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From Public Sociology to Sociological Publics: The Importance of Reverse Tutelage to Social Theory

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Abstract

This article develops an alternative vision of public sociology. Whereas public sociology is often defined through the actions of professional sociologists, this article calls for a recognition of reverse tutelage in public sociology. Here, publics are seen as sociological interlocutors who can, and often do, produce sociological theories and analyses that can inform professional sociology. I demonstrate this reverse tutelage by focusing on anticolonial and anti-racist social movements, including the Zapatistas, Black Lives Matter, Palestine Action, and Cops Are Flops. I highlight how they produce sociological theories of power, neoliberalism, race, bordering, and violence that can orient professional sociology toward relational forms of analysis that build connections between different sites of resistance. In doing so, I highlight how the boundary between what Burawoy terms "professional" and "critical" sociology is much more porous than initially theorized and that critical sociology—from wider publics—can significantly shape professional sociology.

Keywords

public sociology, postcolonial theory, Du Bois, race, sociological theory

In 2007, the American Sociological Association (ASA) wrote *Standards of Public Sociology: Guidelines for Use by Academic Departments in Personnel Reviews*. These guidelines were the result of a two-year study by a newly formed task force on the institutionalization of public sociology, formed in the aftermath of Michael Burawoy's ASA plenary on public sociology in 2004. The intended effects of these standards for public sociology were two-fold. First, there was a desire from the ASA (2007:1) to highlight "the longstanding contributions of sociologists to the public's understanding of, and ability to act on, the social issues of our time." Second, there was a desire to stress how public sociology *was still sociology*:

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It was still scientific, peer reviewed, and methodologically rigorous. In this context, the ASA guidelines were constructed such that the work of sociologists involved in public sociology was appropriately credited and valued in institutional assessments. As public sociology was being institutionalized into the American disciplinary framework, however, the understanding of public sociology largely revolved around the actions of employed sociologists. From Burawoy's (2005b) repeated statement that *professional* sociology is a prerequisite to *public* sociology to the ASA guidelines essentially revolving around the issue of how tenure and promotions committees can assess publicly facing scholarship, there has always been a proclivity to define public sociology through the actions of public sociologists. In this context, I take an alternative viewpoint to public sociology.

Central to my argument is that there are porous boundaries between sociology (a discipline institutionalized in educational systems), sociologists (employees in educational institutions), and the sociological (a way of thinking that highlights germane social processes). Understandings of public sociology often center the discipline of professional sociology and the work of professional sociologists. We need to spend more time also thinking about how certain publics are sociological interlocutors in their own right, forming their own sociological theories, analyses, and interpretations in a way that can enrich professional sociology. Following Gopal (2019), I refer to this iteration of public sociology as "reverse tutelage." Here, the technocratic dynamic of the sociologist holding more authority and expertise in dialogical space with the public is reversed; instead, it is the public who is producing the sociological theory(ies) that can inform professional sociology. I demonstrate this reverse tutelage by focusing on anticolonial and anti-racist social movements, including the Zapatistas, Black Lives Matter, Palestine Action, and Cops Are Flops. I highlight how they produce sociological theories of power, neoliberalism, race, bordering, and violence that can enrich professional sociology by orienting the discipline toward relational forms of analysis that build connections between different sites of resistance. In doing so, I highlight how the boundary between what Burawoy terms "professional" and "critical" sociology is much more porous than initially theorized and that critical sociology—from wider publics—can significantly shape professional sociology. This article is not an attack on professional sociology but, rather, tries to pinpoint a way to continue the expansion of our discipline in critical directions.

BURAWOY ON THE FOUR ITERATIONS OF SOCIOLOGY

The vision of public sociology defined by Michael Burawoy is, by now, well known to many of us working in the discipline.[1] For clarity, I will briefly overview Burawoy's key tenets before highlighting two criticisms: first, that it remains technocratically fixated on the actions of public sociologists and second, that the given definition of "critical sociology" seems too similar to professional sociology—again, because of a focus on the work of professional sociologists.

Crucial to Burawoy's approach is the divide between professional, critical, policy, and public sociology. Policy sociology is defined as "sociology in the service of a goal defined by a client. Policy sociology's raison d'etre is to provide solutions to problems that are presented to us, or to legitimate solutions that have already been reached" (Burawoy 2005b:9). Such policy sociology might involve the hiring of a sociologist to carry out work for a policy initiative. In the current era, one might think of the Biden administration hiring Alondra Nelson to direct the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy or the Brookings Institute working with prodigious scholars like Louise Seamster on debt cancellation.

Policy sociology is contrasted to public sociology. Public sociology is built around a dialogical relationship between the sociologist and the public, where "the agenda of each is

brought to the table, in which each adjusts to the other" (Burawoy 2005b:9). Importantly, Burawoy does not see such publics as prefixed entities but, rather, views them through a relational, Habermasian approach in which publics are constituted by their co-articulation of shared interests and conditions (see also Starr 2021). Crucial to public sociology is that it involves "most simply . . . taking sociology to publics beyond the university, engaging them in dialogue about public issues that have been studied by sociologists. Indeed, it is a triple dialogue—a dialogue among sociologists, between sociologists and publics, and most importantly within publics themselves" (Burawoy 2005c:71). Public and policy sociology are not necessarily antagonistic to each other's aims, and often, policy sociology can become public sociology (and vice versa). Burawoy (2005b:10) argues, however, that "there can be neither policy nor public sociology without a professional sociology that supplies true and tested methods, accumulated bodies of knowledge, orienting questions, and conceptual frameworks." Professional sociology thus becomes the bedrock of Burawoy's (2005b:10) approach, defined broadly as "multiple intersecting research programs, each with their assumptions, exemplars, defining questions, conceptual apparatuses, and evolving theories." Finally, alongside this professional sociology, we have critical sociology, or the process of exposing and critiquing the normative assumptions built into professional sociology. Burawoy's own example of such critical sociology includes Mills's (1959) work on the sociological imagination, where he lamented sociology's move toward irrelevance. This fourfold division of sociology is essential to Burawoy's vision of public sociology.

Burawoy's vision of public sociology—and the fourfold split—itself is based in a history of (especially U.S.) sociology. Burawoy (2005c) argues that prior to World War I, the divide between professional and public sociology was significantly porous. As highlighted through cases such as W. E. B Du Bois (Burawoy 2005c, 2022a, 2022b), Burawoy points out that U.S. sociology in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had close relationships with both policy sociology and public sociology: Du Bois's work in policy at the Atlanta School (see also Wright 2002), his involvement with the NAACP, and his editorship at *The Crisis* were demonstrative of this. For Burawoy (2022a), Du Bois's involvement in professional, critical, public, *and* policy sociology showed a multifaceted vision of the discipline. After World War I, however, Burawoy (2005c:70) argues that you get "increasing separation of professional sociology from publics and a continuing dialogue with the policy world," followed by "an internal critique of professional sociology—the questioning of policy sociology through the vehicle of critical sociology." Here, sociologists like C. Wright Mills and Alvin Gouldner exposed how the ideological foundations of policy sociology tended to be largely reproductive of the status quo; from the 1970s, it became apparent that the absence of alternative "views from the margins" from the sociological canon rendered "mainstream sociology . . . anachronistic" (Burawoy 2005c:70). Through the 1970s onward, elements of critical sociology were incorporated into professional sociology (although not mentioned by Burawoy, one could spot this in texts such as Ladner's [1973] *Death of White Sociology* and Collins's [1986] concept of the outsiders within).

Moving into the twenty-first century, Burawoy argues that we enter a fourth wave of sociology marked by a new relationship between public and professional sociology. Here, Burawoy (2005c:71) argues that because professional, policy, and critical sociology developed so much through the twenty-first century, we are in a better place *now* to produce sophisticated forms of public sociology: "We are now sufficiently secure in our science to engage with publics, to promote a deeper and broader understanding of our endangered world, and thereby reinvigorate sociology with the pressing issues of our times." For Burawoy (2005b, 2005c:72), the twenty-first century can give rise to new forms of *organic* public sociology:

> [in] what I call the organic public sociologist, who is intimately and directly connected to publics themselves, often articulating and representing issues that publics are already struggling with. There are myriads of unpublicized projects of this kind, involving labor organizations, community groups, communities of faith, environmental groups, neighborhood associations, and so forth . . . here publics are local rather than national, thick (bound by a dense set of relations) rather than thin, active rather than passive, often counter-publics rather than mainstream.

Burawoy's account of the possibilities of public sociology stresses how (public) sociologists can be at the fore of working with and alongside various counter-publics, being key figures in the ongoing quest for social justice—after all, for many people, this is precisely what sociology is about (see Prasad 2021). Burawoy originally discussed such possibilities for organic public sociology in the early 2000s; in 2023, it seems as though many of his predictions have been realized. The sociologists Christopher R. Rogers's and Geo Maher's creation of the W. E. B. Du Bois Movement School for Abolition and Reconstruction in Philadelphia is a case in point. Here, Rogers and Maher bring together Philadelphia locals to learn about abolitionism in the context of ongoing police violence: Rogers's and Maher's Movement School demonstrates what Burawoy means when he refers to local, thick, active, counter-publics, where such counter-publics and sociologists are at the table together, articulating and acknowledging each other's concerns and interests.

Indeed, the very importance of public sociology is even more pressing now than when Burawoy first declared its urgency. As Burawoy (2005b:6) discussed in his ASA address, part of the reason why we need public sociology is because "the world has moved right." A politically engaged sociology of inequality was thus needed in that era, Burawoy contended, to build an active resistance to the inequalities engendered by right-wing politics and the frames of thinking propagated by right-wing intellectuals. This assessment of a growing right wing is even more appropriate in 2023, when far-right political projects are increasingly being presented as mainstream (see Mondon and Winter 2020). Speaking directly to this issue, Burawoy (2023:20) contends that "sociology cannot insulate itself within the academy . . . but must advance into the public sphere and there excite debate about the direction of society, educate citizenry about the dangers of market commodification and political rationalization." In this regard, as advocated by Bifulco and Borghi (2023) in their recent appraisal of Burawoy's work, public sociology might be a path toward utopia in a context of widening social inequalities and fissures. Indeed, Bifulco and Borghi (2023) and Burawoy (2022a; Burawoy et al. 2024) also make this argument for the urgency of public sociology in a context where market forces are actively working to turn universities from spaces of public discourse into anti-intellectual, profit-making institutions. Here, public sociology is needed to convince wider publics of the need for sociology (and higher education) itself.[2]

THE GIFTING MODEL IN PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

Despite the analytic depth of Burawoy's argument and his correct assessment of the vital nature of public sociology, I want to draw out two germane criticisms. Namely, I want to first emphasize how Burawoy's understanding of public sociology concentrates far too much on the actions of professional sociologists, to the extent that it runs in tension with his definition of public sociology as dialogical. Second, I argue that Burawoy's definition and analysis of critical sociology is too similar to professional sociology; instead, we should look toward the relations between critical and public sociology, where we can see that critical sociology is often produced by publics themselves. I conclude this critique by suggesting that a more

thorough assessment (and advocation) of public sociology can be offered if we move beyond the extant conflation in Burawoy's account between sociology, sociologists, and the sociological.

Public Sociology and the Public Sociologist

I first turn to my critique that Burawoy's account of public sociology focuses too much on the actions of professional sociologists. Consider, for instance, Burawoy's discussion of Du Bois in his ASA address (Burawoy 2005b) and in his more recent scholarship (Burawoy 2022b, 2022c). Burawoy (2022c:3) states without hesitation that Du Bois was "the greatest public sociologist to have walked the earth," but his analysis of Du Bois's public sociology centers the individual genius of Du Bois over the dialogical relations he forged (and indeed, the dialogical relations that shaped Du Bois's sociology itself). Thus, in his ASA address, Burawoy (2005b:7) praises Du Bois's ([1903] 2007) *Souls of Black Folk* as a prototype of traditional public sociology in the way it is written by a sociologist, "read beyond the academy," and became "the vehicle of a public discussion about the nature of U.S. society—the nature of its values, the gap between its promise and its reality, its malaise, its tendencies." Later in the same address, Burawoy (2005b:14) describes Du Bois's evolving journey from the academy to the public sphere (emphasis added):

> Increasingly disaffected with the academy and marginalized within it by his race, after completing The Philadelphia Negro in 1899, and after setting up and running the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory at the University of Atlanta between 1897 and 1910, W. E. B. Du Bois left academia to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and become editor of its magazine, *Crisis*. In this public role he wrote all sorts of popular essays, inevitably influenced by his sociology. In 1934 he returned to the academy to chair the sociology department at Atlanta, where he finished another classic monograph, *Black Reconstruction*, only to depart once again, after World War Two, for national and international public venues. *His relentless campaigns for racial justice were the acme of public sociology*.

In this account, Burawoy makes it seem as though Du Bois's public sociology was public because his contributions and labor were concentrated outside the academy; the dialogical relations that are said to be so important to public sociology are absent from this analysis. Indeed, Burawoy describes Du Bois as being evidence that sociologists are also members of publics—in this case, seen through Du Bois being a founding member of the NAACP—but Burawoy does not discuss how other members of the NAACP were themselves shaping and feeding back into Du Bois's work. Years later, in a lecture in Porto titled *W.E.B. Du Bois as Public Sociologist*, Burawoy (2022c) again discusses (albeit very cogently) the works of Du Bois without mentioning any of the dialogical relations he had with wider publics. This problem is exacerbated in the way Burawoy (2021:550) comments on how Du Bois demonstrated "a public engagement that forces social science out of its academic cocoon, entering the public arena with social theory and empirical analysis, framing public debates, and issues." Burawoy originally defined public sociology as an adjustment between public and academic actors, yet now when describing Du Bois, his analysis seems much more centered on a sociologist bringing sociology to the public arena, overdetermining, rather than being a product of, public discussion.

Burawoy's analysis of Du Bois is historically accurate, but it leaves out one dimension of Du Bois's public sociology: the process by which Du Bois listened to and learned from

various publics that then shaped his sociological analysis of the global color line. Consider, for example, Du Bois's (1958) comments about attending the First Universal Race Congress in London in 1911. Here, Du Bois (1958) notes how attendees of this conference enlivened his interest in Pan-Africanism and helped him see the transnational connections that existed between racial exploitation across different geopolitical regions (emphasis added):

> I was convinced that the descendants of Africa must therefore unite in common action in order to make their freedom possible in the modern world. How this was to be done I did not know. *But the experience of meeting World Conference of Races members of Africa itself, as well as Central America, inspired me to try it*. Coloured persons from Asia whose problems, so similar to ours, *I had not been conscious of*, hitherto encouraged me.

Two themes—Pan-Africanism and a transnational understanding of race—that became so central to Du Bois's sociological works, such as *The World and Africa* (Du Bois [1947] 2007), *Black Reconstruction* (Du Bois [1935] 2014), and *Dusk of Dawn* (Du Bois [1940] 2007), were themes Du Bois understood through sociological research but that he also learned about through wider publics such as the Universal Race Congress. When Burawoy (2022c) rightfully discusses Du Bois's public sociology in terms of Du Bois himself being a member of various publics (e.g., the NAACP) or in terms of Du Bois's work having public (and policy) reverberations, these dialogical relations that informed Du Bois's sociology are overlooked.

Without explicitly highlighting dialogical relations, we run the risk of infusing technocracy into our understanding of public sociology. Unfortunately, this can sometimes be detected in Burawoy's account when he discusses empirical examples of public sociology. Many of Burawoy's examples involve sociologists (or organizations of sociologists) using their expertise to guide particular social issues—more so as shamans than as interlocutors. From the ASA submitting an amicus curiae brief to the Supreme Court in the Michigan Affirmative Action case, adopting a resolution against the War in Iraq, and protesting the imprisonment of the Egyptian sociologist Saad Ibrahim to Vaughan's expertise in media commentaries on the *Challenger* disaster and W. J. Wilson's policy-turned-public sociology calling for increasing jobs to redress racialized poverty, these are all examples of sociologists using (and sharing) expertise rather than sociologists being in a dialogical conversation with publics. If it is dialogical, it is only dialogical in the way a teacher and a high school class might involve dialogue: There is still an unspoken recognition that the teacher has the higher authority in the interactional chain.

Is Critical Sociology Professional Sociology?

The public is thus sometimes pushed to the background in Burawoy's description of public sociology. This also happens in the context of Burawoy's division between critical and professional sociology. As summarized earlier, critical sociology is defined as sociology that exposes and critiques the normative assumptions built into professional sociology. Again, when giving examples of this critical sociology, Burawoy (2005a) limits himself to the works of (perhaps ironically) professional sociologists, to name a few: Alvin Gouldner, C. Wright Mills, Stephen Turner and Jonathan Turner, Irving Louis Horowitz, Stephen Cole, and James Coleman. Of course, Burawoy's focus on such authors makes sense: They each lamented the growing banality of sociology and grand social theorizing, consequently reorienting the discipline into more productive areas of social inquiry. Alongside these authors,

one could also associate critical sociology with early movements in the U.S. academy from scholars like Du Bois (1898) and Frazier (1947), both of whom highlighted how racial stereotypes and confirmation biases plagued mainstream ethnographic practices (see also Meghji 2022a). As Du Bois (1898:13–14) summarized: “It is so easy for a man who has already formed his conclusions to receive any and all testimony in their favor without carefully weighing and testing it, that we sometimes find in serious scientific studies very curious proof of broad conclusions.”

Even more recently, sociologists such as Alatas (2003), Boatcă and Costa (2010), Connell (2007), Go (2016), Itzigsohn (2023), and myself (Meghji 2020) have contributed to a renewed program of critical sociology in exposing the Eurocentrism, or metrocentrism, that characterizes much classical and contemporary Western sociology. Such critiques signal a postcolonial turn in sociology, orienting the discipline toward projects of epistemic justice (Martínez-Cairo and Buscemi 2021), recovering the contributions of forgotten scholars (Morris 2017), critiquing Eurocentrism and modernity (Boatcă 2021), and theorizing what anticolonial and sociological theorists can learn from one another (Go 2023b).

By definition, there is no reason why only professional sociologists can produce critical sociology. Publics—whether that be individuals, social movements, or organizations—can produce sociological insights that challenge the normative assumptions of mainstream, professional sociology. Despite this possibility, again, Burawoy’s (2005a) focus on critical sociology largely revolves around the actions of professional sociologists. Indeed, part of Burawoy’s provocation for critical sociology is that it can become an instrument through which sociologists can orient professional sociology toward public sociology. As Burawoy (2005a:319) contends, critical sociology is needed to maintain sociology’s outward focus, thus “fostering public sociologies to bolster the organs of civil society.” Critical sociology becomes a tool at the disposal of professional sociologists to engage with publics, but it is still portrayed as being a tool that only the university employee can wield.

PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY AS A GIFT TO THE PUBLIC: WHO HAS A MONOPOLY ON THE SOCIOLOGICAL?

Through overviewing Burawoy’s early theorizations of public sociology, we see that a “gifting model” characterizes this approach. Although theoretically described as a dialogical exercise, the examples provided to illustrate public sociology all involve the sociologist going into publics, providing expertise on a given topic, and “gifting” knowledge from professional sociology to a public sphere. Public sociology becomes a gift the sociologist brings from the academy into civil society rather than being a form of sociological analysis that emerges from dialogical relations. Many sociologists clearly have expertise that can benefit discussions happening in publics, as Burawoy rightfully highlights, but we also need to be cognizant that our approach to public sociology not only accounts for the flow of knowledge from academics to publics but also accounts for the exchange and flow of knowledge from publics to professional sociologists. Without incorporating the two-way flow of knowledge, public sociology is just professional sociology by another name.

Furthermore, without appreciating this dialogical flow of knowledge, we lose sight of how multiple works in sociology have been formed via professional sociologists listening to and learning from wider publics. To list merely a few examples, I think of Murji’s (2007) overview of the concept of institutional racism—a concept that continues to inform sociological work and critique but that did not originate in the discipline of sociology but, rather, from the Black power movement. Likewise, I could mention Narayan’s (2019) work on intercommunalism, a concept that stresses how the world is “hooked up” through

the ever-increasing expansion of the U.S. empire. Again, this critique has come to inform sociology but, as Narayan tracks, stems from Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party's activism. I could mention Mies's (1986) concept of the housewifization of labor, used to analyze how capitalism relies on unregulated spheres of production and reproduction, itself a concept derived from the Wages for Housework movement. Finally, I could mention Gopal's (2019) book *Insurgent Empire*, where she develops the concept of colonial fascism—a concept used to understand the links between European fascism and colonialism—and how again, this concept has shaped sociologists' critiques even though it derived from activist groups such as the International African Friends of Ethiopia. These multiple concepts are essential, at least in my view, for sociology derived outside of professional sociologists' works.

Part of the reason why Burawoy's account of public sociology implicitly commits to this gifting approach and part of the reason it therefore occludes more two-way flows of knowledge is because he conflates sociology, sociologists, and sociological analysis. Sociology is a discipline one studies in educational institutions, and sociologists are those employed to teach, learn, or do research in this discipline. Sociological analysis, however, is different. Of course, what constitutes proper sociological analysis is itself open to critique, but most approaches to defining sociological analysis show how it is not tied to one's employment status. For the "analytical sociologists" who highlight how sociological analysis attempts to explain social phenomena through a focus on social mechanisms (Swedberg 2014), there is no reason why nonsociologists cannot do such explanatory analysis. For those who emphasize how sociological analysis centers social processes (Maines 1979), structural interpretations (Bonilla-Silva 1997), the logic of practice (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), human interaction (Blumer 1956), historical interpretation (Hammer 2020), and so on, all of these definitions necessitate a style of thinking rather than specifying who does the said thinking. As I constantly remind my students, Mills (1959) did not call it the sociologist's imagination, or sociology's imagination, but the *sociological* imagination. Maybe this sentiment is best summarized by Back (2007:12) when he states, "the difference between a professor and a bus driver is that the professor can say stupid things with complete authority, while the bus driver is not authorized to make brilliant insights."

I contend that once we admit that publics are capable of and often produce sociological insights, we can more clearly appreciate the dynamic through which public sociology is often characterized by publics providing critical sociological analyses that can inform professional sociology. My interpretation here is connected to but ultimately different from extant critiques of Burawoy's theorization of public sociology.

Lozano (2018), for instance, has likewise critiqued Burawoy's sharp divide between professional sociology and nonspecialist publics. For Lozano (2018:102), Burawoy offers a "narrow notion of public sociology" that centers the "unidirectional flow of knowledge from the academic expert to extra-academic audiences." Following the South African tradition of critical engagement (see Bezuidenhout, Mnwana, and von Holdt 2022), Lozano (2018) calls for a vision of public sociology that is properly dialogical and collaborative between professional sociologists and publics. However, Lozano's exploration of these possibilities for knowledge coproduction largely centers on methodological practice and the organizational arrangements of academia, both of which differ from my focus here.

In terms of methodological practice, Lozano (2018) mentions their own PhD project about collective action in Spain and their desire to not do a project *on* social movements but, rather, *with* social movement activists (some might broadly refer to this as participatory research[3]). Such a methodological shift is said to create a proper public sphere in which different knowledges can be amalgamated through open discourse. Unfortunately, Lozano

(2018) does not offer an illustration of how they achieved this methodological commitment in their doctoral research, but they do highlight a pertinent case from South Africa.

Specifically, Lozano (2018) turns to the work of Edward Webster and the creation of the Sociology of Work Program (SWOP) in 1983 at the University of the Witwatersrand's Department of Sociology (see also Webster 2022). As Lozano (2018) highlights, SWOP conducted a research project examining the safety of working conditions in South Africa's gold mines, finding that White mine supervisors centered profit over the working conditions of Black miners, often making it impossible for Black workers to avoid dangerous work (see Webster 2022). Importantly, this project was led by sociologists associated with SWOP *in conjunction with the National Union of Mineworkers*, thus allowing informants—who had stakes in the research topic and its dissemination—to become active in the production of knowledge. Furthermore, this public sociology entailed a set of organizational commitments on behalf of the university. The University of the Witwatersrand disseminated the project's findings at a public event in which sociologists and workers and employers in the mining industry were invited to an open discussion. The findings were turned into a pamphlet, translated into two indigenous South African languages (isiXhosa and seSotho), and eventually led to an amendment to Section 23 of the Mine Health and Safety Act 29 of 1996, which protected the right to refuse to work in dangerous conditions (Webster 2022). This all constitutes "proper" public sociology, Lozano (2018) argues, because (1) it demonstrates a participatory methodological practice in which sociologists and publics work together in the design and implementation of the research, (2) the research project raised public awareness about a public issue, and (3) the findings of the research were disseminated beyond academic networks toward wider public stakeholders.

I agree with Lozano's (2018) critique, but my focus here is different. Lozano (2018) claims that Burawoy's vision of public sociology does not account for the coproduction of knowledge, and then they detail a specific case in which we see close collaboration between sociologists and publics. However, by describing this "real" public sociology through highlighting methodological (participatory methods) and organizational (dissemination) practices, Lozano (2018) still paints a picture of public sociology as something necessarily tied to the actions of professional sociologists. Public sociology, here, is still defined by professional sociologists working with publics (albeit in democratic ways), professional sociologists raising issues of public concern (again, in positive ways for the improvement of society), and professional sociologists disseminating research findings in ways that connect and resonate with public and nonacademic stakeholders. Straightforwardly, it is the presence of professional sociologists in the public domain that allows for critical public knowledges to evolve into sociological knowledge. Lozano's (2018) angle is thus quite different from my interest here, where I am demonstrating that public sociology is produced by publics even before they encounter professional sociologists. Moreover, Lozano (2018) highlights methodological and organizational prerequisites for public sociology; this shows how we might foster dialogue between academics and publics, but it does not really focus on the excavation of public theorizing itself,and how such public theorizing can develop professional sociology (which is the aim of my article). This leads to another related critique of Burawoy that differs from my own.

Namely, Cox (2014) has argued that theorizing happens in publics outside of professional sociology, often in the form of social movements. Similar to my argument, Cox (2014) argues that public sociology happens *in* publics and that sociologists can learn from such public theorizing. However, Cox's (2014) demonstration of this argument and overall focus remain analytically distinct from my own. First, Cox (2014) discusses what sociologists and universities can do to foster dialogue with publics, such as attending public forums and

creating and publishing in open-access journals. This is certainly important, but it is largely a discussion of how to reform the organizational structure of academia—this is not my primary concern. More importantly, Cox (2014) focuses on how sociologists can learn from the way movements theorize rather than from the content of movements' theoretical insights themselves. Thus, Cox (2014) highlights how movements often theorize through collaborative discussions that include people from diverse perspectives and traditions, as seen in the World Social Forum or the Zapatista's Encuentros. Cox (2014) argues that sociologists should embrace this collaborative approach to theorizing through public dialogue, but he does not discuss the actual theoretical insights produced by these publics or how these specific theoretical insights can shape professional sociology; this is precisely what I analyze here, as captured in the dynamic "reverse tutelage." The rest of the article will define and analyze the reverse tutelage approach as it pertains to public sociology.

TOWARD REVERSE TUTELAGE IN PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

Gopal (2019) evoked the concept of reverse tutelage to explain a different process from the one analyzed in this article. Gopal's study of early twentieth-century Britain shows how members of the British left developed anticolonial politics and activism through their engagement with intellectuals and radicals who had come to the metropole from the colonies. Gopal (2019:24) uses the concept of reverse tutelage to highlight how "metropolitan dissidents came to learn something from their anticolonial interlocutors and the movements they represented." For Gopal (2019), this reverse tutelage flips the dominant narrative that we see in historical accounts of empire and colonialism. We are often presented with a picture of metropolitan elites giving knowledge to the premodern colonized, yet Gopal's concept of reverse tutelage highlights how the knowledge of the colonized shaped metropolitan political activism. Examples of such reverse tutelage include George Padmore and C. L. R. James convincing members of the British left that the Nazism they were fighting was akin to the British empire's colonial practices and the International African Friends of Ethiopia convincing key members of the British parliament (including Arthur Jones, Ellen Wilkinson, Noel Baker, and Denis Pritt) to recognize the infringement of self-determination imbued into colonial practices (see Meghji 2021).

I contend that the concept of reverse tutelage can also be applied more generally to public sociology. Public sociology is often construed as involving a flow of knowledge from the sociologist to a public; reverse tutelage can explain how public sociology can also involve flows of knowledge from publics to professional sociology. Acknowledging this reverse tutelage forces us to understand that publics can be meaningful sociological interlocutors and can consequently be meaningful producers of critical sociology and sociological theory.

To an extent, this argument is not particularly novel; it builds on extant discussions in sociology. In *Fighting Words*, for instance, Collins (1998:xvi) highlights how oppressed people—regardless of whether or not they are in university positions—theorize about their oppression as a requisite for survival (emphasis added):

> Despite long-standing claims by elites that Blacks, women, Latinos, and other similar derogated groups in the United States remain incapable of producing the type of interpretive, analytical thought that is labelled theory in the West, powerful knowledges of resistance that toppled former structures of social inequality repudiate this view. *Members of these groups do in fact theorize, and our critical social theory has been central to our political empowerment and search for justice.*

For Collins, university status might be a prerequisite for "elite" social theorizing, but it certainly is not a prerequisite for critical social theorizing—that is, social theory proper. Similar points have been made in the anticolonial turn in sociology, where sociologists have pointed out how anticolonial intellectuals, although not employed as sociologists, theorized the world in ways that raised sociological questions and made sociological contributions. In his recent *British Journal of Sociology* plenary, for example, Go (2023b) turned to the writings of Apolinario Mabini and Jose Rizal in the Philippines, Eugenio Maria de Hostos in Puerto Rico, and Frantz Fanon, Suzanne Cesaire, and Aimé Césaire in Martinique to show how each of them, in advocating anticolonialism, developed anticolonial social theories: theories that cut to key sociological problems, such as the definition of society, the relationship between culture and economy, and the possibility of social change in social structures that tend to reproduce themselves. Likewise, Patel (2023) highlights how anticolonial social thought, as an analytic and philosophical ecosystem of ideas stretching back over 400 years, very much fits the criteria for sociological theorizing in the way it "maps and interprets ideas and actions that have emerged in the political struggle(s) of the colonized peoples against capitalist colonialism's material exploitation, ideologies, and practices" and how it "collates, catalogs, and analyses the subjective experiences of being dominated by colonial and imperial economic, social, political, and cultural institutions, policies, and rules."

This historical and growing awareness that sociological theorizing can take place outside of universities, often coming from the margins of society itself, can help us rethink public sociology. I contend that these examples speak not just to the existence of "sociological theorizing outside the academy" but more simply speak to the existence of public sociology: sociological theorizing that develops in (counter)publics that can inform professional sociology.

With this in mind, I move to my final substantive section to highlight how reverse tutelage and public sociology can work. Starting with a focus on the Zapatistas, formed in Chiapas (Mexico), I highlight how an anticolonial public produced a social theory of neoliberalism that orients professional sociology toward (re)considering neoliberalism's alternatives, encourages sociologists to analyze power through focal points of resistance, and shows sociologists how to build connectors between different social groups rather than forcefully imposing a universal. I then briefly consider anti-racist publics who have built connectors across regions (Black Lives Matter in the United States, Palestine Action in the United Kingdom, and Cops Are Flops in South Africa) to highlight how—through building connections between each other's struggles—they help orient professional sociology toward relational understandings of racialization and racism.[4]

THEORIZING FROM THE MARGINS: THE ZAPATISTAS AND THE FOURTH WORLD WAR

In professional sociology, we have referred to neoliberalism as a theory of political economy (Harvey 2007a), a market-based doctrine of complete financialization (Harvey 2007b), a stage of capitalism (Chang 2008; Larner 2003), and an economic embodiment of individualism (Hall 2017). By contrast, the Zapatistas define neoliberalism as a fourth world war waged on humanity.

The Zapatistas are a largely Indigenous-led group formed in Eastern Chiapas, Mexico, in 1994, as a response to Mexico's project of land seizure and neoliberal economic policies.[5] Although they emerged as a response to Mexico's national policies, their comments on neoliberalism as a fourth world war demonstrate the international scope of their social thought. Central to the Zapatistas' theory, as explicated by Marcos (1997) in his speech "The Fourth

World War Has Begun," is that this world war involves seven components: the accumulation of wealth and of poverty (i.e., the elite getting more wealth is inherently connected to the growing impoverishment of others; see Savage 2021), the total exploitation of the totality of the world (as we see, e.g., in the connections between capitalist accumulation and environmental destruction; see Dietz, Shwom, and Whitley 2020), the nightmare of that part of humanity condemned to a life of migration wandering (as we see in the rise of global refugees; Lindskoog 2019), the sickening relationship between crime and state power, state violence, the mystery of megapolitics, and the increasing resistance humanity is deploying (as seen in rising social movements across the world; see Abrams 2023). As a sociological critique of neoliberalism, the Zapatistas draw connections between what might be separated out as disparate areas of sociological research—environment, migration, wealth inequality, state corruption, and state hegemony—as being inherently connected by virtue of being simultaneous battles in a world war.

This social theory was further spelled out in the first intercontinental meeting the Zapatistas organized in 1996, For Humanity and against Neoliberalism, where thousands of people from across the world gathered in Chiapas.[6] At this meeting, the Zapatistas described how they were all part of a connected struggle: a struggle for humanity in a context where the global system of neoliberalism was dehumanizing millions of subalternized people. As the Zapatistas declared in the final remarks at this meeting (Marcos 2002:117, emphasis added):

> [M]illions of women, millions of youths, millions of Indigenous, millions of homosexuals, millions of human beings of all races and colors only participate in the financial markets as a devalued currency worth always less and less, the currency of their blood making profits. . . . The globalization of markets is erasing borders for speculation and crime and multiplying them for human beings. Countries are obligated to erase their national borders when it comes to the circulation of money but to multiply their internal borders. . . . *National governments are turned into the military underlings of a new world war against humanity*.

Again, we see the development of the Zapatistas' sociological analysis and theory. Here, they draw connections between financial markets and economic growth with the process of dehumanization, but unlike professional sociological theories that hold that neoliberalism highlights the power of corporations and the market over the nation-state (Giroux 2005), the Zapatistas develop an understanding of national governments as enforcers of neoliberal dehumanization—that is, as local enactors of global designs (Mignolo 2000).

In developing this sociological theory of neoliberalism, the Zapatistas are theorizing about power, knowledge, political economy, history, trans-localism, and so much more. The Foucauldian ([1976] 1990) aphorism that so many of our students of social theory are familiar with—that where there is power there is resistance—is precisely the point spelled out by the Zapatistas when they describe neoliberalism as a war on humanity and the planet and *also* a historical moment in which peripheralized groups across the world dehumanized by neoliberalism are waging their own struggles against it. In such analysis, the Zapatistas offer professional sociology an agenda similar to the Foucauldian approach: to study power at its points of resistance and to understand the multiplicities of resistance that can emerge in a totalizing structure of exploitation.

The Zapatistas expand on this focus on resistance to neoliberalism in their 2021 Declaration for Life.[7] Here, they emphasize that different groups struggling against problems engendered by neoliberalism can build connections with each other, coming together

to defend human existence. Through stressing the connections that can exist between different forms of resistance, the Zapatistas' social theory highlights how neoliberalism is not a political economic structure that can be replaced with a better political economy. Rather, the Zapatistas posit that neoliberalism's alternative is not socialism, or communism, or a green new deal, but dignity and life itself; the struggles happening across the world against neoliberalism center around these quests for dignity and flourishment. As they state in the seven points of their Declaration for Life, resistance to neoliberalism involves both building connections across difference and recognizing the way these resistances are tied together in a "fight for humanity":

> That we make the pains of the earth our own: violence against women; persecution and contempt of those who are different in their affective, emotional, and sexual identity; annihilation of childhood; genocide against the native peoples; racism; militarism; exploitation; dispossession; the destruction of nature.
>
> The understanding that a system is responsible for these pains. The executioner is an exploitative, patriarchal, pyramidal, racist, thievish and criminal system: capitalism.
>
> The knowledge that it is not possible to reform this system, to educate it, to attenuate it, to soften it, to domesticate it, to humanize it.
>
> The commitment to fight, everywhere and at all times—each and everyone on their own terrain—against this system until we destroy it completely. The survival of humanity depends on the destruction of capitalism. We do not surrender, we do not sell out, and we do not give up.
>
> The certainty that the fight for humanity is global. Just as the ongoing destruction does not recognize borders, nationalities, flags, languages, cultures, races; so the fight for humanity is everywhere, all the time.
>
> The conviction that there are many worlds that live and fight within the world. And that any pretense of homogeneity and hegemony threatens the essence of the human being: freedom. The equality of humanity lies in the respect for difference. In its diversity resides its likeness.
>
> The understanding that what allows us to move forward is not the intention to impose our gaze, our steps, companies, paths and destinations. What allows us to move forward is the listening to and the observation of the Other that, distinct and different, has the same vocation of freedom and justice. ("Part One: A Declaration . . . for Life" 2021)

Note that we are not just reviewing a group's organizational commitments, we are still discussing a public sociology that can influence professional sociology. These contributions to professional sociology are not just realized through the Zapatistas' understanding of neoliberalism and resistance to neoliberalism but are also seen in the very way the Zapatistas talk about the philosophy of social analysis itself. In their Declaration for Life, we see a philosophy in which the fields of ethics and epistemology converge into the same analytic plain. Ethics and epistemology converge here in a practical commitment from the Zapatistas to not universalize one's view of the world but instead to recognize "that there are many worlds

that live and fight within the world," and the aim is not to "impose our gaze, our steps, companies, paths and destinations" onto others but, instead, to work horizontally with others struggling for freedom and justice. As the Zapatistas declare, the aim is to build connections between struggles rather than homogenize acts of resistance, and without these connectors, we are unable to progress: "[W]hat allows us to move forward is the listening to and the observation of the Other that, distinct and different, has the same vocation of freedom and justice" ("Part One: A Declaration . . . for Life" 2021).

In developing this philosophy of social analysis, the Zapatistas go a step further to show that the very act of building "connectors" between different struggles is an act that necessarily involves, or indeed, constitutes, sociological theorizing. Put more plainly, building connections between struggles is a site of sociological analysis. It involves sociological theorizing because it necessitates that we understand the mechanisms or processes by which events or struggles happening across different space or timescapes relate to one another in a nonhierarchical way. This necessitates analysis of how a given social structure can stretch across time and space, perhaps even evolving or mutating in this stretching. I next look at some concrete examples of this "connection building as sociological theorizing."

THEORIZING THROUGH CONNECTING: FROM BLACK LIVES MATTER TO COPS ARE FLOPS AND PALESTINE ACTION

The idea that building connections between resistances necessitates (and constitutes) sociological analysis can be demonstrated historically in professional sociology and through a consideration of contemporary resistance movements. In professional sociology, the notion of "connecting as sociological theorizing" could, to an extent, simply be summarized as the whole ethic of comparative sociology (Suzuki 2017). Indeed, Goldberg's (2015) provocation for a relational racisms approach also summarizes the ethic I am excavating. Goldberg (2015:257) calls on sociologists to analyze on a broad level how "movement in one place ripples through impacts in another, and how structures at one time are taken up and put to work in another elsewhere"; he specifically calls on race scholars to analyze how "racial ideas, meanings and exclusionary repressive practices in one place are influenced, shaped by and fuel those elsewhere" (Goldberg 2015:254). For scholars in professional sociology, like Goldberg, finding the relations between disparate racial (or anti-racist) projects becomes both a focal point of sociological analysis and a space in which sociological critique is born. Nevertheless, as Goldberg (2015) comments, this call for a relational racisms program has not properly taken off in the professional sociology of race, where scholars remain committed to largely state-centric theoretical paradigms (see also Meghji 2023). Again, this pushes us toward thinking about the chasms, and possible influence, between public sociology and professional sociology, given there are many publics that stress the importance of relational models of thinking (particularly in the area of race and racialization). Thinking about these publics as meaningful producers of critical sociology can help refine and bolster peripheral movements in professional sociology.

Consider, for example, the recent activism by Palestine Action in Britain centered around disrupting the factories of the private military and security firm Elbit Systems (see Turner 2022). On the one hand, this group's actions are addressing the direct circumstances of occupied Palestinians and working toward their liberation; on the other hand, they are drawing connections between the practices of the Israeli state, the wider commercialization of military technology under neoliberalism, and the connections between militarization and border control. Elbit Systems is not connected just to the Israeli state but is part of a much wider, global flow of capital, militarization, and bordering: Britain's Maritime and Coastguard

Agency contracted with Elbit Systems UK to protect the border from so-called "illegal" migration, Elbit Systems provides the European Union with military drones to patrol the border in the Mediterranean, and they have 55 fixed towers in southern Arizona to "protect" the U.S. border (Meghji 2023). The United States, through the FBI and military bases, and the European Union, via its border agency Frontex, provide military and border technologies in Niger to prevent migrants from Chad moving to Nigeria, where mobility to the European Union and United States becomes easier. Just South of Niger, in Nigeria, since 2013, Elbit has contracted with the Nigerian government to spy on "radical" left-wing activists. So, when Palestine Action takes direct action against Elbit Systems, we see social theorizing through their actions and practical activities as they show the inherent connections that exist between various social processes and projects of exploitation across a wide variety of state projects, geopolitical regions, and racial projects.

Indeed, caught in this public theorizing/activism is a recognition that there are links between the militarization, securitization, and financialization of external borders and the regulation of national internal borders. In other words, the carceral technologies that racial projects rely on to protect the nation-state from racialized forms of migration are inherently connected to the racialized practices developed in the nation's core. Indeed, the Zapatistas made this point in 1996 when they noted a paradox in neoliberalism: "Countries [or nation-states] are obligated to erase their national borders when it comes to the circulation of money *but to multiply their internal borders*. . . . National governments are turned into the military underlings of a new world war against humanity" (Marcos 2002:117). As pinpointed by the Zapatistas and Palestine Action, there are direct links between increasing militarization of external borders and the increasing carceral logics deployed against individuals within the nation-state. Again, this public theorizing sets an agenda for professional sociology in the way it encourages us to bring together sociological subfields that often remain bifurcated from one another—such as migration studies and the sociology of race—into the same analytic plain.[8] Further clarifying this with a final example, I briefly turn to how this was displayed in the Black Lives Matter protests.

As explicated by Davis (2016:83), since 2014, Black Lives Matter (BLM) "has become synonymous with progressive protest from Palestine to South Africa, from Syria to Germany, and Brazil to Australia." However, as Davis clarifies, BLM did not just become synonymous with progressive protest across the world but also drew relations between the internal systemic racism of the United States and racial projects elsewhere. Consider, for instance, Davis's (2016:139–40) discussion of the connections between violence toward Palestinians in occupied Palestine with the police brutality used to maintain the racial order in the United States, such as during the Ferguson BLM protests in 2014:

> Palestinian activists noticed from the images they saw on social media and on television that tear-gas canisters that were being used in Ferguson were exactly the same tear-gas canisters that were used against them in occupied Palestine. As a matter of fact, a US company, which is called Combined Systems, Incorporated, stamps "CTS" (Combined Tactical Systems) on their tear-gas canisters. When Palestinian activists noticed these canisters in Ferguson, what they did was to tweet advice to Ferguson protesters on how to deal with the tear gas. . . . There was a whole series of really interesting comments for the young activists in Ferguson, who were probably confronting tear gas for the first time in their lives.

Expanding on this example, Davis (2016:140) comments on the "connections between the militarization of the police in the US" and the "ongoing proliferation of racist police

violence, and the continuous assault on people in occupied Palestine." Recognizing these links, BLM started sending delegates to Lebanon in 2015 to work with Palestinian activists, later reiterating their support for Palestinian liberation in 2020 in the aftermath of George Floyd's death. This focus on the links between U.S. racism and settler colonialism in Palestine led BLM to focus on, among many things, the sending of U.S. police officers to learn from the Israeli military via organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League.

Thinking beyond the example of Palestine, we can consider how the murder of George Floyd in 2020 also inspired movements for police abolition outside the U.S. context. Cops Are Flops (2020) in South Africa, for example, created the report "Reimagining Justice in South Africa beyond Policing." In this report, they saw their analysis of police violence and profitable carcerality not as an attempt to project a U.S. reality onto South Africa but, rather, as a form of analysis that stresses they are "fundamentally having the same conversation" as in the United States. The organization highlighted how the South African police use similar techniques of policing and violence as seen in the United States and how the South African police had burgeoning municipal powers similar to those adopted in U.S. southern states. Davis et al. (2022) highlight how movements like Cops Are Flops stress that what happens in the United States is about the United States, but it is also part of a much wider global conversation of carcerality, racist policing, and struggles for abolition. Again, it would be prudent to construe such movements—like BLM and Cops Are Flops—as having a lot to teach professional sociology: The way they transcend national myopia and directly look for links with other racial (and anti-racist) projects elsewhere advocates precisely for the forms of relational analysis that scholars like Goldberg tried (perhaps unsuccessfully) to develop in professional sociology.

A cursory examination of the theory production of these anti-racist movements highlights their ability to challenge the burgeoning presentism within the sociology of race. As documented by Magubane (2013), Go (2018), and myself (Meghji 2022b), among others, American sociology of race in the twenty-first century has latently committed to a presentism that focuses on theorizing aspects of structural racism outside of their historical roots in colonization and enslavement. This is particularly apparent in the critical race iteration of sociology, where the central mission, as articulated by Bonilla-Silva (2015:74), is to study the "contemporary foundation" of racial inequality, turning analysis away from "the sins [of the] past (e.g., slavery, colonization, and genocide)." Alongside this critical race approach, popular theories such as racial formation theory (Omi and Winant 2015) encourage sociologists to divide the history of race (in the United States) into discrete racial formations rather than to think about the undercurrents that have temporally traveled through successive periods. By explicit contrast, movements like Cops Are Flops directly stress the temporal connections between present and past racist practices. In their pamphlet on abolition, for example, Cops Are Flops (2020) engage in a historical excavation of policing in South Africa and the United States: They highlight how policing in colonial America began as a private for-profit organization, creating a link between capital, racism, and policing that remains today (see also Go 2023a). Likewise, they note how South African policing also has a colonial history: The South African Mounted Riflemen were essentially militarized armies who were given policing duties within Black neighborhoods, again creating links between policing and racialization that persist into the present day (Cops Are Flops 2020). Thus, to come back to the crux of this article, we again see publics producing sociological theory that can inform professional sociology: Cops Are Flops not only highlight the importance of a relational approach to race, but they also highlight the importance for professional sociologists of adopting a historical sensibility to understand racism and racialization.

These examples of (counter)public social theorizing help us develop extant critiques of Burawoy's model of public sociology. Namely, although scholars such as Lozano (2018) and Cox (2014) highlight the need for sociologists to learn from (or with) publics, they tend to focus on methodological and organizational practices. This means they highlight the importance of participatory research methods for public sociology, stressing the need for fundamental shifts in the academy toward open-access publications, supporting public fora, and disseminating knowledge in ways that include and connect various public stakeholders. Lozano (2018) and Cox (2014) thus clearly show us how we can make professional sociology more dialogical with publics (and thus create forms of public sociology in line with Burawoy's original definition). However, while recognizing publics as sociological interlocutors, these extant approaches do not explicitly set out to excavate the actual social theories produced by different publics, nor do they highlight how such social theories produced by publics can address, critique, and inform shortcomings in professional sociology. It is this excavation of public theorizing and its importance to professional sociology that are more salient in my approach to public sociology outlined here.

RETHINKING PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

I like to think this article raises a series of rhetorical questions: Are movements like Cops Are Flops, BLM, and Palestinian activists not social theorizing when they see and draw connections between their respective struggles? Were Palestine Action in Britain not being sociological or doing sociology when they saw connections between occupation, militarization, police violence, and imperial bordering? Were Cops Are Flops not being sociological when they construed the fight for abolition in South Africa as being "fundamentally the same conversation" as the fight for abolition in the United States? Were BLM activists not being sociological when they noticed the police resistance to their protests involved the use of technology developed by private military firms and used in other regions of the world? Were the Zapatistas not being sociological in their critique of neoliberalism as a fourth world war or when they advocated for forms of relational social analysis that bridged the fields of ethics and epistemology?

Why do we often struggle to see these solidarity or connecting-building movements as being sociological but we are happy to declare them as radical or activist? Is it because they are doing sociology *and letting sociology inform their practical actions* while we may be teaching sociology and abolition in the classroom, for example, but not standing against our university's own carceral policies? In asking these questions, I want to highlight that in the last stage of this article, I do not construe myself as having moved away from the issue of sociology, sociological analyses, and social theorizing. I believe these are all examples of publics doing sociological work despite not necessarily being university students or professors; and this brings me back to the central crux of this article.

It was 2004 when Burawoy famously advocated for a thorough theorization of public (and professional, critical, and policy) sociology, and since then, various sociological organizations have formally recognized public sociology as sociology. No doubt this provocation from the early 2000s still shapes understandings of public sociology today; indeed, writing now in 2023, we have just had a new handbook of public sociology edited by Bifulco and Borghi (2023) as a means to develop Burawoy's ideas into a new era of utopian social theorizing.

Nevertheless, one can question whether the mainstream understanding of public sociology has sufficiently incorporated the wide range of (public) sociological interlocutors across the social universe. It still seems as though public sociology is often construed as being a gift

the professional sociologist can share with wider publics, rather than being a dialogical exchange of ideas (as Burawoy initially theorized), *or* a case of the public themselves being the primary producer of sociological thought and analysis. To this extent, public sociology is essentially a tool in the repertoire of the professional sociologist. Burawoy (2005b:10) actually notes that "there can be neither policy nor public sociology without a professional sociology," and he more recently stated that "public sociology is accountable to the field of professional sociology, to its scientific norms, and its accumulating body of research" (Burawoy 2023:20).

In contrast to this ironically professionalized vision of public sociology, I proposed an understanding of public sociology based on the premise of reverse tutelage. In thinking about public sociology as a gift from professional sociologists to wider publics, we forget that professional sociologists do not have a monopoly on the sociological. Publics can and often do think sociologically, producing meaningful, critical sociological insights and theories in the process of doing so. As I highlighted with a handful of cases—the Zapatistas, Palestine Action, BLM, and Cops Are Flops—various publics have put forward interesting sociological analyses that can help inform professional sociology. The Zapatistas asserted a critique of neoliberalism that orients professional sociology toward the methodological consideration to study power through its points of resistance, and they highlighted the importance of social analysis to build connections and relations between different points of resistance. Taking this relational model, groups like Palestine Action, BLM, and Cops Are Flops demonstrated the need for professional sociology to consider more systematically the links between different racial and anti-racist projects across geopolitical regions given that these groups are often struggling against different expressions of interconnected racialized processes and flows of meanings and practices.

All these moments of public theorizing constitute reverse tutelage because they demonstrate how professional sociology does not always have all the answers, and professional sociology is not always on the most critical of routes. Scholars like Burawoy are completely accurate in their assessment that critical sociology can help reorient professional sociology onto better pathways, but why should we think that only professional sociologists can produce critical sociology? Reverse tutelage helps us transcend this position by highlighting how publics, in many cases, ought to be considered alongside professional sociologists as producers of meaningful critical sociology. Indeed, as caught in the premise of reverse tutelage, in many cases, we, as professional sociologists, would do much better if we were to listen to and learn from the sociological theorizing of publics.

I will conclude by noting that this call for professional sociologists to listen to wider publics does not advocate for a "death of professional sociology." Since its inception as a discipline, sociology has recognized that professional sociologists do not have a monopoly over sociological analysis. Indeed, as Connell (1997) pointed out, the very "origin story" we teach of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim demonstrates that sociologists are happy to admit that many nonsociologists profoundly shaped the discipline. Furthermore, as signaled through the development of qualitative sociology led by Du Bois (1898), one significant reason why qualitative sociology became mainstreamed was because of the recognition that nonprofessional sociologists often produce meaningful insights about the world that can be incorporated into sociological theories (see also Anderson 2011; Sinha and Back 2014).

Sociological knowledge does not just get produced by professional sociologists. Public sociology, in this case, ought to also be understood as the process by which publics produce meaningful sociological theories and analyses. Incorporating these sociological insights into professional sociology through what I labeled reverse tutelage will, in many cases, just make professional sociology stronger and—I hope—more sociological.

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NOTES

1. There are, of course, alternative definitions of public sociology than the one offered by Burawoy (see Brooks and Wright 2021; Gans 2016). However, these alternative definitions are similar to Burawoy's in the way that "public sociology" is construed as "sociology for the public"; as described by Younge et al. (2023), this vision of public sociology is one where sociology is "out there, accessible, engaging and world changing." For this reason, although my article focuses on Burawoy's categorization, it applies more generally to dominant understandings of public sociology.
2. One might point out the irony that it is not the case that professional sociology is a prerequisite for public sociology but the other way around here.
3. On participatory methods, see Sinha and Back (2014).
4. Importantly, this article is explicitly *not* an analysis of a social movement or movements. This article is about public sociology and the extent to which we need to recognize publics and counter-publics as meaningful sociological interlocutors. For this reason, I deliberately do not spend much time detailing the genesis of the social movements. In future research, social movements scholars can think more explicitly about how to theorize *with* rather than *about* the publics they study.
5. For an overview of the Zapatistas' history, see Mora (2017).
6. This meeting included people from both the West, such as Italy, Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Portugal, Denmark, the United States, Canada, and Greece, and the South, such as Brazil, Paraguay, Chile, the Philippines, Peru, Argentina, Uruguay, Guatemala, Venezuela, Iran, Nicaragua, Haiti, Ecuador, Kurdistan, Costa Rica, Cuba, South Africa, Bolivia, Mexico, and Colombia.
7. The Zapatistas' Declaration for Life is available at https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2021/01/01/part-one-a-declaration-for-life.
8. On the separation of migration and race studies, see Lentin (2005) and Itzigsohn (2023).

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