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Notes

- 1 Elias's understanding of the term 'scientific', and indeed, the model of 'science' that he advocated are discussed in some detail in the chapters that follow. We have placed the word in inverted commas simply to acknowledge at this stage in the book that considerable debate surrounds the usage of this term.
- 2 In this sense, our own usage of the term 'sociological crisis' comes close to Thomas Kuhn's description of a 'paradigmatic crisis'. However, where Kuhn envisaged such a crisis as a phase of paradigmatic fragmentation sandwiched between periods of 'normal science', we view the crisis as rather more fundamental. In Kuhn's sense, there has never been anything approaching 'normal science' in the discipline of sociology. Equally, however, we do not subscribe to the notion that sociology is 'pre-paradigmatic', in the sense that Richard Rorty (1979) used this term. That is, we do not consider sociology to be an enterprise that will mature into a predictive science along the contours of the natural sciences of the present day. Nonetheless, as we shall discuss, *pace* the arguments of, for example, Flyberg (2001), we maintain the notion that sociology can become more 'scientific', partly because of the specific meanings we have in mind in using that term, in particular our understanding that while 'social science' and 'natural sciences' are distinct enterprises, a theoretical-empirical analysis of the development of natural scientific knowledge serves as a useful basis for understanding the figurational conditions under which social scientific knowledge might come to 'develop'. How it might develop, or perhaps better, how it 'needs' to develop, are central to our discussions throughout this book.
- 3 A not dissimilar dissatisfaction with the ways in which sociology was developing was expressed in 1997 by the anthropologist, Peter Worsley, formerly Professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester. It appeared in an interview published in *Network*, the newsletter of the British Sociological Association. In it, Worsley argued: 'My interests have always been wider than those associated with a particular society like Britain, or even with a particular type of society, however important, like industrial society. I have been interested in the variety of humankind, and with supra- as well as national relationships. I don't find much of it in *Sociology*, for example. A friend who has an interest in Third World development recently told me that he hadn't found a single article on the subject for a very long time in the pages of *Sociology*. When I published a book called *The Three Worlds* in 1984, which got excellent reviews across the world, *Sociology* didn't even review it. So people like me, with these types of interest, are getting turned off by *Sociology*... I must say, I do feel terribly alienated. You know, whatever the epoch in the intellectual world generally one spends time, not developing positive theories, but combatting bad stuff... One spends time picking holes in others. I'm fed up with that... I grew up in an epoch where the major paradigms were functionalism and Marxism. Functionalism is dead and Marxism is dead, as effective forces that is. Ranging from Althusserianism (which is also dead) to post-modernism, which I think is fairly dead now, the subsequent changes in intellectual paradigmatic fashion just don't turn me on at all. This may all sound very negative, but the nature of change, or the rate of demise, of paradigmatic systems is expressive of some kind of malaise. People are desperately trying to put in place some kind of paradigm which can be permanent but they

are all failing at an increasingly rapid rate' (Worsley 1997: 7, 8). Worsley's observations echo those of Gouldner to the extent that they each suggest that sociologists have become trapped in a worsening negative feedback cycle of what Elias, following American anthropologist, Gregory Bateson, called a 'double-bind figuration' or a deteriorating 'double-bind trap'.

- 4 The term 'revolutions' can be understood as referring to changes that are short-term and immediate, hence our use of inverted commas in introducing these terms. Elias preferred in this connection to use the process suffix '-isation' in order to indicate that long-term processes are involved. His preferred usages were, for example, 'scientisation' and, more commonly, 'industrialisation' and 'democratisation', etc.
- 5 Former Leicester, later Cambridge and currently Oxford sociologist, John H. Goldthorpe, is one of the staunchest advocates of statistical methods in contemporary British sociology. See his (2000) *On Sociology: Numbers, Narratives, and the Integration of Research and Theory* (Oxford: OUP). Among the more idiosyncratic features of this book is the fact that, in it, Goldthorpe traces the origins of sociology to Quetelet rather than Comte, failing to see the importance in this connection, not only of Comte's contributions but also of the need for a relational approach which brings out the partly independent, partly interdependent contributions of these two pioneering figures.
- 6 Central among them were figures such as Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and P. Lazarsfeld.
- 7 It is clear that Mertonian functionalism did not encounter these difficulties to the same extent except, perhaps, in relation to power.
- 8 See, above all, Giddens's (1986) *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity).
- 9 It is beyond the scope of our discussion here properly to qualify this line of argument. Generalisations, even in the broadest sense, about the disciplines of psychology and economics are bound to be rather too simplistic; indeed, there are branches of both disciplines that share considerable overlap with sociology. Nor do we mean to suggest that either economics or psychology offers an exemplary model for cumulative knowledge development, and at that, one that it would be desirable for sociology to emulate. Events since the global economic 'crisis' of 2008 in particular have, for example, called into question not just core assumptions made by many economic theorists, but the very institutional practice of economics itself. Even from within the discipline, leading economists such as Ha-Joon Chang have called for a fundamental shift in economic thinking, particularly with regard to the 'myth' of the free market and its associated premises (Chang 2010). Chang goes so far as to suggest that the complex financial instruments developed as a result of a sustained programme of economic research are demonstrably dangerous and deleterious to human lives, and as such should be altogether outlawed unless they can be shown to be of unquestionable social benefit for those whom they affect (Chang 2010). Rather, our arguments here involve drawing a contrast between the disciplines of sociology, psychology, and economics in terms of the degree to which each has been successful in establishing a centralised academic consciousness and shared sense of intellectual endeavour. Whilst, as mentioned above, the dangers of a simple paradigmatic consensus are arguably *demonstrated* through some of the practices of contemporary psychology and economics, as we shall argue, we do not agree that this means that sharing a collective sense of endeavour, a commitment to specific professional standards, and a common programme of theory and research are in themselves necessarily problematic. It will depend, of course, on the *character* of such an

endeavour, such standards, such a programme, and, indeed, upon the relationship between these various elements at the core of the discipline.

- 10 Notwithstanding the affinities in Freud's and Elias's core foci, it would be wrong to depict Elias as in any simple sense a 'closet Freudian'. He certainly incorporated a number of Freud's ideas and concepts into his thinking. For example, he used such Freudian terms as 'id', 'ego' and 'super-ego', 'drives', 'libido', 'unconscious' and 'repression' (in his earliest work), especially in his discussions of the sorts of psychological changes that take place in the course of social or individual 'civilising processes'. Yet Elias never accepted Freud's ideas entirely or uncritically. As Mennell (1998) has argued, he (Elias) accused Freud of having an ahistorical view of human psychology, charging him and his followers with adhering to the view that people have always had the same balance between conscious and unconscious mental functions as were visible and detectable in his (Freud's) own times. In Britain, we refer in this connection to the 'Victorian' personality type. As we shall see in greater detail later, it was Elias's contention that the emergent division between conscious and unconscious mental functions is just one result, albeit an important one, of a long-term process in which sociogenetic drive-controls become firmly implanted in the majority of 'normal' contemporary humans. What is important, as Elias puts it, is: 'always *the relationship* between [the] various sets of psychological functions, partly conflicting and partly cooperating in the way [human individuals steer themselves]. It is they, these relationships *within* [people] between the drives and affects controlled and the built-in controlling agencies, whose structure changes in the course of [a] civilizing process, in accordance with the changing structure of relationships *between* individual human beings in society at large' (Elias cited in Mennell 1998: 100–101).
- 11 'Neo-colonial' is, in our view, a more accurate term than 'post-colonial' because it cannot be construed as implying that the dominance-subordination relations of the old colonial era have either entirely disappeared or changed significantly in an equalising direction. It is rather the case that they have altered, becoming less direct and operating through organisations such as the International Monetary Fund and multi-national corporations.
- 12 The philosophy of 'ideal forms' was originally an approach used by Plato who claimed he had inherited it from Socrates. See, for example, his (Plato's) *The Republic*. Hegel transformed it by making it historical and 'dialectical' and it was later further transformed by Marx who made it 'materialist' in opposition to the idealism of Hegel.
- 13 Elias's grounding in Latin and Greek proved to be of great use when he and Dunning were working on their essay, 'The quest for excitement in unexciting societies' in 1966. The idea of the centrality of excitement or 'emotional arousal' in sport and leisure came to them when, partly as a research exercise and partly for pleasure, they jointly watched most of the televised matches in the 1966 World Cup Finals which were played in England. In that context, they were able to observe the emotional arousal of players and spectators as well as of themselves. 'Aristotle wrote about this in his discussion of theatre in *The Poetics*', said Elias. 'He called it "catharsis". Augustine wrote about it, too, in his *Confessions*. "Go and get the translations out of the library, Eric; read them and tell me what they say"'. Dunning did this – it was their usual way of working – and Elias said in relation specifically to Aristotle's *Poetics*, 'I don't trust the translation. It's bowdlerised. Present-day people evidently cannot see the similarity of "cleansing your soul" at the theatre and cleansing your bowels through defecating. That's what Aristotle meant by "catharsis"'!

- 14 Elias related these words to Dunning in the early 1960s. Part of the stimulus was provided by the media coverage at that time of the trial of the Nazi war criminal, Adolf Eichmann, in Jerusalem.
- 15 Chang's arguments here also point to a further complexity related to Elias's model of 'reality congruence', one that we discuss in later sections. As Chang notes, economists '... supplied arguments that insist that all those economic outcomes that many people find objectionable in this world – such as rising inequality, sky-high executive salaries, or extreme poverty in poor countries – are really inevitable, given (selfish and rational) human nature and the need to reward people according to their productive contributions' (2010: 248). We might view the economists' tendencies in this respect to be simply the misguided recommendations of academics and practitioners who, with all good intentions, placed their faith in a deeply flawed economic meta theory. But there is, of course, another possibility: namely, that those in question consciously propagated a series of mythological economic precepts, not out of a belief in their accuracy as 'maps of the financial and economic world', but in the knowledge that the perpetuation of such ideas served as a means to justify their (the economists') own gains and the corresponding 'losses' of others: the vast inequalities that indeed such gains were in fact predicated upon. This, of course, raises a broader set of issues about the basis of neo-liberal thinking; the precipitation of 'academic discourse' into 'lay discourse'; the more general relationship between the academy and the business practitioner community; and the slippage from 'ideas' to 'ideology' that was a central concern of Elias's sociology of knowledge.
- 16 Ilse Seglow, an actress who wrote her dissertation on the theatre, became a leading group psychoanalyst in London. Her son, Peter, became a Sociology Lecturer at Brunel University.
- 17 Elias took Dunning to the Reading Room in the mid-1960s to look up work on cricket. At the end of the day, Dunning had meticulously collected detailed material from one book, whilst Elias had collected valuable data from some six or seven historical sources. 'How do you do it, Norbert?' asked Dunning. 'You have to follow your nose', replied Elias. 'It's a form of hunt'. From that point on, Dunning started to 'follow his nose' as well and his academic productivity increased by leaps and bounds.
- 18 Originally published with the title, 'Studies in the Genesis of the Naval Profession: I, Gentlemen and Tarpaulins', *British Journal of Sociology*, 1: 4 (1950), subsequently published as Chapter 1 of Elias (2007) *The Genesis of the Naval Profession*, Rene Moelker and Stephen Mennell (eds) (Dublin: UCD Press).
- 19 Elias's 1941 letter to his parents was brought to our attention and made available to us by Marc Joly. See his (2010) 'Dynamique de champ et "evenements". Le projet intellectuel de Norbert Elias (1930–1945)', *Vingtième Siècle*, 106: 91.
- 20 It was also kept alive in British anthropology by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and E. E. Evans-Pritchard and, in the United States, by Leslie White.
- 21 Elias refused to speak and write of social 'evolution' among other reasons because, unlike their biological counterparts, social developments are reversible.
- 22 That is to say Dunning, Patrick Murphy and Ivan Waddington.
- 23 The late Ronald Meek, one of the Professors of Economics at Leicester in those days, complained that the sociologists were 'stealing' their students by teaching about subjects like suicide and sex.
- 24 In 1964, Anthony Giddens urged Dunning to read Peter Blau's *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (1964) because, he (Giddens) said, in it, Blau had successfully resolved the agency-structure dilemma by bringing issues of power and conflict

- into the equation. On reading the book, Dunning came to the conclusion that, whilst Blau may have successfully dealt with power and conflict at the micro-social level, his attempt at reconciling this with macro-level phenomena was based on consensualist ideas similar to those of Talcott Parsons.
- 25 Dunning was involved in long and heated discussions of *The Poverty of Historicism* with Elias and Percy Cohen in 1961, Elias and John H. Goldthorpe in 1964. It was these, more than anything else that provided the stimulus for his writing. See, for example, his (1977) paper, *In Defence of Developmental Sociology*.
 - 26 The 'Donald' referred to here was Donald Macrae, who was then a Lecturer at the London School of Economics, subsequently to become Professor Emeritus.
 - 27 A comprehensive set of notes on this course as given in the 1961–62 academic year, the last year in which Elias gave it, were written up by Michael Levin, a Leicester first year undergraduate and subsequently Senior Lecturer in Politics at Goldsmiths College, University of London. These notes are available from the Norbert Elias Foundation.
 - 28 For a discussion of this phase of Elias's career, see Goodwin and Hughes (2011).
 - 29 While Elias was indeed sceptical about some currents of British anthropology, he was by no means dismissive of anthropology *per se*. Indeed, he was sympathetic with 'anthropologie' in the French tradition, particularly that of, for example, Lévy-Bruhl, Mauss, van Gennep, etc. – writers who shared with Elias a broader conception of the human condition or human predicament. Elias's comments on Thurnwald and primitive art (Elias 1929) also show a clear sympathy with a conception of human science as the 'science of man', irrespective of historical period or 'social type'.
 - 30 This latter point is best elaborated on in Elias's own words. He wrote: '[The] opportunity to distance oneself from the dominant, and especially the nationalistic ideologies of the established group, practically always associated even in Wilhelmine Germany and more strongly in the Weimar Republic – as in other countries as well – with belligerent slogans against the Jews, was, of course, only one of the peculiar experiences that came one's way when growing up in a widely stigmatised outsider group. Later one found oneself facing the question: what was it that bound one to the tradition of a group whose most obvious distinguishing feature was the peculiarity of their religion, if one's own beliefs had been completely secularised? Only very gradually, and in conjunction with my sociological insight, did I realise that the social peculiarity brought about by a person's origin, above all the fact of growing up within a stigmatised outsider group, has *per se*, a strong, shaping influence on the mentality of the young person concerned. And the special religion, even though increasingly secularised probably continued to act as a peculiarity of his cultural tradition for some time. It manifested itself, for example, in what I referred to provisionally for my own purposes as the society-specific features of conscience-formation. I suspected – and it was really no more than a conjecture – that in the Jewish tradition the sense of the sinfulness of human beings, and thus the tabooing of their animal impulses, especially sexuality, is less oppressive, and that differences of this kind are maintained, given social continuity, despite increasing secularisation. The same applies to the taste for emotively charged metaphysical religious assumptions; they remain alien to me. I have sometimes played with the supposition that my own ability in breaching the dominant taboos, to perceive the changing ways in which civilisation deals with elementary impulses may be linked to such a peculiarity of conscience-formation' (Elias 1994: 129).

- 31 Sennett (2003), for example, provides a discussion of Elias's work on civilising processes after briefly reviewing Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528) and Della Casa's *Galateo* (1558). He writes: 'A grander connection between civility past and present appears in the writings of the sociologist Norbert Elias. His great book, *The Civilizing Process*, argues that courtesy marked a great sea-change in European civilization. Elias was convinced that social behaviour in the courts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries laid the foundations for what we today call "courtesy", behaviour which is non-aggressive and respectful in character, courtly behaviour which became the model in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the bourgeoisie. The key to this change lay in bodily self-control...' (Sennett 2003: 118). This is a partly accurate summary of what Elias wrote. His argument, as we have shown before, was that 'courtesy', 'civility', and 'civilisation' formed a series marking the successive dominance of courts, towns, and nation-states in the emergent dominance patterns of the people of Western Europe. However, Sennett arguably goes astray when he suggests that: 'Though Elias was Jewish, his text presents a very Protestant account of civility. Shame about oneself serves to restrain criminal aggression... But is shame the single driver of this effort? Is fear of losing control really what makes us civilized? Elias underplays the pleasurable aspects of civility, and he turns a blind eye to its cooperative character... Civility, more than a personality trait, is an exchange in which both parties make one another feel good about the encounter... It is a win-win exchange' (pp. 119–120). We shall provide a fuller discussion of Elias's theory of civilising processes in the chapters that follow. However, for the moment, it is worth noting that Elias was at pains to avoid passing normative judgements about civilising standards – whether an exchange is, to follow Sennett's language, 'win-win', 'win-lose', or even 'lose-lose', in terms of whether the 'parties' involved in such an 'exchange' 'felt good' is anything but an inevitability. It would be worth exploring more concretely what Sennett means by 'feeling good' in this context, and, moreover the social conditions under which this structure of feeling becomes possible, and even, to the degree that Sennett is correct, commonplace. Perhaps Sennett is referring here to how 'polite exchanges' can leave people feeling satisfied in relation to a specific set of social 'needs', particularly the need for 'mutual respect'? It is precisely Elias's point to explore how such 'needs' are themselves historically emergent and are, if anything, a counterpart to, say, a fear of shame, rather than an altogether separate, independent, and alternative 'driver' of 'what makes us civilized'.
- 32 Many of our 'cavils' at Pinker's work relate to minor factual errors in *The Better Angels of Our Nature*. For example, Breslau where Elias was born, is now Wrocław in Poland (pronounced 'vrotswav'), not 'Wroctaw' as Pinker has it (page 59) – the 'l with stroke' character (ł) is, orthographically speaking, a 'w' sound in Polish, not a 't'. Moreover, Elias studied philosophy and medicine at the University of Breslau when Breslau was still a German town, not sociology and the history of science. He switched from philosophy to sociology after quarrelling with his supervisor, Richard Höningwald. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Elias did not immediately flee from Germany to England but, instead, spent two years in France where he tried to make a living with two German communist friends, making and selling children's toys. Norbert was the salesman, not the toy-maker (this is another factual mistake in Pinker's account of Elias's biography). Elias certainly lost both his parents in the Holocaust. However, his father died while they were both still in Breslau, and only his mother died in a death camp. Similarly, the historian J.S. Cockburn did not, as Pinker puts it, compile time-series data on 'the town' of Kent between 1560 and 1985. Kent is

- a county, not a town. Perhaps more substantially, Pinker repeatedly capitalises ‘Civilising Process’ and always used the term in its singular form. Elias himself moved increasingly away from such formulations as, with the passage of time, he gained greater control over his data and analyses. You can use the terms ‘civilisation’ and ‘civilised’ in relation to particular individuals, he used to argue, or in relation to humanity as a whole. One can also use them in relation to countries, classes or ethnic groups, etc. ‘Social processes are like symphonies’, he once said in a lecture that Eric Dunning attended. That is, they are complex admixtures of rising and falling themes. ‘Civilising processes are examples’. They are admixtures with their opposites, ‘decivilising’ processes and according to Pinker, ‘re-civilising’ processes, too. Pinker provides an excellent example of a ‘decivilising’ process in his discussion of the thirty-year long period of increasing violence documented as having occurred in the USA and Western Europe in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, followed by a set of twenty-year long ‘re-civilising’ processes in the 1990s and 2000s. Elias never used the term ‘re-civilising’ process(es) himself, though it is likely that he would have approved of it. Finally, at a rather more substantive level, Pinker neglects to explain sociologically the broad stages of social development through which the major societies of Western Europe passed on their way from feudalism to modernity in the eleventh and twelfth to the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. These were, more particularly, a stage of monarchical absolutism which was weakest in England, strongest in France, and characterised in the German case by a high degree of fragmentation, except in the cases of Prussia and Austria. Each of these stages was noted and named by Elias. The stage of ‘courtisation’ (*Verhöflichung*, rule from royal courts) came first; that of ‘civility’ (rule from royal courts and urban centres) came second; and ‘civilisation’ (world dominance by Europe and the USA) came third.
- 33 One of Elias’s teaching aids in the 1950s and 1960s was a book of photographs of the French comedian, Fernandel, a man with an exceptionally mobile face. Older readers may remember him in a TV commercial for the French alcoholic drink Dubonnet, in the 1970s. Elias also gave a public lecture on laughter at the University of Leicester in the 1950s. It was to the staff forum, the ‘Haldane Society’ which no longer exists. Michael Schröter has translated Elias’s originally English lecture notes into German in an essay entitled ‘Wer lacht kann nicht beißen’ (‘S/he who laughs cannot bite’).
- 34 Dunning remembers bumping into Elias on the Leicester campus on his (Elias’s) return from one of his earliest trips to Amsterdam when he said: ‘Eric my dear, I think we should abandon the prefix “con” because one is unnecessarily saying “with” twice if one speaks or writes of the “configurations” that human beings form with one another’. It was in this way that the concept of figurations was born.
- 35 These time periods are brief compared with the physical evolution of the universe and biological evolution.
- 36 As we discuss in various sections of this book, this is consistent with Elias’s view of social funds of knowledge as intergenerational and collective. Knowledge-accumulation, he suggested, is like a relay race with one generation passing the ‘baton’ or ‘torch’ onto the next. He did not, of course, ignore the fact that, in relay races, the baton is sometimes dropped, i.e. knowledge is sometimes lost as well as gained.
- 37 See Stephen Mennell’s highly original application of Eliasian ideas to the understanding of the history and social development of the United States in his (2007) *The American Civilizing Process* (Cambridge: Polity).

- 38 Elias at first followed the traditional usage of ‘man’ and ‘men’ in this connection, but adopted the gender-neutral terms ‘person’ and ‘people’ in the 1970s. See his note in *Involvement and Detachment* (Dublin: UCD Press (2007a), Collected Works, vol. 8), p109.
- 39 According to Elias, an example of the persistent strength of ascriptive ties in Germany is provided by the fact that, in the Nazi period, people were required to provide proof of a certain number of ‘Aryan’ ancestors in order to establish that they were not Jews. See his (1996) *The Germans*.
- 40 In his *Mozart: the Sociology of a Genius*, Elias shows how the Germans and Austrians developed a humour surrounding farting and defecation which would have been found repulsive by a majority of Frenchmen and Englishmen at the time. He also pinpointed the apparent anomaly posed by the beauty of Mozart’s music and the frequency of ‘toilet humour’ in his and his father’s letters to one another.
- 41 Elias (2000: 43) acknowledges that it did not figure centrally among the slogans of the French Revolution.
- 42 This is similar to biological evolution in which, even though hominoid species such as Australopithecus, Neanderthals and other early hominids such as Peking man and Java man may have become extinct, other hominoids such as apes and humans continue to coexist.
- 43 Elias explicitly discusses Freud’s concept of the superego on pp. 408–410 of *On the Process of Civilisation* (2000).
- 44 It was common practice at this time for upper class people to dip their hands into a common bowl of water before meals.
- 45 On this, see again Stephen Mennell’s insightful (2007) *The American Civilizing Process* (Cambridge: Polity).
- 46 See his (1985) *The Nation State and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity).
- 47 This is suggested by his use of the terms centripetal and centrifugal pressures. The psychologist Kurt Lewin was among the first protagonists of ‘field theory’. Elias lectured Dunning and his fellow undergraduates on this subject in the 1950s and he (Elias) and Dunning had the work of Lewin consciously in mind when they wrote their essay, ‘The Dynamics of Sport Groups with Special Reference to Football’ in 1966.
- 48 The Romans left Britain in 410 AD as part of the shift of the balance of power in their empire from West to East, more particularly from Rome to Constantinople (now Istanbul) which came to form the ruling centre of the Byzantine Empire.
- 49 When Dunning asked Elias in the 1960s whether there was anything in *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* that he now found fault with and would change, he replied that his use of this pair of concepts was perhaps too mechanistic.
- 50 It is arguable that in his later work, particularly *Das Kapital*, Marx moved away from this position to a considerable degree.
- 51 Perhaps significantly, neither Lakatos nor Kuhn neatly conforms to the disciplinary labels ascribed to them by Elias here. Lakatos achieved a PhD in mathematics, physics and philosophy; likewise, Kuhn’s initial academic training was in the field of physics.
- 52 It is in this connection that we can see the imprint of Mannheim’s model of the sociology of knowledge on Elias’s thinking. For example, in his *Ideology and Utopia* Mannheim expresses a position similar to Elias’s in a number of important respects: ‘The sociology of knowledge should seek to investigate the conditions under which problems and disciplines come into being and pass away. The sociologist in the long run must be able to do better than to attribute the emergence and solutions of problems of a given time and place to the mere

existence of certain talented individuals. The existence of and the complex interrelationship between the problems of a given time and place must be viewed and understood against the background of the structure of the society in which they occur, although this may not always give us an understanding of every detail. The isolated thinker may have the impression that his crucial ideas occurred to him personally, independent of his social setting... Sociology, however, cannot be content with understanding immediate problems and events emerging from this myopic perspective which obscures every significant relationship. These seemingly isolated and discrete facts must be comprehended in the ever-present but constantly changing configurations of experience in which they actually are lived' (Mannheim 1997 (1936): 97).

- 53 That said, research on the brain by neuroscientists such as Joseph Ledoux (1996) and António Damásio, among others, suggests that lower parts of the brain, e.g. parts of the limbic system, principally the amygdala, can at times 'hijack' higher level functioning.
- 54 Becker bases this archetypal trajectory on the research of Driscoll (1971). He notes that there is no inevitable or simple relationship between homosexuality, transvestism, and transexuality, but the trajectory nonetheless describes a pattern observed in Driscoll's study. Becker also uses this example to illustrate a point about 'sense making' – that if any particular behaviour appears to the researcher to be bizarre or unintelligible, it probably indicates that we do not know enough about it. In such cases, it is better to assume that it makes some kind of sense to those engaged in the behaviour and, indeed, to seek to elucidate the process by which it has come to 'make sense' (1998: 28).
- 55 Such a code perhaps finds its clearest intellectual expression in the methodological relativism developed by advocates of the 'strong programme' in sociological studies of scientific knowledge; in particular, in relation to the 'symmetry principle' (see, for example, the work of writers such as Barry Barnes (Barnes and Bloor 1986), David Bloor (1991), and the associated 'Edinburgh school'). The principle, which takes as a methodological premise, the effective rejection of any engagement with the 'reality congruence' of scientific knowledge in accounting for the success or otherwise of competing 'truth claims', has been extensively and convincingly contested, perhaps most notably by Sokal and Bricmont (1998), and as part of the now infamous 'Sokal Affair'.
- 56 For example, the British Sociological Association's guidance on the use of language relating to race and ethnicity (BSA 2005) contains an entry on 'civilised/civilisation' which reads: 'This term can still carry racist overtones that derive from a colonialist perception of the world. It is often associated with Social Darwinist thought and is full of implicit value judgements and ignorance of the history of the non-industrialised world. However, in some cases, such as the work of Norbert Elias, civilisation takes on a different meaning without racist overtones'.
- 57 Elias's arguments concerning violent and 'animalic' aspects of human behaviour becoming pushed 'behind the scenes' are complex and nuanced. A case in point pertains to the shifting 'visibility' of death in tandem with civilising processes. As Stanley and Wise (2011) have observed, Elias's position, particularly as it is outlined in his *The Loneliness of the Dying*, is considerably more sophisticated than the now orthodox notion that death has become entirely sequestered from 'private' domestic settings into, increasingly, 'public' institutions such as hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, etc. Stanley and Wise applaud Elias's commitment to analysing long-term trends in the visibility and social organisation of death in a manner which is simultaneously theoretical and empirical, and, most

- importantly, historically grounded. Elias's approach elucidates a more complex set of sometimes contradictory processes than is suggested by the 'juggernaut of sequestration' (Stanley and Wise 2011: 948) involving both a degree of sequestration and a persisting significance of domestic figurations.
- 58 Two of these years were spent by Giddens as Visiting Professor in Canada and the USA.
 - 59 Elias distanced himself from Mannheim in his *Reflections on a Life* (1994). However, Dunning has a clear memory of him discussing Simmel at length, and in a positive manner, with the Simmel scholar Kurt Wolff and Ilse Seglow in Bielefeld in the mid 1980s.
 - 60 The Elias Foundation arranged and paid for annual conferences in the 1980s, and Foucault was an eagerly awaited speaker at the 1987 event in Bielefeld. It was a great disappointment to Elias and virtually everyone in attendance that Foucault failed to turn up. As we learned, during the conference, he had died of AIDS.
 - 61 Foucault defined the concept as follows: 'I would define the episteme retrospectively as the strategic apparatus which permits of separating out from among all the statements which are possible those that will be acceptable within, I won't say a scientific theory, but a field of scientificity, and which it is possible to say are true or false. The episteme is the "apparatus" which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterised as scientific' (1980: 197).
 - 62 See the preceding chapter for a discussion of Elias's contrasting position to those of Bachelard, Foucault, and Kuhn on this issue.
 - 63 The conference was organised by Andrea Bührmann and Stefanie Ernst; see <http://www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/index.php?id=5893>
 - 64 Bourdieu's distinction here straddles similar, but not identical, axes to those of Mouzelis (1995) between 'social theory' and 'sociological theory'; and Althusser between theory as 'thought-abstract' and theory as 'thought-concrete' (Althusser 1969).
 - 65 Elias would have rejected the notion that research has an intrinsic 'logic'. The term has philosophically idealist connotations and as such plays down, amongst other things, the important part played by serendipity in scientific research.
 - 66 In adopting this distinction, we are also intending to include under the heading of the 'political ramifications' of sociological knowledge something akin to Foucault's notion of the 'power effects' of knowledge. For example, the publication of Freud's work, and in particular, the cross-over into lay understandings of his ideas concerning the centrality to the human psyche of the repression of libidinal impulses, had demonstrably important 'political ramifications' or 'power effects'. Put simply, Freudian understandings of 'the self' arguably came to inform 'self-experiences' in important ways. That is to say, for some people, Freudian understandings came to 'frame' and to 'mediate' self-experience through informing their manner of 'self-reflection'; through providing a conceptual vocabulary with which to think, and articulate such thoughts, about themselves; through providing a mode of self-analysis; and through influencing how people seek to apprehend and address their 'psychic' problems, including the very classification of such problems. We are using this example to acknowledge an inevitable 'balance' between the fundamentally inter-related scientific endeavours of 'understanding' and 'changing' the social world.
 - 67 Elias might have agreed with the notion that there are some aspects of social reality that are beyond the reach of 'observation', but only in the sense that the current fund of knowledge in the human sciences may be insufficient to allow for

certain aspects of the social world to be apprehended. Indeed, as we have shown, Elias considered our present-day knowledge of human figurations to be at best, at a very early stage of development and articulation. But equally, he would not have considered the 'invisibility' or 'unobservability' of such aspects of social reality as a logical inevitability, nor as an essential characteristic of their 'form' or 'substance'. It would, we think, be congruent with Elias's position to suggest that developments in the knowledge pertaining to any particular scientific field might render observable that which previously resided beyond the ken of scientific observers. For example, the development of an accurate map of the human genome would not have been possible without an antecedent understanding of hybrid cell mapping, the chromosomal basis of heredity, the structure of DNA, and biochemical genetics more generally.