

Issues and Agendas

The Relations between Sociology and History in the United States: The Current State of Affairs

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In this post-Foucauldian era every schoolchild knows that disciplinary boundaries are technologies and artifacts of power. From the standpoint of the underlying ontological and epistemological issues, the boundary between history and sociology is as arbitrary as the political borders that European colonial powers drew onto the map of Africa. History and sociology are both concerned with human social practice in its capacity for willed or unintentional change, and also in its tendency to reproduce itself historically in ways that appear unhistorical.¹ By describing the radical incommensurability of past societies, historians denaturalize the present; similarly, sociologists' "genesis explanations" reveal the arbitrariness of present social practices.² Both history and sociology belong to (or should belong to) the historical *Geisteswissenschaften* or sciences of culture.

This essential identity of the two disciplines has been recognized repeatedly. Sociologist Robert Lynd's 1939 *Knowledge for What?* described history as "the most venerable of the social sciences" and speculated that sociologists would soon begin to do their own historical writing.³ Fernand Braudel presented similar arguments in the 1950s and 1960s.⁴ At the beginning of the 1980s Philip Abrams concluded that there was no intrinsic difference between history and sociology in terms of their object or methods.⁵ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron made similar arguments in France.⁶ Most recently, historian William Sewell, Jr. has argued that "a deeper theoretical engagement between historians and social scientists [including sociologists] could be mutually enlightening."⁷ This short paper is inspired by Sewell's call for such a rapprochement.

But there is a vast gulf between "is" and "ought" in the human sciences, and the views of Lynd, Braudel, Abrams, Bourdieu, and Passeron were far from hegemonic in their respective periods and national contexts.⁸ In reality the history-sociology relationship – at least in the United States, which is my focus in these remarks – has long been fraught with mutual mistrust and misunderstanding.⁹

Although theory has perhaps had “a strikingly less central place in history than in the social science disciplines,” as Sewell remarks, this does not seem to be the main reason for the paucity of substantive communication between historians and sociologists.¹⁰ The tension has been due to the unequal resources that were provided to the two disciplines in post-WWII America and to the entrenched resistance among more scientific sociologists to historical ways of thinking. At the more microscopic level of daily interactions in US universities, the tension has been heightened by a widespread arrogance on the sociological side of the boundary, one that has often been remarked upon by historians, even those willing to enter into dialogue with sociologists.¹¹ If positivist sociology has long exhibited a kind of “science envy” vis-à-vis the more scientific disciplines such as economics, physics, or biology, it has combined this with disdain toward the more humanistic and historical disciplines.

These problems have been reproduced within the subfield of historical sociology. On the one hand there has been a proliferation of languages and methodologies that promise to reconfigure historical research in ways that simulate the natural sciences. Thus comparison and the “method of difference and agreement” are promoted as analogues to multiple regression analysis.¹² A scientific vocabulary is proffered as a substitute for historians’ terminology, which often expresses less scientific ontologies and epistemologies. For example the seemingly innocuous concept of “path dependency” has been borrowed from economics and introduced in place of the historians’ widespread belief in the fatefulness and irreversibility of time, their assumption that “an action, once taken, or an event, once experienced, cannot be obliterated” but is “lodged in the memory of those whom it affects and therefore irrevocably alters the situation in which it occurs.”¹³ The seemingly technical term “scope conditions” is deployed to deal with the historiographic truism that context matters, i.e., that events are produced by a “conjuncture of structures” (Sewell) with diverse temporalities. Like “path dependency,” the idea of “scope conditions” is only necessary against a background assumption that in normal science, causal regularities are universal across space and time.

By claiming to represent and even to reinvent history single-handedly, historical sociologists unwittingly collude with the discipline’s “Homeland Security Agents,” whose goal is to seal the frontier against historical interlopers. A preferable option would be to open the border to history, inviting processes of transdisciplinarity and transculturation.¹⁴ Without this, sociology will continue to expel and repel historically-minded thinkers and to prevent

trained historians from being hired in sociology departments. Sociologists will be deprived of the benefit of interacting with a discipline that has been dealing for centuries with the same theoretical, epistemological, and methodological questions that concern sociology.

A Brief History of the Repression of History in US Sociology

Let's step back for a moment into the history of actually-existing relations between historians and sociologists. If Lynd could foresee a melding of the two disciplines during the Great Depression, a period in which sociology failed to cohere as a field with agreed-upon definitions of scientific capital,¹⁵ we should not assume that sociology during its initial decades as a discipline was especially interested in a dialogue with history. We often forget that Max Weber, probably the most historical of the founding generation of sociologists, did not identify himself first or primarily as a sociologist at all and had few followers in US sociology until Talcott Parsons "canonized" him.¹⁶ None of the founders of sociology in the US were particularly interested in history, not even the less scientific founders such as Charles Cooley, who pointed to photography and phonography as possible methods to be used by sociology and psychoanalysis, anthropology, photography, and literature as possible research models – but not history.¹⁷

This indifference to history continued through the 1950s, disregarding a few amateurish forays into potted history by social scientists like Parsons who tried to make sense of the Nazis during World War Two.¹⁸ But at least some sociologists echoed Lynd's call for a more systematic relationship to history. Wisconsin sociologist Hans Gerth harshly criticized sociology's ahistoricism after the war.¹⁹ Columbia sociologist Bernhard Stern wrote in the 1950s that

Sociologists once talked of imbuing historians with correct perspectives. But now the situation is frequently reversed and it is the historian who can serve as an example to sociologists. . . . The frailty of sociologists lies in their tendency to abstract from historical reality 'ideal types' that are applicable everywhere and nowhere, beyond time and space, and hence in a netherworld of unreality. . . . Sociologists do not stress the great importance of the dimension of time. . . . Sociologists will remain one-dimensional and hence shallow, and [sociology's] concepts empty shells, unless the examination of historical concepts becomes a meaningful and disciplined task of sociologists.²⁰

In his notes for a public presentation at the University of Michigan in 1962 titled "What Does History Offer Sociology," sociologist Robert Cooley Angell (nephew and former student of Charles Cooley) described the recent period as one that

begins with great interest in underdeveloped world [sic] with throwing off of colonialism in the 1950s. . . . Well trained sociologists found out how to use historical sources – Marion Levy, Robert Bellah, Ed Swanson. Two at least have focused on particular historical processes – Eisenstadt on the growth of empires, and Barrington Moore on alternative processes of change from agrarian to industrial societies. Excellent studies.²¹

But these historically-minded sociologists were on the defensive both politically and in their resistance to sociological scientism. Stern was a former contributor to the journal *New Masses* and founder of the journal *Science and Society* who had been fired in 1930 from the University of Washington for being “too liberal.” He was subsequently “harassed by the Catholic Church and academic administrators during his years at the University of Michigan” and was hauled before HUAC while at Columbia during the 1950s.²² Although he was the first writer to publish a book entitled “Historical Sociology,” Stern was forgotten by the post-1960s founders of historical sociology. Hans Gerth published little and languished in the shadow of his famous student and coauthor, C. Wright Mills, who was himself marginalized in the years to come.²³ Robert Angell was an internationalist, civil libertarian, and left-liberal who “ran the gauntlet of federal investigation” throughout his career and was interviewed in his office in 1965 by a “special agent” and “his assistant from the Air Force office of special investigations.” They asked Angell about his visits to the USSR and East Berlin in 1961 and “forced him to make a loyalty oath in his office in his own words.”²⁴ Angell’s plans to build an interdisciplinary sociology department at Michigan after 1945 by hiring anthropologists were squelched during the 1950s, when the department came to be dominated by quantitative positivists. In 1962 the rebuttal to ASA President Paul Lazarsfeld’s call for an empiricist, presentist sociology at the annual sociology meetings was presented not by a sociologist but by historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Even historically-minded sociologists framed their work in ahistorical ways. Barrington Moore, Jr.’s *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (1966), though pathbreaking in many respects, exemplified the unhistorical “experimentalist” format that was to become so influential in 1980s US historical sociology, one in which each “case” of revolution or some other event is conceptualized “as analogous to separate ‘trials’ of an experiment.”²⁵ Chicago sociologist Edward Shils played both sides of the street in the struggles around sociological scientism. Shils worried aloud in 1948 that efforts toward theoretical development in sociology were “in danger of being suffocated in the stampede for concrete results with immediate descriptive or manipulative value,” adding that “the post-war

financial prosperity of American sociology with the vast sums of money made available by governmental bodies, foundations, and private associations and firms makes this danger a very real one," and he was a cofounder in 1958 of the interdisciplinary journal *Comparative Studies in Society and History*.²⁶ In 1961, however, Shils wrote that "the aim of general theory is to become genuinely universal and transhistorical . . . attain[ing] a generality of scope . . . that render[s] it equally applicable to all societies of the past and present."²⁷ This vision of a sociology of omni-historical general laws was anathema to any rapprochement, much less synthesis, of sociology and history.

The brief but explosive challenge to "big-science" sociological positivism at the end of the 1960s did not bear any direct and immediate relationship to the question of history. Alvin Gouldner's manifesto-like *Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (1970) hailed as the avatars of a new postpositivist sociology Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel, neither of whom was historical in their own work or particularly interested in history.²⁸ Around the same time, inside the discipline of history, the "triumph" of the "new social history" marked the high point of a particular form of social-scientific positivism.²⁹ Social historians began to seek guidance in matters of theory and number-crunching tricks from sociologists. This was not a genuine transdisciplinary encounter but one that took place almost entirely on sociology's terms, eventually generating resentment among historians.

The first breakthrough in the sociology-history relationship in the United States started in the mid-1970s, when the crisis of postwar Fordist society began to be felt within the universities. Sociologists became intrigued by debates that had originated in history, such as the discussion of narrative initiated by Hayden White's *Metahistory* (1973) or the debate on structure and agency that was initiated by E.P. Thompson's (1978) critique of Althusser.³⁰ A relationship that had started with sociologists trying to "imbue historians with correct perspectives" was reversing direction; historians were now providing methodological, epistemological, and theoretical inspiration to sociologists. Graduate courses in historical sociology included many more readings by historians.³¹ Charles Tilly, who had been hired jointly by the Michigan history and sociology departments in 1969, supervised a number of dissertations by sociologists and historians that became increasingly difficult to locate in one discipline or the other in terms of their method, style, and overall problematique.³² The societal crisis of the 1970s was linked not only to an efflorescence of experimentation in filmmaking, music, the arts, extraparliamentary politics, and lifestyles, but also inside some of the academic disciplines. Although fields like

sociology are relatively autonomous from the metafield of power, as Bourdieu has argued, they are not *immune* to societal-level upheavals and transformations.³³ The increased historical interest in US sociology starting in the mid-1970s cannot be explained entirely by dynamics internal to the academic field.³⁴

During the 1980s, however, the two-way street between sociology and history became narrower and less frequently traveled. Within sociology this shift was due largely to the intra-field struggles in which positivists succeeded in reimposing a restrictive methodology on historical sociological researchers. The positivists' hand was strengthened by the continuing shortage of academic jobs. Historical sociology partly "domesticated" itself (Calhoun) around a positivist covering-law format and mimicry of statistical logics of inquiry, a refusal to historicize basic categories, and a recharged positivist distinction between "analysis" and "interpretation."³⁵ Historians, for their part, turned to the "new cultural history" and linguistic and cultural theories, with the result that cultural anthropology and the humanities became more interesting interlocutors for many of them.³⁶ Historians began criticizing sociologists' approach to history as "merely the sociology of the past" and as being seen as "valuable above all because it increases the number of data points."³⁷ The fruitful exchange that had been emerging before was being replaced by a self-contained "historical sociology" that basically ignored historians, or used them as "ideographic" content providers. Today the two disciplines have again moved apart to such an extent that the venerable joint history-sociology position that was once held by Charles Tilly and then by Bill Sewell at Michigan has been discontinued.

Conclusion

What does sociology lose by maintaining barriers against history? History has been around for more than two millennia, while sociology is barely a century old. The historians' bookshelves are filled with classics, from Herodotus' *Histories* to E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. Sociologists can strike a "high-modernist" stance and try to make a virtue of their field's youthfulness, but this suggests an anxious fear of illegitimacy. Historians are not afraid to revisit the same historical period or problem again and again, making new sense of old facts by interpreting them through new theories. The example of historical research on Nazi Germany and the Holocaust shows what a tremendous intellectual contribution can result from a willingness to revisit an era repeatedly. This is a much more fruitful approach to

“cumulative knowledge” than the positivist conceit of repeating an experiment – as if a social scientists could step into the same river twice.

Historians have also been less wary than sociologists about cross-border intellectual exchanges, which means that their discipline, though more ancient, is actually more open than sociology to rejuvenating influences. In just the past two decades historians have gone through linguistic, cultural, and iconic or visual “turns,” all of them supplementing but not replacing their earlier concerns with the social and the political. Paradoxically, the more presentist discipline of sociology is less closely attuned to ongoing contemporary events and crises.³⁸ The positivist prejudice that still prevails among many sociologists according to which only *repeated* events lend themselves to “scientific” treatment places out of analytic bounds all of the structure-transforming events that are the bread and butter of historical (and some philosophical) analysis.³⁹ The prejudice toward repeated patterns also blinds sociology to the kinds of crises that propel societies out of normal situations of legal regularity into “states of exception” which represent not so much the replacement of old structures by new ones as the replacement of structures *tout court* by decisionistic agency.⁴⁰ Thus while historians have been intensely engaged in discussions about U.S. empire during the past four or five years, US sociology journals have barely registered this sweeping global transformation and society-wide discussion.⁴¹ Sociology’s entrenched apoliticism, which is rooted in the doctrine of value-free science, is another reason for its lack of interest in contemporary politics. Even the dominated sectors of US sociology, which are closely connected to social movements and to themes of ethnicity, social class, and gender, tend to focus on the United States and to ignore global politics and non-US spaces.

By ignoring history, sociology also risks reinventing the wheel. Historians have long dealt with the problems that historical sociologists periodically rediscover. Some of the greatest historians have discussed methodological problems like comparison and incommensurability; the role of temporality; the place of individual and collective agency in historical change; and the nature of the unconscious and emotions in social life. Ethnographic sociologists may try to conjure up an entire mode of life on the page, but in doing so they are revisiting territory already explored by Michelet’s “resurrectionist” historiography, Gadamer’s philosophy of history, and the great *Annales* historians like Le Roy Ladurie in *Montaillou* (1975).⁴²

This is not to say that historians have nothing to gain from a reengagement with sociology. Sociology students, at the point when

they have finished their formal coursework, “often have little sense of how to carry out a research project” and usually know very little about anyplace other than their own society or about any period other than the present. But they are “able to argue about fine points of theory indefinitely.”⁴³ As Sewell notes, history is concerned with the relations between structures and agency, or with the events that transform structures as well as the practices that maintain structures. Even the historian of revolutionary change is compelled to first produce a “synchronic” picture of a society or social system in order even to be able to know whether a (diachronic) change has occurred. A “society” can also be described as a congeries of diverse structures and the practices which are the substance of those structures. In order to describe any “society” (whether local, national, or transnational), the historian is compelled to rely on theory, since theories are concerned precisely with providing an account of structures (or in a different language, with causal mechanisms).⁴⁴ In order for theory not to be applied in an ad hoc manner the historian (like the sociologist) will therefore need to become familiar with the relevant theories. Although sociology hardly has any monopoly on theory, it is certainly one discipline (along with psychoanalysis, political science, economics, anthropology, etc.) with theories that might be useful for historians. Some historians are re-engaging with social material and looking again to sociology, but this time in a spirit of antidisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity rather than interdisciplinarity.⁴⁵ We should meet them there.

Notes

¹ On the historical production of apparently ahistorical forms of domination see Vincent de Gaulejac, “De l’inconscient chez Freud à l’inconscient selon Bourdieu: entre psychanalyse et socio-analyse,” in P. Corcuff, ed., *Pierre Bourdieu: les champs de la critique*, p. 75.

² On the genesis of social fields see especially Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995) and “Some Properties of Fields” in *Sociology in Question* (London: Sage, 1993). Bourdieu’s *Masculine Domination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001) deals with the “historical mechanisms responsible for the relative dehistoricization and externalization of the structure of the sexual division and the corresponding principles of division” (pp. vii–viii).

³ Robert Staughton Lynd, *Knowledge for what? The place of social science in American culture* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1939), pp. 116, 129, 138, 153–154, 178; Ch. V.

⁴ Fernand Braudel, “Histoire et sociologie,” In *Ecrits sur l’histoire I* (Paris: Flammarion, 1969), pp. 97–122.

⁵ Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982).

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, “Le mort saisit le vif. Les relations entre l’histoire réifiée et l’histoire incorporée,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*

32–33 (April–June 1980), pp. 313; Jean-Claude Passeron, *Le raisonnement sociologique* [1991], new edition (Paris: Albin Michel, 2006), chapter three. Indeed, many of the sociologists inspired by Bourdieu work in a historical manner; see Christian Topalov, *Naissance du chômeur, 1880–1910* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994); Francine Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy et l'éternel féminin* (Paris: Seuil, 1996); Gisèle Sapiro, *La guerre des écrivains, 1940–1953* (Paris: Fayard, 1999); and Remi Lenoir, *Généologie de la morale familiale* (Paris: Seuil, 2003).

⁷ William Sewell, Jr., *Logics of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 1.

⁸ On the “is” versus the “ought” of social science, compare parts One and Two of George Steinmetz, ed., *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and its Epistemological Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁹ For the sake of this discussion I focus on the case of the United States. For a discussion of the situation in France see *Historiens et sociologues aujourd'hui (Journées des études annuelles de la Société française de sociologie)* (Paris: CNRS, 1986).

¹⁰ Sewell, *Logics of History*, p. 3.

¹¹ See Terrence J. McDonald, “What we Talk about when we talk about History: the Conversations of History and Sociology,” in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, ed. Terrence J. McDonald, pp. 91–118 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

¹² See Craig Calhoun, “The Rise and Domestication of Historical Sociology,” in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, ed. Terrence J. McDonald, pp. 305–338 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Sewell, “Three Temporalities. Toward an Eventful Sociology,” in *The Logics of History*; and Steinmetz, “American Sociology’s Epistemological Unconscious and the Transition to Post-Fordism: the case of Historical Sociology,” in *Remaking Modernity: Politics, Processes and History in Sociology*, ed. Julia Adams, Elisabeth Clemens, and Ann Orloff, pp. 109–157 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); and Steinmetz, “Odious Comparisons: Incommensurability, the Case Study, and “Small N’s in Sociology,” *Sociological Theory* 22(3), pp. 371–400.

¹³ Sewell, *Logics of History*, pp. 6–7.

¹⁴ George Steinmetz, “Transdisciplinarity as a Nonimperial Encounter. For an Open Sociology,” *Thesis Eleven*, forthcoming (Nov. 2007); Edgar Morin, “Sur la transdisciplinarité,” in *Guerre et paix entre les sciences: disciplinarité, inter et transdisciplinarité* (Paris: La Découverte, 1997), pp. 21–29.

¹⁵ George Steinmetz, “American Sociology before and after World War Two: The (Temporary) Settling of a Disciplinary Field,” in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Sociology in America. A History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 258–293.

¹⁶ R.W. Connell, “Why is Classical Theory Classical?,” *American Journal of Sociology* 102:6 (1997): 1511–1557.

¹⁷ Charles Horton Cooley, “The Life-Study Method as Applied to Rural Social Research,” in *Papers and Proceedings. Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 249–253; also Cooley journals, vol. 22, p. 51 (in Cooley archives, Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor). There is no evidence from Cooley’s time as a student in Munich in 1884 that he took any courses in history; Cooley archives, box 2, Bentley Historical Library (Ann Arbor), student

notes from 1884. Albion Small, founder of the Chicago sociology department, wrote a historical treatise on (central European) cameralism: *The Cameralists, The pioneers of German Social Polity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; 1909).

¹⁸ Talcott Parsons, "Democracy and Social Structure in Pre-Nazi Germany," Pp. 225–242 in *Talcott Parsons on National Socialism*, ed. Ute Gerhardt (New York: de Gruyter, 1993).

¹⁹ Hans Gerth, "The Relevance of History to the Sociological Ethos," *Studies on the Left* 1 (1959), pp. 7–14.

²⁰ Bernhard J. Stern, "History and Sociology: A Comment," in *Historical Sociology* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1959), p. 33.

²¹ Quotes from Angell, "What does History offer Sociology," notes for a seminar discussion (n.d.; ca. 1962), in Robert Cooley Angell papers, Bentley Historical Library (Ann Arbor), Box 2, folder "Outlines of Talks."

²² William J. Peace, "Bernhard Stern, Leslie A. White, and *An Anthropological Appraisal of the Russian Revolution*," *American Anthropologist* 100:1 (1998), p. 85; Robert K. Merton, "In Memory of Bernhard J. Stern," *Science and Society* 21:1 (1957), pp. 7–9.

²³ Conservative sociologist James C. Coleman wrote later that when he was a student Mills "seemed to matter little" in the Columbia "social system of sociology" – or that he "mattered only to those who themselves seemed to matter little." Coleman, "Columbia in the 1950s," in *Authors of their Own Lives. Intellectual Autobiographies by Twenty American Sociologists*, ed. Bennett M. Berger (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 77.

²⁴ Angell, "Running the Gauntlet of Federal Investigation," no date, in Robert Cooley Angell papers, Bentley Historical Library (Ann Arbor), Box 1. This report appears to be from the 1970s and to be based on documents obtained using the Freedom of Information Act.

²⁵ Sewell, *Logics of History*, p. 95.

²⁶ Edward Shils, *The Present State of American Sociology* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1948), p. 55.

²⁷ Edward Shils, "The Calling of Sociology," in *Theories of Society*, edited by Talcott Parsons et al. (New York: The Free Press, 1961), p. 1424.

²⁸ Philip Abrams bent over backwards to induct these sociologists into his canon of historical sociology; *Historical Sociology*, chs. 8–9.

²⁹ Sewell, "The Political Unconscious of Social and Cultural History, or, Confessions of a Former Quantitative Historian," in *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and its Epistemological Others*, edited by George Steinmetz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 173.

³⁰ Perry Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism* (London: NLB, 1980); E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory & Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978).

³¹ In Ronald Aminzade's historical sociology seminar at Wisconsin in the early 1980s, for example, more than half of the reading list consisted of work by historians.

³² Compare, for example, the Michigan dissertations by sociologist Ron Aminzade and historian Michael Hanagan from this period: Michael Patrick Hanagan, "Artisans and Industrial Workers: Work Structure, Technological Change, and Worker Militancy in Three French Towns: 1870–1914" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976); Ronald Rubin Aminzade, "Class Struggles and Social Change: Toulouse, France, 1830–1872" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1978). In many ways Hanagan's is

methodologically the more positivist (and therefore seemingly more “sociological”) of the two dissertations.

³³ George Steinmetz, “Fordism and the Positivist Revenant,” *Social Science History* 31:1 (2007); Robert Boyer, “Pierre Bourdieu: analyste du changement? Une lecture à la lumière de la théorie de la regulation.” CEPREMAP paper no. 2004-01 (2004).

³⁴ Christian Topalov, “‘Science of Science’ and ‘Sociology of Scientific Knowledge’: Making Sense of a Missed Encounter,” paper presented at the conference “Practicing Pierre Bourdieu: In the Field and across the Disciplines,” University of Michigan, Sept. 28–30, 2006.

³⁵ Calhoun, “The Rise and Domestication of Historical Sociology.”

³⁶ See Sewell, “The Political Unconscious of Social and Cultural History,” and Geoff Eley, “On Your Marx: From Cultural History to the History of Society,” in *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and its Epistemological Others*, edited by George Steinmetz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 496–507.

³⁷ Sewell, “Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology,” p. 83.

³⁸ A rough survey of the essays on the topic of American “empire” or current foreign policy in leading US history and sociology journals shows much greater interest among the former. To take another piece of evidence, the campus “teach-ins” on the war in Iraq and US foreign policy that were held on October 30, 2006 at the University of Michigan and many other American campuses were organized and staffed almost entirely by historians. This is not because sociologists are less opposed to the Iraq War, however; surveys found that some 80% of the members of the ASA opposed the second Iraq war at its outset in 2003.

³⁹ Sewell, *Logics of History*, chapter 7, “A Theory of the Event.” Also Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (London: Continuum, 2005).

⁴⁰ See Carl Schmitt: “the exception is more interesting than the rule. . . . In the exception the power of real life breaks through the crust of a mechanism that has become torpid by repetition . . . The exception . . . thinks the general with intense passion” (*Political Theology* [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985, p. 15]). Schmitt saw Protestant aestheticism’s rationalism as negating the fundamentally political ethos of Catholic decisionism. Weber by contrast saw rationalization as having lost its spiritual bearing and resting on “mechanical foundations”; G. L. Ulmen, *Politischer Mehrwert: eine Studie über Max Weber und Carl Schmitt* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1991, p. 28). These foundations were not lawless but the opposite. Weber introduced the somewhat ad hoc concept of charisma to capture the same moment of “lawlessness” in social and political life that Schmitt summarized more adequately as “the exception.” See also Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁴¹ Several US-based sociologists have published books on the topic, however, including Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (New York: Verso, 2003) and Immanuel Wallerstein, *The decline of American power: the U.S. in a chaotic world* (New York: New Press, 2003). For a collection of essays, mainly by historians but also by a few sociologists, reflecting on the contemporary US case, see *Lessons of Empire*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Fred Cooper, and Kevin Moore (New York: The New Press, 2005).

⁴² Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clío: A study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Hans Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York:

Seabury Press, 1975); Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

⁴³ Sewell, *Logics of History*, p. 4. Sewell is referring to social scientists in general here, not just to sociologists.

⁴⁴ On “mechanisms” as theoretical objects that combine with one another in the generating empirical events, see Roy Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* (London: Verso, 1986) and Andrew Collier, *Critical Realism: An Introduction to Roy Bhaskar’s Philosophy* (New York: Verso, 1994).

⁴⁵ See Geoff Eley, “Being Undisciplined. On your Marx: From Cultural History to the History of Society,” in *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and its Epistemological Others*, edited by George Steinmetz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 496–507.