

A CHILD OF THE EMPIRE: BRITISH SOCIOLOGY AND COLONIALISM, 1940s–1960s

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British sociology was established as an academic discipline between 1945 and 1965, just as the British Empire was gearing up for a new phase of developmental colonialism backed by the social and other sciences. Many parts of the emerging sociological discipline became entangled with colonialism. Key themes and methods in sociology and the staff of sociology departments emerged from this colonial context. Historians have tended to place postwar British sociology in the context of expanding higher education and the welfare state, and have overlooked this colonial constellation. The article reconstructs this forgotten moment of disciplinary founding and explores three of the factors that promoted colonial sociology: the Colonial Social Science Research Council, the so-called Asquith universities, and the social research institutes in the colonies; and the involvement of sociologists from the London School of Economics in training colonial officials. © 2013 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

INTRODUCTION: IMPERIAL SOCIOLOGY?

In Britain, the years after the Second World War marked the establishment of sociology as a “fully fledged academic discipline with autonomous degrees, departments, and research facilities” (Goudsblom & Heilbron, 2004: p. 14,574). This same period also saw the creation of the “fourth British empire” (Darwin, 2006). British sociology was deeply involved with colonialism between the 1940s and the mid-1960s.¹ The Colonial Office enrolled sociologists in efforts to solve colonial problems and funded autonomous social science in the colonies. The themes, methods, and personnel of the newly created sociology departments in the United Kingdom emerged from this colonial context, and did not simply reflect the concerns of the domestic welfare state. Three of the signature contributions of British sociology after 1940—community studies, race relations research, and the “extended case” approach to ethnography—flourished first in colonial contexts before becoming established in the metropole. British sociology benefited profoundly from its involvement in the empire.

My aim in this article is to reconstruct this colonial moment in British sociology, a founding moment that has been so thoroughly forgotten and overlooked as to render it almost invisible.² Historians have detailed the connections between French, German, British, and American anthropology and those countries’ colonial policies (Leclerc, 1972; Gothsch, 1983; Stocking, 1991; Mills, 2008; Sacriste, 2011). The imperial activities of other disciplines,

1. Most of British Africa decolonized between 1960 and 1968; most of the colonies in the West Indies had to wait until the 1970s and 1980s; Hong Kong gained its independence in 1997.

2. Commentators have pointed to the intellectual effect on postwar British sociology of the large number of anthropology PhDs in its ranks (e.g. Husbands, 1999), but they have not focused on the specifically colonial dimension. Historians of postwar social anthropology have of course examined the colonial connection but have not looked at anthropological out-migrants to sociology (e.g., Mills, 2008).

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including geography and the natural sciences, have also been explored (Godlewska & Smith, 1994; Petitjean, 1996; Singaravélou, 2011). But little is known about the relations between colonialism and sociology. Connell (1997) argued that Europe and U.S. sociologists focused on empire before the First World War, but refocused their gaze on social disorder inside their nations' national borders afterwards. According to Bryan Turner (2006), British sociologists ignored decolonization altogether.³

The period of sociologists' involvement in colonialism has been largely overshadowed by the era that began in the 1960s, which saw an even more rapid expansion of sociology departments and higher education in general (Halsey, 1992). This 1960s era culminated in a crisis or series of crises that were centered on metropolitan Britain (Cockburn & Blackburn, 1969). Raymond Aron is said to have described postwar British Sociology as "essentially an attempt to make intellectual sense of the political problems of the Labour Party" (Halsey, 2004, p. 70). Aron's apocryphal statement is generally read as confirmation that "the conception of sociology and its role was closely connected with the growth of the welfare state" in the United Kingdom (Platt, 2002, p. 183). But Labour also inherited the Empire in 1945, and it devoted considerable energy to colonial policy even when it was not in government (Goldsworthy, 1971, p. 57; Darwin, 2009, p. 541). British sociologists' putative detachment from colonialism is particularly striking in light of the fact that "Greater Britain" between 1918 and 1960 was the largest formal Imperium in world history.

Colonialism and empire were central topics for a significant group of British academic sociologists between the 1940s and the 1960s—scholars located in all of the major universities and sociology departments in the United Kingdom and in the new universities in the British colonies. The main explanatory problem I address here concerns the rise of a full-fledged sociology of empire. A second question that I will only be able to touch upon in the conclusion concerns the reasons for the widespread amnesia concerning this foundational disciplinary moment.

SCIENTIFIC FIELDS AT THE SCALE OF EMPIRES

The proper geographic unit of analysis for the present analysis is the "British World" (Dubow, 2009), or *Greater Britain* (Bell, 2007)—as opposed to insular *Great Britain*. The Greater British academic field encompassed universities and research institutes throughout the colonies and dominions. The status of the white settler colonies of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa had shifted with the 1926 Balfour Report, which declared them to be "equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another," and members of the British Commonwealth of Nations (Darwin, 1999). From that point onward, the primary axis of the colonial problem in the commonwealth countries pitted their white settler governments against the indigenous populations, and no longer centrally involved the Colonial Office. For that reason, I will bracket sociologists in these Commonwealth countries who worked on their international colonial populations except to the extent that they participated in Greater British scientific fields. As Pietsch (2010, p. 377) writes, British academics "from across the universities of Britain's settler empire" had long "professed the existence of a British academic community." The geographic reach of this community underwent a further expansion after 1945 with the creation of new universities and research institutes in the colonies and a slight opening to social scientists from the ranks of the colonized.

3. Historians of postwar French sociology (Masson, 2008) also ignore the colonial research of French sociologists (Steinmetz, 2009).

Even in nonimperial contexts, scientific fields often need to be conceptualized at scales larger (and smaller) than individual countries and cannot be assumed to be coterminous with the nation state. All imperial fields, including scientific fields, are geographic spaces with complex shapes, tentacles reaching from metropolises to imperial outposts, and transverse pathways connecting different points in the global periphery (Steinmetz, forthcoming). The historiography of postwar British sociology is characterized by a severe geospatial foreshortening that projects the smaller scale of the present-day U.K. academic field back onto the imperial era. British sociology may have more members now than it did in the 1950s, but it exists in a dramatically shrunken geospace. A few of its participants continue to wander across along the overgrown trails that traverse the ghostly British Commonwealth. The *Commonwealth Universities Yearbook* still conjures up this spectral global field, listing university staff from Kingston to Mumbai, by way of London. The shared *illusio* (Bourdieu), the “plethora of networks” (Pietsch, 2010, p. 378), and the organized asymmetries of power that held together the Greater British academic world system were gradually replaced by new axes centered on the United States. Those British sociologists currently pleading for a globalization of their discipline are doing so against the backdrop of a relatively recent *deglobalization* of their discipline.

A further specification of my object of analysis is that the 1940s and 1950s need to be analyzed in their own right and not understood simply as a prelude to the 1960s. Historians of British postwar social science emphasize the 1963 Robbins report, which led to an expansion of metropolitan universities (Halsey, 1992), and the 1965 Heyworth report, which established the British Social Science Research Council. But these reports also represent another turning point, from the imperial to the postimperial epoch. They corresponded to a relative crisis in funding for anthropologists and other British scientists working in the colonies (Mills, 2008, pp. 154–158).

To write the history of sociology’s entanglement with colonialism, we also need to reconsider the periodization of 20th century British imperialism. The entire postwar period is often summarized under the heading “loss of empire” (Halsey, 2004, p. 90). This gesture erases the distinctiveness of the 1940s and 1950s. Some imperial historians argue that a “coherent program to transfer power to suitably prepared colonial elites” was developed starting in 1938 with the new Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald. But as Parsons concludes, “there was no such plan, and the main aim of these new policies was to buy the empire time by countering anti-imperial propaganda” (Parsons, 2011, p. 8). Within the relevant ruling circles, there was “almost universal belief” in “the long term nature of British colonial rule” during and after the war (Whitehead, 1991, p. 407; Kirk-Greene, 1979, p. 60). The Colonial Secretary stated in 1942 that “we know in our heart that most Colonies, especially in Africa, will probably not be fit for complete independence for centuries” (Lee & Petter, 1982, p. 133). Some members of the Colonial Office estimated in 1945 that the empire would last another 60 years (Louis & Robinson, 1994, p. 486). The old British imperialism “gained a new lease on life and reasserted itself under the shelter of the new” empire—the American one (Worsley, 1960, p. 106). The United States underwrote the costs of the British colonial empire with over \$1 billion annually (Louis & Robinson, 1994, pp. 468–469). Colonial Office spending and staff increased steadily until 1960, starting with a “record intake of 553 appointments to the Colonial Administrative Services” in 1945 (Goldsworthy, 1971, pp. 45, 392–397; Kirk-Greene, 1980, p. 27). The official timetable for the transfer of power continued to move closer to the present, but never became “tomorrow” until the very moment of decolonization. The War Office opened a major new military base outside Nairobi in 1958. A meeting of Colonial Office senior officials and East African governors in 1959 concluded that these colonies would not achieve independence until the 1970s (Blundell, 1964, pp. 261–262). And in many African colonies, British expats

continued to play leading administrative roles for years after independence. The academic staff at colonial universities in Ghana and elsewhere remained largely British for at least a decade after the handover.

Sociology's "moment" (Savage, 2010)—its establishment in British universities—began immediately after the Second World War, even if departmental expansion accelerated in the mid-1960s. Sociology's first boom was connected not just to the welfare state at home, but also to the massive efforts to refortify the colonial empire through development schemes in which research and higher education played a key role (Carstairs, 1945; Hailey, 1949). A number of colonial ethnographies written by sociologists or anthropologists cum sociologists were already complete by the time Britain entered its imperial endgame (e.g., Fadipe, 1940; Mitchell, 1950; Silberman, 1950; Busia, 1951; Girling, 1952; Barnes, 1954; Worsley, 1954; Sofer & Sofer, 1955; Pons, 1956; Banton, 1957; Van Velsen, 1957; Watson, 1958). The colonies in which sociology had the strongest institutional presence during the colonial period, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, gained their independence in 1964 and 1965, respectively (Southern Rhodesia remained a white-dominated settler colony until 1980).

Empire is the overarching political category in the present analysis. Empires differ from states in terms of their inherent expansiveness and the asymmetry of power between the expanding core state and the dominated peripheries. In modern, specifically *colonial* empires, the core state not only dominates the conquered societies, but also defines their inhabitants as inherently inferior and incapable of self-government. *Imperialism* is a modern foreign policy that encompasses colonialism, insofar as individual colonies or entire colonial empires may be relinquished in the pursuit of broader geopolitical interests.⁴

My focus here is on the sociology of empire, or *imperial sociology*. I define imperial sociology as work carried out by sociologists that takes one or more of the following forms: (1) empirical research in and on colonies, including ethnographies and surveys of the colonized or the colonizers qua colonizers; (2) theoretical, critical, and historical analyses of colonialism or empires, ancient or contemporary (e.g., Robertson, 1900; Hobson, 1902; Long, 1962; Alavi, 1975; Mann, 1986); (3) comparative studies based on information generated in colonies (e.g., Sumner, 1906; Durkheim, 1915); (4) applied sociological research conducted at the behest of imperial governments (e.g., Balandier & Pauvert, 1950; Gulliver, 1985); and (5) professional sociological activities directed toward imperial rule, such as the instruction of colonial officials or membership on government commissions dealing with colonial governance. It is important to stress that imperial sociology, as I define that term, is by no means necessarily favorable to colonialism or empire (Adam, 1972, p. 24). My aim is not to point a finger accusingly at sociology's sins or to engage in a belated disciplinary "decontamination from colonialism" (Gellner, 1980, p. 299). Nor am I trying to replace the insular story of British sociology with an equally one-sided global imperial narrative. However, I do intend to show that imperial research was more than a quirky sideline to the main lines of the emergence of British sociology.

I am especially interested in recovering these researchers' lasting contributions to social science and in exploring the ways in which empire has actually been conducive to intellectual breakthroughs and cultural creativity. The lack of attention to British sociology's colonial forebears severs the field's connections to one of the most exciting and creative moments in its own history. Colonial researchers shaped the sociology of metropolitan race relations and community studies, bringing the insights of social anthropology to bear on the United Kingdom itself. The imperial origins of British race relations research can be seen in Institute

4. See Steinmetz (2005) for these definitions and references to further reading.

of Race Relations (IRR), discussed below. British sociological community studies also grew out of a transnational, colonial context. Many of the pioneers of U.K. community studies also carried out case studies in the colonies and applied Gluckman's (1961) "extended case method" to the metropole (Van Velsen, 1967). These colonial sociologists pioneered a form of "transnational" sociology, analyzing social circuits running between colony and metropole (especially Banton, 1955). Sociological studies of the metropole benefited from the development of network analysis (see below). Most of the scholars discussed in this paper assailed the existing British academic division of labor according to which "when they studied themselves they were sociologists, when they studied the natives they became social anthropologists" (Little, 1960; Bêteille, 1974, p. 704). Postwar British sociology thus supports arguments by postcolonial theorists about the backflow of empire, its presence at the core, and its enrichment of metropolitan culture (Said, 1993).

How can we determine who belonged to the field of sociology? I define the universe of academic sociologists as encompassing anyone who was recognized as a member of the sociological field at a given moment by other contemporary participants in that same field.⁵ This methodological approach only seems circular if we ignore the intrinsic circularity—otherwise known as "relationality"—of social life in general. Historians have sometimes fallen back on expedient operational definitions of membership in a given discipline rather than following a relational and sociological approach. We should not concern ourselves with trying to define what sociology *really* is, asking instead what sociologists thought sociology was and how they used those explicit and often unconscious definitions in patrolling the discipline's borders. A priori definitions of sociology yield too many false negatives and false positives, and exclude precisely the sorts of individuals emphasized in this paper, who often lacked sociology degrees or continued to participate in the social anthropology field even while becoming full-fledged members of sociology. A number of these imperial sociologists moved in and out of metropolitan employment and spent time in colonial institutions. Many published in journals dedicated to the study of a particular culture, region, or country, or to applied journals (e.g., the *Journal of African Administration*), rather than generic sociological journals. Many worked on objects that had traditionally belonged to anthropology—objects that have to some extent been recaptured by anthropology during the intervening period, obscuring the earlier constellation. The rules governing membership in the emergent sociology field were necessarily informal compared with today, since British sociology PhDs were still rare and the only available gate-keeping mechanism, the BSA Teachers' Section, existed mainly to keep out nonprofessionals rather than nonsociologists.⁶

While remaining attentive to the possibility that individuals were active in more than one discipline, the historian also needs a different form of anachronism: counting as a sociologist anyone who referred to themselves as such, published in sociology journals, appeared at sociological conferences, or used sociological terminology. Of course, there are always cases in which membership is difficult or even impossible to determine. This is especially the case in formative disciplinary moments like the one analyzed here.

I have attempted to determine membership in sociology on a case-by-case basis.⁷ I pay particular attention to the field(s) in which scholars received advanced degrees and the teaching

5. Such recognition should be shared by at least a subset of members of the field.

6. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for clarifying this point.

7. My sources include scholars' personal papers, where available, and interviews with them, when possible. I have also examined the unpublished documents of research organizations and funding agencies, departments, and universities. Crucial published documents include, *inter alia*, UNESCO's directory of social scientists specializing in African studies, based on a survey started in 1959 (UNESCO, 1963), the *Commonwealth Universities Yearbook*; various

and research positions they occupied, as well as the description of the individual's disciplinary identity by recognized members of the sociology field at the time and their self-definition. In many cases, public recognition of an individual's disciplinary identity is more significant than the style, theoretical orientation, or methodology of their research and publications. The work of intellectual "immigrants" to sociology did, however, typically converge with the field's norms. At the same time, British sociology was so fluid during the 1940s and 1950s that immigrants from other fields could shape those very norms.

The postwar generation of imperial sociologists examined here did not represent themselves as a coherent group or as disciplinary founders. Nonetheless, most of these individuals moved along similar paths through the Greater British academic field; interacted with one another at particular universities, research institutes, and professional organizations; participated in the same conferences and government committees; published in the same journals and volumes; and referred to one another in their publications and teaching syllabi.⁸

The next section presents evidence for the centrality of empire in postwar British sociology throughout the past century. I focus on the period from the 1940s through the 1960s but provide a very brief overview of colonial interests among British sociologists in earlier decades. The final part of the paper surveys some of the key institutional forces that encouraged the development of imperial sociology, and that in doing so contributed to the establishment of sociology *tout court*, both in the United Kingdom and in some of its former colonies.

BRITISH SOCIOLOGISTS AND EMPIRE, 1890S–1960S

British Sociology as a Nascent Academic Field, 1890s until the Second World War

The first two university professors of sociology in Britain, L. T. Hobhouse and Edward Westermarck, were deeply involved in colonial analysis. Hobhouse published articles that were fiercely critical of imperialism (Collini, 1979, pp. 81–90) and followed Durkheim in cobbling together information from colonial ethnographies to produce a "comparative sociology" (Hobhouse, Wheeler, & Ginsberg, 1915). Westermarck lectured at the London School of Economics (LSE) on "the benefits to be expected from the study of sociology" and "its value to officials in the colonies," and conducted extensive ethnographic research in colonial Morocco (Westermarck, 1929, p. 230). The other U.K. sociology professor before 1914 was Robert MacIver, who published *The Modern State* (1926) after moving from Aberdeen to Toronto. This book included a discussion of land and sea empires and their role in the emergence of modern states.

The British Sociological Society was founded partly as a vehicle for the views of Patrick Geddes. Like Herbert Spencer (1902) and the other liberal anti-imperialists of the era, Geddes understood empires as the source of militarism (Geddes, 1917, p. 100). He held the first sociology professorship in India, at the University of Bombay (1919–1923), where he befriended pro-independence intellectuals like Tagore (Meller, 1990, p. 223). At the same time, Geddes' urban planning schemes in India and other British colonies fortified colonial settlement and did not challenge the very existence of the empire (Meller, 1990, p. 299).

Who's Who publications for the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth countries; and obituaries in the *Times*, *Independent*, and *Guardian*.

8. I base this latter claim on an examination of the Sociology Teaching Materials collection in the LSE Archives, although most of the syllabi included there are for later periods. Forde (1956) and Southall (1961) draw almost equally from sociologists and anthropologists and exemplify the interconnections among specialists in colonial Africa at the time.

Many participants in the nascent field of British sociology before 1914 were anti-imperialist “new liberals,” including J. A. Hobson, author of *Imperialism* (1902). Benjamin Kidd, a vehement defender of imperialism (Kidd, 1898), was a member of the British Sociological Society’s council (Collini, 1979, p. 189). Halford J. Mackinder, the founder of the British school of geopolitics and a major imperial thinker (Mackinder, 1904), also belonged to that council.

Another participant in this proto-sociological intellectual field was John M. Robertson. He never held an academic position, but was a prolific journalist and writer, anticlerical freethinker, radical liberal MP, and vehement critic of empire (Robertson, 1908). Robertson combined the late 19th century trope of decadence with the venerable *topos* of the inevitable fall of empires (Hell, 2009), arguing that the Roman “imperial people was *ipso facto* a community diseased; and wherever they imposed their rule they infected with decay the subject States” (Robertson, 1900, p. 155). Robertson supported Home Rule in Ireland and took the Boer side while covering the war in South Africa (Robertson, 1901).

The imperial focus of the founding generation of British sociologists is evident in their journal *Sociological Papers* and its successor, *Sociological Review*. Hobhouse’s friend Gilbert Murray argued there that “empires are subject to . . . the disease of violence and vain-glory” (Murray, 1910, pp. 228, 231). The journal’s fourth volume covered the London Universal Races Congress, a signal event in the history of anticolonialism (Pennybacker, 2005).

British sociology has been described as languishing between the wars, but this is not entirely accurate. LSE was the only university in the United Kingdom with a sociology professorship, held by Hobhouse until he was succeeded by Morris Ginsberg. Like a number of other social scientists in the “Oxford-London-Cambridge axis” (Halsey, 2004, pp. 73–74), Ginsberg became enmeshed in imperial discussions and activities between the wars, and he discussed different interpretations of imperialism and compared European colonial empires (Ginsberg, 1939).

Another locus of sociological activity between the wars was the Sociological Society that merged with “Le Play House” in 1930 to become the Institute of Sociology (Evans, 1986). *Sociological Review*, now edited by Le Play House, continued to publish articles on imperialism by Geddes, Hobson, the American anti-imperialist sociologist Harry Elmer Barnes, and R. R. Kuczynski, a refugee from Nazi Germany whose demographic survey of the British colonial empire was financed by the Colonial Office (Kuczynski, 1948). In 1938, the Institute of Sociology formed a “racial relations group” which was subsequently “absorbed into the racial unity movement in the early 1950s” (Rich, 1990, p. 100). Here again, as in the IRR, the emerging sociology of race relations was deeply connected to colonial studies.

The evolving relationship between social anthropology and sociology is of central importance in discerning the rise of a specifically sociological contribution to colonial research. British social anthropologists were more inclined to label their research “sociology” or to classify sociology as a subfield of their discipline than was the case in the United States. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, for example, taught sociology at the University of Cairo in 1932–1933 and “African sociology” at Oxford from 1935 to 1940. Evans-Pritchard argued that anthropology and sociology were “inseparable” and should be combined, “in spite of their having become institutionalized as separate” subjects (1967, pp. 172–173). Anthropologist R. G. Lienhardt was the senior “sociologist” at Oxford from 1954 to 1972, also holding a lectureship in “African sociology.” Radcliffe-Brown called himself a sociologist (Kuper, 1983, p. 2), and Audrey Richards used the words anthropology and sociology interchangeably (Richards, 1961, p. 3). The ease with which British social anthropologists appropriated the sociological label reflected not only Durkheim’s influence, but also the institutional underdevelopment of sociology as a

discipline in Britain. British universities accepted anthropology somewhat “more readily than other aspirant disciplines,” including sociology (Kuklick, 1991, p. 52).

The beginning of a movement away from anthropology’s “disciplinary imperialism” toward a more equal relationship between anthropology and sociology is suggested by the Mass-Observation project (Jeffery, 1999[1978]). Sociologists sometimes assimilate Mass-Observation to their discipline’s history since it was focused on the United Kingdom rather than the colonies. But it was explicitly framed at the time as turning an anthropological lens on Britons. One of the project’s creators, Tom Harrisson, published an account of his scientific expedition to Borneo (Harrisson, 1937) before deciding “to study the British people anthropologically” (p. 125). Harrisson worked as a Government Anthropologist in Sarawak from 1947 to 1966 (Heimann, 2004). The book detailing Mass-Observation’s first year included an essay by Malinowski praising the project (Madge & Harrisson, 1938, pp. 83–121). Mass-Observation prefigured the postwar trend of using ideas and methods generated in the colonies to analyse Britain itself as an “unknown country” (Worsley, 1958).

The wartime years saw a growing engagement by anthropologists with actual sociologists. Evans-Pritchard, Meyer Fortes, Raymond Firth, Daryll Forde, and Kenneth Little all published in *Sociological Review*. Firth informed the Colonial Office in 1944 that *Sociological Review* was one of the key journals publishing research on “matters affecting the colonies.”⁹ The stage was set for a colonial turn in sociology.

The Implantation of Sociology in the British Academic Field, 1945–1960s

In 1940, there was just a single sociology department in the United Kingdom, at LSE, along with a joint department of sociology, social studies, and economics at Bedford College, and a social science department at Liverpool. The sociology department at the University College of the Gold Coast was established in 1951. There were also sociologists and sociology departments at that time in India (Uberoi et al., 2007) and Egypt (Roussillon, 2002). Although still dependent on Britain intellectually and not yet fully “indigenized” (Hiller, 1980, p. 264), sociology in the colonies was at least as developed institutionally as in the United Kingdom itself, ca. 1950.

Sociology exploded immediately after the war in the United Kingdom, however, as T. H. Marshall (1965, p. 3) recalled. Peter Worsley described the atmosphere “There were ten new universities a year. I was offered many other chairs . . . The expansion of sociology was exponential.”¹⁰ By 1960, there were 71 sociology professors, readers, and lecturers at 14 different British universities.¹¹ In 1964, the Leicester sociologist Ilya Neustadt described “the whole position as regards sociology in this country” as “absolutely fantastic,” adding that “there are chairs all over the place, departments being set up all over the place, dozens of posts and all sorts of nonsensical appointments and developments being made and taking place.”¹² By the end of the 1960s, sociology chairs existed at 28 British universities (Westergaard & Pahl, 1989, p. 379).

What did it take to be recognized as an academic sociologist in the United Kingdom at this time? To answer this question, it is important again to distinguish the period

9. Firth, “The Scope and Functions of the General Policy.” LSE Archives, Colonial Research Papers (hereafter LSE CRP), File 8/3, CSSRC (44) 13, pp. 1, 6.

10. “Peter Worsley: A Life,” interview with Alan Macfarlane, February 25, 1989.

11. Jennifer Platt, “British university sociologists listed in the *Commonwealth Universities Yearbook*, Selected Years” (unpublished manuscript).

12. Neustadt to Elias, January 30, 1964, p. 2, and May 7 1963, p. 2. Norbert Elias papers (Marbach, Germany), vol. 44, folder 44.1.6 and vol. 44.2.1.

1945–1960 from later eras. A few sociology PhDs were already present in the British sociology field during the 1950s—mainly Halsey’s (1982) “provincial professionals,” but also people like Karl Mannheim and Norbert Elias with their German sociological training and degrees.¹³ Some of the newly minted British sociologists tried to “mark themselves off from their elders who had moved into sociology from other disciplines” by setting up a “sociology teachers’ section” inside the British Sociological Association that was limited to “professional sociologists” (Barnes, 1981, p. 15). But even if the BSA Teachers’ Section excluded John Barnes and Clyde Mitchell from their register of professional sociologists, these and other social anthropology PhDs could hardly be excluded from the discipline entirely, especially since some of these anthropologists-cum-sociologists were located at the most prestigious British universities, including Cambridge (Barnes), Oxford (Mitchell), and LSE (Ernest Gellner).¹⁴ In 1972, social anthropologists still constituted the largest group of sociology professors or heads of sociology departments with PhDs in Britain (3 of 11; see Platt, 2003, pp. 33, 35).

Sociology and Social Anthropology: Shifting Relations

The rapprochement between sociology and anthropology that had started during the war persisted for a while longer before anthropologists began to recognize their weakening position. The provisional executive committee of the British Sociological Association in 1951 included Firth and Fortes, and the committee always included an anthropologist until 1955 (Platt, 2003, p. 20).¹⁵ Joint departments of social anthropology and sociology were set up in Manchester, Hull, Canterbury, Swansea, Kent, Glasgow, Bristol, and School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), and in several colonial universities, including Makerere (Uganda) and in the Gold Coast. Kenneth Little, head of the social anthropology department at Edinburgh, also pushed for an “integration” of the two disciplines (Little, 1960, p. 255). The work of Little’s students, including Michael Banton, Sydney Collins, and Eyo Ndem, showed that the two disciplines could be integrated intellectually. By the mid-1950s, it had become clear to practitioners that sociology and anthropology “no longer confine themselves to what many regard as their proper spheres” (Kaye, 1956, p. 178)—primitive versus urban populations. Sydney Collins referred to Edinburgh’s “wider programme of research of Colonial Peoples in Britain and Sierra Leone.”¹⁶ Banton studied “colonial stowaways” in the United Kingdom.¹⁷ Max Gluckman, who had moved from Northern Rhodesia to Manchester in 1949, urged his students and colleagues to connect colony and metropole and to merge sociology with anthropology (Werbner, 1984; Evans & Handelman, 2006). Ronald Frankenberg (1957) applied Gluckman’s “situational” approach to a Welsh village; Bill Watson conducted a “sociological survey” in a coal mining community in Scotland in 1948–1951¹⁸ before writing his PhD with Gluckman at Manchester on the penetration of the money economy into Mambwe society (Watson, 1958).

13. Elias had a doctorate but had not formally received his sociology habilitation from Frankfurt University before fleeing the country, but he had finished that thesis and submitted it to his supervisor, Karl Mannheim. Mannheim’s own habilitation at Heidelberg had been sponsored by Alfred Weber and Emil Lederer, and Mannheim had been professor of sociology at Frankfurt.

14. Ernest Gellner spent the longest stretch of his academic career in a sociology department, at LSE, though he was also affiliated with philosophy and, in 1984, with social anthropology at Cambridge. Gellner papers, LSE archives.

15. As a reviewer of this article pointed out, other disciplines besides anthropology were also included in the BSA’s executive committee in this period. Sociology’s “special relationship” to anthropology only becomes evident once one considers all of the indicators discussed here.

16. Collins to Chilver, December 2, 1953, in LSE CRP File 8-68.

17. Michael Banton papers, Black Cultural Archives, London. Files Banton 1/1/4 and Banton 1/3/3.

18. See Watson’s application to the RLI, in J. Clyde Mitchell papers, Rhodes House (hereafter “Mitchell papers”), MSS.Afr.s.1998, Box 7, file 3, pp. 11, 15.

Anthropologists continued to publish in the two leading British sociology journals, *Sociological Review* and *British Journal of Sociology* (*BJS*, started in 1950). Gluckman analyzed the connections between colonialism and “sociological anthropology” in *Sociological Review* (Gluckman, 1961). The *BJS* was edited by sociologists Ginsberg, Marshall, and David Glass at LSE, and two leading social anthropologists were soon added to the editorial board: Lucy Mair and Isaac Schapera. Mair held a Readership in “colonial administration” (later called “applied anthropology”) and was in charge of training colonial cadets at LSE. The *BJS* immediately began publishing articles by leading anthropologists, including Firth, Fortes, Little, and Goody. Banton (1964) addressed the question of “anthropological perspectives in sociology” in the pages of *BJS*. Sociologists also published in *BJS* on colonial topics. The African American sociologist Franklin Frazier, who served as Chief of the Division of Applied Social Sciences at UNESCO between 1951 and 1953, gave three lectures at LSE on colonial indirect rule; the lectures were condensed into a lead article (Frazier, 1953). John Rex argued in *BJS* that models of colonial race relations could be applied to British society (Rex, 1959, p. 124).

Despite these continuing signs of rapprochement, some anthropologists began to experience “acute boundary consciousness” due to declining resources and sociology’s rapid expansion (Cohen, 2005, p. 616). The founding of the Association of Social Anthropologists in 1951 was the first sign of an emerging protectionism (Halsey, 2004, p. 65). These fears were not unfounded; by 1981 sociology had grown since the Second World War “at almost ten times the rate of social anthropology” (Spencer, 2000, p. 4). According to Barrington Kaye, a British sociologist working Malaya in the 1950s, sociologists and anthropologists were competing for the support of colonial administrators, each arguing that “theirs is the right, the best, the only method of approach” (Kaye, 1956, p. 176). Kaye claimed that the typical social class habitus of sociologists worked against them in the colonial context. Anthropology, Kaye explained, “grew out of the leisured traveler’s interest in habits different from his own, and the sparetime diversions of administrators.” The anthropologist “exudes the bluff, jovial sort of *bonhomie* which the administrator finds very much to his taste,” whereas “sociology is descended from the need of social reformers for data.” The sociologist’s status in the colonial field of power is diminished by “his statistical apparatus, his inquisitorial approach, his finicky insistence on exactness, and his lack of genial charm” (Kaye, 1956, pp. 177–178).¹⁹

Additional forces were at work, however, favoring the charmless sociologist. The Colonial Office began to promote sociology in the colonial universities, in competitions for research fellowships, and in the configuration of research teams. The secretary of state for the colonies rejected the system of indirect rule, which had been the preferred approach to native policy before 1940. Indirect rule relied heavily on anthropological studies of tribes depicted as frozen into a self-sustaining cycle reproducing timeless custom.²⁰ In place of this “anthropological” approach, the Colonial Office began promoting policies of developmentalism and “local government.” These programs acknowledged Africa’s historicity and embraced urbanization, industrialization, and detribalization. Sociology (along with economics and political science)

19. Historians have undermined the earlier view (Heussler, 1963) that the colonial office recruited mainly Etonian aristocrats for African service (Nicolson and Hughes, 1975; Kirk-Greene, 1980; Gardiner, 1998). A similar analysis would be necessary to determine whether the tensions between postwar anthropologists and sociologists were underwritten by social class differences. For the moment, we can simply note that contemporaries *perceived* such class differences, and that their actions were sometimes shaped by such perceptions. We also need to consider the distinction between specialists in East and Southeast Asia (see Kaye, 1956), where anthropologists continued to outrank sociologists, and Africa, where the disciplinary balance of power started to be reversed in the 1950s.

20. In British-ruled Tanganyika between the wars, the Governor instructed his officials to gather information on tribal traditions, which native policy was then supposed to resurrect (Austen, 1967).

was seen as ideally suited for making sense of these dynamic transformations and was therefore promoted by the Colonial Office.

Another reason for the rising fortunes of sociology in the colonies was that educated Africans increasingly saw anthropology as a “handmaiden of colonialism” (Fage, 1989, p. 401) and insisted that they “deserved to be studied by the type of scientists that studied civilized societies—the sociologists” (Jones, 1974, p. 286).²¹ In the newly created African universities, “anthropology was demoted to a subdiscipline of sociology” or excluded altogether (Sichone, 2003, p. 478; Peel, 2005). A survey of Egyptian social scientists in 1961 found two dozen sociologists but just four anthropologists (Rashad, 1961, pp. 185, 209–211).

A dispute between the sociologist, Norbert Elias, and the anthropologist, Jack Goody, in Ghana reveals the extent to which the staffing of sociology by anthropologists resulted not just in interdisciplinary synthesis, but also stoked the simmering conflict between the disciplines.²² In 1961, the University of Ghana began searching for a replacement for St. Clair Drake, the African American sociologist, as head of the sociology department. Elias accepted the job (Figure 1). Once in Ghana, Elias set out to conduct what he described as “the first sociological as distinct from anthropological research in Ghanaian communities.” He began a historical study of group formation among the Krobo people of Ghana and their responses to intertribal struggle and colonial conquest (van Loyen, 2012). Elias also took over supervision of a survey of the social impact of displacement and resettlement of peasants that would result from the flooding of the Volta River Basin. Such resettlement projects had been carried out across colonial Africa in the 1940s, and sociologists were typically tapped to study the cultural and social impact of these massive plans.²³ In a paper called “Sociology and Anthropology” that he presented at the annual conference of the Ghana Sociological Association in 1963, Elias argued that “the prestige of an Anthropological PhD in Oxford or Cambridge . . . is in Ghana as high as it is in England.” But he insisted that “the training and skills provided by a postgraduate study which is confined to . . . an anthropological study is under the changed conditions of most African societies of limited value.”²⁴ Elias agreed with his Leicester colleague, Ilya Neustadt, that “deep anthropological training distorts and simply creates a blockage and deep-rooted inabilities for *sociological* analysis.”²⁵ It is perhaps significant that Elias and Neustadt were two of the rare people with advanced degrees in sociology teaching in a British sociology department during the 1950s—Elias, with his German habilitation thesis, and Neustadt, with his sociology dissertation written under Ginsberg (Neustadt, 1945). Their identity as full-fledged sociologists lent an added sting to their argument that anthropologists could no longer claim social scientific jurisdiction over Africa.

David Brokensha recalls that social anthropologists coexisted with sociologists at the University of Ghana “with none of the tension that often exists between these two disciplines” (Brokensha, 2007, p. 267), but another member of that erstwhile sociology department, Sir Jack Goody, published a starkly different account. Goody accused Elias, his erstwhile department

21. All of this changed as sociology came to be identified in Africa with the authoritarianism of modernization programs and social engineering and with the political Left, leading to the discipline’s banning in Senegal in 1968 (Mkandawire 1997, p. 23). Funding dried up in the former British colonies for large-scale surveys that were part of the core of “sociology.” Anthropology made a comeback, first “under the aegis of African Studies” and later in the study of national identity (Jones, 1974, p. 286; Sichone, 2003, p. 479).

22. This paragraph is based on files 257–295 in the Norbert Elias papers in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach.

23. Other sociologists involved in studies of resettlement in colonial Africa included Bourdieu and Sayad in Algeria, Balandier, and Pauvert in Gabon, and Brokensha and Drake in Ghana.

24. Elias, “Sociology and Anthropology. A paper read at the second annual conference of the Ghana Sociological Association, April 1963,” p. 21. In Elias papers, File MISC—E XI = SOC-Anthrop.

25. Neustadt to Elias, January 30, 1964, p. 5. In Elias papers, vol. 44.2.3 (underlining in original).



FIGURE 1.
Norbert Elias with students at the University of Ghana, ca. 1962.

head, of a “predatory” attitude toward Africa, and completely dismissed Elias’ research on Ghana (Goody, 2003, p. 71). Goody also asserted that “when Elias came to the sociology department” in Legon “he tried to get rid of anthropology” (Goody, 2002, p. 402). This claim seems to be refuted by documents from the time. Elias wrote to the university registrar in 1964 asking that Goody be allowed teach social anthropology in the department of sociology “for at least a term if not more next session,” since his “teaching would be of very great help to our students next session.”²⁶ Goody’s lasting ill-will toward Elias underscores the intense animus fueled in part by the temporarily reversal of fortunes between the two disciplines.

Elias and Neustadt were not the only British sociologists arguing that anthropology had lost its *raison d’être* as a distinct discipline. According to T. H. Marshall (1956, p. 60), “one may legitimately hazard the view that the basic identity of the fundamental problems of social anthropology and sociology, in the present phase of their development, has become evident; after a period of divergence, the two disciplines are converging again.” LSE sociologist Donald MacRae, who taught at Legon for one term in 1956–1957, argued that colonies and post-colonies were becoming “more and more the appropriate object of sociological research” as the differences between African and European were disappearing with urbanization, “commerce and industry; mass communication and education.” “The day when anthropology will

26. Elias to E. A. K. Edzii, secretary of Registrar’s Office, University of Ghana, July 2, 1964 (in Elias papers, file 258).

be a matter of knowing more and more about less and less is visible,” MacRae wrote (1956, p. 107; also 1959). Clyde Mitchell wrote in 1951: “I think that social anthropology is disappearing as a discipline.”²⁷ Peter Worsley argued in *The Guardian* that “Anthropology rose with colonialism, and, in its traditional form at least, looks like dying with it” (Worsley, 1966).

In response to the rise of a disciplinary patriotism among younger sociology PhDs and the aggravated tension between the two fields, some people with degrees in anthropology who wanted to be recognized as sociologists now started going to greater lengths. They published in sociology journals, used the word “sociology” in book titles, wrote introductory sociology texts (e.g., Goldthorpe, 1959; Cohen, 1968; Mitchell, 1970; Worsley, 1970), used statistical methods and conducted surveys, and published on topics understood as typically sociological, such as urbanization, industrialization, migration, and macrosocial change. They claimed to read *American Sociological Review* and *American Journal of Sociology*, and they joined the British and International Sociological Associations.²⁸ John Barnes had his African students at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI) in Lusaka read Talcott Parsons.²⁹ Clyde Mitchell bought a Powers-Samas punched card sorting machine for the RLI and trained his research assistants to use it (Schumaker, 2001, p. 176). Mitchell referred to the American sociologists Shils and Homans, during their visit to Manchester in 1953, as the “heavenly twins.”³⁰ Anthropologists who gave inaugural lectures as Sociology Professors signaled their commitment to the discipline with titles like *The Sociologically-Minded Person* (Frankenberg, 1970) and *Sociology in Cambridge* (Barnes, 1970).

Contours of Postwar Imperial Sociology in Greater Britain

How many imperial sociologists were there in the United Kingdom and the Greater British scientific field between the 1940s and the 1960s? Let’s restrict ourselves to people who held the position of lecturer or above in a sociology department, or a position as a “sociologist” in a social research institute, and exclude those who took the title of “sociologist” during a temporary research posting but moved back into a different discipline afterwards. Let us also limit ourselves to sociologists who started their careers before 1970. According to these criteria, there were at least 28 imperial sociologists in the United Kingdom between 1945 and 1970. Their ranks include some of the most famous names in mid-20th-century British sociology: Michael Banton, John Barnes, Ronald Frankenberg, Ernest Gellner, Morris Ginsberg, Clyde Mitchell, John Rex, Harold Wolpe, and Peter Worsley. This group also includes sociologists who made important contributions to the sociology of colonial situations but who are less familiar nowadays, such as J. E. Goldthorpe, Frank Girling, Valdo Pons, D. H. Reader, Leo Silberman, Jaap Van Velsen, and Bill Watson. Despite their sociological job titles, many of these scholars were also seen as anthropologists and many remained active in both disciplines. Several, including Barnes and Frankenberg, are remembered nowadays as anthropologists. The point is that they were *also* recognized as participating in the sociology field at the time and that many of them insisted explicitly that they were sociologists. If we extend our purview to sociologists who were active primarily in the colonies or the immediate postcolonies (while excluding scholars whose careers were entirely in the Commonwealth countries), we can add another 20 or so names. Most of them were trained in the United Kingdom. Their ranks include

27. Mitchell to Epstein, May 28, 1951. Mitchell papers, MSS.Afr.s.1998, Box 4, file 3, p. 11.

28. Mitchell to Watson, February 10, 1959, Mitchell papers, MSS.Afr.s.1998, Box 7, file 4, p. 45.

29. Barnes to Mitchell, February 21, 1949. Mitchell papers, MSS.Afr.s.1998, Box 4, file 1, p. 26.

30. Mitchell to Merran, April 1, 1953, Mitchell papers, MSS.Afr.s.1998, Box 2, File 1, p. 43.

British-born sociologists working in the colonies, such as David Bettison and Barrington Kaye, and *British-trained* sociologists who were born in the colonies and returned there to work.

A small number from the latter group were nonwhite and born as British colonial subjects. N. A. Fadipe was a Nigerian sociologist trained in the United States and the United Kingdom. He earned an MA in sociology at Columbia University with a thesis on the Nigerian city of Abeokuta (Fadipe, 1921) and a PhD in sociology from LSE (Fadipe, 1940). His doctoral thesis diverged from standard British social anthropology by emphasizing “the changes taking place in the social life of the Yoruba” (Okediji & Oḷadejọ, 1960, p. 13). Fadipe included chapters on “social control” and “social change.” Fadipe’s emphasis on the social changes wrought by colonialism was understood at the time as a more “sociological” than “anthropological” interest. His use of the phrase “social control” pointed to U.S. sociology.

Most indigenous sociologists who earned degrees in the United Kingdom did so after 1945. *Lloyd Braithwaite* (1919–1995) came from Trinidad in 1945 with a grant from the Colonial Office to study at LSE. After 1950, Braithwaite was a social researcher and sociology professor at the University College of the West Indies. Much later he published a semiautobiographical study of the generation of colonial West Indian students in Britain after 1945 (Braithwaite, 2001). *Kofi Busia* (1913–1978) earned a DPhil in social anthropology at Oxford in 1947 as the college’s first African student, after serving as one of just two indigenous DC’s appointed in the African colonies during the Second World War. In line with more “sociological” accounts, Busia’s thesis (1951) paid close attention to the effects of colonial rule on the function of the chief in the Ashanti polity. Busia was appointed “Government Sociologist” in the Gold Coast, where he supervised a survey of Sekondi-Takoradi city (Busia, 1950). In 1951, Busia then established the sociology department at the University College of the Gold Coast. Later he became better known as a politician, and he briefly headed the Ghanaian state (Rathbone 2004). The third example is *Hamza Alavi*, who contributed to neo-Marxist theoretical discussions of colonialism (e.g., Alavi, 1975). Alavi was trained as an economist in India and at LSE, but he immersed himself in rural sociology during the late 1950s, and, after spending the 1970s in the politics department at Leeds, taught sociology at Manchester from 1977 to 1988.³¹

The sociology field also includes sociologists working for states, businesses, and political parties. The most significant group of heteronomous colonial sociologists were the “Government Sociologists” who conducted research for British colonial governments. Their ranks in Tanganyika included Hans Cory, Henry Fosbrooke, Philip Gulliver, W. H. Whiteley, and Armine Wright. In Kenya, John Peristiany and Philip Mayer worked as Government Sociologists; both went on to distinguished careers as academic anthropologists. Social scientists were hired for short-term research missions and appointed by the Colonial Office to fact-finding committees. Social scientific contract researchers were frequently described as sociologists after 1945 even when their degrees were in anthropology. Kenneth Little, for example, was recruited as a “sociologist” for a mission to Gambia in 1948.³² Anthropologist H. S. Morris was recruited by the Colonial Social Science Research Council to undertake “sociological research” in Sarawak (Morris, 1953, p. 1).

A final cluster of imperial sociologists, discussed in the next section, consisted of those who were drawn into the colonial ambit as teachers, administrators, or members of government commissions even if their own research was not focused on imperial problems.

31. Alavi’s student file, LSE archives; Alavi, “Fragments of a Life,” at http://hamzaalavi.com/?page_id=26.

32. K. L. Little, “A report on a visit to the Gambia in connection with the appointment of a sociologist to the nutritional field working party,” May 25, 1948, in LSE CRP, CSSRC (48), doc. 37.

INSTITUTIONS PROMOTING COLONIAL SOCIOLOGY

This section discusses three institutions that promoted imperial sociology after 1945, all of them directly connected to the Colonial Office: (1) the CSSRC, (2) colonial universities and research institutes, and (3) training courses for colonial at British universities.

The Colonial Office embarked on a new reform program for the colonies in the 1940s. During the interwar years, the Colonial Development Fund of 1922 had already started redefining the aims of colonial rule (Goldsworthy, 1971, p. 11), but many governors in the African colonies held out for indirect rule, an approach that was antithetical to the idea of educating Africans, modernizing African economies, and expanding African political participation. The Colonial Development and Welfare Acts of 1940 and 1945 were part of an effort by the Colonial Office to reorient British rule. This new model involved a complete disavowal of the approach to colonial rule that had provided the context for social anthropological research before the Second World War. Indirect rule was premised on a vision of indigenous society as a patchwork of small, self-enclosed, rural cultures whose customs were to be protected and preserved (Mamdani, 1996). This approach met the needs of colonial administrators, whose overriding interest was to preserve order even at the expense of investors' interests (Steinmetz, 2007). The British government during the Second World War and the Labour government in 1945 initiated a policy shift "in favour of a democratic system of local governments" in the colonies (Whitehead, 1991, p. 412), an expansion of higher education, and an embrace of industrialization, urbanization, and detribalization (Pearce, 1984, p. 77). These priorities pointed toward forms of social science that did not seem to be enamored of tribal customs and exotic practices.

Sociology was still vaguely defined but had some presence in interwar Fabian discussions of colonialism and race relations. It became a catch-all phrase to describe an alternative science of colonized societies in the throes of radical change. The survey methods that were associated in with sociology seemed appropriate for the study of more modern African societies. Theories of social evolution and progress that were associated with British sociologists since Herbert Spencer resonated with developmentalist policies, just as they informed the modernization theories that were emerging as the blueprint for the informal U.S. empire (Gilman, 2003). Social network analysis was developed by anthropologists Radcliffe-Brown, John Barnes, and Clyde Mitchell (before becoming fully formal and mathematical [Scott, 2000, pp. 4–32]). It was a way of thinking that seemed appropriate for analyzing colonial societies undergoing dynamic, chaotic processes of change that were destroying the stable, firmly territorialized social settings beloved of traditional social anthropology (Mitchell, 1969; Barnes, 2008, pp. 400–401). Ideas of urbanization and industrialization fit better with sociology and economics than with anthropology.

The Colonial Social Science Research Council

Historians of postwar British Sociology have implied that there was little public funding for social science research before the British SSRC (McLachlan, 1962). Savage speaks of a general "dismantling and erosion of social research" funding in the "immediate post-war years" (2010, p. 120). In fact, for British scholars working in and on the colonized world, funding was available at the time from UNESCO, the International Africa Institute, various private foundations, university funds, and between 1944 and 1961 from the CSSRC. The CSSRC was the first public research body in the United Kingdom with "representatives of all the major social sciences" (Richards, 1949, p. 143, 1977; Mills, 2002). Because the committee "was composed of academics the funds could be and were consciously turned to [academics']

own purposes” (Kuklick, 1991, p. 191). The CSSRC was created as part of the Colonial Research Committee—later Council (CRC)—founded in 1942. The CRC’s mandate was to create “a cadre of scientists versed in colonial problems” and to finance “investigation in any field of scientific, economic or social activity where knowledge was essential in the interests of Colonial development” (Colonial Research Committee, 1944, p. 6; Hailey, 1949, p. 278). The majority of the research schemes it funded were proposed by individual scholars, typically working on doctoral theses, but other schemes were initiated by colonial governments or by the CRC. Social scientists represented half the membership on the CRC, which was chaired by Lord Hailey. A sociological voice on the CSSRC was Alexander Carr-Saunders, a population expert and Director of the LSE from 1937 to 1957 who is sometime considered a “precursor” of British sociology (Osborne & Rose, 2008). Carr-Saunders was the Council’s chairman through 1951, at which time he was replaced not by an anthropologist but by LSE economist Sir Arnold Plant. The CRC was allocated £500,000 annually for research and education in the colonies, a sum that was raised to £1 million in 1945. By 1951 the CSSRC had its own budget for social science research totaling £325,000 for 5 years. A significant portion of the funded schemes was for projects labeled “sociology.”³³

In 1949, the CSSRC created a “Standing Committee on Anthropology and Sociology.” This committee’s main job was to review grant applications. Its membership was skewed toward anthropology and included Evans-Pritchard, Firth, Read, and Forde. But it also included the LSE sociologist David Glass (1950–1959), a central figure in the discipline at the time (Halsey, 2004, p. 169). The relatively weak presence of sociologists on the Standing Committee understates sociology’s centrality in the overall operations of the CSSRC. According to the CRC’s first annual report, before 1945,

with the exception of anthropologists and linguists, few students in the social sciences have had their attention turned to the Colonies as an interesting and profitable field of research. There is therefore at the present time an extreme shortage of senior research workers fitted to undertake independent and responsible tasks of investigation in the various fields in which the Council is concerned (Colonial Office, 1944–1945, p. 29).

The report went on to list a set of research topics for which there was “an urgent need,” and many of them were closer to erstwhile definitions of sociology or economics than to anthropology. These included “surveys of social and economic conditions in urban and in rural areas”; “studies of the social and economic effects of migratory labour in Africa”; and “studies of political development in ‘plural’ communities.”

The undeclared push for sociology seems to have been understood by relevant parties. When Frederick Lugard applied to CSSRC for a grant for the International African Institute in 1944, for example, he insisted that its work had “been primarily sociological rather than anthropological.”³⁴ Lugard, who was a colonial administrator and not an academic, obviously recognized that it was important to differentiate between the two disciplines and to emphasize sociology.

The emphasis on sociology within the CSSRC in the 1940s was not yet linked to a significant academic field. Indeed, the CSSRC was effectively conjuring the future discipline of sociology into existence. The CSSRC actively sought out sociologists, even in the United States, for its 2-year research fellowships, permanent posts “in the universities in this country

33. Research schemes under CDAW for 1948/49. LSE CRP, file 3/24.

34. Lugard to Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, August 25, 1944. LSE CRP, file 5/2. Lugard died the following year.

and at colonial centres of higher education,” long-term positions for sociologists in colonial research institutes, and one-off research projects (Colonial Research Committee, 1944, p. 6; Colonial Office, 1944–1945, p. 29). When colonial governments requested social research money on an ad hoc basis from the CSSRC, they often asked specifically for “sociologists.”³⁵ One of the first projects initiated by the CSSRC was a “sociological survey of the West Indies” carried out by Edith Clarke. She was presented as having “studied sociology at London University,” even though her main degree was in anthropology, with Malinowski at LSE. Clarke created a research team consisting of “a sociologist, economist and psychologist,” along with an assistant sociologist.³⁶ Meyer Fortes, who headed the “sociological department” at the short-lived West African Institute of Industry, Arts, and Social Sciences in the Gold Coast, requested funding from CSSRC in 1944 for an “assistant sociologist” to “concentrate on [the city of] Kumasi and problems of urbanization” as part of Fortes’ survey of Ashanti.³⁷

Was sociology still simply being used as a synonym for anthropology? No. The CSSRC tried to distinguish between the two disciplines and to recruit bona fide sociologists. The CSSRC Secretary, Firth, singled out three disciplines as priorities for funding in 1944: linguistics, law, and sociology. At that time, Firth defined “sociology” as “Sociology (including *Anthropology*).” Four years later, however, Firth had developed an explicit set of differentiating criteria. Firth included a discussion of “projects and organisation of sociological research” in his report on a tour of social research institutes in Malaya. He concluded that “less than 1% of the total population of the country fall clearly within the scope of classical anthropological inquiry.” What was needed, he continued, was much “more precise data on the way in which the institutions work, in terms of the social and economic relations of the people concerned,” focused on family, organizations, social structure, and communities rather than a series of atomistic tribal studies. Firth used the word “sociological” in describing this research on the other 99 percent of the population.³⁸

Colonial development policy was being powerfully associated with the discipline of sociology. By 1950, sociology was listed as a separate social science that the CSSRC supported, along with anthropology, economics, and linguistics (Colonial Office, 1950, p. 2). Announcements of CSSRC grant competitions in 1953 and 1955 listed five eligible disciplines, with sociology at the top, followed by social anthropology.³⁹

Universities and Research Institutes in the Colonies and Postcolonies

Any discussion of British sociology’s entwinement with colonialism has to consider universities and social research institutes in the colonies (Figure 2). Before the Second World War, there were four colonial institutions with the status of universities and two university colleges in the Gold Coast and Uganda (Morgan, 1980, p. 107). The Asquith, Elliott, and Irvine reports on higher education in the colonies resulted in the creation of 17 new university colleges (Colonial Office, 1945; Ashby, 1966). Carr-Saunders served on the 1946 Asquith Commission

35. “Note on the Proposed Employment of Sociologists.” LSE CRP, file 8/10, CSSRC (45) 20.

36. LSE CRP, file 3/13, doc. CRC (45) 195; and Edith Clarke, “The need for sociological research in the West Indies,” LSE CRP, file 8/4, doc. CSSRC (44) 22. Biographic information on Clarke from her collection at LSE archives.

37. Fortes, West African of Industry, Arts, and Social Sciences, Sociological Department, “Project for a Social and Economic Survey of Ashanti,” October 26, 1944. LSE CRP, file 8/4, doc. CSSRC (44) 25.

38. Raymond Firth, “Report on Social Science in Malaya,” pp. 15–17. LSE CRP, file 8/12, CSSRC (48) 7. Along similar lines see W. E. H. Stanner, Director of the East African Institute of Social Research, to CSSRC, November 5, 1948, p. 4. LSE CRP, file 8/18, CSSRC (48) 92.

39. CSSRC, “Procedure for Awarding Grants,” p. 4. LSE CRP, file 8/50, doc. CSSRC (53) 26. Research Department, Colonial Office, April 20, 1955. LSE CRP, file 8/20, doc. CERC RES, 121/127/01.

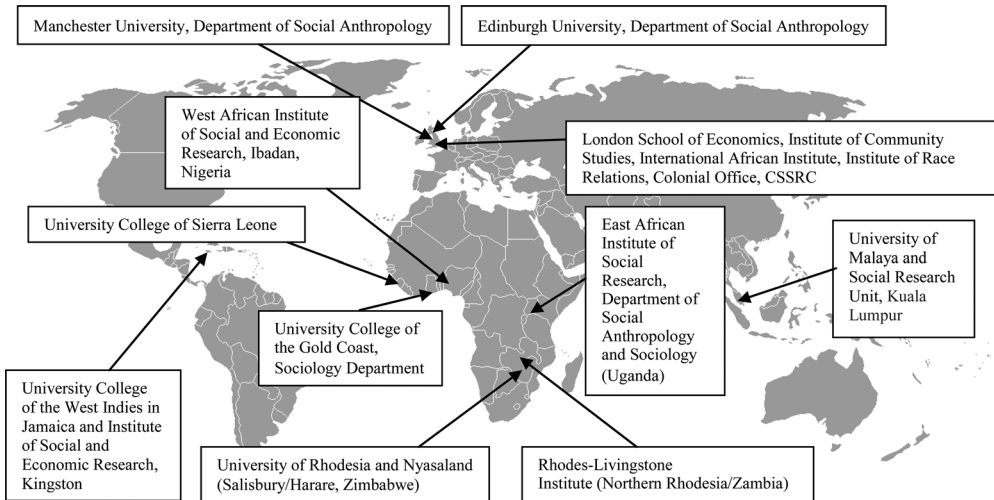


FIGURE 2.
Main centers of British colonial sociology, 1950s.

and chaired the Senate committee that organized the relationship between the colonial colleges and the University of London (Carr-Saunders, 1961). The colonial universities were integrated into the metropolitan system, adopting the “British curricula with minor modifications to suit local conditions” and earning degrees from the University of London, with which they were affiliated in a “special relationship” until they “reached maturity” (Ashby, 1961, p. 11). All examination questions were “printed in London, put into envelopes, sealed, returned to the African campuses, and not opened until the actual taking of the examination,” after which they were dispatched to London “for authoritative grading” (Mazrui, 1975, pp. 194–195). The University College of the Gold Coast was modeled on Cambridge, complete with Halls of Residence and “gowns, high tables, [and] Latin grace read by a scholar” (Ashby, 1961, p. 234).

In the new African universities, sociology departments were typically created before anthropology departments. The delegation to Makerere of the Inter-University Council in 1946 recommended that research at the proposed institute “should not be primarily anthropological, but should be addressed to such problems as engage the attention of workers in social and economic research institutes in western countries.”⁴⁰ The Institute’s funding proposal emphasized sociology, and its director was to be called “Director (sociologist).”⁴¹ When this institute was reorganized in 1957, a memo commented on the proposed replacement of the director post with a “professor of sociology and social anthropology,” arguing that these two had

traditionally been separate fields concerned respectively with study of Western and non-Western societies, but within recent decades there has been a tendency for them to merge. . . . Today therefore, and particularly in an African University College, there is every argument for not perpetuating the separation.

The memo insisted, however, that the new professor’s field should continue to be labeled “sociology” and that the post should not be given to “an anthropologist of the ‘narrow’

40. “Report of the Delegation to Makerere College.” LSE CFR 288/16, p. 14.

41. “Makerere College. Estimated Costs of Social Science Research Institute 1945-50.” LSE CRP, file 8/10, doc. CSSRC (45) 30.

type, interested only in ‘primitive’ societies.”⁴² Makerere modified the conventional London University sociology syllabus, adopting an introductory textbook written by J. E. Goldthorpe to suit African students (Goldthorpe, 1959; Ashby 1961, p. 21).

The “Asquith schools” were outfitted with research institutes and generous leave-time in order to help recruit top faculty from Britain and the Commonwealth countries (Ashby, 1961, p. 218). The institutions that contributed most to the rise of sociology were the East African Institute of Social Research (Uganda); the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research (Nigeria); the University College of the West Indies (Jamaica), with its Institute of Social and Economic Research; the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Southern Rhodesia); the University of Malaya, with its Social Research Unit; and most significantly, the RLI (Northern Rhodesia).

The RLI had already been so successful before the war that the CRC held it up as the model for the other social research institutes (Colonial Research Committee, 1944, p. 4). It was created in 1937 at the suggestion of the colonial governor, who argued that “emphasis should be laid on the sociological side of anthropology,” specifically on industrialization (Brown, 1973, pp. 177, 180). The RLI’s first director, Godfrey Wilson, described social anthropology and sociology as “two words for the same thing” (Brown, 1973, p. 187, note 51). Wilson, “far from seeking out the most remote and uninfluenced African society to study,” focused on urban and industrial areas, migrants between urban and rural areas, and “denuded” rural areas (Brown, 1973, p. 189). According to the first CRC report, the RLI’s purpose was “to undertake and foster *sociological and allied studies* in Central Africa” (Colonial Research Committee, 1944, p. 4; my emphasis). Wilson’s research described the mining community of Broken Hill as a site of violent change and the mixing of tribal traditions (Wilson, 1941–1942). Wilson’s successor as RLI director, Max Gluckman, came from South Africa, where sociology had already been established as a university discipline separate from anthropology between the wars. In 1947, Gluckman was replaced by Elisabeth Colson, an anthropologist trained in the United States, where the distinction between anthropology and sociology was also already well defined.⁴³ The strongest and most explicit embrace of sociology and sociologists at the RLI occurred in 1952, when Colson was replaced by Clyde Mitchell, who had studied sociology in South Africa.⁴⁴ Mitchell’s position at the RLI from 1950 to 1952 was called “Senior Sociologist.”

Training for the Colonial Service

The third factor that helped integrate sociology into colonial social science was the revised curriculum for colonial probationers that was introduced after the Second World War (Kirk-Greene, 2000, pp. 132–135). This new curriculum resulted from recommendations made by the Devonshire Committee, set up by the Colonial Office and meeting throughout 1944 and 1945. Oxford and Cambridge had taken over the training of the cadets selected for the Colonial Service in 1926. Sociology could not be fully included in their training program, however, except in the guise of the “African sociology” that was being taught by anthropologists at Oxford. The Devonshire system introduced the LSE and University of London’s SOAS as full-fledged participants in the training program. Sociology was one of three headings under which the colonial cadets’ training in “language and regional” studies was organized (Colonial

42. Memo from the Principal of Makerere College on proposals approved by College Council, p. 3. LSE CRP, file 8/54, doc. CSSRC 57 (7).

43. Colson returns repeatedly to this in “Anthropology and a Lifetime of Observation” by Suzanne B. Riess (2000–2001), at <http://texts.cdlib.org/view?docId=kt7w10088w&query=colson>.

44. Mitchell earned a BA in social science from Natal University in 1942 and a BA (Hons.) in sociology from the University of Cape Town in 1948.

Office, 1946, p. 8). These courses were to be offered at LSE and SOAS. Coursework during the cadets' second year of training included a section on "social administration." This topic was associated with the sociology and social administration departments at LSE. The brochure on colonial training put out by LSE insisted that:

any student intending to specialise in the colonial field should familiarise himself with the general principles of sociology. The methods of investigation found suited to the study of the highly industrialized societies of Europe and America will also be necessary for use in some colonial territories.⁴⁵

Sociologists Ginsberg, Mannheim, and Marshall were involved in the LSE course along with anthropologists Mair and Richards. Marshall chaired LSE's Standing Committee on Colonial Studies in 1946 and discussed the "application of British social policy and institutions to colonial conditions" with the trainees.⁴⁶ Graduates of the course were at least exposed to the idea that sociology could be useful in colonial governance.

OTHER INSTITUTIONS PROMOTING COLONIAL SOCIOLOGY

A more complete account would examine a number of other institutions that helped conjure colonial sociology into existence, including the London-based International African Institute (Forde, 1951); British foundations that supported social research in the colonies, such as the Beit Foundation; British universities, which initiated certain research projects; American foundations, American universities, and the U.S. government, which sponsored the development of African universities and research before and after independence.

One institution that is worth examining here briefly is the London-based IRR, since it also illustrates the backflow from colonial research to metropolitan sociology. The IRR was founded in 1952 by financial interests in South Africa and Northern Rhodesia, and it was initially focused entirely on the colonies. In 1952, the Rockefeller Foundation financed an IRR study of race relations in Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Rockefeller Foundation 1954, pp. 213–214). Colonial sociologists contributed to the IRR's journal *Race* (later renamed *Race and Class*), including Banton, Barnes, MacRae, and Rex, along with Roger Bastide, Floyd Dotson, Leo Kuper, and John Rex. *Race* ran articles on problems like "The white settler: a changing image" (Gann, 1960) and "Indians and Coloureds in Rhodesia and Nyasaland" (Dotson and Dotson, 1963). The IRR's monthly *Newsletter* was organized by geographical subheadings, and in the first 10 issues, all of the locations were African colonies. In February 1961, however, a new region was listed as the first subheading: Britain. During the rest of the 1960s the *Newsletter* and *Race* became increasingly focused on immigration and race relations in the United Kingdom. This metropolitan emphasis was already clear in 1962, when the IRR obtained a grant from the Nuffield Foundation to carry out a 5-year survey of race relations in Britain—the so-called "Myrdal for Britain." Significantly, this survey's advisors included sociologists Edward Shils, T. H. Marshall, A. H. Halsey, and John Rex, as well as Audrey Richards, who had been director of the African Studies Centre at Cambridge since 1956 (Rose, 1987).

45. Brochure of LSE Colonial Studies program, p. 7. In LSE CFR, 288/3/C.

46. Proposed list of courses, October 11, 1945, and "Minutes of the 13th Meeting of the Colonial Studies Committee," November 15, 1946, chaired by Marshall. LSE CFR 288/3/B.

CONCLUSION: THE INTELLECTUAL PRODUCTIVITY OF EMPIRE

The main conclusion to this paper is that postwar British sociology was as much a product of colonialism as of the vaunted welfare state. What explains the general amnesia about this generation of colonial sociologists and their contributions to the foundation of British sociology? Although I cannot address this problem in detail, one explanation that can be dismissed, I think, would blame this forgetting on the dominated social status of these imperial sociologists.⁴⁷ Some members of this group were indeed socially marginal or lacking in social and inherited cultural capital, even in comparison to Halsey's (1982) professional provincials. Several were born in white South Africa; several were Jews; three were exiles from Nazi Germany. Although none of these conditions were of course intrinsically lower in status, they tended to function as such in many British academic settings at the time. A few, surely the most dominated of these sociologists, were those born as colonized subjects. Nonetheless, the majority of these sociologists taught at a British sociology department at some point in their careers. A more obvious form of marginalization has to do with the late and grudging acceptance of sociology per se at Cambridge and Oxford. It is worth repeating, however, that the first sociology chairs at both ancient universities were held by colonial specialists. Some colonial sociologists, such as Leo Kuper and Michael Burawoy, left the academic "sterling zone" for careers in the United States. Others engaged "imperial careering" (Lambert & Lester, 2006), moving from colony to colony to white Dominion. Some returned from the metropole to the postcolony.

This paper started to explore the idea that politically objectionable regimes can be conducive to intellectual insight and creativity, especially under conditions of scientific autonomy and where resources for research are available. Empires are culturally and socially more complex than nation-states and therefore push their intellectuals to look beyond narrow ethnic and cultural categories. Empires' spatial expansiveness nudges social scientific thinking beyond parochial "methodological nationalism." Banton, Rex, Little, and others tracked the flow of colonial immigrants and ideologies between colony and metropole, breaking free of methodological nation-centrism long before critiques of methodological nationalism. Sociologists found that focusing on empires made it impossible to overlook world systemic and racial disparities of power. Empires are riven by anti-imperial movements, making it difficult for analysts to become trapped in static, functionalist models. Gluckman's "extended case method" and "situational analysis," inspired by the social complexities of South Africa, contributed to the downfall of earlier static and context-free forms of anthropology and forced Malinowski and others to reassess their earlier approaches. Confronted with the evanescence of empires, social scientists may be led to recognize the historicity of all sociopolitical formations. Empires, it turns out, are sometimes good to think with.

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47. This possible explanation was brought up by Johan Heilbron in discussion of an earlier version of this paper at the *Centre européen de sociologie et de science politique de la Sorbonne*, Paris.

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