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CHAPTER ONE

Writing the Historical Sociology of Colonial Sociology in a Postcolonial Situation

Europe is literally the creation of the Third World.

—FANON, *THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH*¹

The Penumbra of Colonialism

Shadows of empire are draped across the lands of erstwhile conquistadors and their erstwhile victims. More precisely, there is an imperial penumbra that allows only part of the light source to be seen. This hidden source of energy is the imperial past. The Roman Empire, one of the deepest sources of imperial energy, is both omnipresent and absent. Words like *colonia*, *imperium*, *emperor*, *dictator*, *proconsul*, and *praetorianism* are still used to describe the imperial textures of our political realities. From Augustus to Hitler, through to the present, western rulers have been haunted by scenarios of decline and ruination, and by the appearance of former “barbarians” at the heart of the metropole.²

The world in which we live is also engraved with the markers of modern colonial empires. From 1492 through the mid-twentieth century, populations in Africa, America, Oceania, and Asia were annexed by a global system dominated by empire-states. Most of the existing states in Africa, Oceania, America, and the Middle East were created as colonies, or emerged from the breakup of former colonies and the collapse of the Soviet Union.³ The boundaries between and within states, the internal lines of ethnic rivalry, the unequal internal distributions of resources, and the administrative structures and institutional practices of governance—in other words, the entire *state culture* of postcolonial polities—can only be understood against the backdrop

of colonialism.⁴ A vast ocean of trauma, among individuals and groups, from Botswana to Algeria, Cambodia to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, indexes colonial violence.⁵

European states also bear the stamp of empire. Eric Williams and Immanuel Wallerstein argued that the rise of the capitalist world system was triggered by the conquest of America, the pillaging of its wealth, and the slave-based plantation economies that emerged there.⁶ For W. E. B. Du Bois, the colonial-era slave system was an essential element in the rise of industrial capitalism, and European cities like Liverpool were “virtually built on the bodies of black slaves.”⁷ According to critical theorists of geopolitics, the entire system of international relations can only be understood against the backdrop of empire, from the Concert of Europe to the League of Nations and the post-war hegemonic US order.⁸

Empires have yielded a vast reservoir of knowledge, concepts, and images.⁹ European languages bear the marks of the *Lingua Imperii* (to paraphrase Victor Klemperer).¹⁰ The very category of *race* illustrates imperialism’s seemingly inexpugnable presence.¹¹ Many of the racial structures and ideologies that undergird contemporary racist practices were forged in colonial settings.¹² The last colonial exhibition took place in 1950 in Bordeaux,¹³ yet museums of ethnography and non-western art continue to reanimate the spirit of earlier colonial exhibitions. Just as “African youth . . . are unaware of not only the richness and creativity” of the “cultural and artistic resources inherited from Africa’s past itself, held and stored in museums and countries completely out of reach” to them, European youth for generations, even after decolonization, have been given to understand that these collections of African culture are part of their own heritage.¹⁴ Museums are only beginning to revise their narratives and restitute objects that were expropriated from the colonies. The former colonial or “tropical” museums in Brussels and Amsterdam have tried to decolonize their collections.¹⁵ While the new Humboldt Forum in Berlin has also started to move in this direction, that entire museum takes the form of an asynchronous project teleported from the era of European high imperialism.¹⁶

The colonial past continues to shape popular politics in Europe and the post-colonies. On the one hand, European nations face the return of the colonial-repressed, in the form of immigration and recharged forms of neocolonial racism directed against immigrants. On the other hand, various social movements have been forcing the imperial unconscious and colonial ideologemes into the public realm of open contestation.¹⁷ Debates over “decolonizing” the curriculum and the public sphere are as intense in South Africa as in Britain and the United States.¹⁸

Colonialism also insinuated itself into organized social science disciplines and broader formations of social thought. Historians of colonial science have examined economics, anthropology, Orientalism, psychology, geopolitics, law, architecture, comparative religion, historiography, political theory, and the

natural sciences.¹⁹ The present book examines the main French social science disciplines in their entanglements with colonialism, while focusing on sociology.

Sociology might not seem like the most obvious candidate for a study of the entwinement of empire and social thought.²⁰ US sociology today is rather relentlessly focused on the immediate present in the American *Heimat*. The US invasions of Iraq provoked barely a whisper among US sociologists. Such silence stems from several sources. First, “foreign” policy is felt to be off limits in a discipline relentlessly focused on the continental United States and modestly tending to its national turf.²¹ The blowback effects of empire or “colonial boomerangs” are also left unstudied by sociology, even though they are presumably “domestic” phenomena and were first discussed by the British proto-sociologist John Hobson.²² One might assume that Native Americans are “American” enough to escape US sociology’s *ukase* against studying foreign cultures. There was, in fact, a non-exoticizing sociology of Native Americans between the 1930s and the 1960s.²³ However, Native Americans have conventionally been claimed by anthropology in the US academy’s absurd division of topics, or ontological spheres. With the exception of a small number of indigenous sociologists, US sociology ignores the internally colonized native other.²⁴

Avoidance of empire cannot, therefore, be attributed entirely to sociology’s parochial focus on the “homeland.” It is the result of a more elaborate set of assumptions, sanctions, and cues. American sociology avoids global imperial phenomena due to a pervasive positivist epistemology that sees singular events as lying outside the realm of possible scientific objects.²⁵ Sociologists tend to embrace a rather “spontaneous” belief in axiomatic neutrality, even if this contradicts the equally widespread endorsement of mainstream liberal political values and the calls for “public” versions of sociology. The words “empire” and “colonialism” seem too politically charged, too rebarbative, for the value-free sociologist.

Despite these impediments, sociology has repeatedly intersected with questions of empire and colonialism. In a foundational article, Raewyn Connell called attention to the ways in which early European and American sociology was permeated by the colonial context of high imperialism (1880s–1918).²⁶ This includes many proto-sociologists and disciplinary founders, such as Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill, Alexis Tocqueville, Herbert Spencer, Ludwig Gumplowicz, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber. Connell argued that sociologists turned inward toward the domestic homeland after World War I. Closer investigation reveals that this account of turning inward applies mainly to the United States, and only if we disregard American sociologists’ involvement with modernization theory during the Cold War.²⁷ Moreover, African American sociologists diverged from the disciplinary mainstream and continued to thematize colonialism during the interwar and postwar eras.²⁸ At the forefront was W. E. B. Du Bois, who analyzed colonialism extensively

and linked it to the oppression of Blacks in the United States.²⁹ Other African American sociologists (St. Clair Drake, E. Franklin Frazier) taught in the British Gold Coast and postcolonial Ghana. Finally, even if Talcott Parsons temporarily became a “canonical” figure in American sociology, as Connell argues, large swathes of European sociology went down entirely different paths, becoming immersed in colonial research and largely ignoring American sociology. This era of mid-twentieth-century colonial sociological research has been almost entirely overlooked and in some cases actively repressed by historians of sociology, as I will show in the next chapter.

One might find it self-evident that European sociology would have been involved in colonial topics and problems. After all, imperialism was omnipresent in European everyday life, even after 1945 (chapter 3). Schoolchildren were still taught about “their” empires; images of colonies appeared in magazines and films; “primitive art” was sold in art galleries and displayed in museums. Gear for colonial tours was sold in Parisian shops. National airlines offered direct flights to colonial capitals. Colonial wars were front-page news throughout the postwar era in France and Britain.

Future sociologists could hardly have been immune to all of this, one might assume. Colonies still offered employment and, for some, the allure of adventure. Medical advances now protected against many tropical diseases, and allowed colonial officials and researchers to bring their families along with them on their overseas postings. There were as many opportunities for jobs and research funding for sociologists in the colonies as in the metropolises. As we will see in chapter 13, the Africanist sociologist Georges Balandier was fascinated as a child by tales of exotic colonial adventures and stories told by his relatives. Balandier leapt at the chance for a colonial career in 1946. Others had less choice in the matter and were drawn into imperial social science by the force of circumstance. Raymond Aron was driven into exile by the Nazi Occupation and felt compelled to try to make sense of Nazi imperialism. Returning to France, Aron applied some his theories of Nazi imperialism to understanding the French, American, and Soviet empires (chapter 11). Jacques Berque was recruited into colonial research by his father, a colonial official in Algeria, which led him to become an Arabist and sociologist of colonialism (chapter 12). Pierre Bourdieu was drafted unwillingly and sent to Algeria, where he underwent a conversion to sociology and developed the lineaments of his theoretical system, which he continued to revise during the next four decades (chapter 14). Albert Memmi, Abdelmalek Sayad, Anouar Abdel-Malak, Paul Sebag, and other sociologists were born as French subjects and driven to understand these colonial conditions (chapter 10). Put differently, if colonies and decolonization had failed to register in French sociology, this very absence would be a conundrum calling for explanation. Yet all of this only seems obvious now, in light of the research that has led to the present book. The

puzzle discussed in the next chapter is the failure of most historians of mid-twentieth-century French sociology even to have registered the “colonial fact.”

Why Focus on Mid-Twentieth-Century France?

A reader might wonder why this book concentrates on mid-twentieth-century France, rather than, say, the late-nineteenth-century era of “high imperialism,” or the 1920s, when European empires reached their greatest dimensions. This decision is a function of my interest in sociology and social science more generally. The natural sciences were more central to colonialism in the earlier periods. Before 1914, colonial rulers drew mainly on medicine, engineering, and the like. In the 1920s, ethnology became the colonial social science par excellence. Sociology remained a small and uncertain discipline between the wars in all of the colonizing countries. Only in Germany and the United States were there coherent and sizable academic interwar sociology fields. However, most US sociologists had retreated back into their domestic shell. Germany lost its colonial empire in World War I, and the Nazi takeover in 1933 resulted in the loss of most of the leading German sociologists to exile. Between 1933 and 1942, the Nazis dangled the possibility of a reconquered African empire before the eyes of the colonial revanchists. A few sociologists, such as Berlin University professor Richard Thurnwald, resurrected the moribund subfield of colonial sociology. Some German sociologists contributed to the interdisciplinary imperial field of *Ostforschung* (research on the East) or offered applied research to the Nazi colonization of occupied Poland. Like American modernization theory, this Nazi imperial sociology differed from western European colonial sociology in fundamental ways. After 1945, colonialism and empire disappeared almost completely from German sociology, although a few of the previously Nazified sociologists promoted the social study of development (Karl-Heinz Pfeffer, Gunther Ipsen) or “international” sociology (Wilhelm Mühlmann).³⁰

I am interested here in the version of colonial sociology that was carried out by professional social scientists, distinguished itself from anthropology, and involved a critical mass of practitioners. This constellation began to emerge at the end of the 1930s and crystallized in the late 1940s and 1950s. French sociology was carried out in a variety of colonies, which gained their independence at different moments. Tunisia and Morocco became independent in 1956; Guinea in 1958, and most of the remaining French colonies in 1960. Algeria, one of the key locales for colonial sociology, became independent in 1962. Rather than ending this study on a specific date, therefore, the book continues until the end of each of the colonies. I will also linger for a few years after decolonization, in order to make sense of the ambiguous transition period between formal independence and scientific decolonization.

Several other factors are involved in defining the book's time frame. First, colonies existed within geographically and politically defined federations and regions. Some countries that gained independence relatively early, like Tunisia and Morocco, were located in the close vicinity of countries that were still under colonial domination. Second, colonialism lived on in the hearts, minds, and publications of sociologists who had worked in the colonies or started their doctoral research overseas before independence. Several Africanist sociologists who began their research during the final years of the colonial period or the first years of independence agreed with comments made by French sociologist Roland Waast. Speaking specifically about scientific and educational matters, Waast called attention to "an acute period between decolonization and independence which [was] sometimes almost colonial."³¹ Third, the overseas universities and research institutes where colonial sociology had established a foothold remained in European hands in most cases for several years after independence.³² The sociology program in Dakar, which began delivering advanced degrees in 1962–1963, was directed by the French sociologist Louis Vincent Thomas.³³ Tunisia gained its independence in 1956, and Tunisian students could work toward a *licence* degree in sociology starting in 1959. The founder of the sociology laboratory there was the Frenchman Georges Granai, and one of the instructors of sociology students in 1959 and 1960 was Frantz Fanon.³⁴ Most French instructors abandoned the University of Algiers in 1962, but the university's rector from 1962 to 1965 was the anti-colonial French historian, André Mandouze, and several French-born social scientists continued to teach there. Bourdieu left the University of Algiers in 1960 and was replaced by the ethno-sociologist Jeanne Favret-Saada. Three French sociologists taught at Algiers after independence: Andrée Michel (née Vielle), a feminist, anticolonial sociologist whose earliest publications include a study of Algerian labor migrants in France and who actively supported the Algerian war of independence; Claudine Chaulet, discussed below; and Émile Sicard, a specialist in the sociology of Slavic cultures who relocated to North African sociology and development studies in the 1960s.³⁵

In short, professional colonial sociology reached its apex between the late 1930s and the mid-1960s. This means that I am focusing here on several different political regimes: the late Third Republic, Vichy France, Nazi-occupied France, and the territories controlled by Free France during World War II, the Fourth Republic (1944–1958), the early Fifth Republic, and the various semi-autonomous "regimes" in the various colonies and colonial federations.

Another reason for concentrating on the period between the late 1930s and the end of decolonization is the greater relevance of this work to current concerns and debates. Much of the present-day writing on "decolonizing" sociology focuses on figures who are completely irrelevant to present-day social research, such as Lester Ward, W. I. Thomas, Franklin H. Giddings, William Graham Sumner, Albert Keller, Leopold von Wiese, and the like. In

the French case, by contrast, some of the leading sociologists of colonialism remain extremely relevant to contemporary work. The most obvious case is Bourdieu, still the most cited sociologist in the world. To Balandier, we owe the framework of analyzing colonized societies *as colonies*. Balandier is also the inventor of the historical sociology of Africa, including its precolonial states, twentieth-century religions, and colonial-era cities. Jacques Berque was the original theorist of decolonizing social science. Aron's acute comparisons between Nazi, French, American, and Soviet imperialism allow us to understand the ongoing decline of the American empire.

One might ask whether organizing the analysis of colonial sociology around a nation-state and its empire risks a sort of methodological "empire-ism," along the lines of "methodological nationalism."³⁶ Considered as a form of politics, colonialism is centered primarily on a particular nation-state.³⁷ Of course, groups of core powers have sometimes exercised joint control over a single colony or zone of imperial domination.³⁸ In general, however, the colonial form was inherently national, in the sense that each colony was ruled by a particular metropolitan state. The colonies that made up the overseas empire of any given colonial power were linked to one another via the circulation of officials, military, professionals, expert advisors, laws, and policies. The borders of different empires were clearly demarcated in treaties and on maps, and were visible on the ground in the form of signs, marker stones, and armed guards.

The nation-state level might seem like a less appropriate analytic unit, however, if we are interested in the cultural aspects of empire. After all, precolonial narratives of travel, exploration, and conquest were often written by citizens of nations other than those who eventually did the colonizing.³⁹ These accounts were quickly translated into major European languages, especially during the early modern period. The Haitian revolution (1791–1804) reverberated across Europe and was discussed in the newspapers Hegel was reading in Jena.⁴⁰ Missionary workers tended to ignore the boundaries set by European colonial powers. African tribes were divided between different colonies.⁴¹

Sociology, however, has been one of the most nationally specific of the academic disciplines. Historians have detailed national traditions and peculiarities even in the natural sciences, contradicting the description of science as an international enterprise.⁴² Sociology emerged in a period of extreme nationalism and was originally connected to projects of national self-fashioning.⁴³ Sociology existed mainly in universities, and each European country had a nationally distinct system of higher education. Each country also had distinctive intellectual heritages that shaped sociology. Sociology varied cross-nationally in terms of the overall size of the discipline, the timing of its emergence, expansion, and contraction, its relations to government, industry, and social movements, and the mix of disciplinary backgrounds represented among its founders. German sociology was created by historical economists

and historians and French sociology by philosophers, while American sociology was originally located mainly in economics departments. Yet sociologists' intellectual exchanges were never limited to their compatriots. Sociologists from the various European empires interacted regularly at conferences and international organizations and in joint publications. Organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) promoted colonial science; American foundations and universities became deeply involved in the social sciences of the European colonies and their metropolises (chapter 5). We might expect national differences to have been undercut by the homogenizing processes linked to Americanization. Yet there was no simple convergence along an American model, even in places like postwar West Germany, much less in France. This does not mean that American foundations did not seek to "reinforce conceptual and technical standardization and to thereby eliminate national differences in the production of social science."⁴⁴ Foundation projects were explicitly oriented toward establishing "beachheads" for creating social science disciplines "as we in the US know them," in the words of one Rockefeller Foundation report.⁴⁵ Yet European social science remained relatively autonomous from these American pressures.

French sociology may be the most dramatic example of a social scientific discipline that was stamped by colonialism. As I will show in this book, around half of the French sociologists during the postwar era worked on colonial themes or in colonial sites. British sociology was similar—around half of the sociologists were engaged in colonial research after 1945.⁴⁶ Sociology in the Dutch and Portuguese colonial empires also resembled the French in this respect. What is especially noteworthy is the emergence of specific methods for studying Dutch and Portuguese colonial social processes that adopted Balandier's approach, which urged researchers to focus on the degeneration of older forms of social solidarity and their reconstitution along new lines, attending to "reactions to the administrative structures imposed by European nations," i.e., to the "colonial situation."

Dutch sociologists lost most of their colonial field sites when Indonesia became independent in 1949, but a new subfield called "non-western" sociology was created to provide jobs for the suddenly unemployed researchers. Like the French and British colonial sociologists, Dutch "non-western" sociologists differentiated their approach from anthropology, which they understood as focusing on the supposedly "homogeneous social relationships of tribal cultures" and ignoring "problems attending modernization, the sociology of the colonial situation or other macro-sociological conceptions."⁴⁷

Sociology was also tied to colonialism in Portugal, although it was much more weakly developed as a discipline. The Centro de Estudos Políticos e Sociais at the *Junta das Missões Geográficas e de Investigações Coloniais* (Board of Geographical Missions and Colonial Studies) embarked on hundreds of

research projects starting in 1956, and social scientists, including sociologists, played a central role in these research teams. The first Portuguese sociology and anthropology chairs were introduced at the Colonial School in Lisbon (*Escola Superior Colonial*) in the mid-1950s, and the country's first social sciences degrees were delivered there starting in 1972. The *Centro de Estudos da Guiné Portuguesa* explicitly adopted Balandier's approach.⁴⁸

There was very little sociology in the residual Spanish colonies of Equatorial Guinea and the Spanish Sahara. Carmelo Viñas Mey, a Spanish sociologist of the "third generation" and a specialist in colonial history, tried without success to interest his colleagues in carrying out empirical studies in the overseas colonies.⁴⁹

Italy lost its colonies in World War II, but recovered quasi-colonial control of Somalia as a trusteeship between 1950 and 1960. During this decade, Corrado Gini continued to teach colonial sociology and included a hundred-page discussion of "elements of colonial sociology" in his 1957 *Corsi di Sociologia*. Gini did not acknowledge the newer sociological literature on colonialism.⁵⁰

My focus in this book is on sociology in Greater France, or France plus "exterior France," as it was sometimes called.⁵¹ This was an empire-wide disciplinary field that encompassed universities, research organizations and institutes, conferences, and journals in the colonies and metropolises. Sociologists from France and its colonies moved through an imperial sociological field centered on Paris to outposts in French cities such as Lille, Aix-en-Provence, and Bordeaux, to colonial cities such as Algiers, Tunis, Rabat, Dakar, and Brazzaville, and to field sites throughout the empire, from Gabon to Tahiti. These locales were part of an increasingly integrated set of scientific fields defined by French institutions, use of the French language, and reference to a common core of texts, concepts, and debates. Sociologists born in the metropole or as French settler-citizens moved with relative ease through this global imperial space. Belgian Francophone sociologists also moved with relative ease between French and Belgian metropolitan and imperial scientific sites. The international movement of sociologists born as colonial subjects was much more constrained, even after decolonization, and their movements were usually bilateral ones, between their home countries and France, rather than ranging across the entire empire (chapter 10). This was a dense network of intellectual and scientific fields and subfields.

Defining Colonial Sociology

The phrase *sociologie coloniale* (colonial sociology) was an "emic" category, used by sociologists themselves. The *Congrès international de sociologie coloniale* (international colonial sociology conference) was held in 1900 in conjunction with the Paris Universal Exposition. *Sociologie coloniale* was the title of a three-volume work by the Sorbonne professor René Maunier, a lifelong

supporter of French colonialism.⁵² However, the label *sociologie coloniale* fell out of favor after 1945, around the same time that the words “colony” and “colonial” in the names of colonial offices, organizations, and publications were being replaced with euphemisms. Some argued for replacing the label *colonial sociology* with *sociology of colonialism*.⁵³ Jacques Berque noted that “the optic of colonial sociology was generally one of colonization,” and was “focused above all on legitimating usurpation by illustrating the archaism” of foreign cultures.⁵⁴ This is the reason sociologists whose careers began in the colonies during the period discussed here sometimes bristled at the phrase *sociologie coloniale* when I interviewed them for this book.⁵⁵ I will discuss the various relabeling efforts, paying close attention to the ways these labels correlated with stable and changing scientific approaches to the colonial subject matter. I will use the phrases *colonial sociology* and *sociology of colonialism* throughout this book as interchangeable analytic categories. Both terms refer to all forms of sociological writing and research focused on overseas colonies and colonial phenomena and empires and imperial phenomena. I remain conscious of the fact that the phrase *colonial sociology* retains the sting of the phenomenon it originally designated: a largely *colonialist* sociology. This is useful in reminding us that this work was being produced within structures predicated on foreign sovereignty and the rule of difference—even when its producers were explicitly critical of colonialism.⁵⁶

The politics of colonial sociologists working after 1945 ranged from militant anticolonialism to fervent support of colonial rule, with most located closer to the former pole. This was also true of the other sciences. At one extreme was the French colonial botanist Pierre Boiteau, who commented in 1948 that “A researcher who does not opt for the national emancipation of the people he is studying cannot fully accomplish his [scientific] mission.”⁵⁷ At the opposite extreme was the sociologist Jean Servier, a researcher in Algeria between 1949 and 1955, funded by the *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (CNRS). Servier tried to contribute directly to the French counterinsurgency campaign by creating an ill-fated “free village” (*djema'a libre*) in the Zakkar region.⁵⁸ Eric de Dampierre allegedly supported the preservation of European rule, at least in equatorial Africa.⁵⁹ Bourdieu and Sayad sharply criticized French Algerian policy and supported the Algerian revolution from a liberal perspective. André Michel became a *porteuse de valises* during the Algerian War and a professor at the University of Algiers after independence.⁶⁰ Claudine Chaulet, a sociologist in Algeria, joined the National Liberation Front (FLN) in the 1950s. Her husband, Dr. Pierre Chaulet, introduced Fanon to the FLN. Claudine Chaulet took Algerian citizenship after independence and remained there as a professor.⁶¹

European sociologists also varied in terms of their professional and personal relations with indigenous sociologists. Some reproduced the hierarchical relationship between colonizer and colonized, while others worked closely

with Arab and African researchers.⁶² The first French colonial subject trained and employed as a sociologist was Nguyễn Văn Huyền. He studied with Marcel Mauss, wrote his doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne in 1935 with Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, and was hired as a researcher at the French *École française d'extrême-orient* in Hanoi in 1940.⁶³ Georges Balandier worked with a number of African social scientists, intellectuals, and political leaders, both within the framework of the *Institut français d'Afrique noire* and in his contributions to creating the pan-Africanist journal *Présence africaine* (see chapter 13). Bourdieu was the first French sociologist who co-authored an important study with a colleague born as a colonized subject, Abdelmalek Sayad.⁶⁴

Three final clarifications are in order. First, not all of the sociologists posted to the colonies focused on colonial phenomena in their research and teaching. The standard metropolitan curriculum was extended to the universities in Algeria, Indochina, and Senegal. I will *not* refer to these overseas teachers of metropolitan curricula as colonial sociologists. Second, a sociologist did not necessarily have to work in colonies to count as a colonial sociologist. The entire subfield of colonial sociology began as “armchair” research that synthesized existing ethnographies and travel reports.⁶⁵ This synthetic genre did not disappear entirely after 1945.⁶⁶ When Bourdieu criticized “theoretical theory” and “materialists without material,” he was echoing a wider rejection at this time of “pure theory” divorced from research and fieldwork. This critique is completely at odds with the stereotype of “French Theory” as highly abstract. Third, colonies or empires were rarely the sole focus for any sociologist throughout their career. Although colonial specialists were among the first French sociologists to conduct archival research and ethnographic fieldwork, most of them moved away from the colonial *topos* after decolonization. Some became Africanists or area specialists; others became specialists in “Third World” development; a small number broadened their perspective to empires and imperialism. The majority, however, simply pulled back into the metropole, like the French population as a whole.⁶⁷

Identifying Sociologists and Disciplinary Fields

Although the history of modern science cannot be limited to disciplinary history, it is just as misleading to ignore disciplines.⁶⁸ This is particularly true for the postwar period, when the human and social sciences began to be more clearly distinguished. There were powerful pressures at the national and international levels toward disciplinary differentiation and self-definition. The French CNRS was divided from the start into distinct sections, each organized around a discipline or group of disciplines. At the international level, UNESCO spurred the creation of international and national disciplinary organizations. American foundations supported the crystallization of disciplines. It is just as misleading to assume that social science disciplines did not

yet exist in postwar France as to assume that they were hermetically sealed silos of self-contained activity.

How can we determine who belonged to a given academic field in the past? Who, in other words, were the sociologists? The most fundamental rule of thumb is that membership in a specialized universe like academic sociology encompasses anyone who was recognized *at the time* as a member of that field by other contemporary participants in it. This approach only seems circular if we ignore the inherent consubstantiality between social structure and agency, persons and their social *Umwelt*. Any intellectual history has to rely on an explicit approach to delimiting the universe in question or risk falling into arbitrary and ad hoc approaches.

Historians sometimes rely on expedient operational definitions, such as counting as a sociologist anyone who referred to themselves as such, published in sociology journals, appeared at sociology conferences, or used the language of sociology in their publications.⁶⁹ This approach begs the question of determining which journals are sociological, how different contributors to them were viewed at the time by sociologists, and how such journals were hierarchically arranged—all questions that are stakes of struggle within the sociology field. The most arbitrary approach would count as sociologists only those who look like sociologists to the present-day observer. Yet struggles over the boundaries of fields and the field-specific “dominant principle of domination” are one of the most important features of the history of science. It is a methodological error to adopt the structuring principles of intra-scientific struggle as one’s own classificatory principles. Many of the sociologists discussed in this book would be spontaneously classified as anthropologists today because they worked on non-western societies.

Bourdieu’s field theory offers a methodological solution.⁷⁰ A scientific or academic discipline can best be understood through a historical reconstruction of its genesis, starting with its *nomothets*—the founders of the scientific *nomos*—and then following the field forward in time, tracking the evolution of structural positions and axes of polarization. The historian also needs to reconstruct the field’s genesis in order to determine which *founders* had the most power in the past.⁷¹ There is often a continuous process of genealogical reconstruction through which new figures are recognized and included while others are forgotten or expunged from the field’s history. Scientific canons are constantly being revised. The only secure way to determine the population of a disciplinary field at a given moment is to reconstruct the judgments of acknowledged members of that field at that moment.

Bourdieu’s theory is not just concerned with practice, inequality, and domination *within* fields. It is also a theory of the demarcation of the *borders* among different fields and between fields, and a theory of *non-fielded* activities. Bourdieu observed that the boundaries of fields are often more like the edges of clouds or the selva at the fringe of a forest, and less like the frontiers

separating nation-states.⁷² That said, the edges of sociology were becoming more sharply demarcated from adjoining disciplines during the postwar period. One example of this hardening of frontiers can be seen in the postwar CNRS, which located sociology in a different section from ethnology, despite the tendency among many practitioners to equate the two fields or to move between them.⁷³

It is sometimes possible to identify a field's members using information other than judgments by direct participants. As Bourdieu noted, "one of the most characteristic properties of a field is the degree to which its dynamic limits . . . are converted into a juridical frontier, protected by a right of entry which is explicitly codified, such as the possession of scholarly titles, success in a competition, etc., or by measures of exclusion and discrimination, such as laws intended to assure a *numerus clausus*."⁷⁴ Once a specific degree is required for entrée, it may become a necessary condition, though usually not a sufficient one, for field membership.⁷⁵ However, scientific and academic fields vary greatly in their degree of specialization and codification. A strict definition based on "juridical frontiers" would imply that, before the 1960s, sociology existed only in the United States, Germany, Britain, South Africa, and a handful of other countries. In France, sociology already existed as an intellectual and academic discipline, but its only recognition in the universities was a *certificate* in *morale et sociologie* (ethics and sociology) that could be earned as part of the philosophy *licence* degree.⁷⁶ Separate *licence* and *doctorat* degrees in sociology were created only in 1958. Most of the great French sociologists of the twentieth century had earned an *agrégation* in philosophy but had no sociology degree at all. There were still no "juridical" rules governing inclusion and exclusion. The closest thing to a sociological membership badge in France was a *chaire* in sociology at a university or one of the *grandes écoles*, or employment as a sociologist by a legitimate research institution such as the CNRS.⁷⁷ Another criterion in the postwar period was membership in the *Centre d'études sociologiques*.⁷⁸ Membership on the editorial board of one of the key sociology journals—*Année sociologique*, *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, and *Revue française de sociologie* (after 1960), or in the reconstituted French Institute of Sociology, was significant, but not always decisive, since these organizations' members continued to be drawn from a range of disciplines.

Where this type of information is lacking, we have to fall back on a case-by-case reconstruction of individual scholars' careers and perceptions of them by others in the field. We can try to determine whether established members of a given discipline, in a given place and time, regarded a particular individual as one of their own.⁷⁹ In some cases it is impossible to identify an academic discipline. This is especially true of people who moved between academia and the intellectual, cultural, and political fields, or who were associated with interdisciplinary institutions such as the *Collège de France*, where it was possible to

invent one's own title and specialization. Some scholars deliberately resisted disciplinary identification.

A more common pattern in our scientific universe was the combination of sociology and ethnology/anthropology. A number of the sociologists examined here moved in and out of metropolitan employment and published in journals dedicated to the study of a particular culture, region, or country, rather than in generic sociology outlets. Many worked on objects that had traditionally belonged to anthropology and that have been largely recaptured by anthropology in the intervening period. This pattern obscures the very different constellation of the mid-twentieth century. In some cases, individuals were categorized as sociologists where there was no "ethnology" position available, but were recategorized as ethnologists as soon as they moved to a different institution. The *Office de la recherche scientifique et technique outre-mer* (Office of Overseas Scientific and Technical Research), for example, subsumed ethnology under sociology in its publications, and had sociologists but no ethnologists on staff during the postwar period.⁸⁰ European anthropologists who moved from metropolitan universities to universities in the colonies or postcolonies were often relabeled as sociologists there, due to hostility to anthropology for its complicity with colonialism.⁸¹ This turn against anthropology foreshadowed a reverse trend today in which non-western sociologists specialized in their own (postcolonial) societies are rechristened as anthropologists when they arrive in European or North American universities. This is a straightforward application of the usually unspoken rule according to which anthropology occupies the "savage slot" in the disciplinary division of labor.⁸²

Recognition as a member of a given field often goes hand in hand with other disciplinary markers, such as a specific intellectual *habitus* and reliance on discipline-specific jargon and references. Immersion in a discipline's *illusio* (Bourdieu) brings with it commitments to its seemingly esoteric ideas and investment in its stakes, which appear meaningless and arbitrary from the outside. We can often track the gradual immersion of an individual in a discipline by attending to vocabulary and turns of phrase and references to particular authorities.

Who, then, should *not* be included in the academic field of sociology? Are there also methodological rules of exclusion? Which criteria are associated with being located on the extreme margins of the sociology field? Here, I again follow several methodological rules of thumb. First, anyone who worked as a sociology teacher or researcher but did not publish and was not active in the national or international sociological associations, should at least be considered extremely marginal to the field. These people lacked visibility beyond the local scene and were usually unrecognized by the wider field; at best, they might be understood as participants in a local sociological field. The same is generally true of administrators, research assistants, and students. Of course, everything depends on whether someone is recognized as belonging to the

field, or not.⁸³ One of the aims of chapter 10 is to ask about some of the sociological reasons people were excluded from or on the margins of the disciplinary field.

A Neo-Bourdieuian Historical Sociology of Science

The present book pursues an historical version of Bourdieu's approach, which I call a *neo-Bourdieuian historical sociology of science*. The historical sociology of social science has received a huge impetus from the practice-theoretical perspective of Bourdieu and his school. Bourdieu argued that social practice is defined by the interaction between (1) an author's habitus, which has to be reconstructed sociogenetically over biographical time, (2) an author's positions in specific, relevant fields, and the history of those fields, which explains the space of positions in a field at a given moment in time, and (3) an author's practical and strategic "position-taking" (*prises de position*) within those fields.⁸⁴ Bourdieu's paradigm takes seriously the idea that fields, including scientific ones, may be relatively autonomous, that is, partially bounded and demarcated from their outside, even while being subjected to and imbedded within envioning social fields and spaces.⁸⁵ Unlike the American sociology of science in the 1950s and 1960s, with its ideal of the scientific "community," this approach focuses on *divisions* and *conflicts* as well as partial and temporary *consensus* within scientific arenas. Scientific disciplines are typically characterized by unequal distributions of field-specific power and resources and riven by internal conflicts.

My premise is that the sociology of social science needs to examine thinkers and their works both individually and in relation to a series of more proximate scientific contexts and more distanced sociohistorical contexts. This procedure can be compared and contrasted with the original version of the sociology of knowledge, or *Wissenssoziologie*, which was defined by Karl Mannheim as being located between the extremes of, on the one hand, a generalizing account that ignores differences between individuals and works, and, on the other hand, accounts in which the "unique qualities of each individual's thought are overemphasized, and the significance of his social *milieu* for the nature of his thought is ignored."⁸⁶ Mannheim provided examples of this approach in his case study of German conservatism. He also discussed this in his self-reflexive explanation of the conditions of possibility for his own theoretical perspective.⁸⁷ The Nazi seizure of power forced Mannheim into exile, brutally interrupting ongoing discussions of the sociology of knowledge.⁸⁸ Mannheim never developed a systematic theory of societal contexts, cultural works, or the scientific subject. Those who picked up the sociology of knowledge in the United States, such as Robert K. Merton, Edward Shils, and Alvin Gouldner, were located within a discipline that discouraged these questions, since these questions seemed closer to Marxism, psychoanalysis, and literary criticism.

Mannheim was embedded within German philosophical discussions based in Kant and Hegel, whereas American sociology was innocent of most philosophy other than neopositivism.⁸⁹ The disappearance of *Wissenssoziologie* in Germany and Austria was a result of the intense hostility to Mannheim on the anti-Semitic Right.⁹⁰ After a promising start in the United States between the wars in Merton's early work, the sociology of science narrowed its focus to the intermediate level of the scientific community.⁹¹ Merton's project, especially after World War II, was to convert *Wissenssoziologie* into "an Americanized 'sociology of knowledge,'" and then to "turn against" it, "and in so doing, to spoil the potential reception of Mannheim's ideas in the United States."⁹² Merton warned in 1952 that any investigation of "the connections between sciences and society constitute[d] a subject matter which ha[d] become tarnished for academic sociologists who know that it is close to the heart of Marxist sociology."⁹³ The new sociology of science focused not so much on science as *scientists*—"their career patterns, work organization, patrons, and professed values." With the rise of the "strong program" in the sociology of science and Science and Technology Studies, researchers lowered their gaze even further to the laboratory while bracketing wider contexts and striking a "studiously descriptive stance" to the sciences, sending the message that "science normally is as it ought to be."⁹⁴

This book will demonstrate that the sociology of knowledge came to fruition in the completely different set of conditions of the late French colonial empire. The surprising migration and maturation of the sociology of knowledge in mid-twentieth-century France was also a result of French sociology's greater openness to questions of scientific reflexivity than the American sociology or post-1933 German sociology. Another key factor was that French sociology was closer to philosophy, due to the training of many of the discipline's central figures at the *École normale supérieure*. French sociology was also opened to the sociology of knowledge due to its permeable disciplinary boundaries, which sensitized it to ongoing discussions in philosophy, anthropology, linguistics, psychoanalysis, history, and (neo)Marxism. Bourdieu was singularly equipped to integrate these diverse intellectual resources and to generate a sociological theory that bridged the social sciences and humanities. This is akin in its ambition to Karl Marx's merger of young Hegelian philosophy with British political economics and French socialist doctrine. It recalls Gustave Flaubert's invention of an unprecedented position in a newly created French literary field, discussed by Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art*.⁹⁵ It also resembles the creation by philosophers Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault of new theories and structural positions located between philosophy and adjoining fields. At the same time, Bourdieu's innovation was made possible by the intellectual, political, and colonial contexts discussed in this book.⁹⁶ What is unique about Bourdieu's theory is that it is a social theory of fields and objects other than

science, and that the discussion of every social object is simultaneously a discussion of the sociology of the knowledge of these objects.

I have argued here and in earlier publications that Bourdieu's overarching framework can best be reconstructed as a practice of *historical socioanalysis*. This is a *neo-Bourdieuian* rather than an orthodox Bourdieuian or a post-Bourdieuian perspective, since it builds on his main ideas while revising them to differing degrees. Bourdieu's approach pays attention to four key components in analyzing intellectual production: field, context, author, and text. Each of these four components needs to be theorized explicitly. Bourdieu has provided a great deal of guidance for the first two components, while limiting his discussion of the third element, the author, to the theory of habitus. As for textual analysis, we need to turn to resources other than Bourdieu.

More specifically, there are six areas of Bourdieu's theory that require rethinking or reconstruction: (1) the relations between fields and more encompassing social or historical contexts; (2) the spatial coordinates of field theory; (3) the theory of the subject, which Bourdieu limits to the concepts of habitus and practice; (4) the need for more explicit methods for analyzing textual and visual works; (5) a restatement of the underlying philosophy of science, in ways that make it compatible with critical realism and postcolonial epistemology; (6) the theory of reflexivity.

With respect to the first point, I have tried to demonstrate here and in other publications that social fields and social spaces should be situated within wider environing contexts, which may be patterned by modes of societal regulation, dominant cultural discourses, "styles of thought" (*Denkstile*; Karl Mannheim), or the political, economic, and social forces that sometimes stamp an entire epoch or geospace, providing a frame for all fields.⁹⁷ These wider contexts are not *super-venient*, in the sense of imposing an asymmetrical relation of dependence upon fields, but they may still shape activity within fields, whose autonomy from their environments is always relative, not absolute. This first point is crucial for defining the range of relevant contexts in the history of science. Bourdieu theorizes social space, which surrounds all fields, and whose basic dimensions are the same as the structural dimensions of fields—different species of capital, forms of habitus, relations of autonomy and heteronomy, etc. However, Bourdieu does not have a theory of the relations among fields, beyond the basic architecture of social space, field of power, and the state, in relation to other fields in general. This is not to say that we should seek a general social theory of epochal contexts. What we need instead is concepts linked to particular historical periods and spaces and defining the widest social contexts—concepts such as developmental colonialism, late colonialism, Fordism, post-Fordism, fascism, totalitarianism, and so on. These concepts help the historian identify the overarching contexts of intellectual production—contexts that are always heterogeneous and changing, but that may still have one or more identifiable emphases.

Closely related is the second point: field theory needs to be grounded in geopolitical space, and not only in (metaphorical) social space. Fields can never be assumed to be spatially identical to the nation-state but often have a smaller or larger geopolitical footprint. The social researcher needs to determine any field's geo-coordinates first, in order to understand the circulation of ideas, objects, and actors within social space. Such a material, spatial grounding is crucial for mapping fields at the scale of studies of empires and colonies, which cannot be equated with fields at the national or global scale.⁹⁸ This approach allows us to conceive of fields that link a metropole with specific colonies.⁹⁹ Geospatializing field theory can also be crucial for understanding practices at subnational and international levels of analysis, within regions smaller than the national territory or zones that link regions in two or more national territories.

What about the theory of the subject? Bourdieu's theory of habitus and practice provides a starting point that rejects models of rationalism, voluntarism, and psychic unity, on the one hand, and models of the subject as a mere bearer (*Träger*) of social structures, on the other hand. Although Bourdieu argues that practice cannot be understood without reference to a whole array of social contexts, he also understands individuals as being endowed with embodied dispositions (habitus) that may persist beyond their original conditions of genesis, and that exceed conscious thought. Bourdieu's sketchy theory of the subject needs to be reconstructed into a full theory of the psyche and subject. The habitus construct can be retheorized using the Lacanian concept of the imaginary and located at an intermediate level between conscious and unconscious thought.¹⁰⁰ We need to treat individuals—including scientists—as beings endowed with an unconscious. It is this third point that leads me to call my approach *socioanalytic*—following a suggestion by Bourdieu and other French sociologists, but interpreting that term as blending the *sociological* with the *psychoanalytic*.¹⁰¹

Any discussion of Bourdieu's theory of subjectivity also needs to encompass his theory of practice. Practice is indeed the central concept in his social theory. Studies of science inspired by Bourdieu therefore necessarily focus on changes in scientific practice over time.¹⁰² Bourdieu's social ontology of practice prevents him from entertaining the idea that social systems are normally reproduced over time, even if he often thematizes social reproduction as a possible, paradoxical state of affairs.¹⁰³ Social fields, like social structures in general, are inherently unstable and dynamic; their stabilization or reproduction can therefore only be temporary. Dynamic processualism is thus inherent in Bourdieu's theory at all levels, including his theory of fields. This applies with special force to scientific fields, which rise and fall, intersect and resonate with other fields, and are constantly changing due to perpetual struggles, new generations of scientists, and "specific revolutions."¹⁰⁴ Bourdieu formulated social reproduction as an analytic problem in the 1960s, at a time when the prominence of structuralist theory was reinforced by an unusual situation of

relative societal stability, rendering theories of “social reproductionism” more plausible. Social theory was beguiled by the ideal-type of social reproduction, from Parsonsian structural functionalism, to Lévi-Straussian anthropology, to Althusserian Marxism.¹⁰⁵ Thinkers such as Bourdieu, who were exposed to colonial theaters before the 1960s, were immunized against conflating social reproduction with the normal state of affairs. Since the central concept of Bourdieu’s social theory is *practice*, studies of science inspired by Bourdieu necessarily focus on changes in scientific practice over time.¹⁰⁶ This point is not so much a reconstruction of Bourdieu as a point of emphasis.

In terms of the fourth revision, Bourdieu recognized that social scientific work is mainly textual and visual, despite efforts to translate social practice into statistics and mathematics. He recognized that social science, like other fields of cultural production, is not only a field of actors and institutions but also a field of *works* that exist in relation to other works. The historical sociology of sociology (or any other primarily textual practice) should analyze texts as being situated within a relational “space of works.” Bourdieu was critical of pure formalist approaches to cultural criticism in which works are analyzed *only* internally and in relation to other works, yet he did not shy away from stylistic questions, for example in his lectures on Manet.¹⁰⁷ However, Bourdieu did not develop an interpretive methodology suited to the analysis of textual and visual works. He did not consider the usefulness of theories of narrative or concepts of transtextuality that I rely upon here in order to make sense of the sociology of colonialism.¹⁰⁸ What is called for is an approach to social scientific texts that takes advantage of formal methods and concepts such as those developed in literary criticism and art history, which lead us to pay attention to the structural and formal aspects of texts and the ways in which texts relate to one another, refer to one another, explain one another, or comment upon one another (intertextuality, paratextuality, etc.). It urges us to attend to narrative form, use of perspective, tense, and authorial voice. These relations exist both among works in the immediate discipline or subfield, and in relation to works in other fields.¹⁰⁹ An adequate approach to interpreting cultural products is key to understanding sociological texts.

The fifth point concerns the philosophy of science. Bourdieu argued that “the sociology of sociology is a fundamental dimension of sociological epistemology.”¹¹⁰ Bourdieu’s philosophy of science is largely compatible with the critical realist philosophy of science and neohistoricist epistemology.¹¹¹ Making this connection has the advantage of linking Bourdieu to a more elaborate and explicit critique of positivism. This is not so much a revision of Bourdieu as an effort to put his epistemology in contact with Anglo-American and German traditions that are positioned similarly vis-à-vis positivism and propose broadly compatible alternatives, even if their terms of discussion are sometimes radically different.¹¹² Bourdieu’s approach is strongly anti-positivist, if we define positivism as belief in the existence of universal, general laws of

human behavior. Bourdieu rejects epistemologies of *regularity determinism* and is highly sensitive to questions of contingency and complex causal conjunctures. Bourdieu rejects scientism—the idea that social science should model itself upon imagined norms of natural science. Bourdieu’s epistemology of breaking with spontaneous pre-notions is premised on the difference between the level of spontaneous, empirical appearances and “ready-made objects,” on the one hand, and a level of underlying real structures and processes, on the other hand. Bourdieu quotes Bachelard to the effect that “there is no science but of that which is hidden.”¹¹³ This picture of reality as layered corresponds to critical realism’s stratified ontology. Like critical realists, Bourdieu believes that explanatory social science can lead organically to social critique, by identifying “true sites of freedom” as well as sites of fatal constraint, and by peeling away layers of symbolic domination and obfuscation.¹¹⁴ Sociology is always political. But the “ethical usage of reflexive sociology” is combined with a rigorous rejection of subordinating sociology to politics or anything else that would limit its autonomy.¹¹⁵ Bourdieu’s explanatory accounts of the rise of new artistic or literary styles or events such as May 1968 are grounded in an epistemology of contingent conjunctures of different historical “series.” This approach is highly compatible with critical realism’s contingentist epistemology and with twentieth-century sociological neohistoricism.¹¹⁶

The final point concerns Bourdieu’s argument that social science requires a specific form of reflexivity in order to make sense of the underlying social logics of practice. Here, I see less need for revising Bourdieu’s thinking than for clarifying it and relating it to the history of social science. One of Bourdieu’s arguments is that the historical sociology of science is the centerpiece of scientific reflexivity. As Bourdieu defines it, reflexivity is almost the opposite of what it usually means in popular and pop-sociological discourse. Rather than an embrace of one’s existing social, political, and epistemic positions, reflexivity involves a rupture with such preexisting cognitive categories. The first break is with the sociologist’s spontaneous theories and concepts about their object. Such scientific “pre-notions” may reflect the doxa of the particular discipline; conversely, they may be rooted in heterodox positions that are adopted unconsciously due to the hierarchical and antagonistic character of social relations within scientific fields. The second break is directed at the categories of the people one is studying, with their understandings of their practice. In the case of the sociology of science, this second move entails a break with scientists’ spontaneous interpretations of their practice. Bourdieu’s theory thus supersedes the older distinction between “etic” and “emic” ones, between scientific *Fremdbeschreibung* (description of others) and spontaneous forms of *Selbstbeschreibung* (self-description).¹¹⁷

Social scientists need to avoid blindly adopting the instruments, theories, and concepts they find readily at hand. They need to reflect on what they

are doing when they do science, which assumptions they enact, and which implicit understandings they may unwittingly reproduce. More positively, they might consider how a reflexive approach to scientific practice could contribute to the flourishing of social science and to the creation of a rational framework for social and civic interventions by social scientists. In order to understand their own positions, the researcher needs to *objectify* the scientific fields and the field of power they find themselves in, at the moment of research.¹¹⁸ This leads them to carry out a historical sociology of their own scientific field, its categories, positions, and polarizations leading up to the present. The researcher reconstructs the field's evolution and its internal structure in order to understand the moves, arguments, and texts within the field, past and present. In some cases (including the present study), a researcher may be so closely linked to the analytic object that their own categories are derived quite directly from the historical categories they are studying. The methodological approach in these cases is the same: one reconstructs one's field and the history of the field one is studying.¹¹⁹

The researcher may then situate themselves within those historical spaces. While this may take the form of an auto-analysis, such reflexive practice is not the same thing as confessional approaches taking the form "I am writing as an X or speaking as a Y." Although scientists' social backgrounds matter, participation in educational and scientific fields can dramatically transform scientists' habitus, interests, and conscious and unconscious thought. That is why it is much more important to analyze the history of the field of knowledge and its intersection with the individual, rather than focusing on scientists' demographic properties.

This is where we can identify the key differences between standpoint epistemologies, structural anthropology, and Bourdieusian theory. Strict structuralism à la Lévi-Strauss assumes that the spontaneous perceptions of those being studied reveal little about the underlying structures shaping culture and practice. Bourdieu presented his disagreement with structuralism in *Outline of Theory of Practice*.¹²⁰ There and in all of his later writings, Bourdieu argues that actors do not simply execute codes or scripts, although they are not free from social structural constraint. Practice always takes place within the structural constraints of individual habitus, the inherited weight of ideas and ways of being, and the relational, conflictual, and cooperative configurations of social fields and social spaces. Yet practice always also involves improvisation in the face of ever-changing situations. Moreover, practice may become more conscious and deliberate through the study of sociohistorical and incorporated structures.

Bourdieu's theory is similarly at odds with versions of standpoint epistemology that argue that insiders have immediate or privileged access to knowledge about their own condition. In the history and sociology of science, this thesis might mean that "only French scholars can understand French society,"

and by extension, only French sociologists could understand French sociology and only colonial sociologists could understand colonial sociology.¹²¹ The failure of almost all French historians of French sociology even to mention the existence of French colonial sociology (chapter 2) casts immediate doubt on this form of insider epistemology. One's own disciplinary history usually comes packaged in texts, categories, and filters that emphasize certain research objects, theories, founders, and bits of reality, while eliding others. Participants in a given field may indeed have greater access to certain experiences and information, but they may also be subject to systematic forms of blindness and bias, and to the lasting effects of current and past repressions of memory.

The ubiquitous dualism of colonial settings makes it particularly important to avoid naively accepting the self-interpretations of the people one is studying. Colonies are inherently dualistic insofar as the *differentia specifica* of the modern colony is the lack of sovereignty and citizenship on the part of the colonized, the construction of the colonized as inherently inferior (the “rule of colonial difference”), and the caste-like segregation this entails.¹²² Colonial scientific fields are dualistic in a different way: they are related to metropolitan ones, without being mere extensions of them. Such dualism distorts perceptions and social relations, making epistemic vigilance especially important. It is far from coincidental that Bourdieu first adumbrated his concept of the split or cleft habitus (*habitus clivé*) in his research in colonial Algeria, and that he discussed the need to execute an epistemological Gestalt switch in making sense of doubled colonial realities (chapter 14).

A conscious *epistemic break* with received pre-notions and disciplinary common sense—one's own and those of the people one is studying—is thus a necessary precondition for social research in general, and for writing the history of science in particular.¹²³ Reflexivity takes an especially complex form in the study of knowledge produced in colonial settings. In addition to the pervasive dualism of colonial situations, another epistemic difficulty stems from the fact that anticolonialism has become commonsensical among the majority of social researchers. Already in the 1950s and 1960s, social scientists frequently compared colonialism to totalitarianism and Nazism. However, as I have discovered through years of archival research and discussions with participants in late colonial situations, these comparisons are too simple. The differences between colonialism and totalitarianism became especially marked during the last decades of European rule, when the colonial powers, including France, had democratic political systems. Scientific freedom was expanding, even in the colonies—with important exceptions such as Algeria during the revolutionary war. French intellectuals showed increasing readiness, compared to earlier eras, to cross the “global color line” in search of interlocutors, collaborators, and friends. Of course, it was true with respect to wartime Algeria, as Fanon argued, that “science depoliticized, science in the service of man, is

often non-existent in the colonies.”¹²⁴ Just as often, however, colonial researchers demonstrated that they were open to rational argument, to evidence and counter-evidence, to reevaluation of some of their spontaneous pre-notions and prejudices, and to alternative voices and epistemologies.¹²⁵ If we do not bracket our own political-epistemic assumptions when studying colonial knowledge, we risk confirming our biases, and we risk historical anachronism.

Overview of the Book and Individual Chapters

Chapter 2 presents postwar colonial sociology in more detail and analyzes its erasure from the history of French social science. The chapter’s first section describes the objects, methods, concepts, theories, and epistemologies of colonial sociology. The second section analyzes the repression of this sociological formation in historical writing and disciplinary memory.

The following chapters reconstruct the conditions leading to the rise of this social scientific formation. To answer the questions of how and why colonies became a privileged object and terrain of investigation and a crucial employment site for sociologists between 1945 and 1960, I examine a combination of causal factors located outside the sociological field proper as well as determinants located within sociology. The distinction between internal and external determinants of science is a continuum, and many phenomena are located at the borderline. Yet even if the distinction is a heuristic device, it is a crucial one insofar as it wards off the methodological errors of *methodological scholasticism* and *methodological sociologism*. The former refers to an approach to the history of ideas in which ideas are explained exclusively by other ideas. The latter explains ideas exclusively in terms of social contexts, social structures, epochal social formations, and forces far removed from texts and their immediate conditions of production.¹²⁶

The structure of the present book avoids both of these one-sided approaches by contextualizing at ever more proximate levels, until we arrive at postwar sociology’s colonial subfield and individual sociologists and their texts in parts 4 and 5. The contexts discussed in the earlier sections should not be considered as “background material” but as a necessary part of a full account of colonial sociology. The intellectual contexts discussed in the middle sections (chapters 6–8) are equally important. As Bourdieu notes, many of the properties of any particular discipline “derive from the relations between this field and other fields.”¹²⁷

Part 2 discusses the more “external” determinants, those most distant in time and social space from the immediate context of the scientific production of colonial sociology. Chapter 3 covers three aspects of postwar France: the re-occupation of the French colonies, the permeation of colonialism by science, including social science, and the continuing enthusiasm for empire among the metropolitan French population. Chapter 4 argues that colonial

developmentalist policies contributed to the rising demand for new forms of colonial social scientific expertise. Sociologists became favored partners of colonial governments, especially as development policies took a turn to social welfare. Developmental colonialism provided social scientists with resources, employment opportunities, and conceptual frameworks, while social scientists tried to influence development policies. Chapter 5 reconstructs the *dispositif* of research organizations in France and the overseas colonies in which colonial sociological research was carried out. This chapter also surveys the American and international organizations that provided support to French colonial sociologists, including UNESCO, the International Sociological Association, and the Rockefeller Foundation.

Part 3 discusses the key *intellectual* contexts for postwar French sociology. Continuing to track from more remote contexts toward more proximate ones, chapters 6 and 7 examine the treatment of colonialism in the disciplines that had some overlap with sociology: psychology, law, economics, geography, history, and ethnology.¹²⁸ Chapter 8 turns to the most immediate intellectual context for postwar sociology, namely, interwar French sociology. Here, I focus on a series of theoretical and methodological discussions. Especially important for postwar colonial sociology were the interwar sociological debates on theory versus empirics; interpretivism and psychology; historical sociology; morality and ethics; states and empires; and the status of “primitivism” in studying non-western societies. I then examine interwar studies of colonized cultures by a set of ethno-sociologists: Roger Bastide, Charles Le Coeur, Maurice Leenhardt, René Maunier, Alfred Métraux, and Jacques Soustelle.

Part 4 analyzes French sociology and its colonial specialists in structural field-theoretic terms. Chapter 9 examines the sociology discipline and its colonial subfield in morphological terms during the interwar and postwar periods. With regard to the interwar period, the key point is simply to establish that sociology continued to exist as a university and research field. I then show that sociology quickly reemerged after 1945. After determining the overall size of the disciplinary field, my first aim is to establish the size and composition of the colonial grouping. I find that around half of the scholars in the French sociology field between 1945 and 1960 engaged in colonial or imperial research. The chapter then examines the relative status of the colonial specialists. I find that colonial sociologists as a whole were roughly equivalent to their metrocentric colleagues in terms of their professional standing. Most of the key positions in sociology, at the Sorbonne, the Sixth Section of the *École pratique des hautes études*, and the *Collège de France*, were held by scholars with colonial interests.

At the same time, many colonial specialists faced barriers to professional success, and some of them languished in obscurity. Chapter 10 begins by examining some of the specific obstacles faced by colonial scholars. Sociologists were mobilized to contribute to programs of uprooting and resettling

Africans. These displacement programs were beloved by colonial rulers but were increasingly unpopular among French intellectuals and leftists, casting doubt on researchers who contributed to them. Colonial sociologists with administrative or military backgrounds were regarded with increasing distrust, as anticolonialism became more commonsensical. Many colonial sociologists worked in remote overseas locations, which made them invisible to their metropolitan colleagues and kept them out of touch with ongoing discussions in the discipline. One group discussed here that faced an especially steep uphill battle, due to the pervasive racism of the colonies and metropolitan France, were indigenous sociologists. The second part of chapter 10 examines some of the strategies used by colonial sociologists to overcome these barriers. Some of them tried to move into more prestigious fields such as anthropology, philosophy, and literature, or to embed their work within aesthetic and literary forms; others tried to increase their scientific autonomy.

The book's final section, part 5, centers on the work of Raymond Aron, Jacques Berque, Georges Balandier, and Pierre Bourdieu. The foregoing analysis of their intellectual contexts puts us in a better position to understand some of the sources of their ideas, and to discern what is inventive and original in their work.

Aron, discussed in chapter 11, was the most innovative French theorist of the causes and varieties of colonialism and of the specificity of "empire" as a political formation. Aron compares, without equating, Nazi imperialism, French colonialism, and the informal postwar American empire. Aron distinguished among different types of empire.¹²⁹ He analyzed empires as inherently fragile, unstable formations, riven by internal contradictions and crises. Aron represented one of the only bridges between postwar European discussions and the neohistoricist epistemology of Weimar sociology, and this gives his work on empire a distinctive historical dimension.

Berque, the subject of chapter 12, was an "Orientalist" sociologist who de-Orientalized the sociology of North African, Arab, and Islamic societies. A reforming colonial official who carried out an intellectual "mutiny" inside the colonial state, Berque's work represents the most historical version of historical sociology that emerged in twentieth-century France. He was the first French sociologist to combine archival and ethnographic methods with social theory in analyzing colonized societies. He effectively invented historical ethno-sociology. Some of Berque's greatest contributions examine the combined effects of colonialism on rural and urban Arab cultures in the Maghreb. Berque's *Dépossession du monde* is a pathbreaking study of decolonization, and *The Arabs* is a unique comparative study of the entire Arab world in the immediate wake of decolonization. Berque coined the critical concept "decolonial" and advocated a form of knowledge he called "transcolonial," defined as a phase of "reciprocal knowledge."¹³⁰ Berque is a founder of post-colonial sociology.

Balandier's work, examined in chapter 13, represents a sustained interaction between sociology, ethnology, historiography, and literature. Balandier examined the entire range of destructive effects of colonialism on African societies, and a panoply of African cultural and political responses to the "colonial situation" in urban and rural settings. He is best known for his research on African messianic religions, resistance, and anticolonial nationalist movements, and for his historical research on the formation of African states.

The penultimate chapter turns to Bourdieu, whose extraordinarily generative theoretical concepts can be traced in part to his time in Algeria (1956–1960) and to the repeated reworking of his Algerian research at every stage of his theoretical evolution. The original aspects of his thinking can now be better understood against the backdrop of the intellectual terrain that had already been created by the thinkers examined in the rest of this book. It is crucial here to weigh the relative importance of (1) the intellectual inheritance—both the colonial researchers and the other, noncolonial thinkers Bourdieu brings to bear on the colonial object (Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard); and (2) the specific colonial situation in which Bourdieu found himself, including the impact of the war and his friendship with Algerians such as Abdelmalek Sayad. I will argue that Bourdieu's theory of habitus, symbolic capital, and fields, and his specific approach to reflexivity and writing the history of culture, including science, emerged from his wartime experiences and writing in Algeria. Chapter 14 therefore completes the hermeneutic circle traced in this book. We will be able to discern and understand an intellectual formation partly with the help of the theoretical methodology encompassed within that formation and reaching its apotheosis at the end of the colonial era in Bourdieu's thinking.

The book's conclusion turns to the question of the relation of this colonial sociology to the present. Is sociology's colonial moment relevant only as an incubus weighing on the present? Should decolonization work by luring this demon out of hiding to be slain? Autonomy is crucial for overcoming academic dependency and for the production of science in general.¹³¹ Since autonomous work of lasting value was created in this period, I will argue, we should not simply erase it, especially since it has already been erased once before (chapter 2). Moreover, the present historical moment is, still, an imperial moment. The questions raised in the research discussed in this book are alive and well.

The next chapter begins the process of reconstructing the existing doxa of the field in order to pierce the veil of spontaneous knowledge, by addressing the extant history of French sociology. As we will see, colonial sociology has been actively repressed. My first goal is to wrest the history of colonial sociology from the dark waters of the Lethe.¹³²

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