 1988) and recognize the patterns.

Second, there are additional substantive reasons to prioritize the analysis of social sciences closer to home. Specifically, the study of global disparities in sociology, particularly as it relates to contexts and substances of sociologies in non-English languages and non-Anglo-European regions, can enrich mainstream scholarship's awareness and understanding of these lesser-known and often invisible traditions. For example, in *Southern Theory*, (Connell 2007) critiques manifestations of Eurocentrism in Northern social theory before introducing several traditions of social theory from Australia and the Global South. Despite potential shortcomings in her exposition of these Southern theories—such as the inability to read the texts in their original languages or an incomplete knowledge of the theorists' intellectual lineages as she herself acknowledges (Connell 2007)—the book remains a remarkable endeavor. It exposes the English-speaking world to non-Anglo-European traditions in

sociology in its attempt to illustrate Global North-South disparities in knowledge production.

Attention to cross-disciplinary differences

A current focus on sociology does *not* exclude cross-disciplinary comparisons. Rather, sociologists can leverage their insider expertise of the sociology discipline alongside broader knowledge of other domains to identify essential operative mechanisms that underpin the dynamics of global academic inequalities while positioning sociology within cross-disciplinary comparisons in terms of its tendencies to display such properties. I propose this rationale not simply for methodological concerns with field expertise or unique adequacy (Garfinkel 1968), but also substantively due to the sociology field's "doubly negative (neither arts nor science)" (Bourdieu 1988) characteristics that render it a particularly important domain for the analysis of global disparities in academia.

One well-noted pattern in published scholarship is that there are more empirical studies on global academic hierarchies and the challenges faced by non-native-English-speaking scholars in STEM fields than in the humanities and social sciences (Mosbah-Natanson and Gingras 2014; Connell 2021). However, this disparity likely does not signify that these hierarchies are less profound in non-STEM fields. On the contrary, the hyper-selectivity regarding linguistic fluency and cultural specificity in non-STEM disciplines might exclude non-Anglo-origin scholars from establishing themselves in the global academic network in the first place, precluding the mainstream English-speaking world from hearing their experiences and struggles

(Demeter 2020). Therefore, it is not incomprehensible that STEM-oriented disciplines exhibit simultaneously a higher rate of “Englishization” or the norm to publish in English, and a lower level of linguistic barriers and requirements for practitioners.

Some essential factors that determine cross-disciplinary variances in openness to non-Anglo-European scholars include scientific formalism, consensus over topical choices, and literary sophistication. These factors are closely associated with the expected level of fluency in the Anglo-Saxon language and culture required to achieve recognition in the Global North. Fields with higher levels of scientific formalism, such as STEM and econometrics, generally have lower expectations for literary or rhetorical elegance in academic writing (Bourdieu 1988). These fields rely more exclusively on technical standards to evaluate scholarly excellence, such as the correctness of a mathematical formula or the ability to design a sophisticated algorithm, making it less critical for a scholar to be adept at writing discursive arguments.

Curiously, the relative ease with English writing in STEM and quantitative-oriented subjects cooccurs with the standardization and *wider* adoption of academic publishing in English in these fields. English, in this context, more effectively proxies its ideal-typical imagery as a lingua franca (Sharma 2018). In contrast, although the English proficiency and writing abilities of scholars in humanities-oriented fields are comparable to and likely stronger than those in STEM, these fields are characterized by lower English-language publishing rates among non-Anglo communities and greater diversity in the languages used for academic writing. While the prevalence of non-English, native-language publications could broaden domestic knowledge

dissemination and foster indigenous discourse, the global dominance of English and its oftentimes associated higher valuation in academia can inhibit the global recognition of a scholar's work and even negatively impact their confidence and sense of self-worth.

In my interviews with non-Anglo scholars across six disciplines (sociology, philosophy, psychology, economics, physics, and biology), people in sociology and philosophy express the highest levels of challenges with writing in English, followed by psychology, economics and finally biology and physics. The descriptor that their discipline is “discursive” is a common first-reaction response from philosophers and sociologists when asked about doing research as non-native English speakers. The importance of one's native language and Western language capacity is most strongly emphasized by philosophers. A Chinese-speaking assistant professor in philosophy from a top-tier Eastern Chinese university (global ranking top 200) views himself and many of his Chinese mentors as conducting high-caliber philosophical research while being “unimportant” and “not worthy of attention” solely due to linguistic barriers:

可能对于这种语言上更熟练的能够使用外语的老师就是会受到更多的尊重[...]在国内学界最有声望的那些老学者们，由于语言的限制，他们可能在国外学界不会有很重要的影响[...], 我可能觉得思想的深度或者是理论的敏锐程度的话，我可能比很多所谓的英语学者要好。但是这个我的语言决定了我不重要，或者我不值得关注。我想这不是

我个人的情况，很多人是这样子，包括我的很多老师是这样子。

(Perhaps teachers² who are more proficient in foreign languages will always be more respected. [...] The most distinguished senior scholars in the domestic academic community, because of linguistic limitations, may not have a significant impact in foreign academic circles [...] I may think that in terms of the profundity of thought or theoretical sensitivity, I may be better than many so-called English-speaking scholars. But my language ability determines that I am not important or not worthy of attention. I think this is not just my personal situation. Many people are like this, including many of my own teachers.)

By contrast, economists unanimously emphasize the singular requirement of a clarity-focused writing style that they find relatively straightforward to implement or mimic. Emphatically, Chinese and Italian-origin economists I interviewed all believed that it would be *easier* for them to write in English than in their native language, even though none of them felt that their English level is as high as their native language. Indeed, one informant consider himself as far from fluent and generally “poor” in English, but still maintains a preference for studying and writing economics in English. One reason informants mention is that they learnt concepts and definitions,

² In the Chinese language university professors and/or scholars are often referred to as 老师 (teachers), the same word used for K-12 teachers.

almost all of which technical and uniformly instructed across countries, in English, and thus find it more intuitive to relate to economics thinking with the English language. In the globalized context of economics departments in the US, therefore, it is common for my non-Anglo-origin informants to communicate with co-national colleagues, students and mentors mostly in their native language while using English words for technical descriptions and jargons.

As for natural sciences, a senior US-based professor of biology, who is a native Chinese speaker, emphasizes the greater challenges of writing in English when crafting grant proposals for a broader audience. However, when it comes to routine paper writing that constitutes most of scientists' writing tasks, the expectation for writing craftiness is relatively low. Depending on the disciplinary field, it can even be practically non-existent. In theoretical physics, for example, some researchers are not even aware of a preferred "writing style." To borrow one informant's descriptors, papers written in a "cryptic" style (i.e., shortened proofs that skip multiple steps and verbal explanations in between and leave the readers to fill in the blanks on their own) can be just as high-quality and equally well-cited as those featuring a "pedagogical" or "clumsy" style (i.e., long-winded pieces with more detailed explanations of each step of a proof, sometimes even using hypothetical parables for illustrative purposes). Formal institutional requirements also illustrate a similar point: the top journal in physics, *Physical Review Letters*, has a 4-page (3750 words) limit for letters, while most journals allow for any length for research articles.

Another key factor relates to consensus or narrowness over the particular types of problems or issues that are worth studying within a field. And here, science subjects

tend to see less variance in terms of the status and stakes of the field, and oftentimes they could start their writing reporting results or new developments with the assumption that their colleagues agree on the relevance of their topic (Bazerman 1988). In comparison, within disciplines like sociology and political science, there is a much higher demand for the necessity to introduce and justify for the relevance and/or importance of one's topic at all, and hence the oftentimes discursively demanding task of "framing" one's article (Merton [1942] 1973; Hargens 2000). Among the Chinese-speaking sociologists I interviewed, for example, several mentioned the idea that the less technically uniform aspects of their writings—e.g., the introduction and conclusion rather than methodology and results, quantitative empirical papers than literature review or theoretical papers—are more challenging for them especially as non-native speakers working on non-Western contexts. As a China-based sociology professor who works on digital inequalities and publishes bilingually in English and Chinese shared,

我认为写作最困难的 introduction 跟 conclusion。

conclusion 还好了，就 discussion 部分中文不存在任何问题，英文存在，因为英文一直要倒逼自己，你有没有把事情说明白？让人家国外的同行一看就了解了？因为你用的是中国的案例，一方面人家可能对你的经验资料不是那么的熟悉和亲近，但是你能不能在你的 intro 里头说明，它是一个很重要的未被他们研究和解释的问题。另外你

discussion 能不能不就中国而中国，而是通过中国也能够看到别的可能性，让别人知道噢中国的经验给我们开发了别的研究平台不平等的新的契机，让它成为一个开放性的领域，而不是用一个 case 来说明就画上句号。所以我觉得最挑战我的 intro 跟 discussion 部分，他还是在语言方面。

(I think the most difficult parts of writing are the introduction and the conclusion. The conclusion is relatively easier; the discussion section poses no problem if I am writing in Chinese, but in English, it always feels like I have to force myself to ensure clarity. The question is whether you have explained things clearly enough for foreign colleagues to understand at a glance. Since my case study is based on China, others might not be as familiar with or feel close to my empirical data. For example, can I illustrate in my introduction that it addresses a significant and unexplored issue? Additionally, in my discussion, can I move beyond focusing solely on China to show how the Chinese experience reveals other possibilities? I want to make it clear that China's experience opens up new opportunities for research on platform inequality, turning it into an open field rather than ending the discussion with a single case. Therefore, I find the introduction and discussion sections the most challenging, and the difficulties still lie in terms of language.)

In tandem with these, global prestige hierarchies appear *more rigid* in sociology compared with natural science disciplines. The previously noted comment from the American sociology professor, “once you leave the US you can never return,” indicates the presence of a “caste system” in academic hiring within sociology (Burris 2004) that not only affects institutional exchanges with the US but also operates globally, with the US—and a few elite institutions in the UK—positioned at the top and hiring practices flowing from higher to lower prestige places. In contrast, while STEM and quantitative-oriented fields also generally adhere to a US-led global hierarchy of prestige, there are notable instances of boundary-crossing. PhDs trained at top institutions in semi-periphery countries, such as China and Brazil, often secure postdoctoral positions in North America and Europe, although such moves are rarer for full-time faculty hiring.

Chapter 2 Changing order: A relational and dynamic retheorizing of global academic hierarchies in social science

Introduction

Recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in the longstanding question of the worldwide status of the social sciences. In particular, a burgeoning, albeit scattered, literature across disciplines highlights multifaceted global inequalities in academic knowledge production (Connell 2021; Hanafi and Arvanitis 2014; Meghji 2021; Wallerstein 1976; Wallerstein et al. 1996; S. F. Alatas 2001; Tenzin and Lee 2022; Boussebaa and Brown 2017; Amano et al. 2023; Contesi and Terrone 2018; King 2004). Put starkly, these disparities resemble a core-periphery model where US-led developed countries in the core occupy significant advantages at material, institutional, linguistic, and epistemic levels, compared with Global South countries that occupy periphery or semi-periphery positions (Schott 1998; Canagarajah 2002). Moreover, with the globalization of science and capitalist expansions, this core-periphery division has been conceptualized as operating under what sociologist Wallerstein (1976) defines as a “world-system”. This means that countries are not only unequal between each other in their research productivity and influences, but also that they are connected together to form an international network, the interactions within which could further perpetuate such inequalities (Demeter 2020).

For example, the creation of knowledge paradigms and theories is typically dominated by scholars in developed Western countries, whereas scholarly communities in developing countries more often have to depend on Western-created

theories for research and could be relegated to the status of data source providers for the further development of new knowledge paradigms and theories by Western scholars (S. F. Alatas 2003). Also, there is a noticeable asymmetry in the exchange of scholars between center and periphery countries. Many more students flow from developing to developed countries for study than vice versa (Macrander 2017). In terms of global faculty hiring, those with PhDs from developed nations are generally favored over those from periphery or semi-periphery countries (Demeter 2020). These processes could result in brain drain for developing countries, and the further consolidation of knowledge productivity in core countries (Dua 1994).

Furthermore, global academic disparities could be particularly salient in human subjects like sociology than in natural science disciplines. The former often require a significant level of discursive articulation or sometimes even “literary elegance” (Bourdieu 1988: 198), while for the natural sciences, linguistic and cultural barriers could still pose noticeable barriers for non-native-speakers but at a relatively lower level aimed primarily for clarity (Contesi and Terrone 2018; Carlsson et al. 2024; Amano et al. 2023). Additionally, knowledge claims, if proven correct, should apply universally in science fields (Schott 1998). Yet in social science, contextual relevance and heterogeneities lie at the core of any empirical investigation. Scholars from the Global South thus often find themselves working with Western theories and paradigms that are less relevant or applicable to their local contexts (S. F. Alatas 2001). Moreover, when they do contribute from their local empirical data and investigations, Global South and/or non-native-English-speaking scholars could face additional

challenges in framing their studies in ways that are understandable or relevant to their Anglo-American audience (Canagarajah 2002).

All the findings and conceptions above provide essential insights into global dynamics of knowledge production, and I concur with them all in terms of their factual accuracy. However, this article is motivated by the basic premise that *an overall theoretical and epistemological reorientation*—or to paraphrase the legacy of Immanuel Kant, a “Copernican Revolution”—shall be undertaken regarding the study of Anglo-American and English-language hegemony or leadership in current global academia. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant ([1781] 1998) inaugurated a Copernican Revolution in philosophy and epistemology, arguing that instead of us revolving around the empirical objects and debate over whether we could require reliable knowledge about them, knowledge is only possible if we as humans impose *a priori* cognitive frames upon the empirical world. A similar change of vision I profess in this article: *what we thought of as the sources of inequality and hegemony that is being imposed upon the periphery (i.e., the “dominated”), we could rethink and possibly reconstitute the order of things by recognizing our collective agential role in constituting the legitimacy and authority of the center (i.e., the “dominant”).*

In this regard, a monumental gap in the literature is the lack of emphasis on a bottom-up and domestic-oriented perspective that examines *internal dynamics within and responses from the periphery* wherein peripheral scholars and communities serve as *agential participants* in the maintenance and restructuring of the world-system of knowledge and science. Informed by such a perspective, the right questions to ask shall still include but not be restricted to: how the US-led global hegemony of

scholarship has been marginalizing scholarships from the non-centers of the world (e.g., less developed areas) or in non-English languages due to ongoing practices and legacies of European colonialism and imperialism, or where one could find empirical evidence of disparities that demonstrates such marginalization.

Rather, equally pertinent but often overlooked are the following questions, ordered by sequence in terms of their level of radicalness: *1) How are global academic hierarchies conceived, perpetuated and possibly also reimagined and reconfigured by academic communities in Global South and/or non-Western countries? 2) How do global academic hierarchies emerge and evolve in the first place?* For example, for practical problem-solving (Prasad 2018; Strübing 2007), are there regularities and patterns one could detect and strategies that a community or country could learn from and selectively adopt in order to lift herself up from the bottom, such that more national sociological communities could exchange with each other with increased symmetry and inclusivity to enrich sociological knowledges on the global level (Rouleau-Berger 2021; Bhambra 2014b)?

In barest terms, I postulate that to understand current Global North-South disparities and cultural asymmetries in academic knowledge production, it is crucial not to lopsidedly emphasize or categorically assume, as current scholarship often does, a top-down and static imagery of inequalities where Anglo-American countries impose exclusionary and exploitative practices that disadvantage countries in the Global South. Rather, one must recenter the familiar and oft-forgotten notions that systems of cultural power are inherently *relational* and *dynamic*. Hierarchies are “relational” in that cultural hegemony is maintained only when there is perceived

legitimacy or authority granted to those in dominant positions, sensed by *both* those at the center *and* those at the periphery, regardless of whether members apparently support or resist these hierarchies. Secondly, these systems are “dynamic”, implying that there are *substantive criteria*—such as the accumulation of intellectual traditions and the availability of funds and personnel for research development—sustaining the operation of cultural power; and yet *precisely because of* the existence of such conditions, the *shifts in conditioning* could lead to *changes in status ranks overtime*.

For these suppositions I draw on the one hand, on Western social theories such as Shils’ (1988) ecological notion of the “center”, Gramsci’s (Gramsci [1926] 1971) definition of hegemony, Bourdieu’s (1991) approaches to symbolic power, and Abbot’s (2001) analysis of the evolution of academic disciplinary fields. On the other hand, my approach is significantly informed by one shared notion across classical Chinese philosophy (Cao [1791] 2009; Luo Guanzhong[罗贯中] [1622] 2016), Buddhist ontology (Wang 2023) and Ibn Khaldun’s ([1377] 2020) work that emphasizes the cyclical rise and fall of persons and civilizations under specified sociohistorical contingencies (Zhao 2021), non-US-origin scholars’ insights that I learnt from fieldwork interviews, and my explorations into the developmental trajectories of American and Chinese sociology (Oberschall 1972; Yan 2010; Zhou 2021).

In the remainder of this article, I first elaborate my proposed theoretical approach. I explicate its motivations and intellectual sources, while also deducing from this theorizing a hypothesized empirical model of national sociological

developments in non-origin places of sociology (i.e., Western Europe)³³ that involve the three stages of 1) selective importation, 2) indigenous growth and 3) global legitimation (or briefly, *importation* -> *indigenization* -> *globalization*). Second, I explain three methodological innovations in this study, which features the endorsement of participants' interview contents as potential sources of theory building ("research subjects as co-authors"), the use of historical precedents to broaden the imagination of plausible realities ("*history as counterfactuals*"), and the analysis of non-English and non-Western academic texts for hypothesis testing and sociological learning ("*non-Anglo texts as locales of knowledge*").

Third, I provide empirical illustrations for the theorizing by drawing on the cases of American and Chinese sociologies. First, I present a brief overview of American sociology from 1865 to the post-WWII period. This account highlights the earlier five decades of intellectual chaos, stagnation, and lack of influence and originality in American sociology (Oberschall 1972). This period contrasts with the emergence of indigenous intellectual vitality after 1910s through the Chicago School led by Robert Park—himself trained in Germany, and the eventual post-WWII takeoff of American sociology driven by varying sociohistorical conditions and Parsons'

³³ Doubtless, there are controversies over whether scientific investigations of social life originate in Europe. Indeed, the answer is likely no. It is often argued in China--and this is a view shared by Radcliffe-Brown too--that the study of society in the spirit of sociology dates to Xun Zi (荀子 316 BC ~ c. after 238 BC). For example, Yan Fu (Spencer [1897]1903) titled Chinese translation of Spencer's *The Study of Sociology* 《群学肆言》 (*qunxue siyan* literally learning of group study), borrowing Xunzi's notion of "群学" (literally, "group study"). Similarly, the Arab thinker Ibn Khaldun's (Khaldûn [1377] 2020) comprehensive study of society appeared in early 14th century. However, I refer to Western Europe the "origin" of sociology because I here align with linguists and sociologists who emphasize the importance of words and etymology in knowledge instituting and making (Zhao 2018; Austin 1962; Merton and Riley 1980). Specifically, sociology as a *named institutional discipline* or *method* did not exist until the introduction of the term in the French *language*. In other words, there are *etymological* bases of *calling* certain practices "sociology", and this etymological association between "sociology" and social studies or thought marks the "origination" of "sociology" in the strict and conventional sense of the term.

serendipitous encounter with Max Weber (Parsons 1980). My historical account implements the method of “history as counterfactual,” illustrating how American sociology, despite its current imagery as a “hegemon”, was once similarly “peripheral” or “marginalized” in relation to the intellectual center of Europe. As such, it went through the periods of importation and indigenization before reaching the status of globalized recognition.

The Chinese case draws primarily on computational and statistical analysis of curated text data from two leading Chinese-language journals, *Shehui* (《社会》 *Society*) and *Shehuixue Yanjiu* (《社会学研究》 *Sociological Studies*), published between 1980 and 2021. Year 1980 is a watershed and renewed starting point for Chinese sociology as the country reestablished the discipline after nearly 30 years of suspension due largely to macropolitical-level concerns with Western imperialist legacies (Yan 2010). Results prove consistent with hypotheses derivable from the two components of my theory. On one hand, articles receive higher valuation (e.g., more downloads and citations) as they cite a higher proportion of English—as opposed to Chinese—language references or are authored by scholars based in developed regions and countries like Hong Kong, the US, and UK. On the other hand, the influence advantage associated with English-language references has been declining and flattening over time, signaling the gradual transition to the second stage of indigenous growth. An unexpected but striking finding is the sheer quantity of citations the Chinese-language papers receive, with scales comparable to current impact factors of leading American sociology journals. This indicates the presence of a vibrant domestic

scholarly community that remains lesser known to the global sociological community, also showcasing the significant payoff in treating non-Anglo text as locales of knowledge.

Before proceeding, I note the differential levels of theoretical assertiveness I maintain vis-à-vis my general theoretical approach versus the three-stage model derived during theorizing and analysis. While I insist on a relational and dynamic theorizing of global academic hierarchies, the more empirically delimited three-stage model of national sociological development shall be read more as ideal-typical heuristics for comparative references than teleological descriptions of definitive paths (Swedberg and Agevall 2016; Skocpol 1977). For example, the model may characterize more fittingly larger, more resourceful countries that could envision transitions from first to subsequent stages, whereas many Southern countries that struggle with dependency in theory, method, research funds and personnel may conceive themselves as not only trapped in the first stage of importation without notable advancements to indigenization, but the process of importation itself may appear wholesale and/or top-down, lacking local adaptivity or relevance (Gramsci [1926] 1971). Likewise, I acknowledge that the three-stage model has a Whiggish-history flavor, which can be symptomatic of other cross-national theories (e.g., Kant [1795] 2021; Smits, Ultee, and Lammers 2000) that commit the classic errors of allegedly assuming 1) that a later stage is more advanced or maturer than a former, and 2) that there is a singular trajectory or destiny for various countries. Yet these are the weaknesses *and* strengths of all models of comparative changes over time: one

price paid for the capturing of generalizable patterns across observations can be the omission of individual heterogeneities, and vice versa (Gramsci [1926] 1971).

My overall theoretical reorientation and the specified empirical model highlight an extension of and departure from a reified and static mode of conceptualization that pre-constrains oneself to the status of the “marginalized” periphery or the “leading” mainstream. It thus holds promises for problem-solving and emancipation grounded in evidenced research (Prasad 2018). As such, this study also animates Mills’(2000) classic approach to sociological imagination that integrates history and biography with social structure, while further recognizing different scales of generalizability (e.g., the general theoretical approach vs the three-stage model) in sociological knowledge making.

Cultural power as a relational and dynamic process

To call the absence of a bottom-up and dynamic perspective a “monumental gap” in research is not hyperbole. The overwhelming emphasis on a top-down and static understanding of center-periphery inequalities loses sight of multiple core processes and phenomena that shall occupy central positions in the study of global academic hierarchies.

Disparities in the academic world, while analogous to inequalities in other realms like material wealth or occupational attainment in the sense that goods are unequally distributed across actors, possess a rather distinct quality: the center-peripheral gaps are largely conceived of, performed, and maintained by scholars themselves who collectively consider certain locales as “centers” or “peripheries” and

who compete to be included and participate in the activities and agendas of the centers (Schott 1998; Shils 1988). While this self-conceived identification of the center may characterize other scenarios such as trading in the global economic system (Wallerstein 2004), one peculiarity of academia is that individual tastes and preferences play a more decisive role in evaluating the worth of goods in this field (Bourdieu 1988). In academia, “goods” and rewards are defined not by material gain but intellectual prestige and symbolic honor (Merton [1942] 1973). As Bourdieu (1988) observes, where an academic’s political, institutional, and social positions often correlate with their intellectual opinions and styles, it is frequently the intellectual aspect that determine the other affiliations, not the other way around.

It follows that despite its connections to political and economic structures, the intellectual field retains relative independence marked by its intrinsic and ultimate link to ideational matters. As such, intellectual positions and tastes are less often predetermined by macro-level structural forces than by evaluative cultures formed at group and individual levels. Intellectual preferences may coalesce around networks of scholars (R. Collins 2000), ranging from small, invisible colleges to larger, cross-national groupings (Wagner 2009; Crane 1972). Meanwhile, individual scholars can—and if they are especially confident about their training and judgment, often do—uphold idiosyncratic standards that deviate from their apparent affiliations. The proliferation of published academic materials in the era of mass printing and multimedia partly contributes to this independence, reducing reliance on traditional authorities like mentors and senior colleagues (Merton 1980). Ultimately, the critical factor is the scholar’s confidence in their intellectual caliber and judgment. While the

bases or sources of this confidence may be complex, varied, or even unconscious to the person, they do exist to guide one's judgment of concrete academic works (Lamont 2009).

These grounding excursions lead to three fundamental realities that an adequate framework of global academic hierarchies must accommodate. First, scholars, regardless of their self-perceived positions as central or peripheral, each retain a notable degree of agency in deciding the geographic or institutional location of the center of their discipline. Whether voluntarily, semi-voluntarily or resistantly (Boussebaa and Brown 2017; Connell 2021; Schott 1998), academics recognize the center as embodying authoritative or legitimate scholarship that defines the evaluative standards for scholarly excellence, a fact that—if one follows Edward Shils—itself constitutes the very definition of the “center”. As Shils’ (Shils 1988) illuminates, the “center” represents a “focus of attention, preoccupation, obedience, deference or emulation” where “certain activities which have specific significance or functions are relatively more highly concentrated or more intensely practiced than they are in other parts of that society. ” As such, “centers” and “peripheries” need not refer to reified geographic entities but serve as spatial metaphors that exist in the psychological perceptions and collective consciousness of all scholars who self-identify as members of this center-periphery relationship (Shils 1988).

Compared with Wallerstein’s world-system conception that emphasizes the exploitative and non-meritocratically self-perpetuating implications of center-periphery interactions (Demeter 2020; Wallerstein 1976), Shils’ definition of center and periphery features the Chicago School’s ecological approach and more

functionalist leanings (Yue and Xiong 2023). Although less popular today, the latter complements Wallerstein's perspective by offering additional theoretical flexibility and empirical accuracy. Conceptually, one well-treated weakness in the original world-system center-periphery model is the lack of characterization for countries whose developmental level lies outside of a clean between center versus periphery dichotomy. In addressing this, one common practice is to create a category of "semi-periphery," which typically includes countries like Argentina, Brazil, China, Korea, Poland, and Russia. In the analysis of science and academia, (Wu and Zha 2018) have proposed a still more detailed four-tier categorization based on a country's level of inward (i.e., domestic) versus outward (i.e., international) orientation in higher education: 1) the US and partly UK where domestic research defines the international mainstream; 2) other populated and powerful developed countries like Japan, France and Germany where national and global research operates in parallel and tandem; 3) smaller-scale developed nations like Switzerland and Netherlands where science is mainly international, and 4) the vast majority of countries in the Third World that aspire to engage in international exchanges but are largely confined to national science.

Empirically, whether one interprets it as an integrative attitude towards learning or a lamentable status of dependency (S. F. Alatas 2022; S. H. Alatas 1972), one unmistakable observation is that across "almost all parts of the global periphery" (Connell 2021), there is a shared sentiment among local scholars to endorse, borrow from and "look up to" scholars, scholarship and institutions from the West and/or the global North. The scene today still resonates with A.A. Akiwowo's comment

over 40 years ago that Southern “sociologists are more influenced by North American sociologists for whom they show far greater respect than they demonstrate towards their own colleagues” (A. A. Akiwowo 1980; Connell 2021). For example, the critique that top American journals and conferences are being “exclusionary” of non-American authors, approaches or topics presupposes the global desirability of being included in these procedures, a presupposition that only upholds insofar as scholars across countries subscribe to the presence of such a vision.

Importantly, the authority and prestige of the center do not emerge from a vacuum; they have historical roots that “earned” them their current status, whether justifiably or not from a normative standpoint and whether contemporary persons recall these roots or not (Shils 1988). For example, the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) at Princeton exemplifies such a center in the minds of scientists and philosophers where Einstein used to take long walks with Gödel. The prestige of Chicago for sociologists partly stems from the department’s pioneering role in the establishment and rise of American sociology (Oberschall 1972). Likewise, the lesser-known École Normale Supérieure (ENS) would likely accrue immediate prestige among scholars across human disciplines if they learn of the school’s record for hosting the highest proportion of Nobel Prize winners in Literature, and for rejecting Durkheim twice before admitting him on his third attempt (Poggi 2000).

My proposed Copernican reorientation features—and these are both accurate impressions—two interacting aspects: on one hand, a less “accusatory” or “guilt-tripping” tone towards the Anglo-American community that dominates global scholarship in contemporary sociology; and on the other hand, a tendency for non-

Western communities to identify with and emulate, rather than resist or critique, the value and quality of Anglo-American scholarship and institutions. As such, my theorizing might at first sight appear more “conservative,” or even worse, “naturalizing,” “normalizing,” “victim-blaming,” or “justifying” the unequal status quo and the marginalization and exclusion experienced by scholars from Global South countries. However, despite this seeming counterintuitive at first glance, my approach has the vision—and I believe also the potential—to achieve higher levels of empowerment for non-Western and/or Global South communities and a more radical form of decolonization that advances the global integration, richness and inclusivity of sociology.

In particular, it challenges us to carefully examine and “exoticize” many underlying, taken-for-granted realities and intuitions that scholars default to when studying knowledge inequalities in Global South scholarly communities. Crucially, while these premises are unconsciously operative and unreflectively implemented, they are not usually factually misguided or wrong. Instead, and only *more* alarmingly so, they most often correspond precisely to the reality of the situations we study. This is exactly a motivation to further sensitize ourselves to them. Echoing (Garfinkel 1968) call for ethnomethodology and Bourdieu’s program of reflexive sociology (Gramsci [1926] 1971; G. Hoare and Sperber 2015; Shils 1988), sociologists must explicitly identify and confront these common-sensical background assumptions to better understand and address the root-level dynamics of the subjects we study.

For instance, there are numerous double standards and inconsistencies that we often unconsciously apply and perpetuate in our critiques and empirical analyses.

There is a prevalent tendency to critique Western, particularly leading American, journals for their lack of inclusivity, while simultaneously upholding and romanticizing the insularity of non-Western journals. Journals based in the US, especially those highly ranked in global metrics, are expected to reflect a global perspective, even though—as one informant insightfully noted during my interview fieldwork, describing American sociology hegemony as both a reality and a paradoxical misnomer—they are named for an internal, national focus (e.g., *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*). Thus, the leading American journals are often criticized for being exclusionary for not including enough topics or authors from outside the US. Conversely, if a non-Western journal, say the *African Sociological Review*, focuses solely on Africa, publishes work solely by African scholars, and exclusively uses theories developed by them, it is celebrated as a vibrant expression of “indigenous sociology” or “autonomous discourse” and a sign of a scholarly community outside of Western hegemony. This positive reaction could even be stronger if the journal is published in a non-English language while belonging to a Third-World country.

As such, in all these critiques and celebrations, scholars automatically implement a top-down and static perspective that presupposes a rigid and unchanging allocation of center versus periphery positions between countries. As an unintended consequence, such well-intended but unreflective analyses can inadvertently reify and reinforce the perception of global center-periphery differences. Most immediately, for example, trapped in such a static and top-down understanding, researchers are less likely to pause and ask how exactly *AJS*, an originally domestically-targeted journal

that had difficulties collecting enough authors for publications back in early 20th century (Oberschall 1972), could now become an internationally prestigious. Meanwhile, for the African sociological community, if researchers solely celebrate the establishment of their autonomous discourses without reflecting further on the double standards, one may be constricted into thinking that autonomy and independence are the highest goals they could achieve, precluding them from envisioning the possibility that their journal might also become internationally leading someday.

By contrast, if we adopt a relational and dynamic approach and are confronted with the same type of evidence, no prior assumption of “exclusion” versus “indigenization” shall be made regarding the similarly internally focused patterns we observe. The evidence at hand provides no inherent clues as to whether the internal focus is a result of exclusion (i.e., scholars from other countries *seek to and/or ideally want to but cannot access* the publishing) or lack of interest (i.e., scholars from other countries *choose not to or never need to know the benefit of* publishing, even though their work would likely be accepted if they did submit). Correspondingly, reciprocal queries could also apply to domestic scholars who publish in their domestic journals (i.e., whether they consider their domestic journal the most ideal place to publish, or whether they resort to domestic journals after either expecting or actually experiencing rejections from non-domestic journals).

These questions are extremely central to the understanding and analysis of any global hierarchical processes. They integrate seamlessly with and constitute a foundational thought in the relational approach proposed here. The emphasis is not on static, observed “evidence” (devoid of conscious consideration of the qualitative

context) of disparities but rather on whether there is “hegemony” in Gramsci’s original sense or if the place is a “center” in Edward Shils’ classic theorizing of center-periphery. For both authors, legitimacy and authority are the foundational elements in any study of power differentials in the cultural and intellectual spheres (Gramsci [1926] 1971; G. Hoare and Sperber 2015; Shils 1988), despite these central insights increasingly being underplayed or forgotten in contemporary discourse.

The methods I use are a combination of intuitionist theorizing (Swedberg 2014) that draws on my informants’ comments and existing social theories, qualitative examinations of historical antecedents, and quantitative illustration of certain theorized patterns. More particularly, I adopt a methodological innovation in this article.

I introduce interviewee scholars’ views and opinions in argument building and knowledge making, citing them—and with real names if I gained their approval—as authoritative sources of knowledge when applicable, as opposed to restricting them to the roles of data and material providers that are entirely subject to the analyst’s (me, the author’s) authority. It is no coincidence that “author” and “authority” share the same first six letters (Shapin 1989). This highlights the fact that I as the author perforce hold a more privileged position that controls the types of discourses and representations my informants could convey. This appears a perennial dilemma in research that hopes to incorporate the perspectives of the participants for collective knowledge creation. It is especially so if the topic of the research involves participants who otherwise hold more subaltern or vulnerable positions, such that the knowledge being created is not only directly related to participants’ vested interests but holds the

implicit or explicit social obligation to not harm or even benefit the livelihoods of the latter. Authors could at least *try* to maximize the authority and visibility of their participants insights and perspective in their knowledge-building and writing process. Since its experimentation in science and technology studies, this approach has increasingly become a norm in disciplines like anthropology and Science and Technology Studies. As I apply it to sociology, I reference and draw on my participants in the *theorizing* section, quoting them as experts to remind the readers of their roles as collaborative contributors to the current project.

Specifically, a bottom-up approach remains relevant insofar as *any* sort of academic hierarchy across institutions or countries exists in the world. However, the “lower” and “higher” ends of a hierarchy do not need to correspond to predefined literal geographies such as the “US” vs “non-US,” or the “developed” vs “non-developed,” or “the Global South” vs “the Global North.” This is that there *are no* static, ahistorical orders of participants/members of such global hierarchies to begin with. These orders only exist insofar as we collectively, as self-perceived participants of this hierarchy, hold the general consent or consensus or collective consciousness—or, to cite an ostensibly very unexciting but in effect incredibly insightful concept of a norm—that such hierarchies exist. They are operative regardless of whether we consider them just or unjust or personally agree with them or not. In effect, the fact that some/many of us think that we need to actively “resist” or “subvert” or “transgress” them attests exactly to their existence.

Certainly, this by no means indicates that hierarchies “just exist out there” without agential involvement or intervention. Instead, it exists due precisely to the

contribution of every one of us who considers ourselves to be part of this game vis-à-vis this hierarchy. For example, sociological studies often illustrate that status hierarchies are sustained even if the majority of people do not consent to them as legitimate but assume that it is the “mainstream” or “norm” that other people believe in the legitimacy of such hierarchies (Gould 2002). In our current case of global hierarchies of academia, it could similarly be the case that a few, some or perhaps many of us do not consider of such a hierarchy as the “correct” order of things and yet perceive ourselves as “marginal to” or “being excluded by” some imagined “center”; and this very imagination or perception that we are *not* “the center” provides the very definition of our position as “peripheral.” (Shils 1988)

This is until, certainly, as numerous accounts in history illustrate, when we realize—sometimes not necessarily in our lifetime but that does not negate the pattern we discuss here—that groundbreaking work as intellectuals and oftentimes with some mix of structural positioning, historical temperament, and luck, we suddenly become the people to not only be a member of the “center,” but with our work, have contributed to the *redefining* of what the center means.

Within the single case of sociology, we cannot forget that Robert K. Merton of Russian Jewish origin had the legal name of Meyer Robert Schkolnick but decided to go public with a more Anglo-Saxon-sounding last name to strategically hide his immigrant-family background. During his lifetime, C. Wright Mills was never the “mainstream” or even generally respected or favorably perceived among his colleagues at Columbia and the sociological profession at large. Georg Simmel, despite being actively praised and recommended by well-established academics of his

time like Max Weber and Edmund Husserl and being known for his mesmerizing lecturing style, never secured a salaried professor job in Germany.⁴ More recent examples we are likely familiar with include the rediscovery and canonization of W.E.B. Du Bois, the popularization of Patricia Hill Collins, and the preponderance of the concept of “intersectionality.”

The establishment of contemporary sociology in China

While it remains lesser known in current English-language literature that China experienced its first wave of sociological development at the turn of the 20th century and, in fact, was a globally influential force in the 1930s and 40s (Freedman 1962), a standard background introduction to Chinese sociology today—an essential and accurate context to mention—typically highlights the over three decades of suspension and near eradication of the discipline in Chinese universities following the founding of Communist China in 1949 under Chairman Mao’s leadership. The reasons for this suspension are certainly complex and exceed the scope of our discussion here, but suffice it to say that the suspension of sociology was not a singular event; rather, it was part of a nationwide project initiated by the 1952 reorganization of Chinese higher education, which systematically weakened the development of American-style liberal arts and humanities-oriented subjects in favor of Soviet-style technical institutes specializing in STEM, agriculture, and medicine (Zhang 2007; Hsu 1964). Likewise, this suspension should neither be simplistically lamented as symptomatic of an

⁴ Simmel lived under an inheritance from his guardian to support his scholarly pursuits; he was lecturing in a university under the title of *privatdozent*, where one’s income depends on student fees; “a salaried” position is more similar to a tenured position as in contemporary America.

“authoritarian” regime that categorically represses intellectual freedom, nor should it be naively accepted as an indispensable move in China’s efforts to reverse Western imperialist legacies and strengthen national industrial development. Instead, it shall be understood as a combination of both aspects, intertwined with other complex realities and considerations (Yan 2010).

With the passing of Mao and the end of China’s Cultural Revolution (1966-76), 1978 marked the beginning of Deng Xiaoping’s reform era. From early 1980s onwards, China not only began adopting a Western-style market economy but also promptly set out to reinstate Western-originated social sciences in Chinese universities. Fei Xiaotong (费孝通)—a sociologist and anthropologist who received training at Yenching, Tsinghua, and the London School of Economics (LSE) in the early 20th century—earned his contemporary fame as the founding father of Chinese sociology as he literally played a central role in reestablishing Chinese sociology in the 1980s. In the absence of faculty members who were more distinguished and senior—most notably Pan Guangdan (潘光旦) and Wu Wenzao (吴文藻), who both died during the height of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s—Fei was appointed by the State as the official leader responsible for (re)starting the teaching, learning, and research of sociology in China.

Fei’s status in this context is thus analogous to that of Durkheim, who was chosen by the French Ministry of Education to establish sociology as a secular intellectual force in France (Oberschall 1972). However, unlike Durkheim, who largely fought tirelessly on his own for the broader recognition of sociology and spent decades

without witnessing the discipline's institutional growth in his country, Fei benefited from greater support from his peers and achieved higher levels of institutional penetration of sociology in Chinese universities (Zhou 2021).

During his government-sponsored visit to the U.S. in 1980, aimed at reestablishing social sciences and academia in China, Fei met with his former college roommate, C.K. Yang (杨庆堃), then a professor at the University of Pittsburgh. Yang suggested inviting U.S. and Hong Kong-based professors as visiting teachers to help train China's new first-generation sociologists. In China, Nankai University was chosen as the site for this pioneering sociology class. College students from across the country—few in number due to the highly selective college entrance process at the time—received announcements for the "Nankai Class," a one-semester intensive training course in sociology, an unfamiliar and novel subject for most people at that time (Zhou 2021).

From its inception, contemporary sociology in mainland China has maintained extensive ties to foreign scholars, particularly those based in the United States and Hong Kong. These include a mix of Chinese and foreign-origin academics, such as Nan Lin, Alex Inkeles and Peter Blau, who were interested in sharing their knowledge and academic lineage with China, often with the specific aim of fostering the indigenous growth of sociology in the country.

Methods

Data

Sociological Studies (《社会学研究》, hereafter SHXYJ) and *Society* (《社会》, hereafter *Shehui*) were founded in 1981 and 1986, respectively, as two flagship, discipline-wide sociology journals. These two journals currently hold unique importance for Chinese sociology in terms of both intellectual prestige and institutional authority. For instance, an associate professor of sociology at a major university in China shared during my interview that, in their department, one publication in either of these two "authoritative" journals is considered equivalent to two publications in a regular "core journal" (核心期刊) for faculty performance metrics.

My analyses center around these journals, and I compiled a curated dataset by collecting multiple sources of information from CNKI, China's largest academic database. For reference extraction and reference language detection, access to reference texts is essential. To achieve this, I downloaded and digitized published papers from *Shehui* and *SHXYJ* between 1980 and 2021. Unlike mainstream English-language databases like WoS and Scopus, which systematically collect and provide reference text data as part of their comprehensive metadata files, CNKI's journal metadata does not offer this option. Therefore, I resorted to batch manual downloading and OCR text processing.

To gather the meta information of the articles, I employed a two-step approach. First, I used CNKI's open-access metadata, which provided all the necessary meta-

level measurements except for article influence measures, which are not available for direct download. Second, to obtain the influence measures—specifically, the number of downloads and citations for each article—I leveraged the fact that these data are displayed on the CNKI webpage for each search result. I scraped the website to collect this information and then merged it with the official metadata downloaded from CNKI.

My total sample includes all 9,250 research articles, book reviews, and editorials published in SHXYJ and Shehui from 1981 to 2021. I excluded shorter, non-substantive texts such as conference summaries, editor’s announcements, and new book information. I included book reviews, however, as these are not considered an established short-article genre in China; rather, they are lengthy, essay-like theoretical discussions comparable in length to full-fledged research articles.

To provide more conservative and meaningful estimates, I further excluded articles with zero references, resulting in a final analytic sample of 3,746 articles. For the analysis of reference counts and proportions, there is typically a dramatic increase in citations and downloads between articles with no references and those with at least one, as some articles from the early development of sociology in the 1980s and 1990s did not include references or follow what are now considered standard research protocols. Note that results using the full sample of 9,250 papers are consistent with the findings presented in the main text but suggest more dramatic effect sizes.

Variables and measures

The outcomes of interest are the valuation and reception of an article, measured through two metrics for triangulation and comparison: the number of downloads and the number of citations an article receives. The data for these measures were obtained from the CNKI database as of October 1, 2022. While citations are the most common and often the only measurement examined by scientometric analysts, I also utilize the download statistic, which may more broadly reflect the level of circulation and interest a piece receives.

My main predictors involve two operationalizations of Western immersion or Western influence. The first is the presence of English-language references in an article's cited references. I calculate both the number and proportion of English-language references in the reference list, based on the hypothesis that in the periphery, the global academic hierarchy rewards Anglo-American influences with higher valuation. In addition to measures related to English-language references, I also construct comparable measures for all other languages detected by an automated algorithm from the reference lists (see Table 1 for a summary). I include a separate category, “*zh-trans*,” which encompasses all references translated into Chinese from foreign languages.

References are extracted from two sources. The first source is a separate “references” section at the end of an article, which is primarily present in articles published after the millennium. If a “references” section is not available, I examine the footnotes to identify those that function as references. I implemented two criteria to

distinguish footnotes that serve as references from those used for explanatory purposes. Specifically, I identified reference footnotes based on their shorter length (no more than 30 characters), the inclusion of Chinese text-title punctuation (“《” or “》”), and then manually reviewed footnotes longer than 30 characters that contained text-title indicators. For language identification of the references, I initially applied a general algorithm and then manually cleaned the data for less common languages (usually misclassifications between English and Chinese) to ensure high accuracy in the results.

The second measure of Western immersion is an author's geographic location. For bivariate analyses, I specify the national origin of the author's institutional affiliation, while for multivariate analyses, I simplify this measurement to a binary distinction between domestic and foreign affiliations. This measure is distinct from the author's national origin; indeed, most foreign-based authors for Shehui and SHXYJ are Chinese-origin individuals. In the case of collaborative articles, a paper is considered as authored by a foreign-affiliated person if any co-author is affiliated with a foreign institution. This approach is primarily due to concerns about statistical power, given that only a small segment of articles have non-mainland Chinese-affiliated (co-)authors. However, the results remain substantively robust even when foreign affiliation is based solely on the first author's affiliation.

A third crucial factor in my analysis is time. I consider temporal changes by specifying a six-category dummy variable for different time periods. I use effect

coding for these periods so that the coefficients reflect the effects relative to the expected mean values.

Finally, I control for several factors: an article's page count, whether the article is an opening article within an issue, whether the references were extracted from footnotes or a dedicated references section, whether the article acknowledged receiving funding, and journal fixed effects (journal SHXYJ or Shehui). I also include a measure for whether the article is written in English, as Shehui, while predominantly a Chinese-medium journal, also accepts English-language submissions and had published 17 English-written articles up until 2021.

Findings

Figure 2 shows the trend in the use of references in English, Chinese, and Chinese-translated languages. The y-axis represents the average number of references per article for articles published in a given year. The data indicate that the use of references was very rare before the millennium, even when including footnote-origin references. Additionally, references in Chinese consistently exceeded those in either English or translated sources. However, beginning around 2000, the number of references systematically increased across all three languages, with a particularly strong spike in English-language references between 2000 and 2005. From approximately 2005 to 2015, three key trends emerged: 1) the number of references consistently increased for all three languages, 2) the rate of citing Chinese and English language references far surpassed that of translated languages, and 3) English references, on average, exceeded Chinese references, becoming the most dominant

across the three. After 2015, however, the use of English references tapered off, while the use of Chinese references continued to increase, with Chinese-language references recently taking the lead. These changes indicate statistically significant trends, as shown in Appendix Figure A2.

As expected, the observed plateau in the use of English references over time can be attributed to the cumulative growth of sociological knowledge in the Chinese language. Prior to 2015, there were few existing theories or studies in Chinese to cite. This may also explain why countries such as Japan or France cite English references less frequently; sociology developed earlier in these countries, and they have established resources within their own language circles. This explanation is also important for understanding the apparent "xenophilia" among Chinese sociologists, as noted in General Findings 1. This trend should *not* be understood as a blind or unconditional preference for knowledge produced in developed Western nations but rather as closely related to the *availability of intellectual resources* within one's own linguistic context.

Figure 8 presents two-way analyses that explore the relationship between the use of references in various language sources and the reception of articles, measured in terms of the number of downloads and citations. The four small panels for each outcome show the proportion of English, Chinese, Chinese-translated, or other languages relative to the total count of references. Note that only papers with at least one reference are included in the analysis for more stringent comparisons. Results are presented in both grouped original bar charts (background, grey) and fitted localized non-parametric regression LOWESS lines (blue).

Overall, the data show that, for citations, there is a generally upward trend for English references across all x-proportion values, with a plateau in the middle. For Chinese references, there is an initial increase followed by a decrease, while for translated references, the trend is generally downward. In terms of downloads, translated references show a downward trend, while Chinese and English references exhibit an increase-plateau-decrease pattern. However, the decline in the use of Chinese references begins earlier than that of English references and shows a more pronounced downward trend. Despite some nonlinearity, the overall trend for English references is upward.

Results from multivariate binomial regression analyses are shown in Figure 4. The models predict the number of citations and downloads received by articles published in *Shehui* and SHXYJ. Several notable findings relate to: 1) the use of English versus Chinese language references (count and proportion measures), 2) the presence of at least one author affiliated with a foreign institution, and 3) whether the language of the article itself is English.

As shown in Figure 4, after controlling for the number of references in each language and other variables, the proportion of English-language references (p_{en}) is significantly and positively associated with the likelihood of a paper receiving more citations and downloads at the 10% significance level. Importantly, separate analyses reveal that the effect of the proportion of Chinese-language references in the same models is *negative* and significant.

Moreover, having at least one author affiliated with a foreign institution significantly increases the expected number of citations and downloads for a given article. This finding largely aligns with the conclusions from General Findings 1. Specifying each country of origin as independent fixed effects poses challenges, as some papers may have multiple authors from more than two different countries. However, a “Hong Kong or US” dummy variable could be considered.

An unexpected finding relates to the significant citation and download *penalty* for papers written in English as opposed to Chinese. This suggests that the audience of *Shehui* and SHXYJ is much more likely to read articles published in Chinese. The apparent popularity of English-language articles does not stem from the language itself; rather, the penalty effect may indicate a lack of comfort among many Chinese-speaking sociologists with English as a foreign language. Instead, the recognition of English-language articles appears to be driven by their publication in “international,” especially “leading international,” journals. For example, papers from internationally leading journals such as *AJS* or *ASR* are recognized and cited by Chinese-speaking sociologists despite the additional barrier of reading in English.

Finally, significant interaction effects are observed between temporal periods and the proportion of English-language citations, with a decreasing advantage associated with citing English papers over time.

Emphatically, the fact that the academic market here is mainly domestic and the publishing language non-English provides a particularly strong illustration of my theory that agents that sustain global academic hierarchies operate above and beyond

the roles of the English language or the US-led Western world as exercisers of oppression and coercion.

In support of the idea that hegemony in scholarship is established not primarily through external coercion but through the active affinity and recognition that scholars in the periphery confer to those in the center, I found that, within Chinese-language sociology journals, authors with affiliations based in developed regions and countries (specifically, UK, Hong Kong, and the US) produce articles that receive more citations and downloads. Similarly, articles that cite a higher proportion of English-language as opposed to Chinese-language references also receive significantly more downloads and citations. Equally important, however, is the finding of a decline in such English reference-related advantages over time. This decline is consistent with the hypothesis derivable from the other component of my theory, which recognizes dynamic shifts in perceptions of cultural power as the substantive bases for intellectual authority to undergo changes. Specifically, the accumulation of native-language knowledge over time could lead to a diminished need to rely on or highly value foreign-language Western sources.

Chapter 3 Injustice to Grieve or Gaps to Close? Remaking the Case for Non-Western Sociology and Insights from Chinese-Language Sources

Introduction: Parallel scholarly strands on non-Western sociology

Today, there appear two parallel strands of scholarship on the status of global and non-Western sociology: 1) writings on the development of sociology in various non-Western regions, which tend to emphasize the foundational and facilitative roles of Western influences, and 2) the literature of postcolonial sociology, that centers on critiquing Eurocentrism and the North-South knowledge divide in social sciences.

In the first scholarship ensemble, one observes a longstanding tradition of welcoming and integrating scholars and perspectives from non-Western spheres. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, long before words such as “Global South” (Pagel et al. 2014) or “Third World” (Azadarmaki 1999; Azari and Sitas 2017; Briceño-León 2017; Bucholc 2016; Coşkun 1991; Luo 2015; Patel and Pandar 2019; Skovajsa and Balon 2017; Titarenko and Zdravomyslova 2017) entered popular parlance and when Germany remained a top destination for America’s brightest students seeking advanced training in social sciences (Oberschall 1972), sociology was already emerging as a discipline with dedicated departments or professorships in East and South Asia (e.g., Japan, China, India), Eastern Europe (e.g., Russia, Czech lands, Poland), Latin America (e.g., Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil), and parts of the Middle East and Africa (e.g., Turkey, Egypt, Iran, South Africa) (Azadarmaki

1999; Azari and Sitas 2017; Briceño-León 2017; Bucholtz 2016; Coşkun 1991; Guofen[罗国芬] Luo 2015; Patel and Pandar 2019; Skovajsa and Balon 2017; Titarenko and Zdravomyslova 2017) (see Figure 5).

Moreover, similar to the American case (Oberschall 1972), sociology is not considered an autonomous local invention in mainstream accounts of any of these countries (Dhaouadi 1990; Tiankui Jing 2022; Jing Tiankui[景天魁] 2017). Rather, reminiscent of sociological arguments for the interconnectivity between intellectuals as a critical factor in manufacturing knowledge (R. Collins 2000; Wagner 2009), a global knowledge network was prevalent from the start. On the one hand, western agents were heavily involved in the transnational spread of sociology: Colonial officials and missionaries from respectively Britain, Holland, and the US, for example, played formative roles in originating Indian, Japanese, and Chinese sociology (Baba 1962; Patel and Pandar 2019; Yan 2010). On the other hand, non-Western sociologists recognized and pursued Western European, specifically French, German, and/or English social thought, as the fountainhead of the discipline and the basis upon which indigenization shall build.

One typical theme these writings emphasize is leading Western academics' mentoring of pupils from the non-European, non-White world. While first-generation Turkish and Egyptian sociologists mostly studied in France under key figures of the Durkheimian school, including Durkheim himself (Bagader 1997; Berkes 1936), the international dedication of Anglo-Saxons was particularly notable. Radcliffe-Brown of British structural functionalism and Robert Park of the Chicago School, as exemplary

cases, committed to posts in less-dominant institutions such as the University of Cape Town (RB 1921-26), Farouk I University in Alexandria (RB early 1920s), and Fisk University (Park 1934-44) (Bagader 1997; Fortes 1956; Hughes 1968). They also made extended teaching visits to Brazil and China, which were well-remembered by local sociologists as pivotal events for their discipline (Domingos Cordeiro and Neri 2019; Elkin 1956; X. Liu 2007; Valladares 2010; Yue and Xiong 2023). Generally, whether a country has a longer or shorter sociological tradition and whether it was effectively colonized by European powers or not (e.g., Ethiopia, Saudi Arab, Russia, Japan), it is rare that its founding sociologists were not exposed to Western education (Alemu 2022; Bagader 1997).

Despite its primary focus on the past, this ensemble of work holds contemporary significance. Much of this research stems from recent efforts to study the “sociology of sociology” and indigenization by “excavating” forgotten histories of non-Western traditions (Dufoix 2018; Yan 2010) and by creating a global representation of the discipline through national histories of sociology (Collyer 2020). Additionally, in terms of historical continuity, despite intermittent stagnation, setbacks and sometimes virtual abolishment of sociology in several countries due to political dramas and turmoil (Keen and Mucha 1994; Platt 1998; Yan 2010), the post-WWII era has seen institutional establishment and indigenous movements across more non-Western countries (Dufoix 2018). Likewise, the percentages of international, especially Asian-origin, PhDs in American social science departments have risen rapidly and consistently over the past decades (SED 2023), illustrating the continued if not enhanced relevance of global intellectual integration and circulation.

In the second strand, scholars also affirm the importance of non-Western sociology. However, instead of stressing the foundational and integrative aspects of Western involvement, they approach East-West relations with an emphatically critical eye. Inheriting the decades-long post-WWII traditions of anti-Eurocentrism, anti-imperialism, and postcolonial criticism (Tomlinson 2003), some sociologists in recent years have advocated for “decolonizing sociology” as a central remit for the discipline⁵ (Bhambra 2007; Connell 2018; Go 2020; Meghji 2021).

Notwithstanding their internal heterogeneities in foci and views (Moosavi 2023), postcolonial sociologists collectively underscore the power imbalances and inequalities in social knowledge creation and reception between global centers and peripheries (Wallerstein 1997). These hierarchies are seen as socio-historical constructs with shifting boundaries and contested definitions (Chakrabarty 2000), but largely they mirror global political economy (S. F. Alatas 2003) and manifest in overlapping forms as West vs non-West, White vs non-White, Global North vs Global South, First World vs Third World, Anglophone vs non-Anglophone, and most recently also the US vs non-US (Pardo-Guerra 2022).

Many authors in this connection have critiqued traces of Eurocentrism in sociology’s topical foci and epistemological styles. They argue that mainstream sociology frequently assumes universality in schemas of human action and cognition that are, in reality, distinctive to the West (Connell 2007; Neubert 2022; de Sousa

⁵ By convention, postcolonial studies stem from literary criticism pioneered by diasporic scholars like Edward Said, Bhabha and Spivak, while decoloniality emerges from Latin American authors like sociologist Anibal Quijano and semiotician Walter D. Mignolo. This paper uses postcolonial and decolonial interchangeably.

Santos 2015). It overlooks central problematics in the Global South such as colonial trauma (Fanon 1952[2008]), time (Zhao 2018), water control (Wen 2018; Wittfogel 1957), and land (Wen 2013; Connell 2007). It develops concepts and conclusions—ranging from the role of financial capital for the economy (Lan 2021), definitions of class categories (Neubert 2022), to experiences of social relationships and emotion (Qi 2014)—that can prove inadequate or “grossly misaligned with” (Lan 2021) non-Western contexts. Similarly salient is the asymmetry in knowledge flow and division of academic labor. Non-Western sociologists often depend on Western ones for theoretical ideas (S. F. Alatas 2003), while Anglo-American sociologists are generally comfortable with their monolingualism, ignorant or even skeptical of non-Western or non-Anglophone knowledge sources (Becker 2019; Meghji 2021). Non-Western population supply data and their researchers implement data collection, while Western sociologists largely monopolize data analysis, theorizing, and authoring (S. F. Alatas 2003; Hountondji [1994] 1997). Additionally, scholars have examined the broader tropes of capitalist modernity and colonial empires as historical catalysts for the North-South divide in sociology. Some have addressed the discipline’s alleged historical role as a symbiotic beneficiary and enabler of colonialism and imperialism (Bhambra 2007); others emphasize violence and exploitation during colonialism as a hidden yet inseparable other side of European modernity (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2005). Overall, in foregrounding the geopolitics of knowledge, postcolonial authors advocate for a more globally inclusive sociology (Connell 2007) while seeking to “deplore” (S. F. Alatas 2003) and redress the “exclusion” (Go 2020)—both epistemic and institutional—of non-Western, Southern sociologies in mainstream discourses.

Thus far, I have strived to provide a balanced overview of the two narratives, as both offer insights into the understanding of non-Western sociologies. However, the parallel status of these narratives is not ideal. The two discourses seldom cite each other even as they both seek to advance non-Western sociology. Equally importantly, they portray contrasting imageries of West-East relations that demand critical syntheses and sociological explanations. This article embarks on these tasks, bringing into conversation the two narratives with the hope of reframing Anglophone scholarship towards a more realistic and more inclusive discourse on non-Western sociology.

I begin by showing the disparities in visibility and author origin between these narratives. Scholarship from the postcolonial narrative—led by scholars highly proficient in English from the developed world—occupies a significantly more dominant position in Anglophone sociology than contributions from the first strand on regional development of sociology, which are mainly authored by scholars based outside the West who often write in their native languages. Here, I posit what I term “*the exclusion paradox*”, wherein Anglophone critiques of Western-centric exclusion inadvertently contributes to a new form of exclusion that overshadows and contradicts the intellectual and political standpoints of many Global South scholars—the very groups they intend to advocate for.

Second, delving into Chinese-language sources including published scholarship, qualitative interviews, and archives, I demonstrate that local sociologists’ apparently more favorable portrayal of the West derives by no means from an amnesia to colonial and imperialist history or indifference to East-West knowledge divides.

Rather, precisely as a response to Western invasion and domination, there is a continuous intellectual habitus in Chinese sociology since the early 20th century that centers on self-accountability and “self-strengthening” (*zi qiang* 自强), where one acknowledges one’s late-comer status and “backwardness” (*luo hou* 落后), learns from Western sociology to bridge gaps, and strives to produce discipline-level knowledge that simultaneously enriches indigenous and Western traditions. I argue that these perspectives stand in contrast to mainstream Anglophone postcolonial sociology, which focuses on moral grievance and reparation that risks overstressing “external accountability” and “external salvation” on the one hand, and the epistemic primacy of indigenous scholars and views that risks annulling generalizable knowledge on the other. I consider the nuanced distinctions between “self-improvement” in Chinese and “self-empowerment” popular in Anglophone discourses. I also add that the stories and standpoints of Chinese scholars are not unique or isolated, citing discussions of similar sentiments from other non-Western regions such as Latin America, Turkey, Iran, and Russia.

Overall, this article elucidates the often-neglected voices and views of Global South-based sociological communities working in non-English languages and illustrates the ways in which non-Anglophone sources expand our sociological imagination on a discipline level. As such, it carves new, collaborative pathways for the advancement of non-Western sociology in relation to Anglo-American sociology and sociologists.

Notes on methodology

This article integrates empirical evidence to advance its theoretical arguments. At times, I present findings from first-hand quantitative analyses. To prevent digressions from the main text, I provide basic methodological explanations in the main text and footnotes and may direct the reader to the Appendix for more technical details. For qualitative evidence, I interweave published materials (scholarship, interviews and archives) with interview data I collected for a large project on the experience of being non-native-English-speaking scholars. Between October 2021 and February 2022, I conducted 39 semi-structured interviews with academics from China ($n = 35$), Europe ($n = 2$) and Latin America ($n = 2$), including 25 sociologists, 9 in the humanities, 3 economists and 2 psychologists. The interviews last on average 110 minutes (range: 1 ~ 2.5 hours). Interviews with Chinese-speaking scholars were conducted in Chinese, and I provide native-language quotes alongside English translations (Younas et al. 2022). Scholars of non-Chinese origins were interviewed in English. Unless I have gained the explicit consent of an interview participant—for example, some participants prefer to disclose their name to increase their credibility as scholars, I quote them anonymously.

Also, I note my use of published Chinese-language sources. First, a recent two-volume book edited by (Zhou 2021) 《重建中国社会学: 40 位社会学家口述实录 (1979-2019)》 (*Rebuilding Chinese Sociology: Oral Accounts from 40 Sociologists*) provides interview records and oral memoirs of 40 renowned Chinese sociologists—a critical addition to the interview data I myself collected. Second, while all the

published sources are named, I anonymize the author's identity for potentially controversial sources unless I gained their explicit approval. The concern here pertains to the altered definitions of common sense and acceptable information as one traverses different linguistic—and therefore cultural, political, and “outsider” versus “insider”—worlds (Merton 1972). For instance, it is not uncommon for Chinese sociologists with an established profile in North America to openly express in Chinese (in scholarly articles, talks, or published interviews) their criticisms on American sociology or individual sociologists, while explicitly mentioning reserving such critiques solely for the Chinese-speaking audience.

Recognition gap and its curiosities

Visibility disparities in mainstream sociology

Popularity of strand two on decolonization

While I introduced the two scholarly strands with equal weight, significant disparities in visibility exist between them. Contemporary Anglo-American sociologists remotely concerned with international sociology likely have heard of decolonization, while finding themselves encountering for the first time most facts on the trajectories of non-Western sociologies (Xie 2017). It is not only that decolonization has been called a “bandwagon” (Moosavi 2020) or “wildfire” (Burawoy 2024) that affects curriculum design, hiring decisions, and the status of canonical texts. It also currently stands as one, if not the only, prominent discourse in Anglophone sociology that brings attention to non-Western scholarships.

In Britain and Australia, key locales of Anglophone sociology outside of the US, decolonization has received widespread recognition. The Australian sociologist Connell's (2007) *Southern Theory* has been cited thousands of times on Google Scholar, with panels in ISA and an interview on ISA's official journal *Current Sociology* featuring her contributions in this regard (ISA 2023; Kislenko and Connell 2023). Bhabra, author of multiple books on postcolonial sociology, won the highest book prize of the British Sociological Association (BSA) for her *Rethinking Modernity* (Bhabra 2007) and currently serves as president of BSA. Similarly, at Cambridge where Meghji works, the sociology department's main webpage lists "decolonise sociology" as a devoted header alongside more general topics such as "research" and "people" (CamSoc 2023), and the site sustains a series of subpages sharing events, publications, and blog posts on the theme.

American sociology has for decades been critiqued for its US-centrism and hegemony in publishing and hiring (Becker 2019; Chekki 1987; Pardo-Guerra 2022). Consistent with this imagery, the American Sociological Association (ASA) exhibits very limited recognition of non-Western traditions. The ASA does have a "Global and Transnational Sociology" section, but an examination of its paper and book award recipients between 2010 and 2023 (ASA 2023) reveals little attention to non-Western sociology. Among the awarded articles, 14 or 35% of them focus on non-Anglo-European regions (others study global processes or the developed world). Moreover, these awardees tend to address non-Western societies as opposed to non-Western sociologies: few engage with scholarship produced by local authors. For example, 6 of

the 14 papers cited references from a local publisher or in the local language, and only 2 of these cited local-language sources more than 5 times (see Appendix).

However, the ASA's lack of attention to non-Western scholarship contrasts with its demonstrated commitment to decolonization framed within its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. The ASA (ASA 2020) now hosts a dedicated webpage that compiles resources on settler colonialism and rethinking the sociological canon. The page highlights America's historically marginalized Black and/or female sociologists such as Du Bois and Harriet Martineau, but notably it also recommends readings from postcolonial sociologists like Connell (1997, 2007) and Go (2016) and includes non-Western thinkers Ibn Khaldhun (1332-1406) and Ali Shariati (1933-1977)—both heavily lauded in postcolonial discourse (S. F. Alatas 2013; Connell 2007)—as theorists deserving of canonization. It follows that even in the more insular-oriented case of US sociology, decolonization of knowledge—but not non-Western sociology in its own name—has gained a degree of visibility in legitimate institutional discourse.

Invisibility of strand one on regional sociologies

By contrast, the strand of scholarship on non-Western sociology histories and development is, at best, inchoate and scarcely visible. Anglophone sociologists today interested in the history of the discipline often describe the historical consciousness of sociology as “dead” and struggle to establish the *raison d'être* of their practice (Albanese 2023; Inglis 2010)—and one can only imagine the situation being still more niche and marginal for histories specific to non-Western sociologies.

Before one considers quantitative metrics such as publication output and citations, two basic qualitative facts are already telling. First, reminiscent of the classic idea that the act of naming carries immense power in registering and establishing a phenomenon (Austin 1962; Foucault 2012), research on the second—but not first—strand is solidified by a collectively identified field name (“postcolonial”/“decolonization”). This helps establish an “invisible college” where scholars form interpersonal cliques and reference insiders’ works to advance a common intellectual agenda (Crane 1972). By contrast, except for a handful of recent attempts by global-center scholars to synthesize publications on “national histories of sociology” (Collyer 2020), writings on the development of sociology in various non-Western nations largely comprise discrete contributions. These writings share thematic foci and epistemic views, but they do not yet constitute a “body of literature” or “field” proper in the sense of a network of scholars who are aware of, read, and cite each other’s work at least as they appear in Anglophone publications (Abbott 2001; Crane 1972).

Another signal of marginality is that depictions of a country or region’s sociology overwhelmingly include—and often entirely transform into—an overview of the discipline’s history in the local area. For example, the ongoing Palgrave Macmillan Sociology Transformed book series (Holmwood and Turner 2014-2024) purports to map the development of the sociology discipline across the globe on a country-by-country basis; yet ideally or not the result for all 30 participating countries so far has focused on their histories of sociology—as opposed to various other ways that a discipline could be introduced, such as compendiums of classical essays by

formative figures, key concepts and theoretical approaches, and/or findings from major substantive subfields. The same applies to individual articles on regional sociologies (e.g., Bagader 1997; Berkes 1936; Briceño-León 2017; Patel and Pandar 2019). Indeed, even papers that focus on domain-specific contributions of non-Western traditions to general sociological theories may also find themselves providing background information on the history of sociology in the region—such as in (Qi 2017) explorations of Goffman’s concept of “face” and its native Chinese origins.

According to social studies of historiography and science, the existence of history is often cited to defend the value of a tradition or civilization against attempts to deny its worth or existence (Mignolo 2005; Wolf 1982). Meanwhile, foundational information underpinning academic discourses is usually left unspoken (Latour 1987; Merton [1942] 1973). Moreover, the maturing of an academic field tends to be associated with less discussion of broader questions of the field’s legitimacy and origin story in favor of specialized subdomain inquiries (Abbott 2001). Referencing these theoretical insights, the emphasis on historical documentation signifies scholars’ efforts and perceived need to establish regional sociologies among an international audience presumed to have little background on the subject (Xie 2017). In other words, in mainstream sociology, not only the specific contributions but even the general existence of regional traditions is not yet widely recognized.

Quantitative illustrations

The invisibility of works on the development of non-Western sociologies is, unsurprisingly, also well reflected in formal evaluative metrics. On Google Scholar,

several works in postcolonial sociology are cited thousands of times (Connell 2007; de Sousa Santos 2015), but citation counts for region-specific non-Western sociologies hover between zero and dozens, with only a handful exceeding 50 (Berkes 1936; S. F. Alatas 2006).

A more systematic demonstration of these gaps is presented in Table 2 and Figures 6 & 7, derived from my analysis of 58,175 articles published in 47 SSCI (Social Science Citation Index) sociology journals. For both charts, the goal is to assess the representation (or research output) and influence (or citations) of the two scholarly strands in mainstream discourses⁶. To briefly clarify my methods (see Appendix for fuller descriptions), among the 218 SSCI sociology journals as of 2024, I consider 1) higher-ranked ones (Q1, or top 25% in journal impact factor, 29 of the 47 journals) and 2) those with a non-US, global, or non-Western focus regardless of ranking. I rely on common tools in text analytics, namely NER (named entity recognition) and Regex (regular expression matching) to identify whether an article addresses the topic of postcolonialism or regional sociology, and whether the geographic focus is on non-Western areas. And I provide results based on both “TT” (article title) and the more relaxed “TAK” (article title, abstract or keyword) text matching criteria for validity checks and comparisons.⁷

⁶ The Journal Citation Report (JCR) provides metrics for sociology journals indexed in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI). Both are run by Clarivate.

⁷ For example, Endo’s (2013) “Overview of media sociology in Japan” is categorized under non-Western regional sociology for both TT and TAK measures since the title matches one of the designated patterns (“sociology in X” X being a non-Western place name); Nefes’ (2013) “Ziya Gökalp’s adaptation of Emile Durkheim’s sociology in his formulation of the modern Turkish nation” fulfills the categorization criterion for TAK but not TT as “Turkish sociology” exists in its abstract but not the title.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 2 shows the overall statistics for articles identified under the two themes. Consistent with my qualitative observations before, articles that deal with the postcolonial theme are clearly more numerous and more impactful than those on the topic of non-Western regional sociology: 525 vs 127 articles published and 25 vs 5 average citations by TAK measure; 138 vs 93 articles published and 32 vs 4 average citations by TT measure. Moreover, both topics appear marginal relative to other subjects in the journals. In terms of research outputs, about 99% (by TAK) to 99.6% (by TT) of articles in these 47 journals cover other themes. Gaps in citations also exist here. Other topics are on average cited more frequently (47 average citations for both TAK and TT) than the two themes of our concern, but these citation gaps are much smaller for the postcolonial (about 1.5 to 2 times higher) than for the non-Western regional sociology theme (over 10 times higher).

In addition to calculating summary statistics, the right section of Table 2 endeavors a contextualized presentation of the top-cited article for each of the topical area. Although for each topical category, there is only 1 single paper that I list here, this practice is substantively meaningful and important because of the prevalence of research across the sociology of science (Merton 1988), network science (Barabasi and Albert 1999), scientometrics (Price 1965), and linguistics (Bagader 1997; X. Liu 2007; J. [李剑华] Li 1927; Luo 2015; Patel and Pandar 2019) showing the shared

finding that the distribution of scientific citations tends to follow a power law-like behavior, where an extremely small number of papers tend to receive the highest concentration of citations while shaping and leading the mainstream concerns and discourses within a topical or disciplinary field. In our case, this single-case analysis indeed proves fruitful and telling. There is again, a sharp three-tier distinction in the number of citations that the top-ranked paper received. The top-cited paper in the “other topics” category is DiMaggio and Powell (1983), by both TAK and TT measures, which received over 26,000 citations in Scopus database. This is followed by the postcolonialism category, with the leading papers being Quijano (2000) for TAK and Burawoy (1998) for TT, and their citation counts are respectively about 1500 and 1000. Yet in the third tier of non-Western regional sociology, the most-cited papers top at 73 (TAK) and 20 (TT) citations, authored respectively by Alatas (2009) and Ramos (2014).

The differences between these numbers are remarkably large, although this is not entirely unexpected. For one, the power-law nature of scientific citation distribution would itself mean that mathematically, the numeric differences would be still larger at the topper ends of the distribution; hence the much bigger differences we are observing for the top-cited papers than for the overall statistical averages. Also importantly, these numbers correspond with the qualitative intuition that I already developed as I was doing literature surveys for the two discourses, although this quantitative exercise provides further evidence that this pattern of disparities unarguably stand, even across a much more systematic level as opposed to the individual papers that I searched.

Moreover, there are four other observations that are just as worth mentioning about these top-cited papers. First, although our sample size is 1 for each category, we can see that there are potential patterns of variations in journal ranking and journal orientation across these topics. In particular, *Current Sociology* and *International Sociology*, where 3 of the 4 top-cited papers on regional non-Western and postcolonial discourse reside, are both the flagship journals of International Sociological Association, a key organizational locus for sociologists outside of the Anglo-American world and an association established after WWII under UNESCO that explicitly promotes global perspectives. On the other hand, these journals are ranked lower than dominant American journals in statistical metrics of impact factors (both being Q2), and in this sense could be considered as more “marginal”, despite these journals themselves also being important outlets for non-Anglo-American-flavored research. Also, it is notable that one top-cited paper on postcolonialism is on *Sociological Theory*, and indeed this journal operates as a relative exception among globally top-ranked journals in that it appears more open to topics related to Global South and non-Western-related discourses (see Appendix). Nonetheless, on the flip side, we shall also be mindful that the non-Western discourse that is particularly and mostly marginal is the actual exploration of regional developments, and as such *Sociological Theory* is yet to host such a paper (see Appendix).

Second, one important way in which scholarly disparities are created is through the overtime accumulation of knowledge. In particular, if a field has been developed for longer and thus has a “classic” paper that’s been longstanding for quite a while, the field might be considered as generally more “mature” or “developed” than

if it is still quite young (Abbott 2001). From this perspective, it is quite telling that the top-cited paper for “other topics” was written in 1983, with the top-cited postcolonialism papers being authored at around 2000. And finally, the Non-western regional topic again shows its relative marginality in terms of field “age”. The top cited papers are from 2009 and 2014, respectively.

Third and finally, I note qualitatively that 5 of the 6 authors that appear in the top-cited paper column were already familiar to me from my literature review before conducting this analysis. The only exception is Ramos’ (2014) work on Chilean social science, which is also the most recently published and in the category with the smallest number of citations received (non-Western regional sociology with a title reflecting such a focus). This fact itself highlights again the marked marginality of non-Western sociological development relative to both the postcolonial and more general topics.

On the other hand, however, my experience here is also encouraging for scholars interested in science inequalities who may not have the resources or time to conduct systematic quantitative studies. Similar to my aforementioned example that the intuition I developed about citation counts disparities during literature review is confirmed in Table 2’s quantitative examinations, here again, even in terms of singular author names, whether I had encountered them before in my prior research well matches the patterns observed through large-scale quantitative analysis.

It follows that particularly in the exploration of scientific inequalities on fields that one is already qualitatively familiar with, a scholar could feel relatively

confident—and the readers should accord the writer such credibility—that if their statement derives from “impressions” they got during their experiential interactions with the field, such observations may be just as insightful and valid as those that are “found” through more systematic computations. I believe this note here is important because one of the ways in which scholars in the Global South are marginalized is due to the stereotypical belief among certain circles that their research is less solid or claims less founded, due precisely to the lack of such “systematic” evaluations as in quantitative practices. However, much of this difference is due to the lack of resources for quantitative technical training in Global South countries, and it could be overly harsh to categorically negate the potential insights of their scholarly claims due to the lack of demonstration of such “systematic” evidence. Moreover, as my own Table 2 illustrates, the actual results that are generated from these “systematic” analysis may very often not diverge from first-hand field experience.

[Figure 6 about here]

[Figure 7 about here]

Books

In many cases, citation data are missing or undercounted in mainstream databases because the publications themselves or works that cite them—particularly non-English ones of non-European publishers—are not indexed there (Bagader 1997; X. Liu 2007; J. [李剑华] Li 1927; Guofen[罗国芬] Luo 2015; Patel and Pandar 2019). For book publications, Google Books' indexing is more inclusive than traditional platforms such as Scopus and Web of Science in all my searches (Azadarmaki 1999; Coşkun 1991; Yan 2010), but certain key texts in non-Western languages are still either missed (Zhou 2021) or not recognized as scholarly contributions in Google Scholar (Azadarmaki 1999), precluding the generation of citation metrics.

An example that illustrates these indexing and citation count issues is my literature survey of local-language academic books on the development of Chinese sociology (Figure 3). The panels juxtapose the number of citations on Google Scholar versus the number of reader ratings on Douban Book—China's largest platform like Goodreads for book cataloging and reviews—for 33 relevant books that were identifiable on either site (platform and book selection explanations in Figure 3 captions). While Google Scholar is much better known globally than Douban, Figure 3 highlights how Google Scholar displays lower publishing and knowledge circulation activities compared with Douban. First, I found all 33 titles on Douban. Yet for Google sites, while 30 are cataloged in Google Books, only 7 of those exist in Google Scholar (i.e., as academic publications or potential citation sources). Even still, none

of the titles are indexed in traditional platforms like Scopus or WoS. Furthermore, on average, the number of book ratings on Douban (mean = 36.1, s.d. = 60.9) significantly exceeds the number of citations received by the same titles on Google Scholar (mean = 1.7, s.d. = 6.7). While 30 titles were rated at least once on Douban among which were 8 titles over 50 times and 5 over 100 times, only 5 titles received non-zero Google Scholar citations, with citation counts ranging from 2 to 39.

[Figure 8 about here]

One may object that these comparisons are flawed since reader ratings and citations are different in nature. However, rather than undermine our observations, the patterns in effect make a particularly *strong* case for the level of academic vibrancy in the local community. If one considers metrics for (English-language) social science books across international platforms, citation counts on Google Scholar typically (far) outnumber book rating counts on websites like Amazon and Goodreads. Hence, it is remarkable that the pattern is reversed for these native-language texts on Chinese sociology. At the least, sizable degrees of readership engagement and knowledge circulation in the Chinese sociological academy go unnoticed if one relies on mainstream databases for indicators of influence. A bolder interpretation is that the actual citation counts of these texts surpass not only the zero-to-handful count provided by Google Scholar but may exceed a dozen-to-hundred times as suggested by Douban's rating counts.

Journals

Missing entries and counts are also common for journal publications. On the institutional level, China's Social Science Citation Index (CSSCI) program identified 613 Chinese-language "core journals" ("核心期刊") in 2022—selected from over 4,000 social science Chinese-language journals currently in printing in China (GAPP 2021; NJU 2021). Yet, at least for sociology, as of early 2024, none of these was indexed in Scopus, JSTOR, or WoS, while EBSCO Sociology Abstract indexes three—all three based in Taiwan as opposed to mainland China. Likewise, for Japan, key Japanese-language journals⁸ exist such as 『社会学評論』 (*Sociological Review*), 『ソシオロゴス』 (*Sociologos*⁹), but 『理論と方法』 (*Theory and Methods*) is the only outlet included in the mainstream Social Science Citation Index (CCSI) indexing. The coverage is less dire for Turkish and Polish-language journals and, unsurprisingly, also for German and French ones. Again, Google Scholar includes more non-English journals in my searches, although mainstream discourse associates Google Scholar with less authority and more "grey literature" (Haddaway et al. 2015).

Meanwhile, various countries and regions maintain their own academic databases (e.g., Japanese CiNii, Chinese CNKI, Korean DBPia, Arabic Al Manhal, Turkish DergiPark) that significantly better cover native-language literature. However, these databases do not always collect or publish citation metrics, especially for book-

⁸ These journals are "key" to Japanese academia in the sense that faculty in Japan's top institutions publish in.

⁹ There is a namesake Germany-based English-language journal, *Sociologus*, not to be mixed with this one.

format publications. More crucially, even with citation reports and English-language interfaces, they remain largely unknown to scholars outside their respective locales.

Scimago's SJR and Clarivate's JCR claim their journal impact factor (IF) ranking as "global", based on which top sociology journals like *Annual Review of Sociology* and *American Sociological Review* had a 2020 two-year IF of 7 to 10 (JCR 2021; SJR 2021). Yet the same metric of 2020 for leading Chinese-language journals is not lower on CNKI (2024): 《社会学研究》 (*Sociological Studies*) 8.7 and 《中国社会科学》 (*Social Science in China*) 11.8. But to the extent that references are documented not by "global" databases but CNKI, these citations—and accordingly recognitions of scholarly work that citations imply—are practically annulled as non-existent for Anglophone sociologists.

The importance of second-order recognition

In this sense, the recognition gaps between the two strands transcend mere inequalities in an "objective" realm of scientific metrics, which may be enabled or hampered by (in)adequate measurement tools. Rather, a key aspect lies in determining whose citation or citations from which platform count as (more) legitimate evidence of recognition. I consider this as a problem of "second-order recognition", or "recognition of recognition". This name borrows from philosophy that uses the term "second order" to denote meta or more reflexive level considerations¹⁰. While high

¹⁰ Two prominent examples are in logic and ethics. "Second-order logic", first introduced by Frege, elevates the level of mathematical statements from "for all elements" to "for all properties"—or the relations between the elements (Väänänen 2021). In ethics, (Frankfurt 1971) coined phrases like "second-order desires" and "second-order volition" to explore the nature of free will. First-order desire refers to the desire for X while second-order desire denotes the desire for desiring X.

performance in scientific metrics can be conceived of as direct, first-order recognition, a more ultimate criterion for recognition—or second-order recognition—relates also to whether the metrics as tools of recognition or the citing parties as conferrers of recognition are themselves recognized. As the Hegel-Honneth theory of recognition elucidates (Honneth 1996), the pursuit of recognition (thymos) is a perpetual and innate feature of human nature; but recognitions are valued differently depending on whether they come from high-status or low-status actors (“master” or “slave”). Recognition from lower-status actors is considered a weaker or even dismissible source of prestige than that from higher-status actors (Fukuyama [1992] 2006).

At the heart of the matter, then, is not solely that regional-language books and journals remain unindexed in global databases. Equally significant is the asymmetrical, one-sided recognition that non-Western academic communities confer to Western counterparts. Despite the progress made by some non-Western countries in science and academia, and notwithstanding the speculation that Chinese social scientists are increasingly opting for domestic publishing over international venues (Zha 2023), a fundamental fact continues to hold: leading Anglo-European sociology journals (as per JCR metrics) are highly regarded and regularly cited by regional-language outlets, in stark contrast to the former’s lack of awareness of the latter’s existence (Titarenko and Zdravomyslova 2017; Zhou 2021; Shin et al. 2023).

Therefore, equity between “global” and regional-language literature is only possible when recognition is mutual on both first and second-order levels. To achieve this, “global” databases shall acknowledge their current provincialism and/or actively integrate regional-language ones. It could also involve promoting regional-language

publications and databases to a more global stature so that the former acquire similar legitimacy levels—to international and domestic scholars—as their Anglophone counterparts. I discuss the practicality of these possibilities towards the end of this paper.

Puzzles and explanations

The discussions so far suggest that the two scholarly strands of postcolonial sociology and non-Western sociological development differ not only in terms of their substantive foci and apparent attitudes towards the West, but also hierarchically in recognition levels in mainstream academia. Key questions remain, however, regarding explanations and sense-making. For example, what are potential geo-linguistic, institutional and epistemic factors that underlie these differences? Also importantly, do non-Western and/or Global South scholars themselves perceive these contrasts and how do *they* understand them?

Author background differences and homology

The analysis of scholarly discourse is inseparable from the analysis of individual scholars' biographies and the socio-institutional environments wherein they operate (Bourdieu 1988; Merton [1942] 1973). One issue, hinted at in the previous section and serving as a point of departure here, concerns differences in *author backgrounds* between the two strands. This principle applies to the current discussion as well. More specifically, these two groups of authors often stem from different backgrounds in their geo-linguistic origins and institutional trajectories.

Writings on non-Western regional sociological development are often penned by local scholars who stem from and work in the developing country of their origin. Many have received academic training in the West, but unless English is also the language of wider communication (LWC) in their country due often to colonial legacy (e.g., India, Malaysia, South Africa), they regularly write in their native languages and turn to English primarily to target an international audience. Illustratively, of my 28 cited sources for the first ensemble in the Introduction section, authors of 21 fulfill such descriptions. The remaining seven were written by Western scholars, among which four covered slightly different topics, i.e., methodological reflections (as in Collyer 2020) and individual biographies (as in Elkin 1956; Fortes 1956; Hughes 1968).

By comparison, sociologists of the postcolonial strand mostly belong to the “non-West West”(Rouleau-Berger 2023): they are rarely Anglo-US-based scholars of White-European descent (“West West”) but are unanimously highly proficient in—often native speakers of—English (or occasionally French) and are predominantly based in developed countries. Leading authors such as Connell, Bhabra, Meghji, and Go originate from, studied, and work in Anglophone countries (Australia, Britain, the US) while having either non-White descent or non-imperial-metropole origins. Other central figures, including Walter Mignolo, Syed Farid Alatas, and de Sousa Santos, were raised in semi-peripheral, non-Anglophone nations (Argentina, Malaysia, and Portugal) but are similarly adept at English writing, US-trained, and have spent most of their careers in developed countries (the US, Singapore). Influential contributors also work from the Global South, such as Sujata Patel (India) and Radhamany

Sooryamoorthy (South Africa), but their countries have colonial ties to Britain where English is the LWC among the educated class and Western scholarship is a staple in the standard curriculum (Dua 1994); both also maintain extensive ties to Western institutions as visiting professors.

Synthesizing the analyses hitherto, there appears a “homology”¹¹(Bourdieu 1984), or structural correspondence between multiple attributes of the two scholarly ensembles (Table 3) authors’ geo-linguistic background (non-Anglophone vs Anglophone, developing vs developed country), 2) scholarly orientation (regional focus vs postcolonial criticism, humble vs critical towards Western scholarship), and 3) prestige and recognition in mainstream academia (lower vs higher). Relative to local sociologists who recognize Western lineages and delineate non-Western sociological development, postcolonial authors focused on anti-Eurocentric criticism are typified by higher competence in English, deeper familiarity with Western discourse, and more prominent institutional positions in Western academia.

[Table 3 about here]

Some paradoxical imageries emerge from this homology. First, between the two strands, decolonization features a higher concentration of Global North-based scholars and accrues more prestige and recognition, but its very content is to critique

¹¹ Bourdieu uses homology to refer to morphological resemblance in structures across different fields (e.g., art, labor market, academia) that follows the underlying logic of social classification. For example, individuals of similar class positions tend to cluster around similar behaviors in other fields such as cultural tastes, political stances and schooling.

and unsettle what it considers the “exclusion” or “dominance” of Western knowledge and power structures. By contrast, local scholars from developing countries often exhibit an apparently more welcoming and less hostile attitude towards Western scholarship, even when their own works and traditions are the actual and more serious “targets” or “victims” of such Western “exclusion” and “marginalization.” Put differently, one first puzzle that demands explanation is this:

- 1) *Why do these two groups approach East-West relations with these contrasts, where their views apparently reverse what their structural positions and recognition circumstances seem to instinctively imply?*

Second, a hierarchy of reception applies to scholarly strands *within* non-Western sociology, which generally *replicates* what might be called a logic of “Western premium” characteristic of academic hierarchies in mainstream social sciences. Scholars closer to the Anglo-American core, by a mix of linguistic, geographic, and institutional measures, are also more frequently successful in achieving wider-level prestige and recognition. This gives rise to another puzzle:

- 2) *If postcolonial scholarship aims to promote global inclusivity regarding non-European and/or non-Western sociological traditions, how shall one make sense of their de facto Western-premium-based advantages relative to the latter? Or why are we observing the reproduction of the Western-premium-based hierarchies within non-Western sociological discourses?*

I explore answers to these two questions in the following sections.

Key points of divergence

To reiterate our first puzzle: compared with the largely First-World-based postcolonial sociologists who hold critical attitudes towards Western scholarship, why does an integrative ethos appear more prevalent among local scholars who write on regional sociological developments, even as the latter endure more “exclusion” or “marginalization” from mainstream scholarship?

In *The Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington (1996) reconciled two opposing portrayals of the West—one depicting it as overwhelmingly powerful and the other as irrevocably fading—by suggesting that both are factually accurate: the West is experiencing decline despite its continued relative dominance in the world order. The puzzle confronting us here, however, requires a slightly different, and perhaps subtler form of adjudication.

Where the two scholarly strands differ in their attitudes towards the West (integrative vs. critical), the key difference between them lies as much in their knowledge of factual happenings as in their epistemic and moral standpoints (Mannheim 1929[1979]; Haraway 1988). The differences here, as (Sowell 2007) would put it, are differences in “visions”, or basic premises and vintage points from which one approaches worldly encounters. Specifically, it appears that many non-Western local sociologists embody a vision of what shall be called “self-strengthening” (自強)—to borrow a set phrase in contemporary Chinese that derived from the literal slogan of late Qing China’s nation-wide Western-Learning movement

(洋务运动 *yangwu yundong*) in response to foreign powers' imperialist invasions. In this vision, intellectuals concede the factual "backwardness" or "weakness" of their nation's scholarly development relative to the West and focus on learning from Western traditions and scholars to integrate into, catch up with and potentially become an alternative leading force in global scholarship. This contrasts with West-based postcolonial sociologists who uphold a more idealist and moralist stance that emphasizes the "remedying," "rectification," or "readdressing" of "injustice" through Western efforts (Bhambra and Holmwood 2021). The latter vision I capture as "external accountability" and "external salvation" to juxtapose with the former—although as I will further clarify later, these terms only apply from the viewpoint of *non-Western scholars*. Intention wise, given their respective structural positions, postcolonial and local scholars are taking stances that they each conceive as most sensible to advance non-Western sociology.

The contrasts in visions between the two scholarly strands manifest across various planes. Colonial and Christian involvement in the engineering of non-Western sociologies is well-known to scholars in both strands. However, while postcolonial sociologists tend to perceive inherent grievances and injustice in the process (Bhambra and Holmwood 2021), local sociologists document the process with more ambivalence, neutrality and sometimes even appreciation (Titarenko and Zdravomyslova 2017; Yan 2010). Likewise, authors of both discourses are keenly aware of the North-South gaps in knowledge production and consider them as undesirable. However, their responses towards these gaps differ significantly. While postcolonial authors emphasize the moral illegitimacy of the disparities and

accordingly scrutinize their origins and persistence, many local scholars who write on regional traditions acknowledge these gaps as a present reality and focus more on devising strategies—with learning from the discipline’s Western origins seen a key approach—to narrow, close, or even reverse them (Briceño-León 2017; Zhou 2021).

Even the meaning and implications of indigenization appear different to authors of the two strands, again reflecting their stances towards the West. While both groups maintain that local sociologists’ autonomous contributions should be valued, postcolonial sociologists almost unanimously stress how indigenous sociological traditions or modes of thinking can be independent of, and contrast with Western thought patterns (Meghji 2021; Sooryamoorthy 2020; de Sousa Santos 2007). By contrast, non-Western local sociologists often consider a deep familiarity with classic Western traditions a cornerstone towards creative indigenous theorizing (Briceño-León 2017; Cordeiro and Neri 2019; P. Huang 2016; P. C. Huang 2021). For them, indigenization can but does not necessarily entail the creation of knowledge independent or distinct from Western theories. Instead, it pertains to a sociologist’s ability to draw on local phenomena and thought traditions to contribute to globally recognized sociology on the discipline level, with or without explicit lineage to or alignment with Western authors (A. Akiwowo 1988; Zhai 2018).

Indeed, these attitudes towards indigenous sociology also translate to differences in the criteria or identity eligibility of an indigenous sociologist. Postcolonial authors, akin to pioneers of Black feminist thought (Collins [1990] 2022), often assert a tripartite association between indigenous or insider identity, an indigenous perspective, and a heightened claim to knowledge legitimacy. Conversely,

committed to discipline-level knowledge, non-Western sociologists more closely resemble (Merton 1972) who, while recognizing the knowledge-shaping role of outsider/insider identity, consider each as having distinctive advantages and disadvantages in knowledge creation. Indeed, Chinese sociologists, in collaboration with French colleagues, have explicitly contested the link between national-ethnic background and the capacity or right to work on indigenous sociology, arguing that both non-Western and Western sociologists can and shall contribute to post-Western sociological discourses (Rouleau-Berger 2023; Xie 2017).

Behind the contrasts: Colonialism and the Janus face of social Darwinism

For readers more familiar with mainstream decolonization discourse, the information so far might be overwhelming or even questionable. Should not local sociologists be ardent supporters for the decolonial enterprise that seeks to rectify injustices for the Global South? If local scholars uphold the vision of “self-strengthening”, does this mean that they do not consider Westerncentrism, colonialism and/or imperialism as causes of their current marginality, but attribute this marginality to their own individual and collective lack of capacity? Why would they do so, especially if they are the more direct bearers of the Western colonialist past? Am I, the author, using biased evidence or committing a certain form of “victim-blaming” bias here?

Answers to these queries become clear as one delves deeper into non-Western contexts and first-hand experiences. For those that hail from and grow up in a Third World country historically subject to Western colonialism, it is an everyday

experience that the West exists as a Freudian “big Other”—appearing both as more advanced or morally superior and a perennial point of reference against which one measures oneself (Fanon 1952[2008]). Similarly, and particularly relevant for our current purpose, collective memories of Western invasions and threats of civilizational survival have led many non-Westerner intellectuals to resonate with a largely realist and evolutionist worldview towards international politics.

To summarize this worldview briefly, it asserts that all civilizations, whether tacitly or overtly and intentionally or not, are engaged in competition for leadership and prominence in their pursuit of survival and prosperity. Throughout human history, civilizations alternate their positions in the global ranks of power (Liang [1901] 1994; Huntington 1996). Within a given historical period, those who hold power and resources often become regional or global “centers” in the realms of culture and value systems, attracting deference, admiration, and emulation from civilizations in the “periphery” (Shils 1988). Moreover, processes of cultural diffusion and dominance are not straightforward or linear. Generally, a civilization would not acknowledge the authority of another unless they witness unarguable signs that prove the latter’s “superiority”, and shifts in power are common over time (Huntington 1996). For one, there is a rather universal tendency of “ethnocentrism” among civilizations to assert the value and legitimation of their own culture (Hirschman 2004). For another, cultural or value-system spheres are often conceived of as more essential or core to a civilization’s self-definition and understanding than material spheres (Ye 2005).

Throughout world history, there have been instances where civilizations emerged as centers of international culture and influence with minimal military

conquest, as seen in ancient Greece, China, and Egypt. Conversely, civilizations influenced by monotheistic expansionist religions, such as Christianity and Islam, often began their cultural diffusion with coercion or violence (Zhao 2021; Huntington 1996). For example, during the rise of the West in the modern world, Westerners first secured their global advantage by demonstrating their superior power in the material realm—such as in wealth, science and technology—via military control and conquest of other regions. Subsequently, after physical and political subjugation, more countries began to credit legitimacy to the West in the realms of culture, value systems, and institutions (e.g., democracy, the humanities and social sciences) (Ye 2005). This latter process was not automatic. It often required Western agents’ colonial and missionary practices through cultural and educational penetration, supplemented just as importantly by pro-Westernization intellectual and elite forces within the non-Western nations (Huntington 1996). Even so, protestations, counter-Western ideational currents and widespread reversal to one’s indigenous cultural values may occur whenever a civilization finds certain grounds (e.g., economic prosperity as in East Asia or religious righteousness as in the Islam world) to re-claim its excellence and power.

In the case of China, this thread of intellectual thinking run deep from late 19th century to the present day (Qin and Zhou 2023). It connects closely to collective memories of suffering, humiliation but also resilience and self-strengthening in early modern China when the country was clearly on the “weaker” side relative to Western powers (Jiang 1938 [2017]). Since 1840, China suffered consecutive war defeats against Western and Japanese invasions in a short span of years: the First Opium War

(1839-42), the Second Opium War (1856-60), and the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), each followed by a series of unequal treaties. These treaties, combined with other “diplomatic” negotiations sent by Western powers in between, forced China to pay various indemnities, cede multiple territories (e.g., Hong Kong to Britain since 1842; Taiwan to Japan in 1895; Northern China to Russia and Japan’s alternating control between 1894 and 1945), and open up coastal cities (e.g., Shanghai and Tianjin) for not just trade but also the establishment of “foreign concessions” that essentially operated as inland colonies (Jiang 1938 [2017]).

Beyond the typified procedures of war losses and treaties signing, two instances provide a fuller picture of Western colonialist influences on China, illustrating on the one side, the extent of trauma brought with it *and* on the flip side, the deep ambivalence and dilemmas associated with its Christian “civilizing mission.” Such backgrounds are crucial to mention because discussions of colonialism in Western discourses often overlook countries like China, leading to a common misconception that China is an atypical or exceptional case in European colonialist history or even that it does not “qualify” as a “proper victim” of colonialism. Yet in reality, the colonial experience in China bears varying resemblances to other colonized lands. The only exception is that also as a general rule, Western colonizers treated “greater” or more “civilized” countries like China with more respect and a more cautious attitude, such that the *extent* of dilemmas and trauma that colonialism brought to China was not *as* destructive or literally annihilating as it did for many others (Karl 2018).

First, in 1860 and again 1900, allied troops of European powers—first time the British-French delegation and second the Eight-Nation Alliance—pillaged and burned down the royal Old Summer Palace (圆明园 *yuanmingyuan*) known for its national treasures and hundreds of exquisite gardens and architecture. Given the grandeur of the site, it took 3,500 soldiers to set the entire palace ablaze, with the fire lasting three days. Dozens of governors, eunuchs, and maids committed suicide at the scene, and over 300 royal servants who were unable to escape perished in the flames. Chinese sources estimate that 1.5 million treasures were looted, while some English-language sources report up to 4 million (Egmont Hake 1884[2018]). The scale and destruction of this event were devastating to the Chinese people, who have since coined the phrase “the burning of the Old Summer Palace” (火烧圆明园 *huo shao yuanmingyuan*) to collectively remember this incident (Jiang 1938 [2017]). In fact, the destruction appeared shocking and tragic even to the perpetrating European armies themselves. As a British captain of the Anglo-French army recalls (Egmont Hake 1884[2018]):

You can scarcely imagine the beauty and magnificence of the places we burnt. It made one’s heart sore to burn them; These places were so large, and we were so pressed for time, that we could not plunder them carefully.

Second, research on the history of higher education in pre-Communist China, including studies of Chinese sociology history, often emphasizes the positive influences of Christian universities on China’s educational and academic development in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Chiang 2019). Between the 1920s and 1940s,

US-initiated Christian universities such as Yenching University (now Peking University), St. John's, Hujiang, Lingnan, and Nanking (now Nanjing University), offered comprehensive curricula in sociology and bilingual instruction. These institutions often had faculty who graduated from top graduate programs in the US and Britain like LSE, Oxford, Chicago, Columbia, Princeton, Harvard, Cornell (Yan 2010) and they themselves were well-recognized in the West as world-class institutions (C. Li 1987). Notably, Tsinghua College (now Tsinghua University) played a critical role in facilitating China's international learning. It was initially founded jointly by the American and Chinese governments using Boxer indemnities as a preparatory school for overseas studies in the West. For example, China's most renowned sociologist Fei Xiaotong (PhD LSE under Malinowski) and his teacher, social-biologist Pan Guangdan (Dartmouth and Columbia, studied under Nobel-winning geneticist T.H. Morgan), both benefited from the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship (Tsinghua Sociology 2010).

However, considering the temporal era's backdrop, there was an explicit colonial context featuring the "civilizing mission" and imperialist ambitions (C. Li 1987). These universities were established by American missionary forces who fundamentally believed that Christian conversion was the ideal, if not the sole, path for people to develop morality and civility (C. Li 1987). More saliently and directly, the US became a leading force in establishing Christian universities in China partly due to a strategic consideration to compete with other imperialist powers, especially the Japanese and also the Europeans, who were similarly engaging in educational causes in China at the time (C. Li 1987). For Japan and the US, there is extensive

documentation showing that their vision of educating the Chinese was to win the hearts and minds of China's most promising pupils and future intellectuals, who would ideally develop favorable and appreciative attitudes toward their cultures and values(C. Li 1987).

Most characteristically, the Boxer indemnity program was a direct product of such a vision and well reflects the dilemmas and ambivalence in evaluating colonialist endeavors. The Boxer Indemnity Scholarship, together with the founding of Tsinghua, drew on US President Theodore Roosevelt's decision, upon reading a persuasive letter written by Illinois University President Edmund J. James in 1906, to waive much of the indemnities China owed the US following the 1901 Boxer Rebellion, and to use the parts that China had already paid to the US to fund Chinese students for overseas studies in the US. To reiterate a famous quote from the letter:

China is upon the verge of a revolution...The nation which succeeds in educating the young Chinese of the present generation will be the nation which for a given expenditure of effort will reap the largest possible returns in moral, intellectual and commercial influence.

Remarkably, the quote is often endorsed today by universities like MIT and UIUC to highlight their longstanding engagement with China (MIT 2017; UIUC n.d.). But even in this one single sentence, one could peek into the potential contexts—and indeed these are elaborated in the full letter—that 1) there are other nations that are also trying to educate the young Chinese” and that the US shall become that nation,

and 2) while the US bears no ill intentions for China and may genuinely hope for the “friendship”, “bonds”, and “mutual knowledge” between the two nations—to quote the phrasings in the letter, a fundamental motive for the US to invest in Chinese education is to expand its own influence upon China and to “reap returns” on both intellectual and economic fronts. Elsewhere in the same letter, for example, one reads:

We should today be controlling the development of China in that most satisfactory and subtle of all ways, —through the intellectual and spiritual domination of its leaders.

Furthermore, an elephant in the room that mainstream sources on the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship rarely address is what the “Boxer Indemnities” exactly are and how they came about (Hunt 1972). Often, if the initial cause of the indemnities is mentioned at all, it is an extremely brief description regarding compensations that the Chinese government owed to Western countries after the “Boxer Rebellion”. Some sources also mention, without further explanations, fees for “the dispatch of combat troops for the Chinese government” and compensations for losses suffered by Western and Chinese Christians as well as churches. Indeed, when the historical context around the scholarship is discussed, more focus is placed on the apparent magnanimity of Western countries like US, Japan and France in willingly forfeiting parts of the indemnities for educational causes, and at times, also controversies within the US about whether Roosevelt’s decision to waive part of the indemnities was overly forgiving or friendly.

However, if one takes a deeper look into the historical emergence of the Boxer Rebellion and the associated indemnities, historians in both Chinese and English-language worlds agree that the Rebellion was a grassroots and nation-wide anti-imperialist, pro-Qing government, and anti-Christianization movement (Jiang 1938 [2017]; Hammond 2023). It broke out due to various direct exploitations and invasions experienced by ordinary Chinese peasants vis-à-vis foreign powers and Chinese people who gained privileges and domination after their Christian conversion. Of course, these descriptions only reflect a partial picture, as there were also numerous poor and helpless children, women, and elderly who trusted Jesus for peace yet were slaughtered indiscriminately during the 1900 Boxer uprising. Both English and Chinese sources estimate the casualties to be about 200 to 400 foreign missionaries and over 20,000 Chinese Christians.

Doubtless, these killings should never have occurred. However, it appears to be a different question whether this massacre justifies the follow-up decision by Western powers to marshal an Eight-Nation Alliance army towards Tianjin and then China's capital Beijing, arguing that the Chinese government had not been effective in putting down the Rebellion and that they therefore had to "intervene" to address the issue themselves. This led to the capture of both cities and the forced fleeing of the royal family to Rehe province. Witnessing the continuous defeat of the Chinese army in the battles, the Chinese government had to sue for peace. This led to the signing of the Boxer Protocol with 13 Western countries, which was subtitled as a "Peace Agreement" between "the Great Powers" and "China."

One major demand in the Protocol is what later became known as the Boxer Indemnities, which involved an astronomical sum: 450 million taels, or 16,785 tons of silver plus 4% interest over 39 years, totaling 36,625 tons of silver, estimated to be worth \$320 billion in today's market (Carter 2022). Moreover, in addition to the indemnities, multiple forms of punishment were imposed against Chinese officials and people. Articles II and X specified the death, exile, or life-imprisonment penalty for over 100 national and local government officials that the Westerners deemed "complicit" or ineffective in crushing the Boxers. Article X stipulated a new national edict that permanently and categorically imposed the death penalty on any Chinese citizen found to have "membership in any anti-foreign society" (*Boxer Protocol* 1901).

Given the range of contexts and practices surrounding the Boxer Rebellion, Protocol and Indemnities, it is extremely difficult not to conceive of the whole incident as colonialist and imperialist encroachment of China. This view is not only widely shared among the Chinese people and many serious historians in the West (Silbey 2012; Hammond 2023; Jiang 1938 [2017]), but also by Mark Twain (Twain 2006) in his radically anti-imperialist statements during a 1900 speech in New York:

Why should not China be free from the foreigners, who are only making trouble on her soil?... China never wanted foreigners any more than foreigners wanted Chinamen, and on this question I am with the Boxers every time...I am a Boxer too, for I believe in driving him out of our country.

Despite all this, in mainstream Western discourses, the imperialist aspect of the event remains much lesser known or acknowledged. Some narratives one-sidedly emphasize the Boxers' attacks against Christians and gloss over the invasive actions of the Western powers and the harshness of the Protocol contents (US Dept of State 2009). Most commonly, the much more benign outcome of the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship is remembered and celebrated as a favorable act of friendship between the Chinese and the Americans, while the imperialist tragedies and traumas behind them, are neglected and forgotten (UIUC n.d.; MIT 2017).

With the above discussions of the two instances of the Burning of the *yuan ming yuan* and the complexities and dilemmas surrounding missionary higher education in China, it is crystal clear now that China was not only once severely affected by colonialist and imperialist forces, and also importantly, that even as of today, likely for reasons such as China's Communist and one-party political stature and the country's rising economic power that has often been viewed as a threat to Western countries, China has not been successful in enlisting itself to the membership proper of Global South countries and/or marginalized ethnic-racial groups (e.g., indigenous people, Black individuals) that the West recognizes as having seriously "wronged" or colonized in modern history.

Against all these colonialist backgrounds and collective memories, it becomes sensible why the Chinese nation overall and Chinese intellectuals in particular largely identify with a realist and evolutionist understanding of global power relations. Having experienced firsthand the cruelty and self-interestedness of foreign powers, it would be preposterous to hold the illusion that Western powers would prioritize a truly

“civilizing mission” where they aim to serve the interest or improve the livelihood of non-Western people for the latter’s own benefit, even though many of their individual citizens could bear such truly altruistic and lofty motives. By the same token, it *does not make sense to* resort to Western countries for “justice”, since “justice” or morality, to the mind of the Chinese, only applies among those who are willing to follow the rules of civility, and yet Western powers made it overly clear to China, through their imperialist actions, that they would not follow such rules unless China also has a similar level of material and military power as their equals.

These sentiments are practically universally shared among contemporary Chinese people and intellectuals alike, well illustrate by the household Chinese phrase “落后就要挨打” (*luo hou jiu yao ai da*, literally “the backward will get beaten.”) The Chinese government adopted this phrase from the USSR during Mao’s era to raise national awareness about the traumas and lessons from early modern Chinese history, and to emphasize the importance of pursuing self-strengthening and national excellence to prevent the recurrence of similar events.

Indeed, in 1901, right after the Eight-Nation Alliance’s occupation of Beijing and the signing of the Boxer Protocol, when China was beginning to be “carved up like a melon” (*gua fen* 瓜分) by foreign powers, late Qing China's leading intellectual Liang Qichao published 灭国新法论 (*mieguo xinfa lun*, On New Methods for Destroying Countries), in which he saliently argued (Liang [1901] 1994):

近二百年来，所谓优胜人种者，其灭国之手手段略见一斑
矣。[...]两平等者相遇，无所谓权力，道理即权力也；两

不平等者相遇，无所谓道理，权力即道理也。彼欧洲诸国与欧洲诸国相遇也，恒以道理为权力；其与欧洲以外诸国相遇也，恒以权力为道理。此乃天演所必至，物竞所固然，夫何怪焉？夫何忍焉？所最难堪者，以攘攘优胜之人，托于岌岌劣败之国，当此将灭未灭之际，其将何以为情哉？其将何能已于言哉？

(The past two hundred years have witnessed a remarkable variety of methods by which the so-called superior races have been annihilating other civilizations.[...] When two equals meet, power is irrelevant; reason itself is power. When two unequals meet, reason is irrelevant; power itself is reason. When European countries interact with each other, they always resort to reason as power. However, when European countries interact with non-European ones, they always resort to power as reason. This is an inevitable outcome of natural selection, a fundamental principle of survival of the fittest. Why should we be surprised by this? Why should we be resentful? The most unbearable aspect is that people who boast of their excellence find themselves entrusted to a precarious, declining nation. In this state of impending yet incomplete destruction, what kind of emotions can they possibly feel? How could they refrain from speaking out?)

To the contemporary readers especially if she is a Western social scientist, Liang's remarks above present an uncanny marriage of anti-colonialism and social evolutionism—or to mention the term more directly, social Darwinism. In Western discourses and globally, it is an understatement to say that social Darwinism as a theoretical framework and intellectual trend has fallen out of favor. More critically, it has been completely discredited and rejected as a pseudoscientific ally to racist ideologies in European science history and, most notably and tragically, as a tool for literal racial annihilation during the Holocaust of World War II.

However, the context differs significantly for early 20th-century China and for several other non-Western nations (e.g., Iran, Japan, Turkey), where Herbert Spencer's work was notably popular and selected as a top choice for translation and integration into their intellectual currents (Connell 2007). It could lead to other interpretations for other countries—for example there is a tendency towards using the theory to justify for imperialist expansions in Japan. However, at least in the case for China, it is certainly *not* used to inspire the types or forms of imperialist or racist types of thinking that the Europeans are normally or increasingly exclusively would make associations with.

In particular, social Darwinism was used as a theory that for nation or civilizational saving when people feel that the entire country is the verge of being annihilated by Western powers. The idea here is simple: the rules are cruel for civilizational survivals, and the civilizations that are “better” or “superior” or have more power could rise to dominate or even, any time at their will, destroy others. If we, as those that are on the currently more “backward” or weaker side of civilizational

competitions do not wake up to this harsh reality and start improving or strengthening ourselves, our civilization or nation could and likely will be destroyed.

I intentionally avoided mentioning “China” in the previous paragraph as an experimental attempt to actually “*decolonize*” our thinking: When Europeans talk about what social Darwinism is, they never need to say “in Europe, social Darwinism means X and Y and Z.” Instead, they simply say “social Darwinism means X and Y and Z”. That is, they have the right to define what social Darwinism is, and as a result could impose their indeed provincial understanding of it but without contextual qualifiers. However, if only we are to step back a little to think about the possible implications of the core statements themselves alone: “survival of the fittest” and “natural selection”, and if we are able to collectively run the thought experiment of assuming that there has never been other historical and contextual associations the Europeans have witnessed in relation to these statements and theories, how would we react to these notions used as metaphors or regularities for summarizing patterns about civilizations, nations, and/or racial-ethnic groups?

The readers could have your own answers about the results of your thought experiment, but for the Chinese and likely multiple other countries at the time that also saw their nations as being on the verge of distinction, they found this explanation was a most enlightening and insightful way for them to both make sense of what has been happening to them, and just as importantly, to devise ways to respond to these tragedies and impending threats of destruction that they were experiencing. For example, as historian Yin Dexiang noted when commenting

of leading late Qing dynasty scholar-official Guo Songtao says

学者尹德翔在论郭嵩焘时有言：“社会达尔文主义既可以为西方先进国家的殖民征服提供口实，也可以为落后国家和人民所利用，表现为一种自强和斗争的理论。”此言中关于国家、人民的“先进”、“落后”概念固然有待商榷（按：技术可分先进、落后，文化就很难作如此区分，文化有强弱，却不能依强弱定价值上的优劣），但其对社会达尔文主义在中国的意义揭示甚明。

Scholar Yin Dexiang said when discussing Guo Songtao: “Social Darwinism can provide a pretext for the colonial conquest by advanced Western countries. It can also be utilized by backward countries and peoples, manifesting itself as a theory of self-reliance and struggle.” The concepts of “advanced” and “backward” regarding countries and peoples in this statement are certainly debatable (note: technology can be divided into advanced and backward, but it is difficult to make such a distinction in terms of culture. Cultures can be dominant or weak, but the value of a culture cannot be determined based on strength or weakness). Nonetheless, Yin clearly reveals the significance of Social Darwinism in China.

which is also the reason why that Liang Qichao, upon realizing such a tendency, left his Japanese mentors

For European whites, social evolutionism or the explicit notion of “superior” versus “inferior” races is tied to the historical atrocities and traumas that were committed by members from *their* group against *other* racial-ethnic groups. And the Europeans created the idea of race by considering their own group as the *superior* one (Hirschman 2004). However, for China and other non-European countries to whom the encounter with the idea of an international “world” at all is one that is forced upon them by the Europeans through their invasive behaviors (Karl 2018), the presence of a racial hierarchy condemned them to the *inferior* end, facing annihilation unless they reform themselves to catch up with the technologies, weapons and more generally the “civilizations” of the West, social evolutionism is associated with an entirely different connotation. In particular, social Darwinism provides a sensible framework to Liang Qichao, just as it does to other intellectuals and social thinkers at the time of China, that helps them not only make sense of what was going on in terms of the threats of civilizational and national survival that they are experiencing vis-à-vis Western imperialist and colonialist invasions. Moreover, social Darwinism empowers them to think that as long as people in their nations could alarm themselves to dangers of being annihilated and to strengthen themselves to rid themselves of the “inferior” racial status, they could also reverse their lots, saving their nation at least if not to excel in the global stage in the future.

It matters a lot whether one’s group is the one that is at the *higher* or *lower* end of the racial hierarchy. If it is those that are relegated to the lower side of the hierarchy that are making sense of their conditions through the logic of social Darwinism in order to alarm and motivate themselves for self-strengthening, this carries extremely

different connotations than if social Darwinism is propagated by those who consider themselves at the higher end of the hierarchy so that they could take it as a natural order that they exploit, harm, or destroying others. An analogy could be about the term “victim blaming”. The word carries a negative connotation in the English language likely because it is assumed that the subject stating such a blame is the *perpetrator*. However, in the Chinese case, if the same phrase is applied, it is the *victim* that is the subject: she is trying to consider how her own weakened conditions gave rise to the beatings that she suffers, especially given that her prior interactions with the perpetrators have fully convinced her that there is no way that the latter would simply decide to be moral and civil and stop the beating. The only strategy of survival for the Chinese, in other words, is to devise strategies to no longer be weak. This gain explains the widely popular notion of 落后就要挨打 (“*luo hou jiu yao ai da*” backwardness leads to being beaten) in China.

Perhaps another singularly important question is this: what if the Chinese, after gaining enough strength, is no longer a “victim” and has now acquired the capacity or power to subdue or supersede the Europeans or other groups. Will the intellectuals back then celebrate this as an “opportunity” to dominate others? There is a variety of sources of evidence to suggest that the answer is a definitive “no”. In the deep-rooted humanist thoughts in Confucianism, one of its most central theses, very much resembling Immanuel Kant’s moral law and categorical imperative but with no recourse to or presupposition of a Christian or supernatural being, is that “己所不欲勿施于人” (“Do not do to others what you would not want for yourself”). This is also

the philosophy that intellectuals of the early modern Chinese time were deeply immersed in and brought up with.

According to literary scholar (S. Li 2014), because Liang Qichao remains in his deepest roots a Confucian humanist, it is very difficult—and practically impossible—for Liang, even as he was immensely exposed to Western thinking, to accept the cruelly exclusionary and exploitative acts that stem from racism or social Darwinism as employed in the European context. For instance, during his travels in the US, Liang was shocked and disgusted by incidents of lynching. In Li's (S. Li 2014) analysis of Liang's U.S.-travel diary *Travels to the New Continent* (《新大陆游记》), he wrote pertaining to the Liang:

而在紧接着说到白人处死黑人的私刑“灵治”时，他则甚为厌恶：“当二十世纪光天化日之下，而有此惨无人理之举，使非余亲至美洲，苟有以此相语者，断非余之所能信也。”他在分析此事原因时满腔义愤：“无他，人种上之成见则然耳。美国独立檄文云：凡人类皆生而自由，生而平等，彼黑人独非人类耶？呜呼！今之所谓文明者，吾知之矣。”

(When he spoke about the lynching of black people by white people, he expressed great disgust: “That such a cruel and inhumane act could occur in broad daylight in the twentieth century—had I not come to America myself, I would never have believed it if someone told me about it.” Analyzing the reasons behind this, he was filled

with righteous indignation: "There is no other reason than prejudice based on race. The American *Declaration of Independence* states that all men are born free and equal—are black people not human beings? Alas! Now I understand what is meant by so-called civilization today.")

Particularly telling in the original Chinese text, the word “lynching” does not exist in Chinese and Liang resorted to his own transliteration of “灵治” (*ling zhi*) in his diary. Ironically, 灵治 originally denotes a form of spiritual healing in Taoism and yet it comes to represent “白人处死黑人的私刑” (literally, private corporate punishment where white people execute black people), a wordy explanation in Chinese that only highlights the foreignness and grotesqueness of the concept of “lynching” to non-English cultures in general and to Liang alike.

Here, one not only see the remarkable levels of sympathy that Liang showed towards Black people in lynching. But also, again very subtly but importantly, there is yet a moment of “double standard” that he is applying here. Specifically, in his writing of *New Methods for Destroying Nations*, which is meant to be a formal, open essay addressed towards the *Chinese* to alarm them to the imperialist encroachment and possible annihilation of the Chinese nation-race, he explicitly mentioned “夫何怪焉？夫何怼焉？” (“Why should we be surprised by this? Why should we be resentful?”) Yet here, regarding the atrocities against non-Chinese people—in this case black people and elsewhere too when writing of the intervention of the US against Colombia on the Panama issue, Liang holds Wester powers to the standards of morality and

expresses anger and indignation against their oppression and atrocities. Such a “double standards” is again similar to the adapted spread of social Darwinism in China. For the Chinese, a stringent criterion and an emphasis on self-improvement is held against one’s own nation. Indeed, Liang turned away from his Japanese mentors in his later life, when he witnessed that the adoption of Spencer and Darwin’s evolutionist theory was transformed in Japan to facilitate imperialist (and now indeed racist in the European sense of the word) thinking to justify for their attempted invasion and imperialist domination of Asia.

Hence there are at least three very crucial distinctions in the context where social Darwinism was perceived and adopted in European racial science versus in China.

Second, there appears to be substantial differences in whether racial hierarchies are assigned based on the inherently unchanging biological category in China versus Europe. In all the Chinese-language sources I see in terms of the circulation of Darwin and Herbert Spencer, both of which being the forefront of Western thinking for China at the time, I do not see any emphasis on the idea of racial hierarchies as being specifically related to biology and hence being irreversible. In other words, while it is certainly the case that in European race science and particularly in Nazi ideology, there is a strong notion that race is being inherent and biological, which then permanently attaches specific racial categories to unchangeable status, it appears that in early modern Chinese intellectual discussions of (social) Darwinism, biology play a far less important role. It is true that there is the idea of the “Sick man of East Asia” [东亚病夫] one racist notion against the Chinese in relation to their biological body

that they are weak and ill. However, as it is well illustrated by a lyric in the contemporary Taiwanese popular singer Jay Chou's 双截棍(*shaugn jie gun*, Nunchucks, (the) “东亚病夫的招牌, 已被我一脚踢开” (*dongya bing fu de zhaopai, yi beiwo yijiao tika* I have kicked away the sign of the sick man of East Asia), even for such a more body-related imagery, in Chinese people's own understanding, one is being called such a name due to the social and economic standing or condition of one's nation, which also means that once these external social conditions are reversed, this racist name no longer applies to oneself. Also notably, in Chinese, the distinction similarly exists between the two words of race (种族 *zhongzu*) and ethnicity (民族 *minzu*) where race is defined more in terms of phenotypes while ethnicity culture. However, the existence of different racial groups does not mean that there shall be a hierarchy between them, let alone one that permanently predefines one's position within it.

In short, precisely *because of* their first-hand understandings—not only cognitively as in moral principle but also experientially as in collective national *memories*—of the negative consequences associated with their countries' “weakness” or “backwardness” vis-à-vis the West in modern history overall and in social sciences as one specific mirror, the vision for many non-Western scholars is not to “lament” or “bemoan” experiences of marginalization (Zhou 2021; Titarenko and Zdravomyslova 2017) but to “strengthen oneself”—to borrow the signature slogan of “self-strengthening” (自强) in late Qing West-learning movement (洋务运动 *yangwu*

yundong , literally “foreign affairs movement”)¹² since the second-half of the 19th century (Qin and Zhou 2023).

This is particularly true if the nation or civilization is one with a long history that has traditionally likened itself to “glory” or “strength” such as the Chinese, the Iranians, the Japanese, the Russians, and the Turks (Yuan 1843; Talattof 2015; Huntington 1996; Toland 2003), and believes in its own potential to stand up in the world stage as a powerful player vis-à-vis the West notwithstanding its temporary setbacks. The case is less true if the nation is historically less powerful or a subordinate group within a dominant country. In the latter cases, the trauma and damages could be more devastating to the point of sustained exploitation and/or literal annihilation—as in the scandalous case of Belgium King Leopold II against the Congolese. Partly, this is due to the differential treatment that the Europeans imposed on different civilizations/groups depending on their perception of the level of “civility” or “humanity” of the colonized (Said 1978). Furthermore, there is another layer associated with national territorial and state responsibility in the specific case of

¹²This movement has current popular translations into English as “self-strengthening movement” and “Westernization movement,” neither of which I find satisfying. “Self-strengthening” is somewhat apt because “自强求富” (*zìqiáng qiúfù*, literally “strengthen oneself and seek prosperity/wealth”) is the major slogan of the movement. However, I see no substantive reason to single out the “self-strengthening” aspect over the “wealth/prosperity seeking” pursuit for the translation. Additionally, the movement’s original name, 洋务运动 (*yángwù yundòng*, literally “foreign affairs movement”), is not revealed in the “self-strengthening” translation. As for “Westernization,” this appears at first sight closer to the idea of “foreign affairs” but can actually be quite misleading for the specific mentalities that underlie this movement. Within the leaders of 洋务运动, there was indeed a small segment of elites and officials who embraced what in English would be understood as “Westernization,” namely the adoption of certain core *values* and *cultures* from the West. However, most practitioners of the 洋务运动 (*yángwù yundòng*) had an explicit vision *against* “Westernization”, believing that China’s learning of the West should focus exclusively on the material aspects, namely science and technology for economic and military power, whereas Chinese culture and philosophy are by no means “weaker” than Western ones and should be actively preserved in such “foreign affairs movements.” I call it the “West-learning movement” for lack of a better word choice here. It is still a poor translation because there is a set phrase, 西学 (*xī xué*), with a more scholarly-focused meaning for “west-learning.”

minority groups within settler colonial countries, such as indigenous and black people in the US and Canada or aboriginals in Australia. The post-WWII modern world is built around the assumption that a country's government is normatively responsible for protecting the basic rights of its citizens. currents of anti-racism and diversity movements might, seen from historical and contemporary experiences, lead to certain degrees of actual improvement or “uplifting” of their status quo.

It is not that non-Western intellectuals do not welcome justice-centered programs like postcolonial criticism. In China, for example, even among the most incisive critics of American identity politics, there are affirmative approvals of the *intentions* of knowledge decolonization and global inclusivity (S. Liu 2023; Zhao 2018). However, there is a clear schism in episteme and moral stance between local Chinese sociological and postcolonial discourse in that unlike prominent postcolonial sociologists who, as already noted, are mostly West-bred and West-based and accordingly for whom criticisms of the West largely mean internalist *self*-reflexivity and taking initiatives from one's own (Western) side, the same behavior of anti-Eurocentric criticism—such as seeking “justice” against colonialist sufferings or lamenting the “marginalization” or “exclusions” of autonomous traditions—means relying on and/or expecting an external (Western) *Other* to address one's own problems.

Behind the contrasts: Indigenization through Western Learning

Local Chinese sociologists well remember and richly document Park's 1930s visit to Yenching College in Beijing (now Peking University or PKU), highlighting his

contributions to Chinese sociology—particularly its “human ecology” tradition—in Chinese-language publications. Discussions are present in articles (Lu 2009; Sun 2005; Yue and Xiong 2023b), book chapters, books, and even the department chronology of PKU (2020) Sociology’s official website. China’s most distinguished sociologist and founder of contemporary Chinese sociology, Fei Xiaotong (2002), wrote a series of memoir essays between 1998 and 2000 to honor Park as a centerpiece in rebuilding Chinese sociology after 1980. Biographically, Fei was an undergrad at PKU during Park’s visit. And over five decades later in these memoirs, Fei identifies Park as a key influence on his understanding of sociology, saying for example “My knowledge of sociology and of how to do sociology is in fact influenced by Mr.[Teacher] Park¹³” (我所学到的社会学以及怎样去搞这门学科，实际上受了派克老师的影响). Fei vividly recalls the striking impression of the opening statement that Park made during his first lecture on Sociological Research Methods: “I’m not here to teach you to read books. I’m here to teach you to write books”. In 2002 PKU(2002) released an edited volume 《社区与功能：派克、布朗社会学文集及访学记》 (*Community and Function: Sociological Essay Collections and Scholarly Visits of Park and Radcliffe-Brown*) that compiled two books initially published in 1936 following the visits of Park and Radcliffe-Brown. Importantly, all this literature exists only in Chinese so far. (see Figure 9)

¹³ He referred to Park as “派克老师”, which literally translates to “Teacher Park”. This is a standard way for pupils to honorifically address their teachers in Chinese. The closest English expression here is “Mr. Park”, but for the specific context of pupil-mentor relations.

In English, except for paragraph-length accounts in Hong Kong scholar (H. F. Chen 2018) monograph on Chinese sociology, and two featured papers in a recent volume on China's urban studies (Forrest, Ren, and Wissink 2019), Park's ties to China remain little known beyond sporadic, one-word mentions in his biographies (Shils 1996). Furthermore, In the postcolonial and US-centered anti-racist discourse, these scholars' contributions have been increasingly neglected and oftentimes explicitly denounced. It is common for Park, for example, to be mentioned in postcolonial critics' texts with a negative tone and for them to say that he visited the Third World in order to –and here the contemporary author would put this word into double quotation marks—“uplift”—people there (Meghji 2021).

究竟什么是本土？经验可能当然是我们中国的问题。那理论我们试图要基于本土提出能解释我们自己经验的理论，但为什么说不是说关起门来？因为社会学说一千道一万它是舶来的，什么是 social structure？Structure 它的核心的测量是什么？国外已经发明这么好的工具，我们为什么不用？

What exactly is local/indigenous? The empirical aspect might of course be questions unique to China. When it comes to theory, we try to propose theories based on local experience that can explain our own experiences. But why is it that we *can't just close the door and talk among ourselves*? Because sociology, no matter how you look at it, is *an imported concept*. What is social structure? What is its core

measurement? *Foreign countries have already invented such good tools, why don't we use them?*

For about a semester during my freshman year, I mistook 涂尔干 (tu er gan) and 迪尔凯姆 (di er kai mu) as two separate French sociological figures with strikingly similar views including solidarity and cohesion. It was only after wondering about the uncanny coincidence that both wrote a book titled *On Suicide* that I started to connect the dots and found out from an internet search that they were both the same person, “Durkheim.” Similarly, a close friend of mine explained their erstwhile confusion of Max Weber (马克思 韦伯), Marx (马克思), and Karl Marx (卡尔 马克思), unsure if they were one, two, or three distinct German authors. They vividly remembered their amazement upon discovering that 马克思—universally known to the Chinese as a revolutionary thinker and author of *Das Kapital*—had such a vast intellectual range as to also focus on bureaucracy and rationality while coining the term “charisma”.

The paradoxes of exclusion

The postcolonial aura and its discontent

The observation that Western premium exists in the social sciences, where Western integration is associated with higher academic prestige and recognition, is not new. However, the question now confronting us probes the issue a step further: how shall one account for the reproduction of this pattern within discourses on non-Western sociologies?

One natural starting point, which has been raised by numerous scholars in literary and cultural studies, pertains to an apparent irony or critique characterizing the postcolonial strand: the institutionalization of postcolonial studies in Western academy (Dalleo 2016). As a field of study that originated and maintains its strongest presence in the literary discipline, postcolonialism thrives predominantly in countries that were former centers of Anglo-European colonial power despite its purported aim to destabilize and subvert such power. Furthermore, it is created and pioneered by diasporic intellectuals like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak (Bhabra 2014a), all of whom were educated and write in English despite their Middle Eastern or Indian ancestry and work(ed) as celebrity professors in top-tier US universities. As Dirlik(Dirlik 1994) famously remarks in the opening line of his essay “The Postcolonial Aura”, his answer to the question “Where exactly...does the ‘post-colonial’ begin?”—an answer he considers “only partially facetious”—is “when Third World intellectuals have arrived in the First World academe”.

Akin to the scene of postcolonial sociology but in a way arguably more radical or extreme, postcolonial literary criticism obtains institutionalized prestige and recognition right in the intellectual center of its home discipline precisely by “explicitly positioning itself as oppositional to the field’s institutionalized mainstream” (Dalleo 2016). The pattern here resembles the contours of postcolonial sociology: the latter’s prominence in representing non-Western sociologies can relate to a similar marriage of an institutional anchorage in Western academy with anti-Eurocentric criticisms. Meanwhile, the sociology case is less radical and more rigidly reproduces existing structures of Western premium in scholarship. In literature,

founding figures of postcolonial studies are first-generation diasporas born in Global South countries, many of whom did not live in the developed world until their college or doctoral studies; and they successfully occupy the center stage of their discipline in the US. In sociology, as noted in the previous section, one witnesses either international academic migration from semi-periphery to developed nations or core figures hailing directly from Anglo-American birthplaces. Overall, for both disciplines, an irony appears where postcolonial criticism is rewarded with institutionalized recognition in Western academy.

Furthermore, the recognition of this irony is not a niche observation confined to experts of postcolonial studies. This contradiction is also readily apparent to academics from non-Western backgrounds, particularly those for whom English is not a primary language. In my interviews with Chinese-origin scholars on the hegemony of English and Western scholarship in global academia, discussions on potential ironies in postcolonial discourses often emerge as a recurrent theme. For instance, Lee, a US-based informant in Spanish literature, observes:

我不知道我这突然跳到那个 postcolonial studies, 他们说
其实就是现在比较最强势的几个学者, 你像 Homi Bhabha, 除
了他之外, 还有几个学者。虽然都是印度裔, 但是其实都是从小
在美国生活成长的, 我觉得还是会有一些不一样, 就他们的
跟他们的那个 postcolonial society 其实还是会有一些距离[...]虽
然有第三世界的族裔的背景, 但是其实在这边成长的。

(I don't know if I should suddenly jump to postcolonial studies. Some of the most dominant scholars now, for example Homi Bhabha—in addition to him, there are a few other scholars. Although they are of Indian origin, they actually grew up in the United States. Well, I think this is a little different: There is some distance between them and their postcolonial society [...] Although they have a Third-World ethnic background, they grew up here.)

Note that factually, Lee's description regarding Homi Bhabha is inaccurate: Bhabha grew up in India and moved to England for graduate studies, before securing academic positions first in England and then the US. This does not invalidate Lee's insight that postcolonialism represents a particular vision that distinguishes from the experiences of people who actually reside in Third-World countries. Further, the intuition still holds that successful postcolonial scholars tend to possess privileged access to and immersion in Western scholarship and society. Lee's observations highlight a distance between postcolonial scholars and the societies they discuss, a theme that is echoed and expanded upon by a qualitative sociologist Bao, whose critique of postcolonial frameworks proves even more blunt:

我：那您觉得美国学术界是他会和外面交流不封闭？

包：我觉得好像没有【笑】。我觉得他们非常的封闭，就比如说那个 postcolonial theory，他们一直说要做一种 relational sociology 嘛。说要和殖民地学术做对话。但是你看他们也没有

引进殖民地的知识分子写的东西——他们母语写的书过来。他们只是在英语世界内去讨论第三世界的东西。它还是在一个西方的世界观念下去做的一个学术，而不是说真的要引进其他国家的一些 knowledge。对，我觉得他们虽然自己说他们是 reflexive，但是我觉得他们一点也不 reflexive 【笑】。

(Me: You feel that American academy is not closed to communication with the outside world?

Bao: I don't really think so [laugh]. I think they are very closed-off. For example, postcolonial theory, they have always said that they want to do relational sociology, saying that they want to have dialogues with academics from colonized lands. But you see, they don't import things written by colonial intellectuals—books written in their mother tongue. They only discuss Third World things within the English-speaking world. It is still scholarship based on conceptions of the Western world, rather than really introducing some knowledge from other countries. Right, I think even though they say they are reflexive, I don't think they are reflexive at all [laugh].)

Here, Bao directly addresses the issues of “mother tongue” and the marginality of writings by intellectuals from “colonized lands” relative to postcolonialism. He also frames a postcolonial irony in his own terms: on the one hand, postcolonial theory proclaims to uphold inclusivity-oriented slogans, such as being “reflexive” or

“relational”. On the other, it fails to effectively implement these ideals, seldom introducing “knowledge” from the Third World and remaining confined to “Western conceptions”.

Indeed, Bao’s comments regarding discrepancies in advocacy and implementation echo several critics of postcolonial theory, who turn the latter into an object of sociological analysis pointing out elements of Eurocentrism in its operations (Wood 2001; Wallerstein 1997; McLennan 2006, 1998). More broadly, this dynamic embodies a common mechanism in intellectual debates: critics of an established order, such as postcolonial scholars, remain entangled with the very issue they critique (Bourdieu 1988).

An additional observation is notable regarding the quotes. For both Lee and Bao, postcolonial theory was not a planned focus of the interview but a topic they broached themselves when discussing English hegemony and/or hierarchies in global academia within their discipline. For Lee, she “didn’t know if [she] should jump to” postcolonial studies (from her then focus on Hispanic literature). For Bao, postcolonial theory served as his primary example to illustrate the “very closed-off” status of American academia (in his case, American sociology). Strikingly, according to my informants, it is not only that postcolonial scholarship carries an ironic dimension that contradicts its supposed imagery of inclusivity and openness. But such a contradiction is also associated with the perception of postcolonial studies as emblematic of Western privilege, even in comparison with general Western scholarship that does not tackle decolonization.

This finding, while unexpected at first, shall neither be underplayed nor overstated. In my further explorations with Bao, Lee and other Chinese sociologists, many confirmed their critical distance towards postcolonial and decolonial studies while supporting knowledge decolonization as an overall movement. Two broader issues emerge.

“Hypocrisies” of the global inclusivity agenda

My informants avoid sweeping accusations of Anglophone postcolonial studies as they appreciate the latter’s support for global inclusivity—mentioning, for example, its “良好初衷” (“good intentions”). Nonetheless, some clearly see an internal inconsistency or “a slight degree of hypocrisy” (“说它 hypocritic 是有一点”) that specifically troubles decolonial more than other subfields of Western sociology. An explanation I summarize and confirmed by sociology informants Ma, Bao, Liu and Nu, is as follows. Most Western sociologists who work on topics other than decolonization do not think or know much about the non-US or non-Western worlds. This can, of course, indicate a problem of parochialism. However, neither do they claim or pose a political stance to “advocate for” traditions in the Third World. It can appear (particularly) problematic, then, when First World-based postcolonial sociologists implement these claims and assume a “savior” or “spokesperson” role—even entirely inadvertently and in their best intentions—for what they consider as “excluded” scholarship created by Global South scholars. Simply put, decolonial authors may misrepresent local scholars’ perspectives while speaking for them. Moreover, their advocacy often leads to the promotion and further integration of their

own works into Anglo-American academia, with less to no tangible benefits to Global South communities.

The socio-psychological processes here resemble findings from a recent experiment on cultural appropriation, where participants show stronger disapproval when they feel cultural boundary-crossing extracts value for the “appropriator” without accruing benefits to the origin culture (Oshotse, Berda, and Goldberg 2024).

On the other hand, this analogy is only partially valid. Informants recognize the good intentions behind decolonization—mentioning, for example, its “良好初衷” (“good intentions”), which contrasts with the typically negative connotations of “appropriation”.

Also intriguingly, Bao disputes that the problem of appropriation applies. While definitions of cultural appropriation emphasize the distinction between appreciation and exploitation (Cruz, Seo, and Scaraboto 2024), Bao feels that postcolonial sociology rarely engages with non-Western knowledge to begin with, thereby nullifying the question of whether the engagement is appreciative or appropriative:

Cultural appropriation 不一定，毕竟它都没怎么去试图 bridge 本土的文化。这也是我觉得母语是很重要的问题，我总对 postcolonial 的文化资源比较存疑，它似乎并不在意本土的任何知识传统，只是借殖民地的名头为武器。

(It's hard to say if there's cultural appropriation. After all, it does not even try to bridge local cultures. This is also why I believe mother tongue is a very important issue. I always feel skeptical of the cultural resources of postcolonial. It does not seem to care about local knowledge traditions, but just borrows the colonial banner as a weapon.)

Besides insights on cultural appropriation, Bao's comments above invite a deeper-level query. Previously, Bao emphasized postcolonial scholars' attempts to engage with non-Western traditions through relational sociology, except that in practice it fails to import local-language, local-authored sociology. Yet in the preceding quote, the critique seems harsher: he alludes that postcolonial sociology only "borrows the colonial name as a weapon" and that it does not "seem to care about" local traditions. If the issue of mother tongue and local knowledge engagement has more to do with capacity, whether one "cares" appears to also touch on the intention or vision of the postcolonial enterprise. Is there an inconsistency or ambivalence in Bao's attitudes towards postcolonial scholarship? And what does he mean by a "weapon" here? What is the weapon supposed to serve? His answers below help clarify these questions:

我觉得 postcolonial study 的主要目的是对西方世界的知识体系权力结构的反思, 它关注 global inclusivity 是想通过对殖民行为的解创, 来达到以外部反思内部的目的。但至于说它有多大程度上关心殖民地本身发展, 我比较存疑, 这类研究可能要归

属到 development study 之类的学科里去吧。我之前说他不 reflexive 可能不准确，它对西方知识体系挺 reflexive 的，但是可能就不反思自己【笑】。

I think the main purpose of postcolonial study is to reflect on the knowledge system and power structure of the Western world. By paying attention to global inclusivity, it aims to dissect colonial behavior in order to reflect on the inside from the outside. But as to how much it cares about the development of the colonies themselves, I am skeptical. This type of research may be done in disciplines like development study. It was perhaps a little inaccurate for me to say earlier that it is not reflexive. It is reflexive towards Western knowledge systems, just not reflexive towards itself [laugh].

Bao's issues with postcolonial sociology extend beyond the dichotomy between incorporation versus appropriation, or interest-based considerations like academic standing and prestige. Instead, he suggests a more nuanced distinction, both sides of which are in alignment with the umbrella project of "global inclusivity". The actual study of and attention to the development of non-Western sociologies, according to Bao, is distinguished from critical reflections on Western knowledge structures. Decolonization focuses on the latter but is (much) weaker at the former. Ultimately, this critique-centered orientation reflects an inward-directed concern with the West: the non-Western "outside" is studied in order to *introspect* Western

structures and frameworks and not for the pursuit of knowledge from/about the Third World in its own end.

One illustrative example of this introspective bias is seen in Connell's celebrated *Southern Theory*, which earnestly attempts to introduce social theories from various non-European and Global South locations, including Australia, Africa, India, Iran, and Latin America. Despite the book's title and despite her repeated acknowledgment of her linguistic limitations—only being able to read English translations and dealing with selective translation of scholars' works—the reception of her book highlights a disparity. It is her critique of Euro-American traditions in Part I, rather than the substantive discussions of non-European theories in Parts II and III, that has garnered more attention and citations (Connell 2018). This pattern underscores the persistent inward focus in the cultivation and diffusion of decolonial scholarship, even in works striving for global inclusivity. Moreover, within postcolonial criticism, *Southern Theory* is already somewhat exceptional in terms of its coverage of non-Western traditions. Other pieces focus more exclusively on liquidating and redressing colonial and imperialist past of West and its entanglement with Western intellectual thought including the sociology discipline (Connell 1997; Bhabra and Holmwood 2021).

Extra writing difficulties with theorizing

My interviewees not only express dissatisfaction with postcolonial sociology's alleged insufficiency or superficial coverage of local scholarly traditions. Another frequently cited complaint about postcolonial scholarship stems from a paradoxical

reality related to its technical and intellectual demands: the challenges non-native English speakers face when reading about and writing on theoretically complex and discursive themes. Except for three US-based qualitative sociologists who previously worked as journalists before entering academia, most non-Anglo-origin I spoke with not only primarily conduct quantitative work but also consider interpretive-style qualitative—and especially theoretical—research to be more daunting in terms of articulation and writing. The paradox here is that postcolonial sociology, which relies heavily on theoretical discussions and primarily operates in English, can exclude non-native English-speaking scholars from the Global South from full participation more than many other subfields of sociology do. This is ironic by itself when decolonial scholarship aims to open up academic discourses to the Third World—including tackling linguistic inequalities as one of its precise goals (de Sousa Santos 2015).

[WILL FURTHER ILLUSTRATE]

[Argument summary](#)

In opening and diving into two parallel discourses on non-Western sociology, regional sociological development versus postcolonial criticism, this article achieved two main goals. First, I discussed the visibility disparities between the two discourses, illustrating in a variety of ways the marginality of research on non-Western regional sociological development, which are penned predominantly by local scholars whose primary working language is not English. I showed on the one hand, the relative dominance of postcolonial sociologists on Global South sociology, drawing on analyses of institutional recognitions, scholarly network formations, and quantitative metrics. On the other hand, using Chinese sociology as an example but also addressing

some other countries, I emphasized the impressive vibrancy of non-Western sociologies in their domestic languages and markets. I proposed the notion of “second-order recognition” to underscore the importance of qualitative and contextual awareness when creating and comparing metrics of academic evaluation.

Second, I established a structural homology between scholarly orientation, author background, and scholarly prestige across the two scholarly discourses. This framework led me to delve more deeply into the institutional, epistemic, and historical explanations for two apparent puzzles that arose from this homology. The first puzzle explores the epistemic and moral orientation differences between the postcolonial and local non-Western sociologists, questioning why local-based non-Western sociologists more often adopt an integrative and welcoming attitude towards Western scholarship, unlike the critical views held by largely West-based postcolonial sociologists. In response, I identified a vision of “*self-strengthening*” among many non-Western scholars, which emphasizes recognizing an actual gap in social science development and using Western learning to improve their status quo. Diving into the Chinese case, I suggested that this vision originates from 1) firsthand experiences of the cruel and ambivalent consequences of colonialism, leading to a realist and evolutionist view of international politics, and 2) a realistic (though likely temporary) shortage of existing intellectual resources and knowledge accumulation in local sociology, and the promise and need to first acquire Western scholarship in order to grow and enrich indigenous scholarship.

The second puzzle, which I termed the “paradox of exclusion,” observes how Western-dominated academic hierarchies in mainstream sociology appear to be

replicated within non-Western discourses between regional sociologies authored by local scholars and postcolonial sociology authored by West-based scholars.

Addressing this, I considered an analogy with postcolonial literary criticism, where a similar ironic dynamic has long been noted. I enriched this analysis by drawing extensively from interviews with Chinese-speaking scholars, who confirmed the general sentiment that postcolonial scholarship, despite its intentions to enhance global inclusivity, can be seen as “slightly hypocritical” or exclusionary. Beyond similarly noticing its major contributors as West-based and/or English-native-speaking scholars, my informants also noted its *de facto* internalist preoccupations with Western-related reflexivity and its lack of actual engagement with or introduction of writings from colonized lands in their mother tongues. Additionally, my informants pointed to the intellectual and linguistic sophistication required by theoretically intensive fields like postcolonial studies, which they also identified as a significant reason for its exclusivity vis-à-vis non-Western scholars who are non-native English speakers.

A path forward and reflexivity

Where disparities in reception and prestige exist between Western and non-Western sociology, and where a reproduced hierarchy within non-Western sociology distinguishes postcolonial from regional sociological discourses, many may believe it easier to analyze, critique, or reflect on such disparities than to change them. I think differently.

Historically, some of the defining events for the sociology discipline involve the shifting of the global center of the field from Western Europe to the US after

WWII (X. Chen 2019) and Talcott Parsons' translation of Max Weber's work to the Anglophone world through his D.Phil. studies in Germany. Neither seemed "easy" or "expected" at the time. In the late 19th century US sociology expanded institutionally without "any original ideas and intellectual systems" (Oberschall 1972) while well into the 1930s the field remained torn between its Progressivist Era social welfare ethos and the establishment of academic legitimacy. As for Parsons, he had never heard of Weber until his planned visit to Heidelberg, despite having studied at Amherst and LSE and having attended lectures of R. H. Tawney and Morris Ginsberg who both discussed the link between Protestant ethics and capitalism¹⁴ (Merton and Riley 1980).

Simply put, the transnational circulation of knowledge has been contingent on a nation's economic and cultural power, as well as the talents, serendipities, and will of individual scholars. Therefore, for everyday sociologists in the Global North, increased awareness—and ideally attention, translation, propagation, and application—of what I have demonstrated in this article to be the significant presence of peer research activities in the Global South could serve as a practical starting point. This shift can transform the current unidirectional flow of legitimacy recognition into a reciprocal exchange. Consequently, sociological scholarship from non-Western regions would gain broader recognition in mainstream sociology, while the latter would become more enriched with insights and perspectives from the former.

¹⁴ Their omission of Weber may surprise contemporary readers but is quite plausible given the historical reality. Weber was far from the only author of his time to propose the Protestant, non-utilitarian origins of capitalist development. Indeed, as Fukuyama (1992 [2006]) notes by citing numerous sources that Weber referenced, the idea was "so commonplace at the time" that Weber "felt the burden was on others to disprove it."

This vision and practice are relevant to all sociologists, regardless of their national-ethnic origin, political alignment, or research areas. Whether one feels an affective or moral affinity with the non-Western world, agrees with the postcolonial critique of center-periphery asymmetry as evidence of “injustice” or “exclusion,” or primarily engages in theoretical or empirical research, significant benefits are derived from learning about non-Western sociologies. Good ideas often emerge through the learning, bridging, or synthesizing of multiple thought traditions or fields—a point reiterated in various ways by classical and contemporary sociologists of knowledge, such as “the stranger” by (Simmel [1908] 2011), “marginal man” by (Park 1928), “marginality” by (P. Collins 1986), and “structural holes” by (Burt 2004). Additionally, at the core of academic life are the pursuits of prestige and recognition, and the organization of personal networks and communities for knowledge production and sharing (Merton [1942] 1973). Both of these drives motivate the exploration of ideas and work by those previously unknown, especially when there are indications—as in the case of the high domestic impact factors of Chinese sociology publications—that valuable contributions have been made in areas of one’s concern.

With their distinct structural positions and vantage points, postcolonial sociologists and local scholars are each undertaking initiatives that they believe are most beneficial and sensible for advancing non-Western sociology. However, while it is widely accepted that local scholars should not be presumed to know less—in fact, they likely “know more”—about what is most strategic and beneficial for their own scholarly communities, their thoughts and voices are underrepresented in the Anglophone world compared to those of Western-based postcolonial sociologists. The

latter, though well-intentioned, inadvertently presents an inaccurate depiction of non-Western scholars' epistemologies and standpoints. Mainstream discourse more frequently echoes anti-Eurocentric criticisms than it acknowledges a desire among non-Western scholars to actively pursue integration into mainstream sociology. It also knows less of a vision of "self-strengthening" that transcends grievances and focuses on learning from the West to enrich local traditions. In fact, to borrow an insight from postcolonial sociology, it can itself be a symptom of Western dominance that, despite the commonality and prevalence of such integrative attitudes across multiple Global South and non-Western countries, local scholars there often remain unaware that others share similar sentiments and assume their own experiences as singular or isolated (Bhambra 2014b).

As such, this work should not be misread as an unsympathetic dismissal or "exposé" of postcolonial sociology. As a beneficiary and indeed an active contributor to the movement myself—given my Third World origin and my anti-colonialist discussions vis-à-vis early modern Chinese history in this very text—I identify certain blind spots with an eye towards furthering the cause of decolonization. Undoubtedly, critiques against Western dominance—even in its more salient forms as "ethnocentrism" or "bias"—remain highly relevant for today's sociological academia. For instance, from my fieldwork alone, one informant mentioned that his Harvard professor discouraged his doctoral students from submitting to the International Sociological Association (ISA) because there are "many Southern scholars" there, while another in Scotland was told by her German-origin professor that she should only cite English-language publications since sources in other languages are

“unverifiable.” Nonetheless, this paper adopts a different angle as I consider it urgent to address internal heterogeneities within non-Western discourses for a more realistic and self-empowered portrayal. As such, when I point out ironies within postcolonial sociology, I do not imply that individual authors are at “fault” for these ironies. Indeed, it is precisely part of my argument that certain objective realities and standards determine disparities in the intellectual domain. To lament these disparities as “injustice” or to attribute them to specific external groups may not be the most strategic approach to opening social sciences towards the global community—at least for certain countries that have historically embraced self-imageries of glory and resilience and believe that they have the strength to embark on the journey of bridging gaps.

On a broader and more reflexive plane, insofar as the non-Western sociologies remain more peripheral compared to Western sociology—a fact evident from empirical analyses (Mosbah-Natanson and Gingras 2014; Torres and Alburez-Gutierrez 2022) and well-perceived by scholars from the South, it is unsurprising that contentions and critiques prevail regarding decolonization and global sociology (Moosavi 2023; R. Collins 1997; McLennan 2014, 1998; Wood 2001). Theorists have long held that when those in subordinate positions attempt to articulate their histories and experiences vis-à-vis those in power, controversies often emerge (Foucault 1980). It is also well-known that identity-based coalitions necessarily induce divisions within the identity as no one single segment or individual can fully represent the group (Merton 1972; Butler 2011). As (Chakrabarty 2000) illuminates, the provincializing of Europe is a multifaceted and open project, which can elicit disparate reactions and

demands depending on the geographic, cultural and linguistic identity of individual persons and nations.

Meanwhile, despite heterogeneities and internal divisions, there is a shared goal among sociologists toward global connectedness, integration, and inclusivity. As I have been trying to demonstrate, this goal is not insurmountable, if we, as sociologists of the Global North and South, collectively envision it as achievable and make even small adjustments to take an interest in each other's work. At the beginning of this discussion, I mentioned two examples of "objective" or structural changes in disciplinary orientation to showcase these possibilities. I conclude with an example on the "subjective" or epistemic and political side. In *The Second Sex* (de Beauvoir [1949] 2015), de Beauvoir wrote:

In the midst of an abstract discussion it is vexing to hear a man say: 'You think thus and so because you are a woman'; but I know that my only defence is to reply: 'I think thus and so because it is true,' thereby removing my subjective self from the argument. It would be out of the question to reply: 'And you think the contrary because you are a man'

How would de Beauvoir react if she learned that today, not only is what was "out of the question" during her time now perfectly acceptable, but that in intellectual discussions, women may now assert "I think this way because I am a woman" to enhance the authority of their statements?

Tables and Figures

Table 1: The number and percentage of references in various language sources in leading Chinese-medium sociology journals *Shehui* and *SHXYJ*

Panel A: *Shehui*

Language	abbre.	Freq	Percentage (%)
German	de	186	0.4307
English	en	18629	43.1387
French	fr	278	0.6438
Italian	it	1	0.0023
Japanese	ja	81	0.1876
Latin	la	1	0.0023
Russian	ru	11	0.0255
Chinese	zh	19239	44.5512
translated Chinese	zh_trans	4758	11.0180
	Total	43184	100.0000

Panel B: *SHXYJ*

Language	abbre.	Freq	%
German	de	217	0.3435
English	en	27247	43.1260
Spanish	es	3	0.0047
French	fr	275	0.4353
Italian	it	2	0.0032
Japanese	ja	198	0.3134
Latin	la	1	0.0016
Dutch	nl	1	0.0016
Norwegian	no	1	0.0016
Portuguese	pt	3	0.0047
Chinese	zh	28461	45.0475
translated Chinese	zh_trans	6771	10.7170
	Total	63180	100.0000

Table 2: Overall Metrics for Non-Western Regional Sociology vs Postcolonialism in Select Sociology Journals^a

Topic	Method ^b	Article count	Article prop	Mean citations per article	Article ^c	Top cited Journal	Citations
Non-Western Regional Sociology	TAK	127	0.2%	4.9	Alatas. S. F. (2009)	<i>curr sociol</i>	73
	TT	93	0.1%	4.0	Ramos Z. C. (2014)	<i>curr sociol</i>	20
Postcolonialism	TAK	525	0.9%	24.8	Quijano A. (2000)	<i>sociol theory</i>	1562
	TT	138	0.2%	32.4	Burawoy M. (1998)	<i>int sociol</i>	944
Other Topics	TAK	57,530	98.9%	46.8	DiMaggio & Powell (1983)	<i>amer sociol rev</i>	26534
	TT	57,946	99.6%	46.6	(As above)		
Totals	Journal Total	47	Article Total^c	58,175			

a. Data source: Scopus as of June 2024. Note that citations on Scopus (and Web of Science too) can be noticeably smaller than Google Scholar citation counts, although the general trends (e.g., relative rank of citations) remain similar.

b. Refers to strategies used to determine whether an article addresses the topic of concern. Topics are identified based on whether the title (“TT”) or title/abstract/keywords (“TAK”) of an article matches specific regular expression (regex) string patterns (e.g., “decolonization” for “postcolonialism” and “Japanese sociology” for “non-Western regional sociology”). See Appendix for more methodological details.

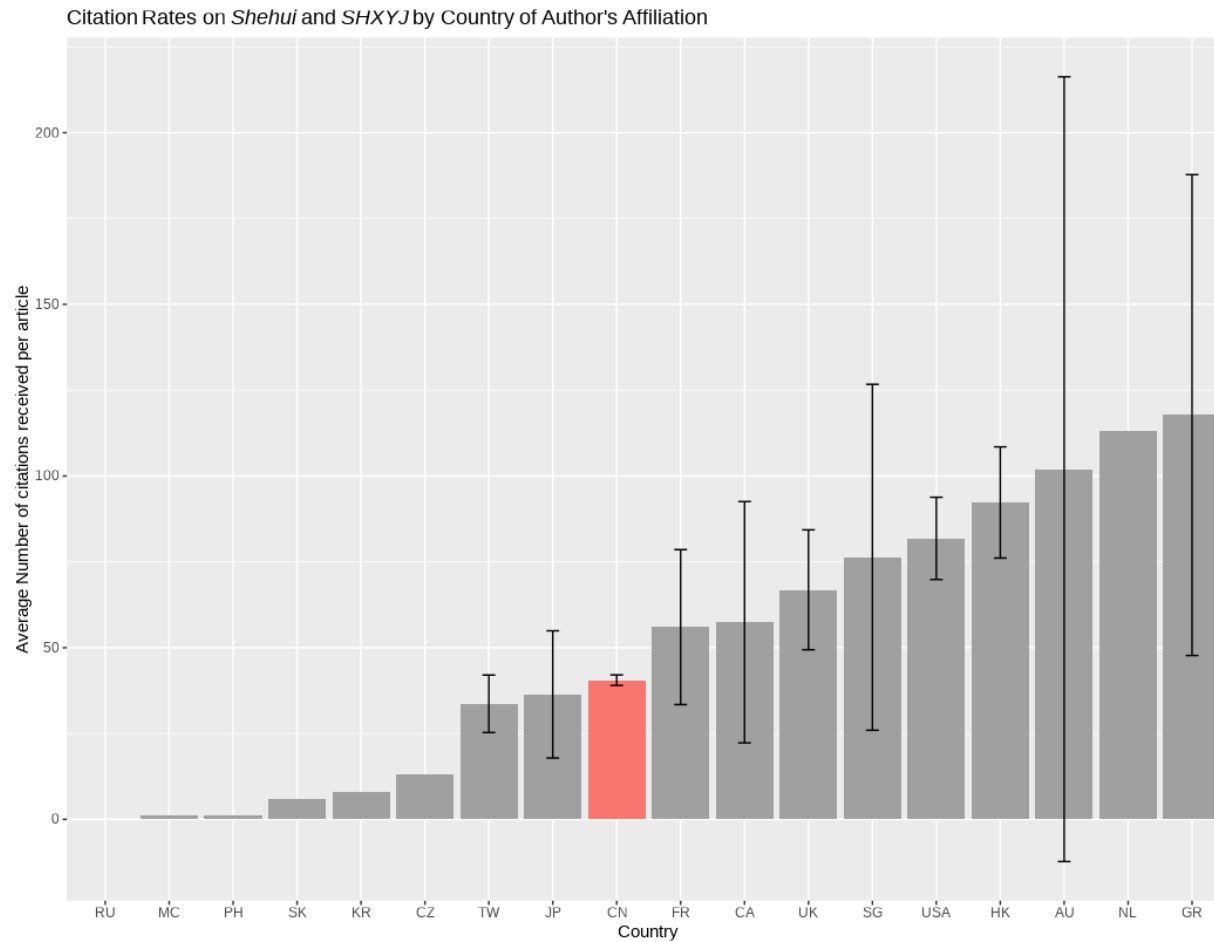
c. Article total does not equal the sum of the three topic types because there are articles classified under both postcolonial and regional sociology themes (7 for TAK and 2 for TT).

d. Article titles are Alatas. S. F. (2009), A Khaldunian exemplar for a historical sociology for the south. Ramos Z. C. (2014), Local and global communications in Chilean social science: Inequality and relative autonomy. Quijano A. (2000), Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America. Burawoy M. (1998), The extended case method. DiMaggio & Powell (1983), The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields.

Table 3 Strands of Anglophone scholarship on non-Western sociology

	Substantive focus	Regional sociological development	Decolonizing sociology
Scholarly Orientation	<i>Attitudes towards the West</i>	Humble and integrative	Critical and confident
Authors' Background	<i>Native Language</i>	Non-English	English or another European language
	<i>Working Language</i>	Mostly native languages; English for international audience	English
	<i>Origin location</i>	Developing country	Developed or semi-periphery country, including Anglophone
	<i>Current location</i>	Developing country of origin	Developed country, mostly Anglophone
Mainstream Recognition		Lower	Higher

Figure 1: Citation rates of published articles by author's country and region in leading Chinese-medium sociology journals *SHXYJ* and *Shehui* (1980-2021)



Note: Citation rate is calculated as the number of citations received per article. Country names from left to right are Germany, Netherlands, Australia, Hong Kong, USA, Singapore, UK, Canada, France, mainland China, Japan, Taiwan, Czech, South Korea, Philippines, Macao, Russia. Error bars for certain countries are inestimable because only one paper is published by authors based in those countries.

Figure 2: Changes in reference counts overtime by language source in leading Chinese-medium sociology journals *SHXYJ* and *Shehui* (1981-2021)

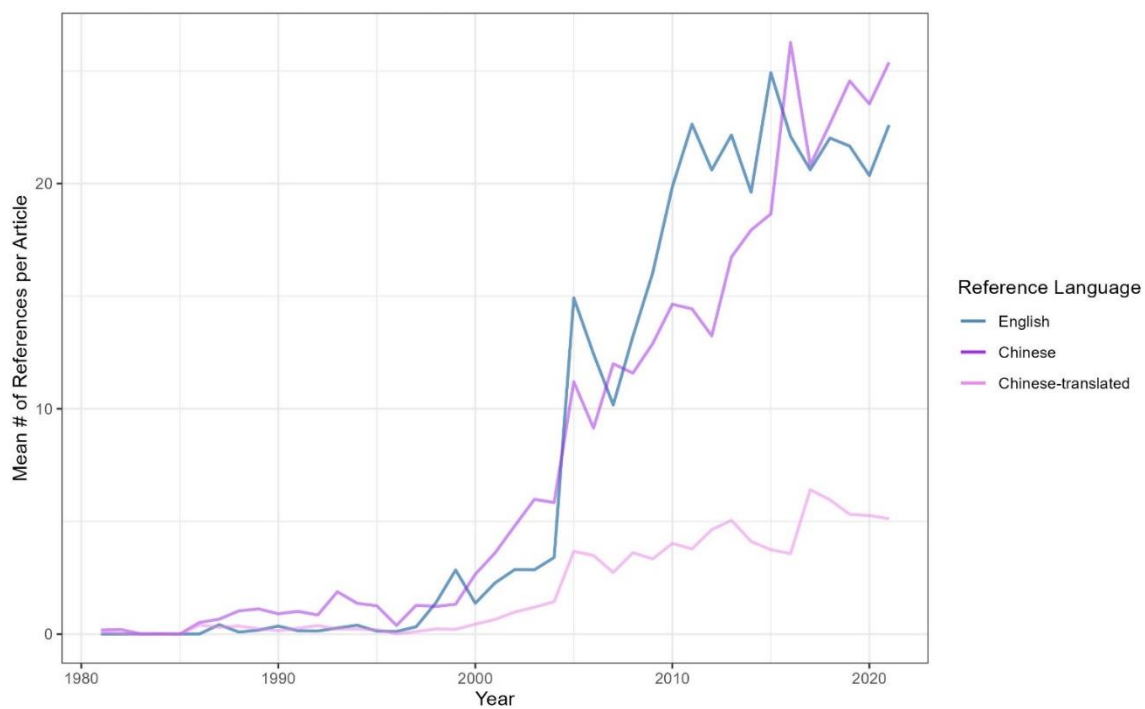
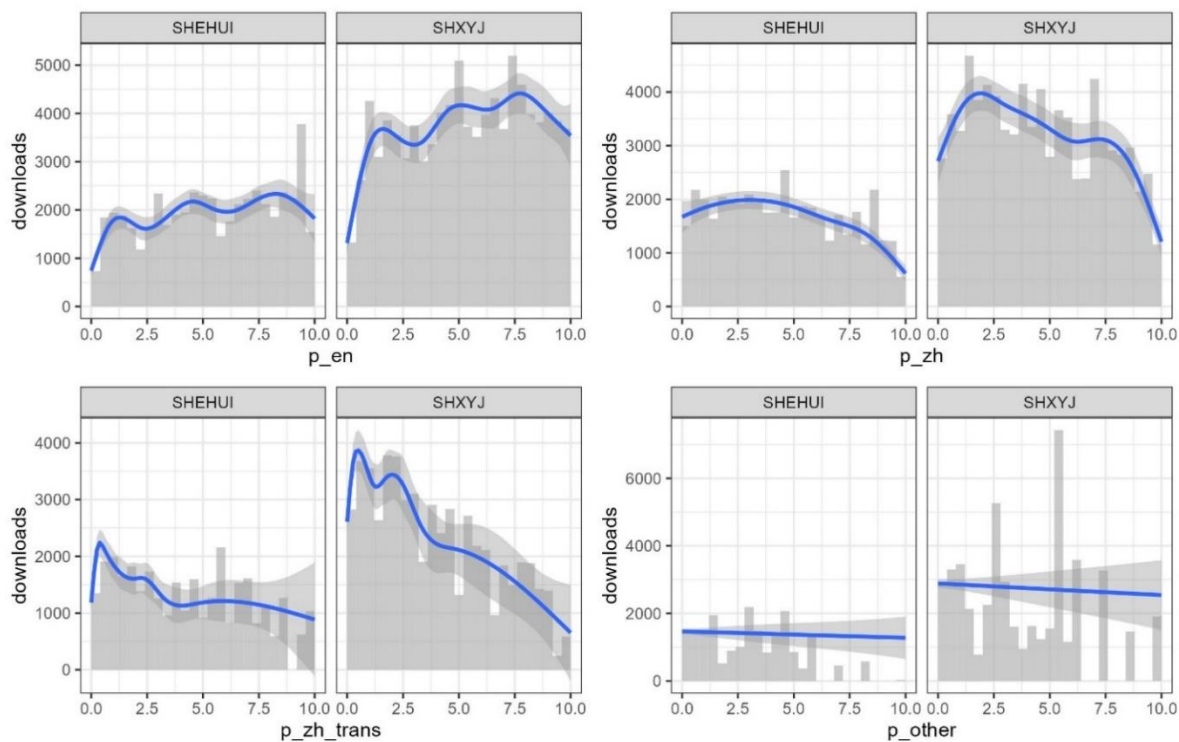


Figure 3: Average number of downloads and citations by the proportion of references in a given language (*Shehui* and *SHXYJ* 1981-2021)

Downloads by the prop of refs in Eng vs Ch



Citations by the prop of refs in Eng vs Ch

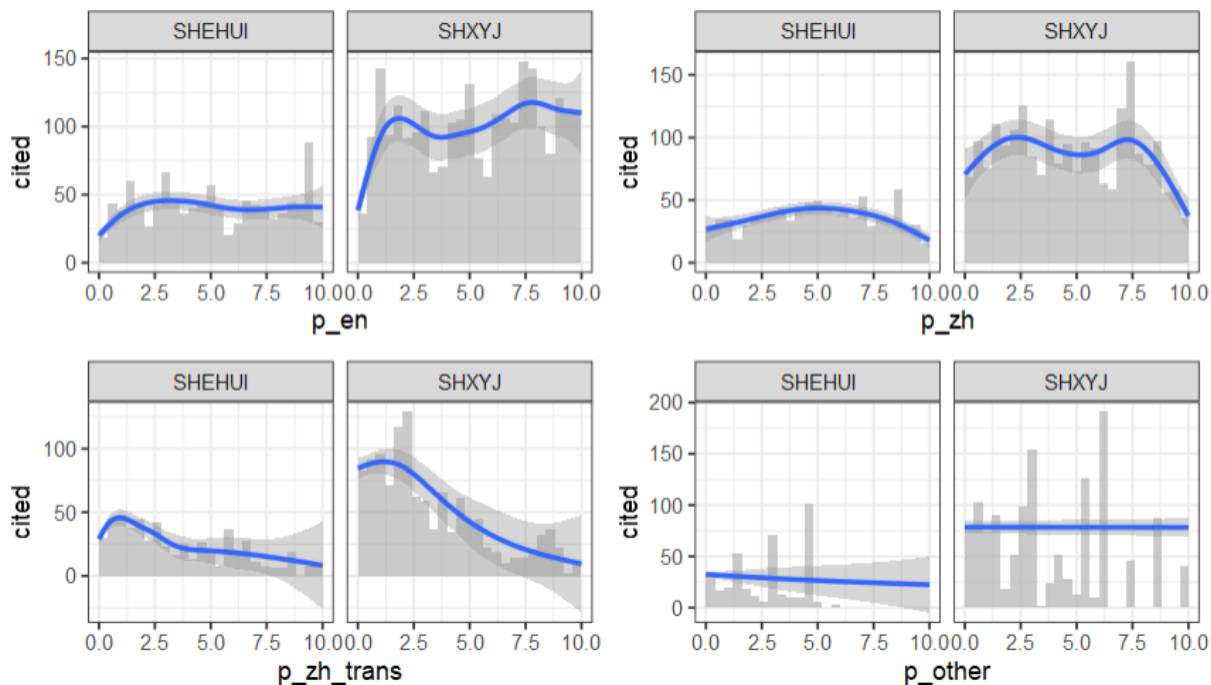


Figure 4: Result from negative binomial regression predicting an article's number of citations and downloads

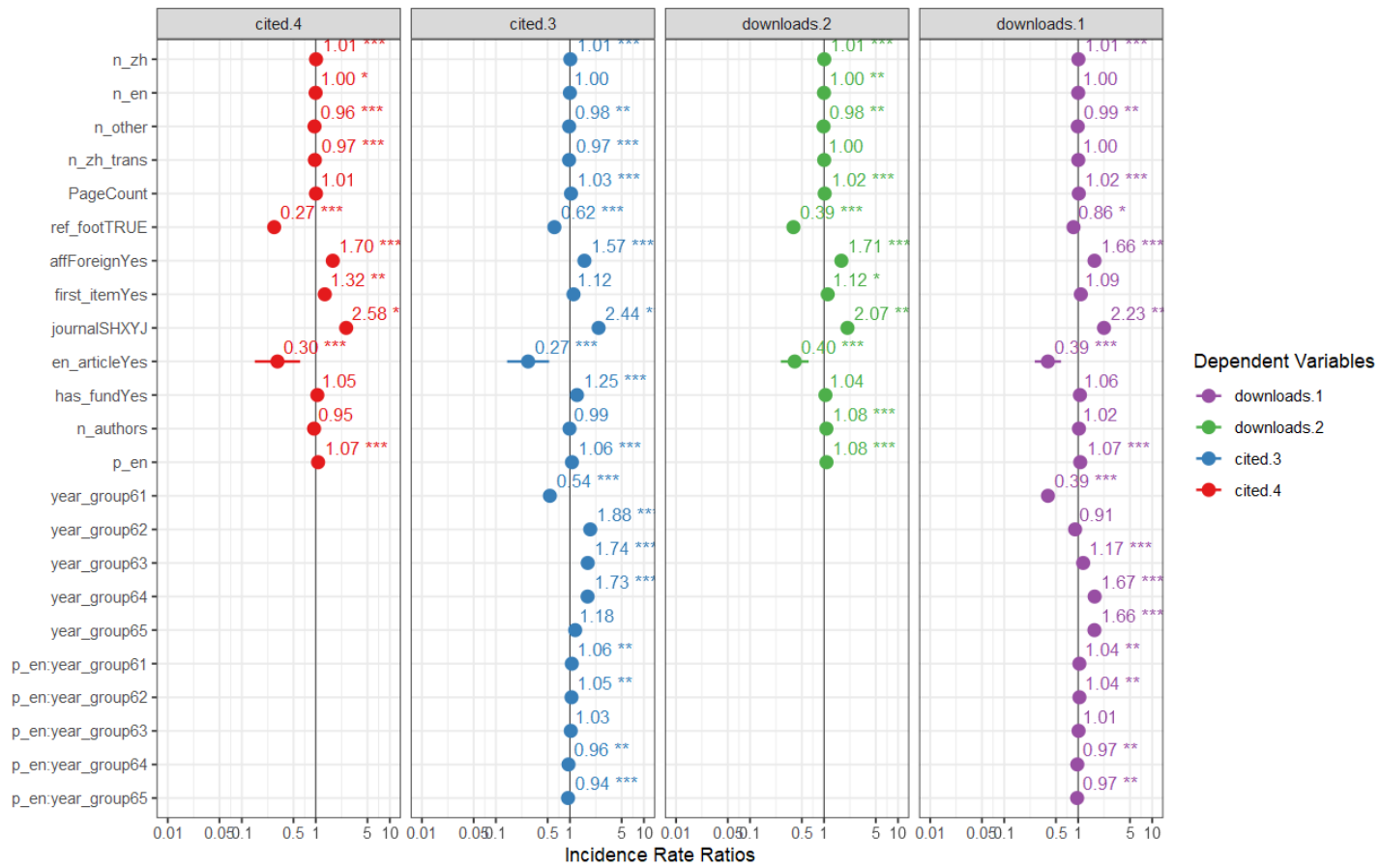
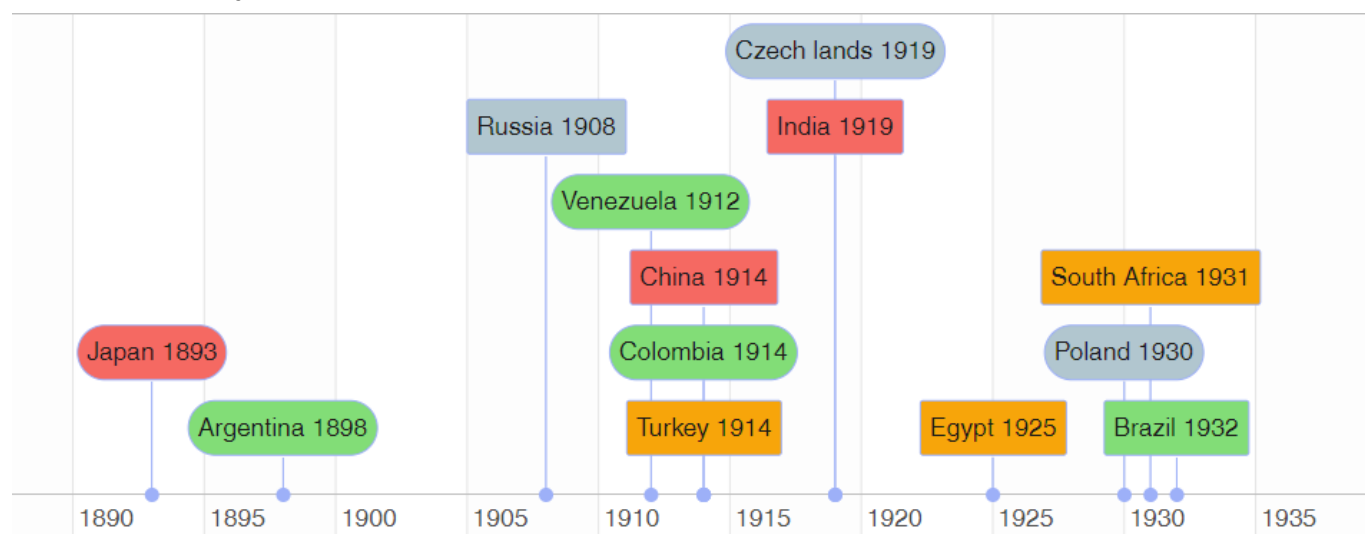


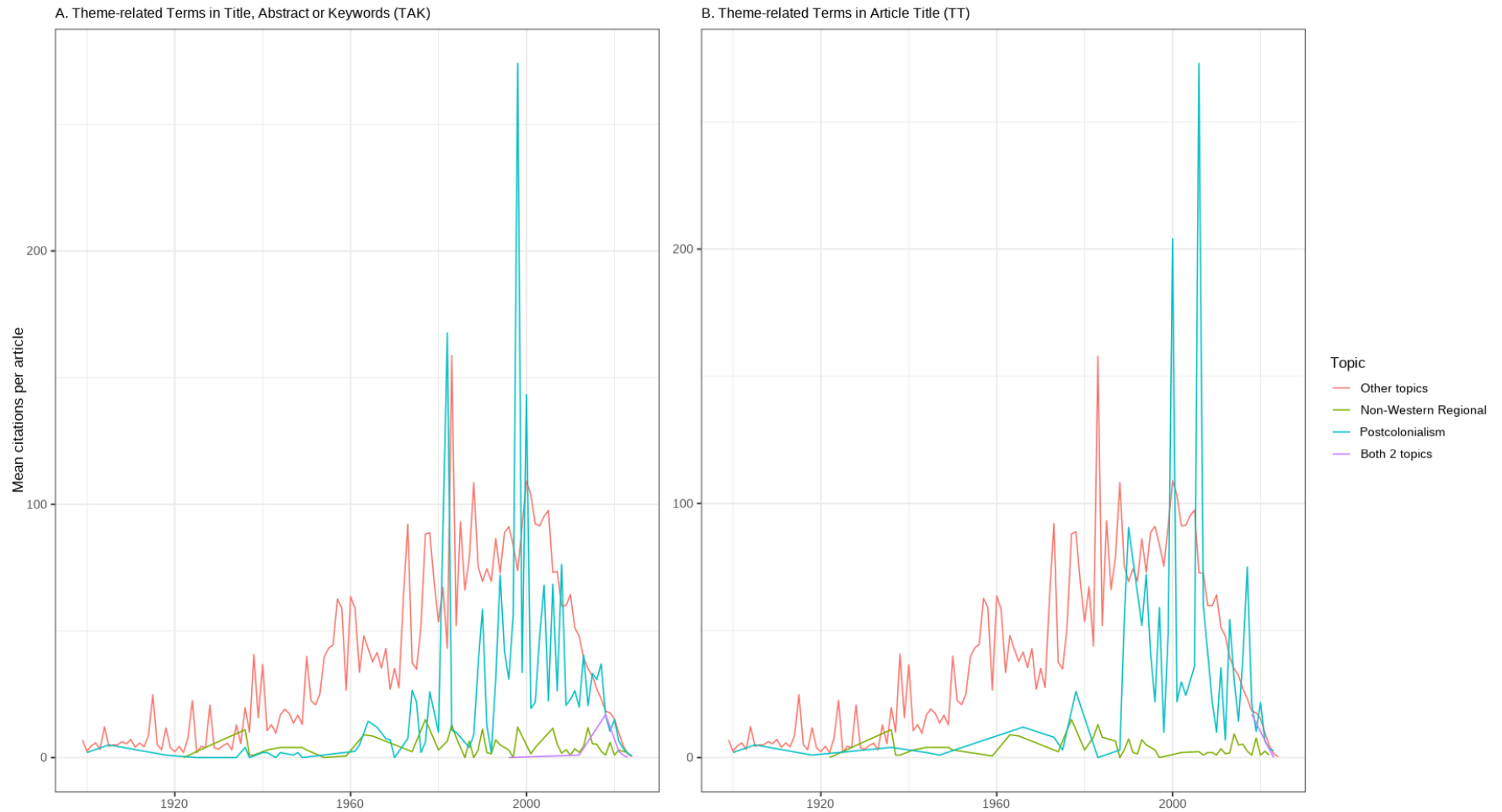
Figure 5: Establishment of the first sociology department, school, or chair in non-Western countries between late 19th and early 20th centuries



Notes: Node color = Region. Node shape = Sociology department or school (rectangle); Sociology chair (oval)

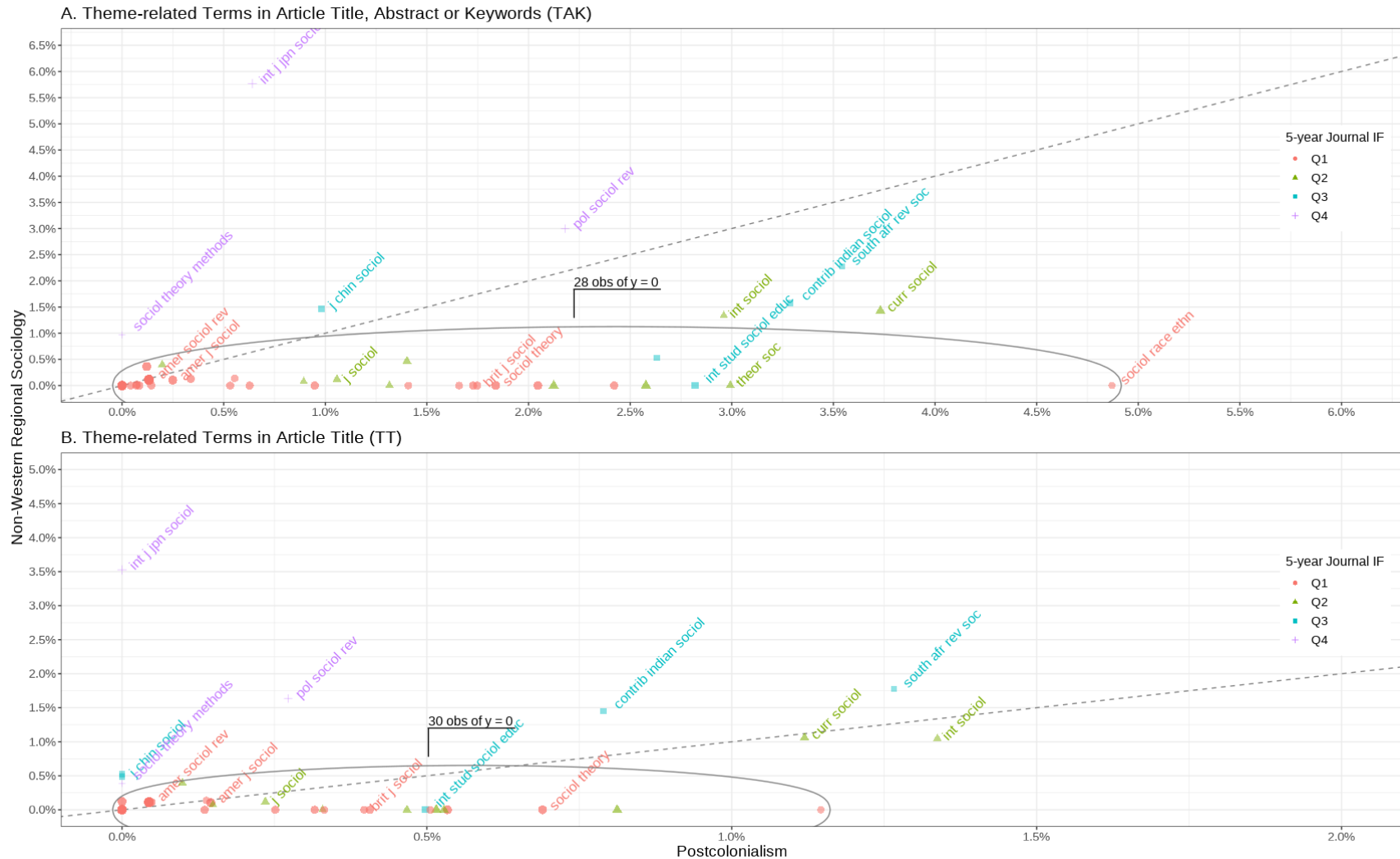
Japan 1893	Toyama Shoichi as the Head of Sociology at Tokyo Imperial University (now Tokyo University) succeeding Ernest Fenollosa, an American who taught sociology courses as professor of philosophy and political economy
China 1914	Department of Sociology established at University of Shanghai (Hujiang University) by American sociologist Daniel H. Kulp (葛学溥)
India 1919	Department of Sociology established at Bombay University by Scottish intellectual Patrick Geddes
Argentina 1898	Sociology Chair created at the University of Buenos Aires by Antonio Dellepiane
Venezuela 1912	Sociology Chair created at the University of Los Andes by Julio César Salas
Columbia 1914	Sociology Chair at the University of Externado created by Diego Mendoza
Brazil 1932	Founding of Free School of Sociology and Political Sciences (ESP)
Russia 1908	Department of Sociology established at the Neurological Institute
Czech lands 1919	Sociology Chair appointed to Břetislav Foustka at Prague's Charles University
Poland 1930	Sociology Chair established for Jan Stanisław Bystroń at Jagiellonian University, who was professor of Ethnography (also teaching sociology) from 1919 at the University of Poznań
Turkey 1914	Department of Sociology established at Istanbul University by Ziya Gökalp
Egypt 1925	Department of Sociology established at the University of Cairo by French-educated Egyptian sociologists
South Africa 1931	Department of Sociology established at the University of Pretoria; First Sociology Chair appointed to H.F. Verwoerd at the University of Stellenbosch in 1933

Figure 6: Citation Metrics Trends for Non-Western Regional Sociology vs Postcolonialism in Select Sociology Journals



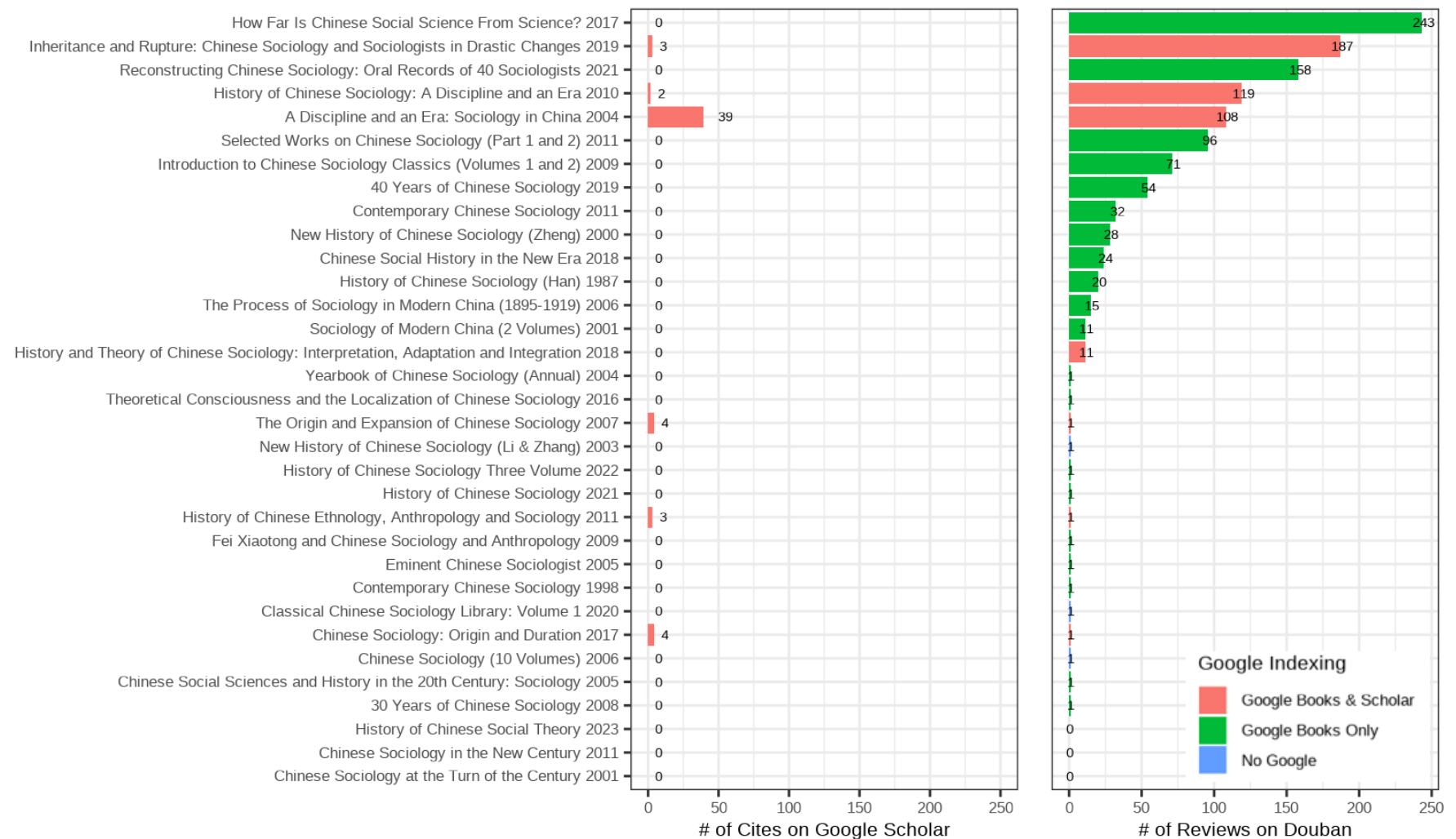
Note: Data sources are Journal article metadata from Scopus and Clarivate’s Journal Citation Reports as of June 2024. 5-year Journal IF (JIF) stands for “5-year journal impact factor”, denoting journal impact factor calculated for the past 5 years. Q1 to Q4 are quartiles of the JIF ranking. For example, Q1 means a journal is top 25%. JIF quartiles are distinguished by color and symbol shape. Journals with higher impact factors are also represented by darker (less transparent) symbols. The two themes of non-Western regional sociology and postcolonialism are identified based on whether the title (Panel A) or title/abstract (Panel B) of an article text matches specific regular expression (regex) string patterns. See Appendix for methodological details on sample selection and article theme identification.

Figure 7: Percentage of articles covering non-Western regional sociology vs postcolonialism in 47 JCR-ranked sociology journals (N = 58,175)



Note: Data sources are Journal article metadata from Scopus and Clarivate’s Journal Citation Reports as of June 2024. 5-year Journal IF (JIF) stands for “5-year journal impact factor”, denoting journal impact factor calculated for the past 5 years. Q1 to Q4 are quartiles of the JIF ranking. For example, Q1 means a journal is top 25%. JIF quartiles are distinguished by color and symbol shape. Journals with higher impact factors are also represented by darker (less transparent) symbols. The two themes of non-Western regional sociology and postcolonialism are identified based on whether the title (Panel A) or title/abstract (Panel B) of an article text matches specific regular expression (regex) string patterns. See Appendix for methodological details on sample selection and article theme identification.

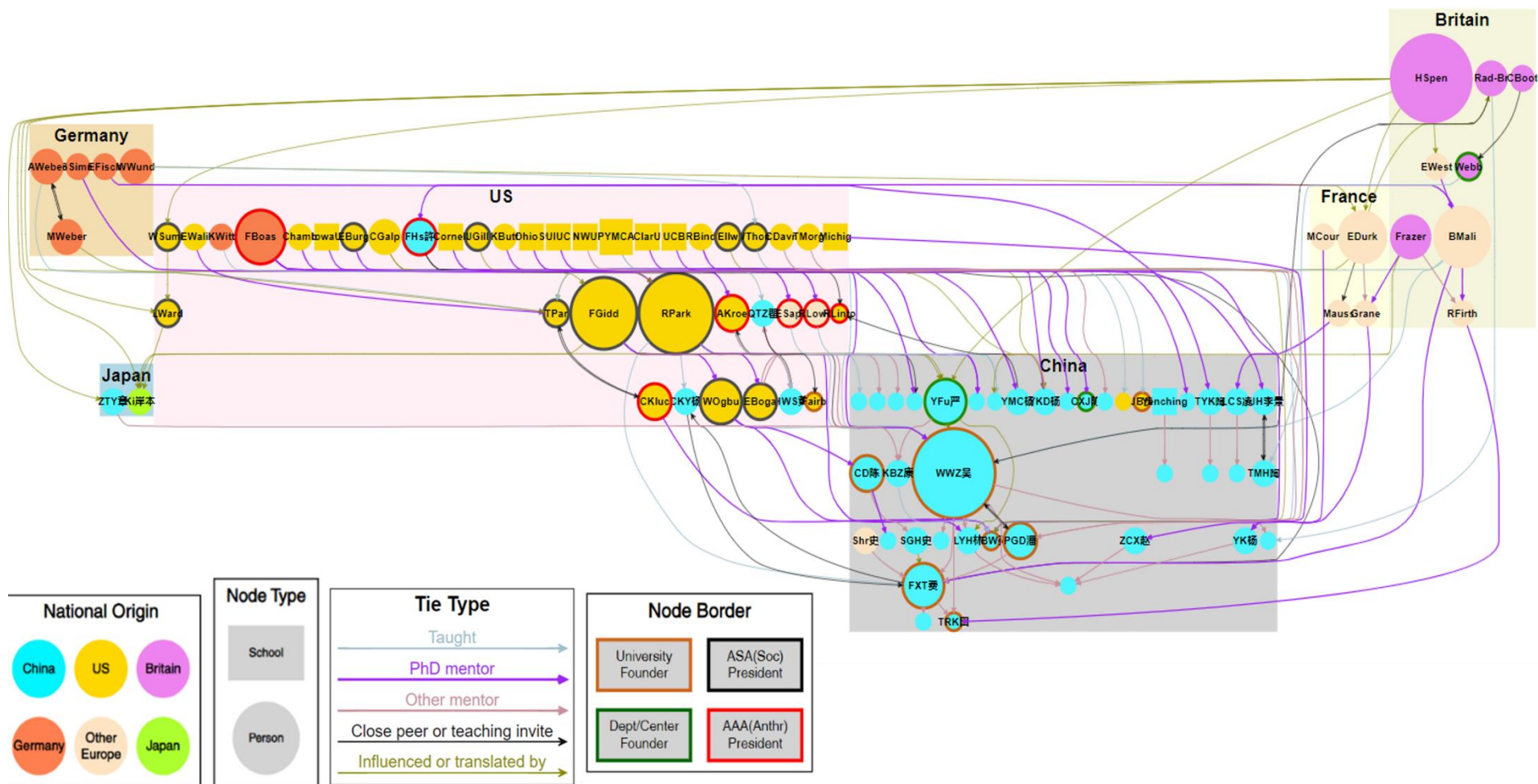
Figure 8: Reception of 33 Chinese-language Books on the Development of Chinese Sociology: International versus Domestic



Note: All books focus on the development or status of general-level Chinese sociology. Author surnames included for books with identical titles. Titles are my translations. These books were identified by searching “中国社会学” (“Chinese Sociology”) on Douban Book, followed by a manual selection process. Exclusions were made for domain-specific contributions within Chinese sociology (e.g., 《都市中国社会学新探》 *New Explorations of Urban Chinese Sociology*), sociological studies of Chinese society (e.g., 《转型与断裂: 改革以来中国社会结构的变迁》 *Transformation and Rupture*), and non-sociology works (e.g., 《中国社会史》 *History of Chinese Society*). This selection process was then replicated on Google Books and Google Scholar. While all 33 titles are indexed on Douban, their indexing status varies on Google sites. Google platforms were chosen for their greater inclusivity than traditional platforms like Web of Science,

Scopus, JSTOR, and EBSCO, none of which index any of the listed books. The “1” values for rating counts in Douban represent books that Douban classifies as having “too few ratings” for definitive review counts.

Figure 9: Western-originated lineages of Chinese sociology



Appendix

Chapter 2 Figure A1

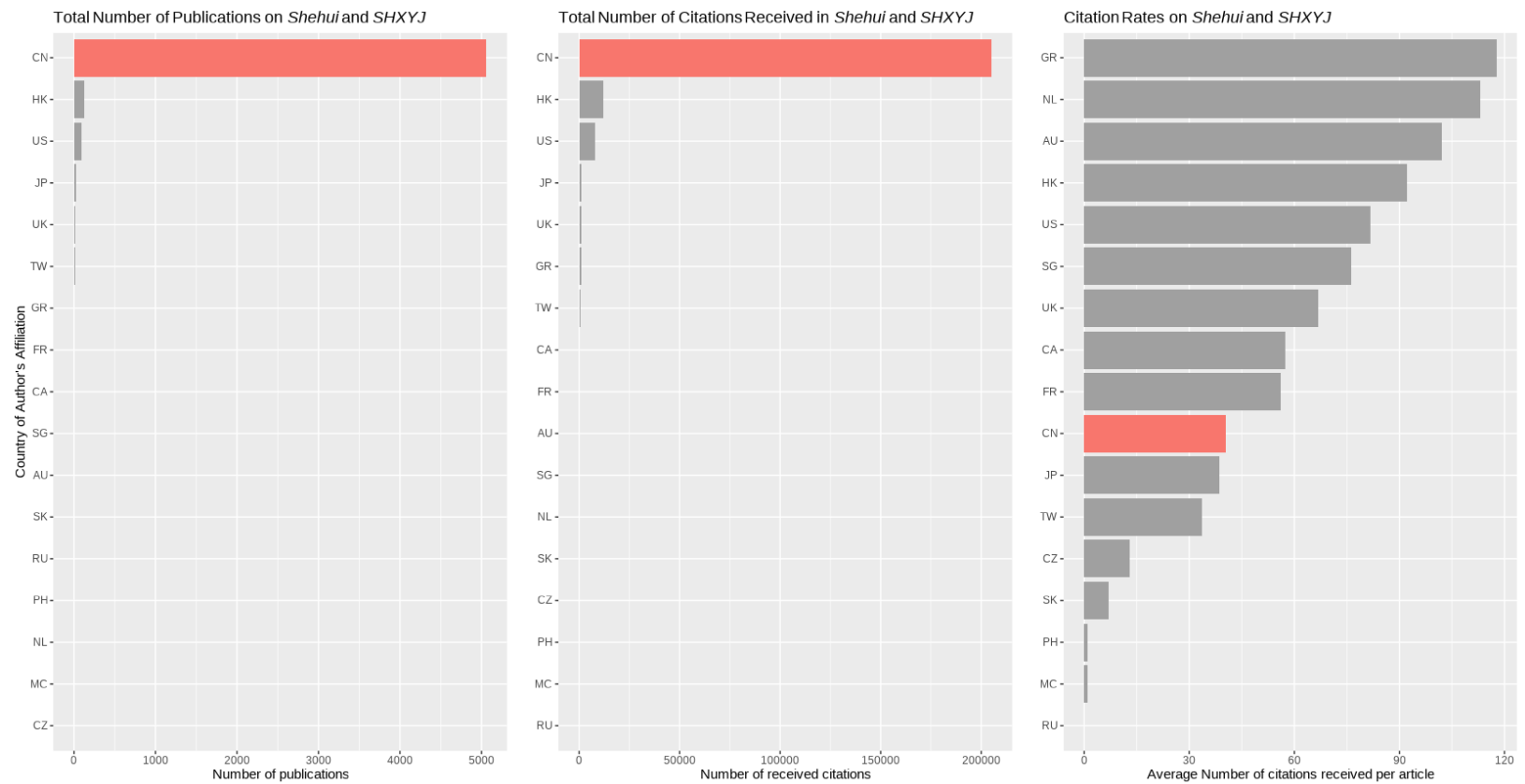
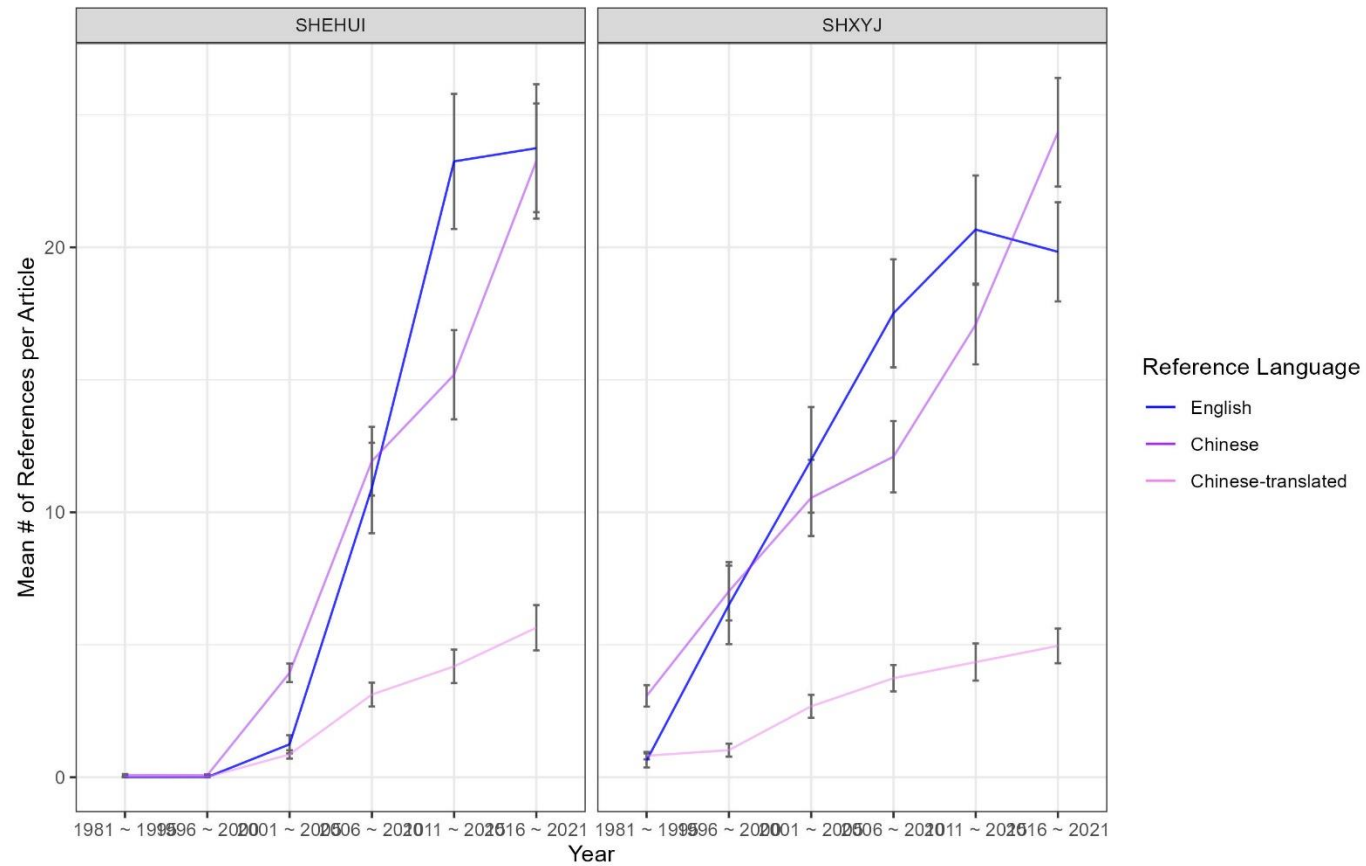


Figure A2

Changes in Reference Counts Overtime by Language Source in China's Leading Soc Journals (1981 ~ 2021)



Chapter 3

Frequency distribution of 5-year JIF (Journal Impact Factor) across the 47 journals analyzed

JIF	Freq	%
Q1	29	61.70
Q2	10	21.28
Q3	5	10.64
Q4	3	6.38
Total	47	100.00

Frequency distribution of the geographic focus of the articles analyzed

Geographic focus is measured by whether the title or abstract includes place names like town, province, country or larger regional (e.g., Scandinavian) levels.

	Freq	% Valid
global	7	0.012
non-West	8718	14.986
West	18348	31.539
non-placed	31102	53.463
Total	58175	100.000

Methodological notes for Figures 2 and 3

Out of the 218 JCR journals under the “sociology” category as of 2024, I select 47 that are of two types. 1) Leading mainstream, namely Q1 in Journal Impact Factor and apparently sociology related. For instance, I exclude *Annals of Tourism Research*. 2) its non-US, global or non-Western foci. For example, *Current Sociology* and *International Sociology* published by International Sociological Association, *Journal of Sociology* and *British Journal of Sociology* from Australia and Britain, and *South African Review of Sociology*).

I exclude 40 non-English journals due to my linguistic limitations except for the Japanese-language *Sociological Theory and Methods* that consistently provides English titles and abstracts. I analyze research articles, proceeding papers, and editorials, excluding document types like book review. The

The two themes are identified using custom regular expression (Regex) pattern matching and named entity recognition (NER).

The Regex pattern for the “postcolonial” theme:

- `" post(-?)col|de(-?)colo|coloni(s|z)|imperiali|coloniality|western(-?) ( ?)centr|euro(-?) ( ?)centr"`

captures contents that contain the substrings of “post-col” or “postcol” (e.g., post-colonial), “de-colo” or “decolo” (e.g., decolonization), “coloniz” or “colonis” (e.g., colonization, colonize), “imperiali” (e.g., imperialist, imperialism), “coloniality”, and terms indicating westerncentrism or eurocentrism (e.g., western-centric, eurocentrism).

For the “non-Western regional sociology” theme, the process involves two steps. First, I apply Spacy-Transformers NER to identify potential place names and extract location-related

entity types (NORP, GPE, LOC) (e.g., urban China, Chicago, or Polish). I then manually checked and cleaned NER results: 1,487 phrases initially identified as place names were dismissed as they were inaccurately recognized or did not indicate a clear geographic location (e.g., the southern, Haitian American, Cartesian). Place names are also manually recoded for non-Western locations (e.g., Polish = non-West, the Third World = non-West, United Nations ≠ non-West).

Second, a recognized place name X is combined with the Regex Y =

- `"\s+(\bsociology\b|\bsociologie\b|\bsocial science(s?)\b)"`

to create patterns like “XY” or “Y in X”. This considers cases like “X sociology”, “X social science(s)”, “sociology in X”, “social science(s) in X”. For instance, Polish sociology, sociology in urban China, or Chicago social sciences.

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