emerald**insight**

International Origins of Social and Political Theory

Epistemic Ruptures: History, Practice, and the Anticolonial Imagination
Ricarda Hammer,

Article information:

For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

*Related content and download information correct at time of download.

EPISTEMIC RUPTURES: HISTORY, PRACTICE, AND THE ANTICOLONIAL IMAGINATION

Ricarda Hammer

ABSTRACT

Examining the work of Frantz Fanon and Stuart Hall, this article argues that their biographic practices and experiences as colonial subjects allowed them to break with imperial representations and to provide new, anticolonial imaginaries. It demonstrates how the experience of the racialized and diasporic subject, respectively, creates a kind of subjectivity that makes visible the work of colonial cultural narratives on the formation of the self. The article first traces Fanon's and Hall's transboundary encounters with metropolitan Europe and then shows how these biographic experiences translate into their theories of practice and history. Living through distinct historical moments and colonial ideologies, Fanon and Hall produced theories of historical change, which rest on epistemic ruptures and conjunctural changes in meaning formations. Drawing on their biographic subjectivities, both intellectuals theorize cultural and colonial forms of oppression and seek to produce new knowledge that is based on practice and experience.

  Keywords: Anticolonial thought; empire; theory; race; practice

INTRODUCTION

The disaster of the man of color lies in the fact that he was enslaved. The disaster and the inhumanity of the white man lie in the fact that somewhere he has killed man […] But I as a man of color, to the extent that it becomes possible for me to exist absolutely, do not have the right to lock myself into a world of retroactive reparations. I, the man of color, want only this: That the tool never possess the man.

(Fanon, 2008, p. 180)

Diaspora is a loss. It's not forever, it doesn't mean that you can't do something about it, or that other places can't fill the gap, the void, but the void is always the regretful moment that wasn't realized. History is full of what is not realized, and I feel that about it. Whenever I go back, I think I'm at home but still I'm not at home.

(Hall & Back, 2009, p. 668)

To study systems of cultural oppression requires a particular kind of imagination. This article argues that the specific biographic, subjective, and affective experiences of anticolonial thinkers provide insight into how colonial epistemic frameworks operate. If, as analysts, we start from the subjective experience of the colonized, the racialized, or the diasporic subject, we adopt a perspective that captures the workings of racial hierarchies and imperial representations. Of a long tradition in anticolonial thought, this article focuses on the work of Frantz Fanon and Stuart Hall specifically. Both intellectuals were born in the Caribbean but left for Europe, and Fanon later for Africa. The article suggests that these "transboundary experiences" were profound, affective, biographic instances which shaped their intellectual work (see Introduction, this volume): Frantz Fanon recognized and felt the racializing structures of colonialism upon encountering white Europe, witnessed the dehumanizing colonial violence in Algeria and sought to explain his life experience as a racialized subject. Stuart Hall, a former colonial, then a diasporic subject in Britain, experienced the feelings of being out of place or perpetually displaced, which, I argue, fueled his anticolonial imagination.

What we know is positioned, arising from our particular, socially constructed standpoint (Go, 2016). Fanon's and Hall's anticolonial subjectivity allowed them to theorize not only how power structures operate, how dominant regimes of representation reproduce themselves and affect the subject, but they also identify openings in history and opportunities to break with conventional "ways of seeing the world." While cultural sociology has long theorized the work of ideology and symbolic domination, the anticolonial tradition adds insights into the racializing and imperial structures of modernity. Fanon and Hall focus on a specific subjective experience within

empire, that of the racialized and the displaced subject. For Fanon, the colonized is enveloped in a system of discourses that profoundly affect his sense of self and render him inferior. Hall puts his focus on the subjective experience of belonging, the migrant and the diaspora, and shows how, for the colonized subject, this sense of self always seems to be somewhere else. Both put forth a theory of history and propose that new knowledge − and indeed, epistemic ruptures − can emerge out of practice and experience.

There are also interesting differences in Fanon's and Hall's anticolonial imaginations. While Fanon gives us a theory of racialization, Hall theorizes displacement and identity fragmentations. This may be because they were embedded in distinct colonial ideologies. For example, France considered its colonies as extensions of the French nation state, aimed to standardize language, laws, and institutions across the territories, thereby upholding the illusion that all subjects within the territories were equal (Ahluwalia, 2010). This pernicious myth, which, Césaire writes, associated "in our minds the word France and the word liberty" and bound "us to France by every fiber of our hearts and power of our minds" (Césaire quoted in Hall, 1995), broke for Fanon upon realizing that he had been fixed as black. Colonial subjects in the British Empire similarly looked to Britain as the motherland, but there was little pretense to elevate colonial subjects to equality. Instead, ideology was built on tutelage for an endlessly delayed self-determination. For Fanon, racialization excluded him from France and humanity itself, while for Hall, displacement was the central experience to modernity. In what follows, I describe these biographic interactions with empire before showing how Fanon and Hall theorized history, practice, and openings for change. In sum, I hope to show that the anticolonial tradition provides an example for how the unity of practice, theory, and subjectivity can challenge epistemic oppressions.

TRANSBOUNDARY EXPERIENCES: FRANTZ FANON

His father a slave descendant and his mother of mixed French heritage, Frantz Fanon was born to a middle class family in 1925 in Fort-de-France, the French colony of Martinique. Early on, Fanon was influenced by the anticolonial writer Aimé Césaire and his teachings on colonial racism in the Martiniquan Lycée Schoelcher (Alessandrini, 2005; Gibson, 2003; Gordon, 2015). Looking back on the paradigmatic experience of the Antillean black schoolboy, Fanon recounts how much the boy sees himself

as belonging to and identifying with France: "Forever talking about 'our ancestors, the Gauls', [the schoolboy] identifies himself with the explorer, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries truth to savages − an all-white truth. There is identification − that is, the young Negro subjectively adopts a white man's attitude" (Fanon, 2008, p. 114).[1] The Antillean subject's identification with metropolitan France is particularly strong when compared to other subjects in the French Empire. For example, the image of the black man − created in colonial tales and ideologies − is associated with "the African," located on the African continent. "When in school he has to read stories of savages told by white men, he always thinks of the Senegalese. As a schoolboy, I had many occasions to spend whole hours talking about the supposed customs of the savage Senegalese" (Fanon, 2008, p. 114). In short, the Antillean does not think of himself as black. "Subjectively, intellectually, the Antillean conducts himself like a white man. But he is a Negro" (Fanon, 2008, p. 114).

This colonial paradox becomes apparent once the Antillean moves to Europe: Through the encounter with white Europe, the Antillean colonial subject learns that the category of "the Negro" in fact includes him just as much as the Senegalese. Leaving Martinique, the young Fanon joined the French resistance against occupying Nazi Germany, and it was during his time in the French military that he experienced racial hierarchies and racism on a daily basis: White soldiers, fighting alongside black soldiers, addressed blacks with the informal "tu" as opposed to the respectful "vous," white French villagers − for whom black soldiers had risked their lives − mistreated them, and white women preferred Italian, fascist prisoners over black soldiers who had liberated them (Go, 2013a, 2013b; Gordon, 2015, p. 12). In a famous incident in *Black Skins, White Masks*, Fanon (2008) recounts the crystalizing moment, when he understood that his skin color, ranked at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, trumped any feelings of belonging to France. Fixed as a racial other in the gaze of a young white French boy, Fanon describes the psychological, affective reaction he felt upon recognizing the child's dehumanizing gaze.

While traveling in France, Fanon encounters a mother with her young child. Upon seeing Fanon, the young boy turns to his mother and exclaims: "Look a Negro … Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!" (Fanon, 2008, p. 84). In the glance of the boy, Fanon writes, he had been fixed as something other: something outside Europe, Frenchness, whiteness, civilization, and outside the bounds of those who belong. Recognizing the power of this gaze, Fanon reacts, feeling the burden of history on his shoulders. "I could no longer laugh, because I already know there were legends, stories, history

and above all *historicity* …. Then assailed at various points, the corporal schema crumbled its place taken by a racial epidermal schema … I was responsible for my body, for my race, for my ancestors" (Fanon, 2008, p. 84, italics in original). Inscribed in his skin color and physical features, was a history of racial slavery and colonial ideologies that marked him as entirely other. Thus, even though the colonial subject feels himself as a part of France, he gets fixed outside it.

The colonial condition is inherently contradictory (Go, 2013a, 2013b). Hailed as a free French citizen from Martinique to metropolitan France, Fanon realizes that his black skin prevents him from truly belonging to the French republic. The racialized subject is called to inhabit a contradictory reality, a fragmented space, as the "white man's other" (Sardar, 2008). "The movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together again by another self" (Fanon, 2008, p. 109). His identity and sense of self is placed in a space of nonbeing, which is perpetually external to the ideals held up by colonialism.[2] Even though France is "his" country, the racialized subject is made to feel different to other people (Fanon, 2008, p. 115). Moreover, this contradictory situation forces itself into the realm of the intimate: Since the Antillean family has little connection with "national" France, the Antillean subject is faced with a choice between his family and European society and its ideals of civilization and whiteness. Seeking to attain the status of the white, the Antillean "tends to reject his family − black and savage − on the place of imagination" (Fanon, 2008, p. 115).

This encounter with the white world is powerful on a psychological level. "When the Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitizing action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an *actional* person" (Fanon, 2008, p. 119). Instead of being one's own person, the black man instead strives to emulate the European because that is what is valued, socially, but also subjectively. That is, in order to attain a measure of self-worth, the black man wants and needs to be white. It is Fanon's own transboundary encounter, the encounter with the racialized gaze that made apparent to him the profound psychological effects this immersion can have. Succumbed to the weight of history, stories, language and meanings of a white world, the racialized subject loses his agency, he stops being *actional*. While the inferiority of the colonized subject is felt inside him, as a form of personal weakness or inferiority complex, Fanon asserts over

and over that the subject is in fact "*made* inferior" (Fanon, 2008, p. 115, my italics). The immersion of inferiorizing narratives, tales, and languages produces inside him this feeling in inferiority. However, once he recognizes that the ideals of the colonial world are beyond his attainability, the process of developing his true self begins.

Philosophically, Fanon's conception of the human builds on phenomenology's assertion of being-in-the-world. Oriented to explain one's lived experience, phenomenology considers consciousness as inseparable from the body, with the body "at all times invaded by consciousness" (Hudis, 2015, p. 8). The universal, for Fanon, is a world of mutual recognitions, where the I is the we and the we is the I, but racism distorts the possibilities for true recognition. Racial schemas fix us into whiteness and blackness, where the other, in the words of Lewis Gordon, fails "to be seen through being seen" (Gordon, 1995, p. 58). Fixed into an entirely over-determined blackness, the racialized subject feels himself alien to himself. Yet, unable to escape how the world "sees" his body, the black subject must engage with the world through this bodily schema. Here, Fanon leaves room for the agency of the black subject: Consciously deciding on this engagement with the white world, while racially fixed, the racialized subject can do so at his own terms, not as an object, but as an embodied subjectivity.

It is futile and, in fact, counterproductive to separate Fanon's biographic experiences from his theoretical writings. His subjective experiences of *encountering* white Europe, of *feeling* the gaze of a young boy and of *internalizing* the discourses of inferiority the white world had produced around him, were the impetus for his scholarship. What is more, precisely this subjective experience gives us an insight into the relationship between self-formation and racializing structures and the consequences of being a racialized subject in a colonial system. Fanon's description of the psychological effects of colonialism and racial structures contrasts any theory that seeks to neatly distinguish the objective and the subjective. Starting with the subjective experience of the racialized subject, enveloped in a system of discourses and knowledge that structurally render him inferior, then allows us to understand the radical break historical change requires.

Experiences in Colonial Struggle

After the War, Fanon studied medicine and psychiatry and began to use psychoanalytic tools to understand the effects of racialized schemas on

blacks' sense of self-perception and self-worth. The 1950s in France brought together a series of African freedom fighters who met in the metropole in order to discuss independence. This particular time and place was thus replete with revolutionary philosophies. In 1953, precisely when Algeria was on the brink of anticolonial struggle against France, Fanon was offered a job at Joinville Hospital outside Algiers. In Algeria, Fanon witnessed first-hand the violence and dehumanizing effects of colonial relations. In fact, he treated both, colonized and colonizers, which made clear to him that the colonial relationship is dehumanizing for both parties (Fanon, 2008). By 1956, he resigned and officially joined the National Liberation Front (FLN). While located in Tunis, Fanon founded the radical magazine *Moudjahid*, and became one of the most influential ideologues of the Algerian revolution. However, stricken by leukemia, Fanon died on December 6, 1961, and never lived to see Algerian independence (Alessandrini, 2005; Gibson, 2003; Gordon, 2015; Hudis, 2015).

Given his biographic experience and the context of anticolonial revolutionary struggles, Frantz Fanon's work was always born out of practice and he, in turn, sought to influence worldly events. The context of colonial violence in Algeria as well as later decolonization struggles throughout Africa fed his theoretical development, just as much as his writings sought to propel struggle and call the black man to action. *The Wretched of the Earth*, written in the months before his death, for example, is explicitly oriented as a text for practice, while proposing a profound analysis of colonialism's knowledge structures. It is important to keep in mind that this kind of historical context not only endangered his physical existence, but also profoundly shaped his mind, soul, and humanity (Sardar, 2008).

The anticolonial struggle, Fanon exclaims, demands new concepts and new forms of knowing, because not only are epistemic structures and action linked, but they also inform and feed off each other. Europe's involvement in the colonial project suggests that it has a racist structure, which operates on the social as well as the symbolic level. Manifested in discourses, knowledge structures, practices, and ways of thinking, this racist structure maintains colonial dominance (Fanon, 2008, p. 68). For example, given that the colonizer not only acts in the world but also constructs the narrative and history of this action, the colonized subject finds his inferiority written into history. In other words, science, discourses, and ways of knowing are not outside history but in fact developed hand in hand with social structures. For example, referring to comic books where black men are villains and white men are heroes, Fanon writes, even "the magazines are put together by white men for little white men" (Fanon, 2008, p. 103). Colonial

structures are *held up* and reproduced through the frameworks in which we view the world, which allows us to take the white man as the master of the world for granted. Consequently, the revolutionary struggle demands new ways of knowing, new concepts, through which we can think the new reality.

Breaking with Knowledge Structures through Practice

Fanon proposes a new kind of universalism that does not yet exist and cannot be formulated out of existing dominant discourses. He rejects the blind imitation of European Enlightenment thought just as much as a valorization of existing essentialist Black identities that are nothing more than images and representations produced by Europeans. New forms of knowing cannot be conjured up by existing, dominant knowledge structures. Instead, for Fanon, newness arises in practice and revolutionary struggle. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (2007), he calls on the colonized to act, to bring into existence a *new man*. Put differently, his theorizing is neither aimed for knowledge production nor critique, it is composed to incite action. His emphasis on colonial agency is clear: "Man is what brings society into being. The prognosis is in the hands of those who are willing to get rid of the worm-eaten roots of the structure" (Fanon, 2008, p. 4). He calls upon anticolonial revolutionaries to bring into creation a new man, and the only way that practice and the idea of a new humanism can become reality is through action: "The 'thing' colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation" (Fanon, 2007, p. 2).

Importantly, decolonization, for Fanon has a very distinct meaning. An escape from colonialism inevitably involves struggle. In other words, true decolonial agency is very different from accepting the colonizer's gifts. This rests on Fanon's theory of colonial subjectivity: The only way the colonized can rid themselves of their inferiority complexes, imposed by European, dominant, cultural understandings, is through struggle and anticolonial actions. For example, if the colonized accept *recognition* based on the colonizer's terms, this recognition always rests on the gifting of recognition by Europeans (see also Coulthard, 2014). While recognition may thus objectively improve their economic or social situation, *subjectively* the colonized remain in an inferior position. Fanon does suggest, alongside other Marxists of his day, that economically exploitative relations within colonialism need to end, but if recognition is the colonizer's gift, emancipation will always be incomplete.

Here, Fanon's biographic, subjective, and affective practices shape his understanding of colonialism in distinct ways. The kind of recognition Fanon advocates, one that levels the playing field and allows the colonized to escape from their position of inferiority, involves struggle. Put differently, the colonized cannot expect to eat at the master's table, without confronting the *terms* on which they gain recognition. They cannot accept European ways of knowing, images, and representations, for neither the colonized nor the colonizer will fully break with their dehumanizing relationship. Instead, the colonized subject has to find her own ways of being, acting, and knowing. In short, Fanon is asking for a much more profound form of action. As such, he urges the colonial subject not to seek "equality" or "freedom" in the replication of European civilization, in trying to imitate because that ideal hides behind a moving bar.

Moreover, the colonial relationship cannot be broken simply by European withdrawal. The only thing that can break the colonial relationship is the creation of a new man: He who was formerly colonized must transform himself into an active, thinking historical being, "to rise above this absurd drama that others have staged around me … to reach out to the universal" of reciprocal recognition (Fanon, 2008, p. 197). If the colonized subject is not recognized, he is not fully human, for as long as the colonized "has not been effectively recognized by the other, that other will remain the theme of his actions. It is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that his own human worth and reality depend. It is that other being in whom the meaning of his life is condensed" (Fanon, 2008, p. 169). As long as the colonized subject is not seen as human, he will *always* depend on the actions of Europeans, so only through reciprocal recognition can the colonial relationship be broken.

What are the tools and resources the black subject can draw on in this quest for liberation? First, Fanon implores the colonized to recognize how representations of black identity and black inferiority are constructions. Moving beyond self-loathing, the racialized subject needs to "rise above the absurd drama" to work for a new kind of human being (Fanon, 2008, p. 153). This recognition is the first step in a process to find one's own agency amidst colonial structures of oppression. In other words, in a situation where colonial subjects live-in-death, the long process of finding their own agency, which had been written, defined, and determined from elsewhere, is a painful and violent process. Given this over-determination from the outside, there is no "ontology of blackness" and the black subject is faced with the task to construct an identity out of absence. The colonized has to overcome his own powerless position, most importantly, by

overcoming his own sense of inferiority that had been externally imposed. Without waiting to be recognized as a black man, he must "make [himself] known" (Fanon, 2008, p. 95), thereby regaining historical agency. Importantly, Fanon departs from Negritude thinkers in that the affirmation of blackness can only be one step on the road to universality. As a next step, decolonization must move beyond racial schemas to create a "new man." This would not only bring decolonization, but also allow us to break from the relationship between colonizer and colonized: "For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man" (Fanon, 2007, p. 239).

Yet, action does not automatically follow from thought. To make the colonized into a social, reflexive, actionable being, the colonized need aspirations. It is here where the anticolonial intellectual can provide guidance and stability. Fanon's own texts were written to promote this sense of practice and vision. In short, the imaginary, the creation, the invention of the new man can benefit from the work of an intellectual, but this intellectual labor has to stand in an interactive relationship with the practical struggle. If the intellectual fails to actively engage in practice, he may become nothing more than a colonial protégé. Influenced by European universalisms and systems of thought, he is just as much a product of the colonial system (Fanon, 2007, p. 46). To contribute to the anticolonial struggle, the intellectual must conduct self-analysis (Fanon, 2007, p. 211) and engage with the people's struggle: "[T]he colonised intellectual who is lucky enough to bunker down with the people during the liberation struggle, will soon discover the falsity of this theory. Involvement in the organization of the struggle will already introduce him to a different vocabulary […] the colonised intellectual witnesses the destruction of all his idols: egoism, arrogant recrimination, and the idiotic, childish need to have the last word" (Fanon, 2007, p. 11). Without this grounding in the liberation struggle, the intellectual finds himself rootless, without a compass that anchors his vision.

Practice against History

The black subject is confronted with a dilemma. A history of colonialism and racial slavery has brought with it a system of representations, tales, images, stories, and narratives that mark the black subject's place in the world. Enveloped in these discourses, "[t]he black man wants to be like the white man. For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white. Long ago the black man admitted the unarguable superiority of the white

man, and all his efforts are aimed at achieving a white existence. Have I no other purpose on earth, then, but to avenge the Negro of the seventeenth century?" (Fanon, 2008, p. 178). The burden of history manifests itself in epistemic structures. How then, despite this historical weight, can the colonized subject break with the weight of history? Fanon very much acknowledges the cultural and structural impediments that hold the colonized subject in his place, but he emphasizes over and over again, that "I am not a prisoner of history" (Fanon, 2008, p. 179). While decolonization does need a certain amount of historical rewriting, Fanon's emphasis lies on forging new imaginaries. The colonized cannot succumb to the historical process that is "pre-given," written for him. Instead, Fanon states: "The body of history does not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate the cycle of my freedom" (Fanon, 2008, p. 180).

In order to grasp Fanon's theory of history and the necessity for an epistemological break, it is important to remember the urgency of his writings. Amidst colonial revolution, it is this historical watershed moment that introduces "invention into existence" (Fanon, 2008, p. 179). While acknowledging the life-in-death condition of the colonial subject that has historically been placed in a space of nonexistence, Fanon calls for the "leap," that breaks with the structures of history. "I am a Negro, and tons of chains, storms of blows, rivers of expectoration flow down my shoulders. But I do not have the right to allow myself to bog down. I do not have the right to allow the slightest fragment to remain in my existence. I do not have the right to allow myself to be mired in what the past has determined. I am not the slave of the Slavery that dehumanized my ancestors" (Fanon, 2008, p. 179).

Furthermore, Fanon underlines that the colonial relationship not only dehumanizes the colonized but also implicates the white man. "The disaster of the man of color lies in the fact that he was enslaved. The disaster and the inhumanity of the white man lie in the fact that somewhere he has killed man" (Fanon, 2008, p. 180). In other words, the colonizer, just as much as the colonized, has lost his humanity through being implicated in violence and torture. The radical break must therefore not only reposition the black man as an actional being, but also transform the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. It is through this new creation that we can create mutual recognition. Fanon's vision of this world, breaking with Manichean colonial reality, is a reimagining of social relations between men: "Superiority? Inferiority? Why not the quite simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself?" (Fanon, 2008, p. 181). In order to overcome the fixing of the racialized

subject in a position of exteriority, Fanon envisions a new form of relating between people that works through dexterity, emotion, and a radical form of knowing each other.

Fanon's anticolonial imagination points to a new kind of social relationship that escapes prewritten social hierarchies. This insight was made possible due to his own affective and subjective experiences of being-in-the-world. Recognizing how colonial and racialized structures dehumanize the racialized subject, Fanon suggests that a break from these hierarchies needed to be based on a transformation of the racialized subject. To become an "actional" person, to break from epistemic structures that define one's sense of self, the racialized have to act. Due to Fanon's own biographic and practical experiences in a colonial system, he was able to understand how deeply colonial structures shape the humanity of all involved. To escape from this colonial situation and to obtain veritable recognition and self-determination, struggle was necessary.

"Decolonisation never goes unnoticed, for it focuses on and fundamentally alters being, and transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of History" (Fanon, 2007, p. 2). Witnessing the decolonizing struggle, Fanon suggests that (Algerian) combat gives rise to "new attitudes, to new modes of action, to new ways" (Fanon, 1965, p. 64). Yet, national consciousness, just as much as racial pride, is solely one stage to a new society, for national consciousness has to give way to social and political consciousness. Aware of possible deadends following decolonization, Fanon warned of one-party states, the power of national bourgeoisies, or reifications of nationalism, as they deter from his universal vision. Only by transcending national consciousness could we aim for deep-seated transformation and a new humanity.

Fanon's writings were always deeply implicated in current political situations, drawing from contemporary events and subsequently seeking to influence them (Fanon, 1969). Most importantly, for him, culture and ideas could reflect both, the failures of social change and also the possibility for social change. In order to create a new world, a new man, an actional subject, what is needed is a radical break from old systems of representations. For Fanon, the anticolonial intellectual has the task to articulate a vision for anticolonial revolutionaries, never as an outside observer, but always linked to practice. Then, the intellectual can put forth a "new history of man," a system of knowledge categories that ceases to reproduce European domination. Only by breaking with epistemic foundations that position the white man at the top of the hierarchy will we stop taking his position for granted.

In short, this epistemic break, brought about through struggle and historical rupture, can produce the conditions for a new humanity (Bogues, 2005). Fanon, through his intellectual practice, attempted to inspire this structural break.

Fanon's realization that, as a racialized subject, he could never really be a part of France was a profound biographic experience, which in turn inspired his analyses of racialization: the need to break from racial fixations, to assert himself as a human being, and to create a new conception of man that allows for mutual recognition. Deeply shaped by historical context and his engagement in decolonization struggles, Fanon's call for a new humanity and a clear epistemological break makes up his anticolonial imagination. Importantly, neither Fanon nor Hall − whom I turn to next − write about race as a subcategory, but instead theorize how imperial and racializing schemas are a constitutive element of the modern world. Hall's anticolonial imagination differs from Fanon's as he wrote from a different historical moment. However, influenced by his upbringing in colonial Jamaica and his transboundary experience as a diasporic intellectual in Britain, Hall is similarly positioned to analyze the pervasiveness of dominant, imperial representations: He recenters displacement as a modern experience, includes the other in a national political imaginary, and illuminates for us ways to intervene in dominant cultural meaning systems.

TRANSBOUNDARY EXPERIENCES: STUART HALL

Stuart Hall was born on February 3, 1932, in the British colony of Jamaica. He grew up, in his words, "in a lower-middle class family that was trying to be a middle class Jamaican family trying to be an upper-middle class Jamaican family trying to be an English Victorian family" (Hall, 1987, p. 45). Colonialism marked not only the political context of his early life, but also Hall's family life. This means that the objective condition of colonialism created contradictory subjectivities: On the one hand, his family wanted to belong to the metropole and on the other, the racial hierarchies of colonial Jamaica meant that his skin being darker than his family's was "the first social fact" he knew (Akomfrah & Hall, 2014). Hall's early years were marked by a refusal to live up to the dominant metropole-oriented aspirations presented to him. For him, the objective and subjective could not be separated, because the objective, colonial contradictions produced intense subjective feelings and anguish, breaching into the private sphere

(Hall & Chen, 1996). Hall recalls that his mother in particular aspired to British-ness, and "thought the world would disappear with the departure of the British" (Hall & Back, 2009, p. 662). After winning a Rhodes scholarship to study at Oxford, Stuart Hall left for Britain in 1951, leaving Jamaica 12 years before it reached independence (Back & Tate, 2015).

"I felt out of place in Jamaica, and when I came to England I felt out of place in Merton College, Oxford, and I feel out of place even now. I feel out of place in relation to the British, which might sound a very strange thing because I've lived here for 50-something years" (Hall & Back, 2009, p. 669). The sense of displacement marked Hall's early childhood experiences, just as much as his adult life. As a colonized subject, he writes, one is always "displaced from the center of the world" (Hall in Meeks, 2007, p. 272). This center of the world is represented as *elsewhere*, and one feels out of place with the people as well as the conditions one finds himself in. Moving to Britain perpetuated this sense of displacement. "It is my home in a certain kind of way. But I will never be English − never. I can't be, because traces in my life, and the traces in my memory and the traces in my history of another place are just ineradicable. I can't get them out of my head. I don't want to have a fight about it, but that's just how one is. So being displaced, or out of place, is a characteristic experience of mine. It's been all throughout my life" (Hall & Back, 2009, p. 669).

The sociological imagination, as Mills (2000) reminds us, is a bringing together of biography, structure, and history. Stuart Hall's biographic experiences and affective relationship pertaining to displacement, profoundly shaped his analysis of social structures and of history. His biographic experience of "being displaced" as a "place of identity," as a state of being that is consistently in motion, is an affective state he became familiar with long before he learnt about it through scholarship. Displacement as a defining factor of one's identity means "[l]iving with, living through difference" (Hall, 1987, p. 45). Hall notes that in the midst of anticolonial struggles, many intellectuals from across the British Empire came together in Britain to discuss the end of empire. Upon sharing his own experiences with others, he understood that this feeling of displacement was in fact very wide spread: Everyone had come to London, escaping from the throes of colonial society and seeking a way to "become modern subjects." To become modern, one had to leave behind the colony, to go elsewhere, to start the process of "becoming," to become, in the words of George Lamming, "a native of my person" (Hall in Meeks, 2007, pp. 272, 273).

Hall settled in Britain throughout the period of decolonization and became a founding figure of and in British cultural studies. He contributed

to the emergence of the New Left and became the editor of the *New Left Review*, all the while reflecting on the meaning of "we" in the New Left, given his diasporic position within it (Hall & Chen, 1996). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Hall's voice was heard on British radio and television, and he became Britain's foremost public intellectual of multiculturalism. To this day, his critical work on Thatcherism provides one of the most profound analyses of changing culture in Britain. In his writings, he documented the experience of the diaspora, the experience of being black in Britain, and analyzed the changing configurations of class and race in British society (Hall, 1988, 1997). Throughout his life, his theoretical interventions always came from a particular standpoint, that of a diasporic Caribbean intellectual. Knowledge, he argued, is always deeply shaped by one's positionality, and his way of looking at British culture started through the "prism of his Caribbean formation" (Hall in Meeks, 2007, p. 271). Not simply a Caribbean intellectual, but as a diasporic Caribbean intellectual, Hall's intellectual life was marked by an attempt to understand his own biography.

His way of looking at the world was defined by movement, displacement, dislocation, the sense of not quite belonging, and the question of where to find meaning without having an easy answer to the question of "origin." In a larger quest to understand culture and society Hall placed the people of the diaspora front and center. Seeking to learn "who they think they are, where they want to go, where have they come from, what's their relation to the past, what's their memories, [and] how they express their creativity, how they express where they want to go to next" (Hall & Back, 2009, p. 662), Hall did not view displacement as somehow "outside" the nation state or the boundaries of the body politic, but definitive of the modern world. The answer to the question of where one is from, in a time defined by movement, he thought, merits "a long story" (Akomfrah & Hall, 2014). It is this positionality, this diasporic biography, I argue, that has shaped Stuart Hall's intellectual practice, his theory of history, and his view of the world in a global, relational ontology.

Diasporic Insights

Due to his own sense of displacement, Stuart Hall centered the migrant in his analyses of postwar Britain. Hall's experience of "never-quite-belonging" marked his own identity, an identity which "depended on the fact of being a migrant, on the difference from the rest of you" (Hall, 1987, p. 44). He recounts, that having been through the British colonial school system,

having been immersed in English literature, and having his mother's aspirations oriented toward England, "I knew England from the inside. But I'm not and never will be 'English'" (Hall & Chen, 1996, p. 490). This position of knowing a place but not being of that place, not being wholly of either place, "that's exactly the diasporic experience, far away enough to experience the sense of exile and loss, close enough to understand the enigma of an always-postponed 'arrival'" (Hall & Chen, 1996, p. 490). In a sense, Hall's biography and subjectivity mirrors a larger British colonial ideology that not only ruled British subjects but also permanently delayed their arrival to modernity.

Yet, Hall's own biographic experiences allow him to recognize this sense of displacement as a very wide spread condition of contemporary times. Displacement, migration, and movement are not a marginal phenomenon, but in fact the story of many people's lives, a kind of collective cultural experience. Biographically displaced, always "somewhere else," the colonial subject is able to shatter essentialized claims to identity, homogeneity, and stability. What is more, with today's prevalence of global flows and movement, everyone's identity is fragmented, and many can empathize with the subjective feeling of not quite belonging. Ironically, it is his diasporic, colonial experience of not quite belonging that makes Hall the paradigmatic modern subject. In this age, he writes "you all feel so dispersed, I become centered. What I've thought of as dispersed and fragmented comes, paradoxically, to be *the* representative modern experience" (Hall, 1987, p. 44).

Hall's focus on movement and the diaspora has at least three analytical consequences: First, it forces us to think about belonging as a complex story that cannot be contained in nation state boundaries or one "origin." Belonging is created and recreated in the movement itself, and this movement has become the norm in modern life. Second, it explodes the ideal of a homogeneous, bounded nation, and highlights the empire's constitutive nature in nation-building and all seemingly "local" histories. This standpoint also recreates a kind of national imaginary that finds room for "the other." Third, if our lives and senses of attachment cross nation state boundaries or emerge within the empire, we must conduct analyses that are themselves relational and "contrapuntal" (Go, 2016; Said, 1993). For the analyst, adopting the category of the nation state is restrictive at best and inaccurate at worst, particularly if it fails to portray a holistic, transboundary experience of migrants, the diaspora, travelers, refugees, and the displaced.

Stuart Hall's experience in the diaspora thus gave him very unique insight into the contemporary cultural experience. Akin to Simmel's stranger, Hall

suggests, the diasporic subject also gains a kind of insight into his host culture. Through the "shock" of translation, he may be able to see what others do not see or simply take for granted. Drawing on C. L. R. James, the diaspora is "in but not of Europe" and may be able to create knowledge from this distinct position (Hall & Back, 2009). That is, the experiences of the diaspora suggest that the world is made up of "overlapping territories" and "intertwined histories." As a result, Hall was sensitive to Britain's history of empire and related knowledge formations and discourse. He argued against "imperial amnesia" and critiqued the surprise the British public felt regarding the "sudden" arrival of a black population in Britain.

Failing to appreciate Britain's intertwined, imperial history, the British public came face-to-face with the fact that Britain had a black population and that this black population was here to stay. For Hall, this "surprise" was misconstrued. Caribbeans had not only "recently" become part of Britain and the Windrush generation was not the "first" to belong to Britain, but Caribbeans and their ancestors had always been "the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea" (Hall, 1991, p. 48). Having grown up in colonial Jamaica, Hall was able to intertwine the history of two distinct points in the British Empire: the history of his birthplace, colonial Jamaica, and the history of his residence, metropolitan Britain. Through this transboundary, biographic experience, Hall overcame analytic bifurcations, be that methodological nationalism, external/internal, or domestic/international distinctions. His biographic practice allows him to recenter questions of immigration, to focus on the experience of the migrant himself, to reconstruct historic linkages, and to map imperial cultural representations. This recentering makes imperial legacies more apparent, does not mark immigrants as always already external to the body politic of the nation state, and focuses our attention to traces in racial representations. In short, Hall's subjective experience alerts us to systems of oppression that were previously hidden.

Identification and the Making of the Subject

On a visit to Jamaica in the early 1960s, after the first wave of immigration to Britain, Stuart Hall recounts an interaction with his mother. She remarked: "I hope they don't think you are one of those immigrants over there!" Hall states that in this moment he understood who he was — an immigrant. The narrative of migration brought to light one part, one version, of his own identity. He turned to his mother and said: "Of course,

I'm an immigrant. What do you think I am?" She responded "in that clas-
sic Jamaican middle class way, 'Well, I hope the people over there will
shove all the immigrants off the long end of a short pier'" (Hall, 1987,
p. 45). Again, Hall draws on his subjective life experience − his encounter
with his mother who had bought into the British colonial ideology − to
build a larger theoretical narrative: ideas, discourses, and narratives shape
who we are, where we belong, and how we can change.

Motivated to understand his own identity, Hall developed the concept
of "identification." He defines identification as "the process of subjectifica-
tion to discursive practices, and the politics of exclusion which all such sub-
jectification appears to entail" (Hall, 1996f, p. 3). In other words, the
process of identification was one of "becoming, rather than being." If iden-
tity, then, is about "becoming rather than being," identity can change; but
it is also dependent on concrete historical and institutional sites and the
cultural resources made available to us. Identities are "constituted within,
not outside representation" (Hall, 1996a, p. 4). Who we are is formed in
interaction with the narratives we find available to us. There is no
"essence," or fixed, ahistorical part to our identity. Subjectively, we may
think that identity arises from inside, but "who we are" is in fact the result
of one's long conversation with the world around us. We are, in part, how
others see us (Akomfrah & Hall, 2014). Therefore, to understand the mate-
rials through which identities are created, we need to analyze the specific,
historical resources that are made available to us (Hall, 1996a, p. 4).
Subjective experiences interact with the narratives of history and continu-
ously make and remake who we are.

Drawing on his own biographical practice, Hall notes that the identity
of being "an immigrant" is an unstable place to be. Once Hall recognized
his identity as an immigrant, Hall embarked on an identification process to
learn that he was "black." This identification as a black intellectual comes
at a very specific historical moment, connected to the rise of British Black
cultural politics (Alexander, 2009). The category "black" in itself is not a
stable label, but it is also culturally, politically, and historically constituted.
While, to outsiders, Jamaicans may "appear black," they themselves never
spoke of themselves as "black," and never saw themselves as black. The
black identity, therefore, particularly for people in the British diaspora, has
to be recognized through, what he calls, political education (Hall, 1987,
p. 45). Hall writes: "Many, many people in Jamaica, including lots of
people who were black, did not think of themselves in the way in which
people after the late 60s came to think of themselves as black. So it was
a discovery for me, a rediscovery of the Caribbean in new terms, and

a rediscovery of my thinking about culture, and a rediscovery of the black subject" ([Hall & Back, 2009](#), p. 662). While Hall draws attention to the importance of narratives that serve as resources for our identification, he also emphasizes that to adopt a position means "staking a place in a certain discourse or practice" (Hall in Meeks, 2009, p. 282). This *act* of taking a position is important. Assuming a certain identity allows us to not only speak from that particular position, but it also allows us to − under a different set of circumstances − actively modify this position.

Here, it makes sense to juxtapose Hall's theory of subject-making with Althusser's. In fact, neither Fanon nor Hall thought that we are mere products of ideological interpellation. Hall rejects Althusser's interpellation and the top-down making of the subject and instead defines identities as "the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'" ([Hall, 1996f](#), p. 5, 6). Hall emphasizes the importance of agency on the part of the subject in recognizing oneself in a web of meanings offered to us by ideologies. Identities are never simply "produced" from the top down, but rather come into existence through the subjects' temporary attachments to particular positions in society; they are not "hailed" but they have to invest in a particular position.

This solves what Hall calls Althusser's problem of "correspondence," the fact that the theory cannot explain whether the interpellated subject is somehow predisposed to subject and "fall into" a particular situation in the social order ([Hall, 1996f](#), p. 8). Hall formulates a theory of articulation, which analyzes which discourses are *received* by their subjects. The perceived unity of a discourse is really a particular articulation of specific elements that can be rearticulated in different ways. Articulation is "the non-necessary link, between a social force which is making itself, and the ideology or conceptions of the world which makes intelligible the process they are going through, which begins to bring onto the historical stage a new social position and political position, a new set of social and political subjects" ([Hall, 1996f](#), p. 144). A subject then has to invest in a particular position by thinking of it as *articulation* of self rather than as imposed designation ([Hall, 1996f](#), p. 6). Enunciated practices productively *make* the subject and are explicitly situated in concrete historical situations.[3]

To go back to Hall's example of discovering himself as "black," we can recognize that only because the category is historically and culturally constituted does not mean that it is "less real." The symbolic is the space where

the subject enters into a dialogue with available cultural narratives. Even though these narratives are fragmented and ever unfinished, the subject − one's "self" − relates to these narratives as a set of histories, histories that are very much real. Narratives *represent* reality and also allow individuals to situate themselves as particular subjects. We position ourselves in relation to a particular discourse, with real effects. This interplay between the narrative and our investment in it suggests that cultural identities also undergo constant transformations. The idea that at some point we will "secure" our sense of self in a fixed way is false. If narratives change, if we retell history in a different way, the way we relate to this narrative also changes. Identities, in short, are "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (Hall, 1990, p. 225).

Hall's theory of identification captures racial and colonial symbolic systems of oppression, attached to *real* histories. The colonial subject identifies with the Victorian family and enters this process of becoming. The subject positions himself in relation to colonial cultural narratives. As a result, the colonial subject's identity is perpetually "somewhere" else. In fact, the subject is doubly displaced: displaced in his relationship to the narrative (not there) and displaced from making and constituting the narrative altogether (Hall, 1987). It is from his theory of identification that Hall seeks to uncover the trauma of the colonial experience: The colonized find themselves confronted with a set of narratives, subjected to dominant regimes of representation that normalized their position of inferiority (Hall, 1990, p. 225). This leads Hall to underline the importance of representation, particularly with regard to being black in Britain and to explore the problem of ideology.

Ideology, Conjunctures, and Ruptures

Hall's cultural theory consistently underlines the importance of narratives that are available to us, that help us define who we are and how we articulate who we are. His writings on identification make clear that our identity construction is a two-way process between subjection and investment. To have meaningful choices available to us leads us to the question of ideology. What happens if "perpetually displaced subjects" do not participate in the construction of narratives? What if they cannot draw on productive narratives to define themselves? And how do systems of representation contribute to the fact that we take the world, as it is, for granted? Representations, to Hall, are crucial because they form the reservoir of

available narratives. Precisely when dominant discourses fail to represent, for example, the black presence in Britain, Hall turned to an examination of black cinema or everyday practices (Hall, 1980, 1996a, 1996b, 2006). Thus, to him, social ideas manifest themselves not just in top-down bourgeois ideology, but also in practice and in the everyday − just as much as in intellectual, theoretical knowledge frameworks (Hall, 1996e, p. 27).

To understand how Hall's diasporic insight into − what one might call − "subversive representations" shapes his theory of history, we need to discuss his writings on ideology. In short, similar to the fragmented nature of his writings on identity, Hall also saw the cultural system as fragmented. While ideology produces powerful dominant frameworks, there are always spaces − in the everyday, in art, film, or everyday practices − that challenge this dominance. Stuart Hall defines ideology as the "mental frameworks − the languages, the concepts, categories, imaginary of thought, and the system of representation," that are available to us to make intelligible, define, and make sense of the world around us (Hall, 1996e, p. 26; Hall, 1992). The problem of ideology, then, is the way in which dominant mental frameworks define the way we interpret particular historical moments. These ruling ideas allow us to delineate what seems rational or reasonable and they give us a vocabulary that allows us to interpret and give meaning to particular actions. Akin to Sewell's duality of history (Sewell, 1992, 2005), Hall's concept of ideology takes on an interactive role with the material: While ideology is symbolic, it takes on "material force." No practice, action, or material structure can ever be outside the realm of the symbolic. Instead, all practices are always enveloped in a system of meaning that allows us to orient ourselves in this world (Bogues, 2005; Hall, 1996e). To understand how and why social change occurs, he argues, we need to account for how social ideas arise (Hall, 1996e, p. 26).

In his analysis on Thatcherism, for example, Hall proposes that Thatcher changed the "currency" of political thought. Freedom came to be equated with the free market, and society was not deemed a relevant category of thought. The point here is that Thatcherism not only changed Britain's structural make-up, but also the way we interpret and give meaning to everyday interactions (Bogues, 2005; Hall, 1982, 1988). Politics is always also a symbolic formation. Therefore, if we want to think about social change, and the ways in which history proceeds, we need to focus on the semiotic struggles that underlie how we interpret social events. In short, a theory of change rests on understanding how meanings change over time and decipher openings for new meaning formations. To do so, Hall urges us to pay attention to historical specificity and the analysis of conjunctures.

Openings for "newness," where a challenge to ideology can take place, rest in historical conjunctures. A conjuncture is the combination of distinct long-term social and historical processes that articulate themselves with great intensity at a given historical moment. Conjunctures may be historically specific because they are enunciated in distinct discursive forms. An analysis of historical conjunctures thus seeks to understand "how the new replaces the old" and how, in turn, we learn to take the new for granted (Akomfrah & Hall, 2014). The old, however, never quite goes away; the break with history is never complete. Compared to Fanon's envisioned radical break, Hall conceptualizes change as a "reconfiguration" of elements that belong to the past with some that are new. In his words, the present always has an incomplete, and to some extent an unfinished, relationship to the past. To study ideology within a given historical configuration, then means to understand how the symbolic "stabilizes" particular forms of domination (Hall, 1996e, p. 27). Hall's articulation forms the connection between ideology (the symbolic) and the social, but not in an economic deterministic manner; that is, not "as one *necessarily* given in socio-economic structures or positions, but precisely as the result of an articulation" (Hall, 1996c, p. 145).

To give an example, to Hall, the lasting presence of the British Empire was always evident, be that in ways in which identities were configured or how the British interpreted the presence of their black population. The way "race" is articulated in Britain fed off a particular "reservoir of unconscious feelings about race," but this reservoir gets articulated in distinct ways (Hall & Back, 2009, p. 677). Historical long-term processes are thus very much at play and always influence the present, but dominant discursive formations *change* in specific historical circumstances. For the analyst, that means that pointing to the mere "legacy of empire" is insufficient; instead, one has to understand the *specific* configurations of meaning and articulations for each unique historical conjuncture. Importantly, ideology is never all-encompassing and totalizing, but always fragmented and contested. This means that historical change cannot solely be based on an analysis of structural logics, but must take into account how narratives relate to the social and how subjects articulate and position themselves in society at large. If people invest in a particular narrative, it is with this moment of recognition that a political change can occur.

Given the importance of narratives, cultural representations, and meaning-creation in history, the task of the intellectual is also never "outside" history. Instead, Hall suggests, intellectual labor should aid us to understand specific historical conjunctures *and* seek to make an intervention.

First, the intellectual traces how a particular conjuncture emerges, configures itself out of distinct elements, and creates a historically specific, new element. Second, critical intellectual work seeks to intervene in a particular historical conjuncture in order to shift its outcome. In understanding how various ideologies come together and in proposing a given narrative, there may always be a possibility to reshift how we make sense of our reality. Importantly, this intervention is only ever possible if we seek to carefully understand the specific historical conjuncture, for, "[e]ach time that comes, it does require a change of perspective" (Akomfrah & Hall, 2014). Since ideologies are fragmented, the opening for radical politics is always a possibility. It is important to note that this kind of intellectual work forces us to orient our critical practice not toward the blind reproduction of academic disciplines, but to engage in a kind of cultural practice that mirrors what Gramsci called the work of the organic intellectual (Gramsci, 1971).

To sum up, Stuart Hall's diasporic and colonial experience allowed him to formulate a theory of identification, subject-making, and historical change. Akin to his writings on identity — the ever unfinished process through which we define who we are and stake our position within historically constructed narratives — his theory of cultural systems is also always in motion. While he was very aware of the powers of hegemonic ideologies — particularly under Thatcherism — and the importance of ideologies in the constitution of subjects, he similarly emphasized the availability of *openings* in history (Bogues, 2005). Cultural forms, he wrote, are never fully closed. Instead, it is in these openings, that he sought to intervene as a public intellectual and put forth systems of interpretation that may lead to a change in social relations. As a diasporic intellectual, displacement and movement was central to his own life experience, so his search for movement and temporary openings in the midst of historical conjunctures mirrors these subjective experiences.

A British subject growing up in colonial Jamaica, Hall's positionality made him very aware of the dominance of empire, not just in structural, political manifestations, but also in terms of epistemic forms of domination. Writing from this particular position, Hall combated British imperial amnesia, be that in recentering how we think about the presence of Britain's black population — as always already there — or in focusing on the prevalence of diasporic experiences and narratives of displacement as a modern experience. The colonial experience of always being displaced to "somewhere else" and always awaiting the postponed arrival allowed Hall to create a distinctly anticolonial imaginary that recenters those at the margins and make space for Britain's others. Even though he turned to the

study of race only later in his career, the focus on displacement spans his entire oeuvre and is profoundly anticolonial.

Hall's and Fanon's anticolonial imagination is distinct, due to differing colonial structural experiences and ideologies, but also because they were born into two distinct historical moments. While Fanon wrote in dialogue with decolonization movements, Hall's writings were interventions, aiming to shift British postwar political and cultural discourse, seeking to provide new imaginaries and new spaces of representation for black artists and marginal voices. Moreover, in contrast to Fanon, looking back on anti-colonial revolutions, Hall gives us a theory of history that accounts for the durability of old elements and their powerful grasp on people's minds. Yet, he always maintained that through careful analysis of historical conjunctures, new knowledge and meaning systems may emerge − ideas that allow for shifts in history (Bogues, 2005; Wilder, 2014).

CONCLUSION

This article proposed that Frantz Fanon and Stuart Hall were able to draw on their formative transboundary experiences in order to break with dominant, colonial categories of thought. Because they lived in distinct historical moments, Fanon amidst anticolonial revolutions and Hall in post-World War II Britain, they put forth distinct theories of practice, history, and social change. Yet, despite their different historical contexts, both intellectuals' subjective experiences allow for a particular kind of epistemic rupture. Fanon's focus on the colonized's subjectivity and the psycho-affective effects of colonial structures led him to argue for a radical break, not only with socioeconomic colonial relations, but also epistemic colonial frameworks. It is through his attention to psychological colonial structures and the impossibility to fully develop one's humanity as a racialized person that he suggests a radical creation of the new, *actional* being. Stuart Hall put his focus on the experience of the diaspora, the migrant, and displacement, which not only makes a global relational analysis possible, but also allowed him to argue against fixed, essentialist identities. Identities are fragmented, much like the cultural system: Despite dominant ideological frameworks, Hall was able to look for openings in history, conjunctures, in which newness can emerge. Both placed front and center the constitutive nature of empire, colonialism, and racialization to modern societies, seeking to make space for and truly recognize "the other."

Consistently uniting theory and practice, anticolonial writers not only positioned their intellectual labors as a form of political practice aimed at social change, but also sought to understand how history could provide openings for ideas to create this kind of change. Fanon proposed that it is in revolutionary practice through which the colonized subject can break with the burdens of history and find his own ways of acting, thinking, and knowing. Hall theorized how history has an always incomplete relationship to the present and how thought can intervene in these ruptures. Both produced ideas that were intended to influence action and produce social change. In other words, intellectual production is not "outside" history, but exists in a dialectical relationship with the everyday and revolutionary practice. For Hall, theory can play an important role in articulating and extrapolating the meaning of specific historical conjunctures, while for Fanon, the intellectual − in dialogue with practice − can enunciate visions for a new humanism and aid in the anticolonial struggle.

The tradition of anticolonial thought may particularly speak to cultural sociology. Influenced by the "practice turn" (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992; Dirks, Eley, & Ortner, 1994; Ortner, 2006; Sewell, 1992, 2005), cultural sociologists have largely worked to collapse the distinctions between theory, practice, and history, and theorized the symbolic realm. They have turned to the study of practices and meaning-making as theory-generating exercises, seeking to overcome a conception of theory as ahistorical, apolitical, and abstracted from the life world. With the turn, culture − ideas, orienting conceptual frameworks, and meaning-giving interpretations − was no longer seen as a "product" or "reflection" of other determinants but formed part of the social itself (Somers, 1995). Sewell called this the duality of structures − emphasizing that history is simultaneously composed of meaning-conferring, virtual schemas, and material resources which sustain each other (Sewell, 1992, p. 136; Somers & Gibson, 1994). Given the dialectic between virtual schemas and material resources, ideas and intellectual practice consistently influence social change. It is here where the anticolonial tradition may push cultural sociology further.

Anticolonial thought is marked by a double bind: it is itself part of the world, but seeks to break with dominant frameworks and to imagine the world differently. As this article showed with the example of Fanon and Hall, anticolonial thinkers aim to create knowledge that breaks with colonial and racial hierarchies, based on practice and experience. In particular, Fanon and Hall create epistemic ruptures by focusing on the *subjectivity* of the colonized or the diasporic subject. Showing how colonial histories and representations of these histories dehumanize or continuously displace

the colonized or racialized, Fanon and Hall both make a case for new narratives. Based on their own biographies, they are able to grasp the operation of empire, based on how its knowledge categories shape what we know, what we deem reasonable, and how we construct human difference. While cultural sociology has a long tradition of ideological critique, anticolonial thought points to the epistemic realities of empire and shows us a way to recenter the racialized, inferiorized, or displaced self. Based on their practice, colonized and diasporic subjectivity, Hall and Fanon proposed distinct ways to capitalize on ruptures in history that allow for an escape from racialized structures of oppression.

NOTES

1. Fanon's language is a product of his time and hence does not use gender-neutral expressions. Without seeking to make gendered statements, in this article, I adopt Fanon's language for clarity.

2. Fanon's theorization of self-formation in racialized societies is similar to W. E. B. Du Bois' "double consciousness." Du Bois also points out how the racialized subject has to contend with the dehumanizing structures of racialized societies in his self-formation.

3. As a sidenote, Hall never equated society "with text" but used these concepts as an analogy to uncover subjects' meaning-making practices (Hall, 1996f).

REFERENCES

Ahluwalia, P. (2010). *Out of Africa: Post-structuralism's colonial roots*. London: Routledge.

Akomfrah, J., & Hall, S. (2014). *The Stuart Hall project*. British Film Institute, London.

Alessandrini, A. C. (Ed.). (2005). *Frantz Fanon: Critical perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Alexander, C. (2009). Stuart Hall and 'race'. *Cultural Studies*, *23*(4), 457−482.

Back, L., & Tate, M. (2015). For a sociological reconstruction: WEB Du Bois, Stuart Hall and segregated sociology. *Sociological Research Online*, *20*(3), 15.

Bogues, A. (2005). Working outside criticism: Thinking beyond limits. *Boundary 2*, *32*(1), 71−93.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Eagleton, T. (1992). Doxa and common life. *New Left Review*, *191*, 111−121.

Coulthard, G. (2014). *Red skin, white masks*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Dirks, N. B., Eley, G., & Ortner, S. B. (Eds.). (1994). *Culture/power/history: A reader in contemporary social theory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fanon, F. (1965). *A dying colonialism*. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Fanon, F. (1969). *Toward the African revolution: Political essays*. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Fanon, F. (2007). *The wretched of the earth*. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Fanon, F. (2008). *Black skin, white masks*. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Gibson, N. C. (Ed.). (1999). *Rethinking Fanon: The continuing dialogue*. New York, NY: Humanities Books.

Gibson, N. C. (2003). *Fanon: The postcolonial imagination*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Go, J. (2013a). Fanon's postcolonial cosmopolitanism. *European Journal of Social Theory*, *16*(2), 208−225.

Go, J. (2013b). For a postcolonial sociology. *Theory and Society*, *42*(1), 25−55.

Go, J. (2016). *Postcolonial thought and social theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gordon, L. R. (1995). *Fanon and the crisis of European man*. London: Routledge.

Gordon, L. R. (2015). *What Fanon said: A philosophical introduction to his life and thought*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks* (Vols. 1−3), London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hall, S. (1980). Cultural studies: Two paradigms. *Media, Culture and Society*, *2*(1), 57−72.

Hall, S. (1982). The rediscovery of ideology: Return of the repressed in media studies. In M. Gurevitch, T. Bennett, J. Curon, & J. Woolacott (Eds.), *Culture, Society and the Media* (pp. 56−90). New York, NY: Methuen.

Hall, S. (1987). Minimal selves. In L. Appignanesi (Ed.), *Identity 6* (pp. 44−46). London: ICA.

Hall, S. (1988). The toad in the garden: Thatcherism among the theorists. In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 35−57). London: Macmillan.

Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity* (pp. 222−237). London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hall, S. (1991). Old and new identities, old and new ethnicities. In A. King (Ed.), *Culture, globalization and the world-system* (pp. pp. 41−68). London: Macmillan.

Hall, S. (1992). The West and the rest: Discourse and power. In R. Maaka & C. Anderson (Ed.), *The indigenous experience: Global perspectives* (pp. 165−173). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.

Hall, S. (1995). Negotiating Caribbean identities. *New Left Review*, January−February 2009. Retrieved from https://newleftreview.org/I/209/stuart-hall-negotiating-caribbean-identities

Hall, S. (1996a). Cultural identity and cinematic representation. In H. A. Baker Jr., M. Diawara, & R. H. Lindeborg (Eds.), *Black British cultural studies: A reader* (pp. 210−223). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Hall, S. (1996b). New ethnicities. In H. A. Baker Jr., M. Diawara, & R. H. Lindeborg (Eds.), *Black British cultural studies: A reader* (pp.163−173). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Hall, S. (1996c). On postmodernism and articulation: An interview with Stuart Hall. In D. Morley & K.-H. Chen (Ed.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 131−150). New York, NY: Routledge.

Hall, S. (1996e). The problem of ideology: Marxism without guarantees. In D. Morley & K.-H. Chen (Ed.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 24−46). New York, NY: Routledge.

Hall, S. (1996f). Who needs 'identity'? In S. Hall & P. Du Gay (Eds.), *The Question of Cultural Identity* (pp.1−17). London: Sage.

Hall, S. (1997). Subjects in history: Making diasporic identities. In W. Lubiano (Ed.), *The house that race built* (pp. 289−299). New York, NY: Pantheon.

Hall, S. (2006). Black Diaspora artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in post-war history. *History Workshop Journal*, *61*(1), 1−24.

Hall, S., & Back, L. (2009). At home and not at home. *Cultural studies*, *23*(4), 658−688.

Hall, S., & Chen, K.-H. (1996). The formation of a diasporic intellectual: An interview with Stuart Hall. In D. Morley & K. H. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 486−505). London: Routledge.

Hudis, P. (2015). *Frantz Fanon: Philosopher of the barricades*. London: Pluto Press.

Meeks, B. (2007). *Caribbean reasonings: Culture, politics, race and diaspora: The thought of Stuart Hall*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.

Mills, C. W. (2000). *The sociological imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ortner, S. B. (2006). *Anthropology and social theory: Culture, power, and the acting subject*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Said, E. W. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Sardar, Z. (2008). *Preface in Black skin, white masks*. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Sewell Jr, W. H. (1992). A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, *98*(1), 1−29.

Sewell Jr, W. H. (2005). *Logics of history: Social theory and social transformation*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Somers, M., & Gibson, G. (1994). Reclaiming the epistemological 'Other': Narrative and the social construction of identity. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Social theory and the politics of identity* (pp. 37−99). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Somers, M. R. (1995). What's political or cultural about political culture and the public sphere? Toward an historical sociology of concept formation. *Sociological Theory*, *13*(2), 113−144.

Wilder, G. (2014). *Freedom time: Negritude, decolonization, and the future of the world*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

This article has been cited by:

1. Tarak Barkawi George Lawson The International Origins of Social and Political Theory 1-7. [Abstract] [Full Text] [PDF] [PDF]