CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Contemporary Sociological Theory provides a definitive guide to current theoretical perspectives for sociology and the wider social sciences. This updated anthology, now in its fourth edition, includes thematic sections on symbolic interactionism, institutions, power, inequality and modernity as well as debates on contemporary social crises and structuralism.

The new edition encompasses some of the deepest selections available on key contemporary authors such as Foucault, Habermas, and Bourdieu, and it is fully revised with extensive additions on issues of race, gender, difference and intersectionality, and lively new introductory material throughout.

With extensive references to further readings and resources, *Contemporary Sociological Theory, Fourth Edition* is an invaluable primary text for undergraduate courses in social and sociological theory, and an excellent supplement for courses in wider social sciences programs including human geography, anthropology, criminology, and urban studies.

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Edited by Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, and Virk

CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY **FOURTH EDITION**

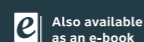Edited by Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk

CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY FOURTH EDITION

Contemporary Sociological Theory

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Fourth Edition

Edited by

Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk

WILEY Blackwell

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Introduction

Sociology is the pursuit of systematic knowledge about social life, the way it is organized, how it changes, its creation in social action, and its disruption and renewal in social conflict. Sociological *theory* is at once an integrated account of what is known and a guide to new inquiry. It is organized scientifically to help us see the connections among different facts, relations of cause and effect, and deeper patterns of social organization and change.

But, sociological theory always comes in the form of multiple theories. Each offers a distinct perspective on society, helping us to see different dimensions of what is going on. Some difference is just a matter of focus, like looking at nature with a microscope or a telescope. Sociological theories may focus on interpersonal relations, large organizations like a corporation or an army, or overall patterns of social change and stability. But at any of these levels, sociological theories also propose different ways to look at social life.

The Classical Inheritance

Contemporary sociological theory is built on a foundation of classical theory laid down as part of Western modernization between the 18th century and the middle of the 20th century. These were remarkable but troubled years. They ran from the Enlightenment and industrial revolution through the rise of empires and then decolonization, the formation of the modern capitalist world system, two world wars, communist revolutions, Cold War, to the formation of welfare states that expanded health care, education, and other benefits. They included fantastic advances in technology, urbanization, and wealth. They also included the flourishing of the world's first large-scale democratic societies – and long struggles to improve them because they were founded with internal contradictions, including toleration of slavery, exclusion of women, and restrictions on the rights of those without property.

Sociology was born of trying to understand all this transformation and upheaval – and also likely directions for further change and what action could shape the future of society. What we now call classical sociological theory is the most enduringly influential of this earlier work. Classical sociological theories orient us to several basic questions, revealing what is involved in different approaches to answering them. Among the most important are the following:

1. What are the conditions for scientific knowledge of social life?
2. How is society shaped by the state, and how in turn does society shape politics?
3. What are the social origins and impacts of markets, especially large and still expanding markets?
4. How do individuality, Community, and society relate to each other?
5. What are the fundamental differences among societies?
6. How have power relations among societies – such as colonialism and war – shaped individual societies and regional and global social relations?

All these questions remain active concerns for sociologists today. Sociological theories not only propose answers, but they also understand what counts as a good answer. They help us clarify basic concepts and their relations to each other. They help us develop the capacity for good judgment about what variables are likely to be important in a particular analytic problem or explanation. Even when they disagree with classical theories, contemporary sociologists measure their work by classical standards of intellectual quality.

Contemporary sociological theory has built on classical predecessors but sought both to go beyond them and to theorize new developments. Earlier theorists paid too little attention to race or to colonialism, for example. W.E.B. DuBois was an exception, showing the "problem of the color line" at work both in the racial division of the United States and in the global division shaped by European colonization. Not surprisingly, perhaps, most male theorists failed to appreciate the importance of both women's inequality and gender as a constitutive social category. Classical theorists like Harriet Martineau and Jane Addams pointed to the issue, but men were slow to grasp it fully.

But, Du Bois, Martineau, and Addams were all clear that what they wanted was not to abandon classical sociological theory but rather to bring its analytic strengths to bear on issues it initially ignored or underestimated. Du Bois, for example, drew enthusiastically on the work of Max Weber and later Karl Marx. Martineau admired Spencer; Addams drew ideas of social evolution from the American sociologist Lester Frank Ward. What all wanted was to keep improving sociology's intellectual inheritance and advance engagement with the key issues of their day.

What is "contemporary" of course keeps shifting. For Du Bois and Addams, the 19th century was classical, and the early 20th century was contemporary. For us, their work has become classical. Contemporary theory incorporates what is most valuable from its classical inheritance at the same time that it innovates, overcomes limits, and responds to new issues. Theorists ask, for example, whether the West is in decline or how it can renew itself.

We have drawn the line separating contemporary from classical roughly in 1968–1975. This was a period of crises and shifting directions. The year 1968 saw protest movements around the world, many sparked by the US war in Vietnam but also calling for broad social transformation. A million students marched through the streets of Paris and joined forces with as many as 10 million striking workers. In Japan as well as Europe and the United States, specific concerns of students mixed with pursuit of broader social transformation. Protests were huge in the United States, not just on college campuses but at the Chicago convention of the Democratic Party – where police repression became as famous as the protests.

Upheavals were international. Early in 1968, the Prague Spring briefly brought a progressive, potentially democratic government to Czechoslovakia before Soviet repression. Protests in Poland and Yugoslavia further signaled a crisis in the Communist bloc. Repression of dissent helped to bring stagnation that undermined communism over coming decades. 1973 brought a military coup in Chile that led to decades of right wing military dictatorship there (mirrored in some other Latin American countries). The dictators gave neoliberal economists some of their first chances to shape policy. Later in 1973, the Yom Kippur War helped to spark the transformation of OPEC into a global force controlling – and radically increasing – the price of oil. This sparked an economic crisis that famously combined high inflation with stagnant growth. Neoliberalism guided an intervention that tamed inflation but with policies that guided a long period when wealth grew but wages did not. The postwar boom ended, and inequality began to grow sharply.

Also in 1968, Martin Luther King was assassinated, and the Great Civil Rights Movement launched in the 1950s seemed to stall. The same period saw dramatic expansion in the long struggle for women's rights. "Second wave feminism" started in the early 1960s and continued for two decades.

In short, the era was a watershed. Sociology was deeply engaged in trying to understand social change and transformation. Some earlier work seems surprisingly contemporary. We have no doubt that some later work will soon attain the status of classics. But, most of the major conversations and controversies in contemporary sociological theory have roots in the 1960s and 1970s, and each drew in different ways on classical theory.

Symbolic and strategic interaction

In the 1960s, there was renewed interest in connecting personal life to sociological issues. The most important bridge from classical to contemporary was established in Herbert Blumer's work in the tradition of his teacher, George Herbert Mead He named this "symbolic interactionism." The creation of social reality, Blumer argued, is a continuous process. Positivist research methods that break this down into "variables" commonly lose touch with the meaning that was created by actors in interaction. It is important to understand society not as static structures but as potentials that people could use in their future actions and interactions.

Part of the attraction of symbolic interactionism was that it offered insight into the self and society at the same time. This suited it to an era when people placed new emphasis on self-understanding, not least in the context of expansion in the range of choices they could make about their lives. Throwing off constraints was a major theme of the 1960s, an era of

Romantic enthusiasm for self-examination and self-expression. But, as contemporary sociologists showed, the ideal of perfect freedom was illusory. Even sex, drugs and rock and roll were socially organized.

No theorist was more important to this effort than Erving Goffman (excerpted here). Influenced by Mead, Durkheim, the "Chicago School" and classical sociological theory generally (and also by anthropology), Goffman resisted belonging to any one school. He pursued ethnographic studies with theoretical intent – and vast influence. In these, he sought to situate individuals not just in social relationships but in projects of creating and managing their self-understanding at the same time they managed their relations to others. Coping with embarrassment is a repeated and personally meaningful social task (even if sometimes ignored by theorists). We can think of individuals as actors in social dramas, he wrote, presenting themselves in more or less persuasive performances.

Part of what made Goffman's work so important was his focus on ordinary people as they managed social challenges such as stigma, mental illness, repressive institutions, or simply dating in high school. He did not see society mainly through its elites, nor did he see it as obviously harmonious. In this, he fit with and shaped an era of growing appreciation for the life projects of ordinary people and a sensitivity to society as sometimes an obstacle or a challenge as well as usually a necessary condition.

Goffman was perhaps the most powerful influence in the development of "microsociology." This focused on the small picture of face-to-face interaction, not the big picture of politics, economics, functional integration or class conflict. A successful conversation is a social achievement and not always an easy one, Goffman suggested, and commonly dependent on "interaction rituals." Goffman's insight informed decades of research in conversational analysis, a branch of ethnomethodology – the phenomenological study of how people create culture and meaning.

Randall Collins (excerpted here) took the theme of "interaction rituals" forward in a "radical microsociology," seeking to complement Durkheim's understandings of group membership and conflict with attention to the small scale and concrete. For it is not just conversation that has to be socially organized in interpersonal exchanges but also sex – or just holding hands, crime, violence, smoking or not smoking, or starting a business partnership. Institutions maintain themselves through the ritualization of interaction. Conflict results not only from the breakdown of ritual interaction chains but also from mobilizing them into contending social forces – say capitalists and workers, different religions, or police and protestors. In conflicts, action is shaped by rituals, but actors also mobilize ritual interaction chains to try to secure their objectives.

It is common to think of symbolic interactionism and interpretative microsociology generally as completely distinct from strategic or rational choice analysis. Goffman, however, made contributions to both. His accounts of the production and management of meanings and images always included attention to implicit strategies. Indeed, he coined the term "strategic interaction," which later became the title of one of his books, including a chapter based on his presentation to a 1964 conference on "Strategic Interaction and Games" that influenced developments in international relations and economics as well as sociology and social psychology. This introduced him to the dynamic (later to be called or evolutionary) game theory being developed by Thomas Schelling (an economist and

future Nobel economist). Schelling in turn cited Goffman appreciatively for contributions to understanding enforcement and communication in strategic interaction.

Strategic analysis of basic sociological questions is at least as old as Thomas Hobbes' account of why rational individuals in a "state of nature" would choose to give up their freedom for the security of a strong state. The issue remains current today as people debate whether to worry more about policy violence restricting their freedom or crime that poses a demand for policy to provide security. Obviously, balance is desirable. But, achieving balance is itself the kind of problem taken up by analysts of strategic interaction. Building on the exchange theories of George Homans and Peter Blau (both excerpted in *Classical Sociological Theory*), contemporary sociological theorists developed a "rational choice" approach to sociology. This was grounded in methodological individualism – the idea that a good sociological explanation had to make sense of individual action as a crucial building block. As articulated, for example, by James Coleman (excerpted here), this challenged Durkheim, Parsons, and all who approached society as a "whole" sharply distinct from individuals. Critics sometimes confused methodological individualism with a preference for individual autonomy over group solidarity. But as Michael Hechter (excerpted here) famously showed, one could provide a strong account of how rational individuals formed group solidarity.

Both studies of symbolic action and analysis of rational choice inform the idea of "agency." This means the capacity to act effectively, accomplishing one's own goals and potentially changing social relations. Minimal agency is involved in making a simple consumer choice – like which brand of breakfast cereal to buy. There is more when one can choose a career and acquire the education to succeed in it or start a business and secure the capital for it to flourish. This is partly a matter of resources and rational choices. But as Goffman showed, it is also a matter of communication that makes collaboration and social relationships possible. Paying attention to strategy and communication together helps to distinguish agency from action based on emotion or habit or indeed failure to think.

Without agency, people either act without direction or are dominated by social structure. This does not mean they *do* nothing but that their actions are highly constrained. People form relationships partly in order to get things done but also for the pleasure of the relationship itself. They invest relationships with meaning, which is mutually constituted through their interaction. Relationships in turn become factors enabling people to realize their goals. Goffman bridged what is more commonly a divide between interpretative sociology and more formal strategic analysis. Both sides inform the analysis of agency.

Structure, agency, and institutions

At its most basic, structure is the enduring patterns of social organization with which individuals must contend. They can change structure, but usually only over a long period and through collective action. Take the population structure. How many people are young and how many are old will have a big impact on markets, need for schools or old age care, hospitals and sports fields. The age distribution changes if young people marry earlier and have more babies, but the influence of any one pair of

parents is small. It will change if more immigrants are accepted, but this depends on politics and policy, not just individual choices.

Structural patterns are slow to change. Many constraints are produced and reproduced beyond the direct, conscious choices of individuals. Sociologists also want to know how much agency individuals or groups have in guiding this change, but the answer is never complete and full autonomy. Simply to celebrate action without considering constraints is unrealistic. And, constraint is not all conservatism. Consider Georg Simmel's famous contrast of dyads and triads (considered in *Classical Sociological Theory*). These are structural forms. A relationship between two people is changed if a third is introduced. And, there are more complicated versions. Group size is an example. If you mix two groups of very different size, equal contact will have different consequences for each. If a college is 10% black and 90% white, for example, black students will be far more exposed to their white classmates than vice versa. If there are more boys than girls at a dance (or vice versa), guess who will have more trouble finding partners.[1]

Networks work in a similar way. They are material realities based on numbers and patterns of relationships. We can grasp networks intuitively: who do we know? But, this is only part of the story. As the contemporary sociological theorist Harrison White (excerpted here) pointed out, we should also ask who do we *not* know? Think of a high school class where everyone seems to know the popular social stars – but there are many people they fail to recognize. The same logic applies to getting jobs. What credentials you gather is important – degrees and work experience make you a more attractive employee. But, the most important factor is not anything about you – it is whether or not there is a vacancy.

Networks have become an important theme for contemporary sociological theory, entwined with more and more robust empirical analytical techniques. They help to explain everything from transmission of diseases to chances for upward mobility. Networks, in this sense, are distinct from categories. Sociologists had long studied whether people were male or female, old or young, and native born or immigrants. All these categories correlate with social inequality and opportunities, and all are important. But, networks focus more on specific positions in webs of relationships. Not just male or female, but head of household or not. Not just old or young, but boss or employee. Not just native or immigrant, but connected to local elites or only to others in disadvantaged populations. Harrison White's work showed that networks and categories had distinct effects but also that the strongest groups were those in which category and network coincided.

The social bases for agency were challenged by the rising prominence of neoliberal economic ideology. This is the view that social policy should be guided entirely by the preferences and interests of individuals, especially individual owners of property. It is closely related to the classical liberalism that so appalled Karl Polanyi (excerpted in *Classical Sociological Theory*) when it led economists to endorse cutting welfare benefits to those who lost their jobs because of technological change that benefitted the wealthy. In 1987, the neoliberal UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher captured the notion so starkly that she inadvertently caricatured it, saying: "there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families."[2] Needless to say, this view was not widespread among sociologists.

Contemporary sociological theorists analyzing markets generally side with Polanyi and emphasize what he called "embeddedness." Markets are not an escape from society but

very much a part of it. Take applying for a job. This is an action, and it may build on earlier actions like acquiring educational credentials. But, as Mark Granovetter (excerpted here) showed, social networks shape who has access to information about new job openings. Those with friends and family in good jobs have an advantage. Their social relationships combine with their individual initiative to give them greater agency to realize their goals.

Neither structure nor agency is simply the "right" point of view. They are both important dimensions of social life. But, they are difficult to reconcile. This became a major focus for sociological theory. It is not enough simply to say "balance." It is important to see how categories and relationships are constructed out of meaningful action as well as how they constrain us as structures. It is important to see that structures not only constrain us but also empower us to get jobs or launch social movements. Anthony Giddens (excerpted here) called for "new rules of sociological method" designed to reconcile the two perspectives.

There is also more to social life than structures and actions – even actions with lots of agency. There are, for example, institutions. Whether we speak of family or religion or business corporations, institutions are a combination of structure, patterned ways of action, and cultural meanings. Families can be larger or smaller, for example, and the (structural) trend has been toward fewer children. Family members do not act randomly toward each other but take up more or less common roles (patterned ways of action). At least in principle, parents provide for children, secure their education, make sure they have medical care, and so forth. And families are products of culture. Are they formed of arranged marriages or love matches? How many children couples think they should have or at what age they should have them are views reproduced in culture not merely among individuals. So too how strongly children feel they should care for aging parents.

Specific families, or religious organizations, or business corporations all learn from each other. As Walter Power and Paul Dimaggio (excerpted here) argue, they both imitate and adapt to each other within fields. In essence, families look at other families to see how they should behave. But, they cannott look at all families; they look at those in the same country, and probably class, region, and religion. Likewise, business organizations in an industry will resemble each other more and more. This is not necessarily a matter of conscious choice. It is a matter of what possible actions or structures seem sensible, something that may be partly materially objective but is largely a matter of shared culture. The result is what they call "institutional isomorphism." Companies in the same industry or schools competing for the same students come to look like each other. As Powell and Dimaggio make clear, following Max Weber, this need not be either the result of happy functional integration or of coercive power. It is a pattern produced out of individual actions that in the aggregate become social pressures. Likewise, as Granovetter argues, there are many individual decisions in markets, but they are not the whole story. Markets are embedded in social institutions.

Power and Inequality

Pursuit of stability and prosperity were dominant concerns in the decades after World War II and the Great Depression. Functionalist sociology was dominant partly because it spoke to the desire for social order and gradual improvement. And, in fact, the years after

1945 saw a great deal of orderly progress, building new institutions, and improving social conditions. In France, they came to be called "les trente glorieuses" – the thirty glorious years. In the United States, it was "the postwar boom."

This was an era of building state institutions to provide social support – education, health care, social security, public media, and more. It was an era of relative cooperation between capital and labor. These still had competing interests, of course, but for a time they found negotiated solutions within the frame of "organized capitalism," based largely on public regulation to avoid disruptive confrontations.[3] Nonetheless, for all the eras achieved, there were internal tensions or even contradictions. These became drivers for transformations – including in sociological theory.

Sociologists had always been attentive to power, inequality and difference, but during the period of functionalist dominance after World War II, theoretical emphasis fell overwhelmingly on social integration, consensus, and factors that held society together. When Parsons and other functionalists used the word "power," for example, the emphasis was on the overall capacity of a society, the "systemic" character of social life, and the extent to which social organization fit together so that every feature was necessary to the whole. But, Parsons was less concerned with the ways in which some people wielded power over others and the extent to which such domination shaped social organization.[4]

A new generation of theorists criticized the implicit conservatism in this. They saw functionalist sociology as too supportive of the existing social structure, too focused on achieving stability. While Parsons drew widely on earlier sociological theory, he sidestepped Marx. The new generation looked for different classics largely to help them analyze the inequalities and conflicts they saw in contemporary society. Interest in Parsons declined, and there was new attention to Marx.

Sociological theory was also reshaped by new readings of the classics. While Parsons' interpretation of Weber emphasized legitimate authority, the new generation focused on Weber's critical analyses of oppressive rationalization. They integrated this with Marx's early writings about alienation in the experience of work as much as his mature theory of capitalism as a system. There was a renewal of interest in Adorno, Hokheimer, and other critical theorists who analyzed how social psychology and the construction of knowledge entwined to support authority and close off paths to liberation in modern society. Herbert Marcuse, for example, saw the new consumer capitalism as basic to a "one-dimensional society" that stifled creativity.

More and more sociological theorists presented a model of society in which tensions and struggles were basic and unity was largely maintained by power.[5] Environmentalists condemned exhaustion of resources, dumping of waste, and damaging side effects of new products. Sociologists of gender argued that better kitchen appliances did not compensate for consigning women to work in the domestic sphere. Sociologists of race pointed to inequalities in education, housing, and other dimensions of what were supposedly well-integrated societies. Many younger sociologists identified with the "New Left" that developed in the 1960s. This built on the history of labor struggles but contrasted itself with the Old Left that saw economic issues as always primary. It embraced traditions of radical democracy, the struggle for Civil Rights, and the peace movement.

C. Wright Mills (excerpted here) famously documented the existence of a "power elite." This was more than a matter of simple inequality. Members of this elite were connected to

each other across fields and professions, for example, generals to bankers, politicians to lawyers. They went to the same schools and belonged to the same organizations, like the Council on Foreign Affairs or certain clubs in New York. They were not only privileged; through these connections, they exerted power. Relatedly, Steven Lukes (excerpted here) showed that power was reflected not only in the making of decisions but also in determining what decisions would be on the agenda and shaped the very wants, desires, and attitudes of citizens.

Michael Mann (also excerpted here) offered perhaps the most fundamental theory of social power.[6] This was not, he suggested, just a matter of influence or even control exercised *in* society. Societies themselves were and are organized *as* power networks. Power was deployed hierarchically, of course, but also laterally, determining who and what was brought into a particular network. And, power was evident not only in explicit domination like that of a boss over subordinates but also in forms like what Mann called "infrastructural power" – the capacity to extend bureaucratic systems at a distance. In modern societies, states are able to exert influence and collect taxes as effectively at the geographical edges of countries as at the center.

Mann and other sociologists of the next generation shared with functionalism the question of how society was held together at a large scale. Parsons had called this "the problem of order," tracing it back to Thomas Hobbes. His answer was basically that order was achieved by a system in which the different parts of society met each other's needs and those of society as a whole. Schools, for example, met industry's needs for educated (but also disciplined) workers. Industry in turn met consumers' needs for products. Together, they contributed to society's overall prosperity. But when functionalists said that the social system "worked," critics asked "worked for whom?" Their answers pointed attention to patterns of inequality.

Inequality can of course be organized in different ways, from slavery to a feudal hierarchy to the special privileges bureaucrats and party officials have enjoyed in communist societies. In modern capitalist democracies, citizens are at least legally free to pursue different careers, but they are rewarded unequally. Functionalists, like many economists, have argued that differences in wages and salaries mainly reflect a necessary incentive system.[7] Critics charge that this might justify some inequality, but not the amount typical of modern capitalist societies.

The "incentive" view fits better when there is a high level of social mobility – that is, when large numbers of people are able to move up in the social hierarchy. This was characteristic of Europe and the United States, as the middle class expanded after WWII. Since the 1970s, rates of social mobility have declined sharply. Inheritance explains more of people's economic opportunities – like whether their families can help them buy houses. Not only do more people now find upward mobility blocked, many also experience downward mobility, for example, by losing good jobs with benefits and becoming unemployed or forced to accept work closer to the minimum wage. It is often the same categories of people who inherit better opportunities or more constrained life chances. As Charles Tilly (excerpted here) showed, inequality can be structural and durable without being the result of functional imperatives.

Indeed, in almost all the capitalist democracies, inequality has grown more extreme since the middle of the 1970s.[8] In the 1950s, CEOs were paid about 20 times what a typical

worker earned. In the United States, they now make more than 300 times the average worker's pay. This is not only higher than it used to be, it is higher than in other successful capitalist countries – such as Norway, for example, or France. Pay differentials are shaped by culture and power, not just functional necessity. It is no accident that the United States has not only the highest levels of CEO compensation in the world but also the most violent history of resistance to labor organizing.

More generally, contemporary sociologists point out that inequalities of wealth may be both more extreme and more durable than inequalities of income. The gap between those with $100,000 salaries and those with only $50,000 salaries is real, but it pales by comparison with the gap between those with billions of dollars in assets and all those who must sell their labor to live. It is easier to move wealth – capital – from one country to another or from the manufacturing industry to high-tech IT companies; it is much harder for workers to adjust when their jobs vanish.

Upward mobility is associated with societies in which there are many relatively permeable layers. Sociological theorists contrast such "stratification" systems with class inequality in which divides are sharper. Marx emphasized the categorical difference between owners of the means of production (capitalists) and workers who had no choice but to sell their labor. Class inequality remains a basic concern for sociological theory. It shapes every aspect of social structure.

In and after the 1960s, however, other dimensions of inequality demanded increased attention. Previous analyses of class have often emphasized the situation of white men, but race, ethnicity, and gender have also been basic dimensions of inequality. In each case, power has been mobilized to maintain inequality. And, there are other dimensions: sexual orientation, disability, and immigration status. In each case, contemporary sociological theorists are attentive not only to material inequality but also to issues of voice, cultural expression, and recognition of difference. They focus not only on the explicit exercise of interpersonal power but also on the ways in which culture and social structure distribute power unequally. Even a seemingly equal interaction between men and women or Black and White citizens is typically shaped by their previous experience of established inequalities and power dynamics. Likewise, unequal pay is not just a matter of pay for workers in exactly the same job but also cultural norms for workers in similar jobs. Women working as nurses and teachers are required to have high levels of education but are paid less than men in other occupations with similar requirements.

More generally, contemporary sociology has come to see inequality as a matter of cultural as well as economic capital and of the influence of each on the other.[9] Inequalities are reproduced when parents are able to get their children better education than others. They are shaped by the neighborhoods in which families live. They are shaped by accents in people's speech.

Bourdieu

The most important theorist of the interrelationship of culture and inequality was Pierre Bourdieu (excerpted here). Bourdieu showed ways in which inequality was reproduced through a combination of culture, social structure, and individual internalization and the

challenges of achieving agency for change. We do not just follow norms or rules, we develop habitual ways of acting. Bourdieu called this the "habitus." But this is not just habit; it is also how we improvise new actions, even in new contexts, on the basis of our previous experiences. It is how a basketball player knows when to pass and how a stand-up comedian knows the timing crucial to a joke.[10]

What becomes a part of us in this way is shaped by structural patterns in society, but not so much in the abstract as in the ways we encounter them. We internalize the class structure, for example, from the perspective of where we started out and a trajectory of how we did in school, job applications and promotions, treatment by other individuals – even dating! – and institutions like banks. Our experience of inequality is shaped not only by economic capital – money – but also by cultural capital.

After WWII, for example, there was a massive expansion of public schooling. Attendance through high school became almost universal. This was pursued as an extension of democratic rights and an attempt to create greater equality – and it did open up some opportunities. Bourdieu himself grew up poor, the grandson of a sharecropper and the son of a postman in a rural village in a disadvantaged region. He was able to attend elite schools and become a professor only because of government scholarships. However, Bourdieu pointed out, this was exceptional. Schooling was easily mobilized to reproduce inequality. Middle-class families could do more to prepare their children, and schools made their children feel more comfortable. The children of workers or peasants often felt out of place. Schools used tests to give an apparently objective measurement of performance, but children were not on a level playing field in the first place. And at every stage, there was sorting in which some children were destined for advancement. The "destiny" was not supernatural, however, not even natural. It was at least largely the product of different levels of investment in the children – by their parents, sometimes by teachers, by the state when they were sent to the "better" schools at higher levels and eventually to the top universities. The children of elites were inheritors of their parents' advantages not just by means of direct financial transmission but by the indirect means of schooling.[11]

Bourdieu was influenced by both Weber's analysis of status hierarchies and Goffman's account of the presentation of self in everyday life. He saw society as organized largely through making distinctions – from what food or music or art we like to what political candidates or potential romantic partners.[12] In the abstract, these reflect cultural categories and their structured relations – the food is hot or mild and we label it with ethnic categories such as Mexican or Japanese; the music is raucous or mellow and we label it in genres such as rap or jazz. But each person develops tastes based on experience that is socially ordered, not random. And acting on tastes is always a kind of performance in relation to others. Showing what one likes, that one knows how to use chopsticks, or that one knows how to behave in a fancy restaurant or a loud club is also showing that one fits in to certain groups and sometimes showing off.

Seemingly individual tastes, thus, reproduce unequal social organization – elites are more likely to enjoy classical music or jazz and know how to behave in fancy restaurants; they are more likely to have higher education and lots of money. Everyone may want more money, but they do not necessarily want the tastes elites have, and they like the company of people who share their tastes. And, the formation and expression of tastes is shaped not

only by hierarchy but also by oppositions: jazz is more popular among Black elites and those on the Left; classical music is more white and conservative.

Classifications are occasions for struggle, and what Bourdieu called "symbolic violence."[13] When women are told they are "naturally" more emotional and less rational, or when some forms of sex are said to be "unnatural," this is symbolic violence. The politics of gender seeks to redefine how women are seen and thus what opportunities they have. Struggles for gay rights seek changes in both laws and attitudes that reflect negative classifications.

For Bourdieu, this social organization of tastes is part of a more general theory of inequality, power, and action. The different forms of capital are all distributed unequally: wealth, the cultural capital of prestige, the educational capital of credentials, the social capital of connections. They give people different chances in life as well as different tastes. Lack of capital brings suffering; greater capital confers power. In modern societies, power and capital are organized into fields linked to different kinds of institutions and production: business, government, law, education, health, religion, literature, and art. Each field has its own hierarchy, forms of capital, and characteristic habituses. As C. Wright Mills argued, branches of the power elite may all be connected, but each field is shaped by an interest in maintaining its autonomy. The government seeks not to be collapsed into business; business (or capitalism more generally) seeks not to be dominated by the government. All the cultural fields seek autonomy from both business and government. But, they also need support from markets or the state, so they have to manage these boundaries. And inside each field, there is opposition between those with more autonomy and those with less.

Foucault

Another widely influential contributor to contemporary sociological theory was Michel Foucault (also excerpted here). He was a classmate and friend of Bourdieu's, and they shared both an enduring focus on unequal power and the perspective sometimes called "poststructuralism." The label is potentially misleading for both produced classic works of structuralist analysis. But both also sought to move beyond more or less static approaches, integrating attention to enduring patterns in social and cultural structure with a focus on change and the dynamics of individual action.

Foucault focused on the relationship of power to knowledge, on the relationship of both power and transformations of knowledge to the constitution of modern individuals, and on the development of new techniques of governance and administration – what he called governmentality – that work through positive means more than negative applications of force.

In an early study, Foucault examined the social construction of "madness" and its relationship to shifting ideas of correct knowledge and development of institutions of confinement and eventually psychiatric treatment.[14] He continued with *The Birth of the Clinic*, which included an examination of how the "medical gaze" objectified the body and then more general studies in the formation of kinds of knowledge – different "knowledges" – in distinct historical epochs.[15] These studies came together to shape Foucault's two most important projects.

Discipline and Punish is Foucault's account of how modernity reshaped law enforcement and with it helped to make the modern person. An older logic of punishment

had used dramatic public executions and other physical punishments to make moral examples of criminals. There was no expectation of rehabilitating them, though they might seek to save their souls by confessing their crimes. By contrast, the modern era developed prisons to take prisoners out of the public gaze (as asylums had done with the mad – now called mentally ill). In place of punishment, there was a new emphasis on surveillance. This constant monitoring was evident in the very design of prisons and used in an effort to remake prisoners. By some standards this was more "humane," but it was also a new extreme in social control. All of modern society was reshaped by surveillance, Foucault suggested, including policing but also social work and the collection of all kinds of statistics. This was complemented by governmentality, as citizens were given incentives – sometimes subtle and even hidden – to conform to social norms or government policies. Above all, citizens were made into the agents of their own self-discipline.[16]

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault again noted a modern disciplinary regime. Governing sexuality became an important religious concern, producing a new regime of internalization of responsibility combined with confession. This required constituting a "truth" of sexuality. This involved not just a classification of the morally acceptable and unacceptable but development of the ideas of "normality" and deviance. In addition, sexuality was essentially as something basic to who one *is* by contrast to sexual practices as some things one *does*. Along with the idea of normality, ideals of "performance" were deployed both in hostility toward homosexuals and other "deviants," and in anxieties to conform to expectations, the proliferation of "self-help" and "how-to" books and comparisons of each individual's own experience to that in movies or literature.[17] This was part of the constitution of the modern individual by disciplinary power.

Individualism ideologically presented the self as the fount of freedom, but in fact it was an effect of disciplinary practices. Deployed not only in prisons but also in clinics, schools, workplaces, and even through shopping, these made individuals the agents of self-discipline on behalf of social norms. But, modern states do not rely only on these regimes of disciplinary power. They also use what Foucault called "Biopower." Here, the object of attention is not the individual as such, but whole populations in which individuals are sorted by statistics on everything from birth to life expectancy to public health and processes such as sex and conception, migration, aging, and death are all managed.

Race, Gender, and Intersectionality

Race and gender are central dimensions of inequality. However, race and gender also denote dimensions of difference that are not reducible to inequality even if they are always deeply influenced by it. They are also dimensions of self-understanding, social relationships, culture, and power. How the categories are constituted is as basic as how they figure in inequality.

Understanding race and gender, moreover, is necessarily a matter of connecting structure and action, the relationship of agency to power, and the ways culture and inequality are reproduced in institutions – in other words, all the themes addressed in prior sections of this book.

Race

What we call "race" may seem obvious but is not. It is a complex mixture of observed differences in appearance, putative biological underpinnings, correlations with social or behavioral attributes, inherited assumptions from earlier classifications, dubious histories, and essentialist thinking. It is in large part a product of racism. Understanding here race and racism come from, how they work, and how they are reproduced are basic tasks for contemporary sociological theory.

Essentialism starts with the idea that there is some common denominator that unifies all the members of a particular category and separates them from others. It commonly flies in the face of manifest statistical variation. For inside any group we call a race there is enormous variation which we have to ignore to see it as unitary. It is in this sense that racism made race; it actively produced classifications, not simply responses to pre-existing racial differences.

By the 19th century, the inheritance of previous racial ideas was incorporated into new evolutionary theories. We now see genes at work.[18] Genetics makes clear that there are no sharp boundaries, only statistical patterns with varying degrees of association with popular conceptions of race. Individuals who have themselves tested commonly discover multiracial histories in what they had thought were clear racial identities. These inspire new projects of reconciliation, as, for example, Black and White descendants of Thomas Jefferson connect to each other.[19] As Alondra Nelson shows, reconciliation projects are just one of the ways in which genetics changes how we reckon with the biological dimension of race.[20] Are reparations due to genetically tested descendants of slaves, or should they be embedded in policies to benefit what we treat in general as races today?

The study of race has commonly focused on those marked out as different from whites. Whiteness is sometimes treated as normal and in need of no special explanation; sometimes it is strongly asserted, as by slaveowners, the founders of the Ku Klux Klan, or White Nationalists today. Only recently has "whiteness" become a significant object of sociological study, though as early as 1920, Du Bois famously asked, "But what on earth is whiteness that one should so desire it?"[21]

Essentialism is specious. Yet it persists, and there are recurrent efforts to put the genie of variation back in the bottle of essentialism – and to base policies on racial categories.[22] Why? Because thinking about race is not just an abstract intellectual exercise, but embedded in practical power politics and inequality.

The single biggest factor in modern racism was the slave trade. This gave a powerful motive to classify Africans as both categorically different and inferior even while it deposited those it captured around an increasingly colonized world. The slave trade was part of both European colonialism and the global birth of capitalism. Even as race and racism were organized into specific national histories, there remained what the sociologist Paul Gilroy called a Black Atlantic.[23] Transnational networks shaped racial consciousness and racist responses. This was true for music – as in the multinational history of what became Rap and Hip hop. This was true for literature. The Black Atlantic was not an entirely separate Black culture; it was informed by different national contexts – as, for example, W.E.B. Du Bois was influenced by Marx and Weber as well as American thought and became central to Pan-Africanism. He gave the closing address at the influential First

Pan-African Conference of 1900 and coauthored its "Address to the Nations of the World." This included the line later made famous in *Souls of Black Folk*, "The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line."[24] Advanced by leaders in the next generation, including Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor, and Julius Nyerere, Pan-Africanism became a transformative social theory as well as a political movement.

In American sociology, however, Du Bois and other leading Black sociologists were often marginalized. Sociologists (mostly white) did study race and racism. They focused on "race relations" and projects of incremental improvement like the work of Booker T. Washington at the Tuskeegee Institute. But they did not integrate the more radical, transformative perspectives of Du Bois, Oliver Cox, or other early Black sociologists into dominant sociological theories or research programs. Resuming the path of sociological theory on which these classical thinkers embarked is now a central task for contemporary sociological theory, as suggested by Aldon Morris (excerpted here).

This requires appreciating both the advances made in long struggles and their limits. Demonstrating agency despite racist obstacles, Black Americans built institutions such as the historically black colleges and universities that provided education – and intellectual life – when admission to other universities was blocked. Workers like Pullman train porters fought to unionize. Most important of all was the great Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. This renewed the progress made after the Civil War and reversed it during the Jim Crow era. It brought enormous advances, peaking in 1964–65 with the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts. But, it also confronted violent resistance, including the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr.

During the 1960s, a new Black Power movement began to question the goals of assimilation and racial integration. The basic question was how much of their own culture, identity, and claims to respect African-Americans would have to surrender to assimilate. It appeared to many that ending forced segregation (a main goal of the civil rights movement) only addressed half the issue. It questioned keeping Blacks out of white neighborhoods and other preserves but did not question whiteness as such or the extent to which integration was only offered on the condition that Blacks act like whites. It appeared, in other words, as if greater economic and political equality for Blacks was offered at the expense of Black pride – that is, of recognition of the cultural achievements and self-understanding of Blacks themselves. Integration, as Orlando Patterson (excerpted here) suggested, was full of paradoxes. To deny it was clearly racist; to pursue it did not overcome racism. Confronting challenges of racism and shifting patterns of integration (and segregation) is never only a matter of equality. It is also one of recognizing cultural differences and creating solidarities.

Racial formation has never been just a matter of past history. Not only do struggles for social justice continue. So does a process of reproducing thinking – and both social action, and social structure – in terms of race. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant (excerpted here) have shown, racialization is reproduced with new groups in new situations.[25] The way Europeans (and white Americans) thought about Africans influenced how they thought about Native Americans. These were racially othered – again, despite great variation – as they were pushed out of the way and killed to make room for first colonists and then an expanding country. Racist thinking shaped the reception – or rejection – of

immigrants. Irish and Southern European immigrants were described as Black or thought of as too much like America's Black population (with anti-Catholic religious bias reinforcing racism). Asian immigrants posed another challenge. They were valuable as labor – not least in building railroads. But, they threatened racial purity. Chinese immigration was long restricted. Indians were considered more acceptable because they were Caucasian. When the expanding United States took over territories with large Mexican populations as the result of military conquest in the West, these were described not only as ethnically or nationally distinct but also as racially different – as they often still are.

Race, racism, and racialization remain very current issues. In the United States, they are put on the public and sociological agendas by everything from police violence and murders to segregation of housing and schools to celebrations and criticisms of America's first Black President. But the issues also come up with regard to immigrants in Europe, Chinese attitudes and policies toward non-Han minorities, Brazilian politics, and even discussions of skin color in India.

Gender

Contemporary sociological theories of gender raise many of the same questions as those focused on race. Gender inequality has been shaped by sexism as race has been shaped by racism. Gender is embedded in inequality but is to it. It has been transformed by collective struggle. And, it is commonly essentialized – as men (and sometimes women) make remarks on the lines of "you know what women are like." Gender also has a biological basis – more substantial than that of race – though this is often held to determine characteristics it does not. Again, like race, how we think about gender influences sociological research on other themes – notably family and sexuality but also society in general.

Material inequality was and is basic. Women were long denied voting rights and subjected to unequal laws. They are still paid less than men and blocked from promotions. They carry disproportionate burdens for childcare. Women's struggles for social equality entered a new phase of growth in the 1960s. This was contentious in sociology as in the rest of society. In 1969, several hundred women sociologists gathered in a "counterconvention" at San Francisco's Glide Memorial Church rather than being marginalized in the nearby convention of the American Sociological Association. But, sociology was transformed. Sociologists claimed agency in the field's self-transformation – forming organizations like Sociologists for Women in Society and seeking to broaden participation and perspectives through efforts like the ASA's Minority Fellowship Program. And, having more women in sociology was basic to seeing things men did not notice and thinking differently.

The rise of feminist sociological theory was an important part of this struggle. This reflected in part the need to explain – simultaneously – why gender inequality was as pervasive as it was and why this was not inevitable (as popular beliefs and some functionalist theories suggested) but open to change. The Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith (excerpted here) showed the implicitly masculine standpoint of most existing theory and the potential power of complementing this with theory written from the standpoint of women. She drew on both ethnomethodology and Marxism to construct a theory of the

"conceptual practices of power." [26] Work like this drew attention to the ways in which seemingly neutral classifications such as those of law courts and welfare agencies, censuses, and indeed sociological surveys reproduced and helped to enforce certain normative understandings of how the world *should* work. These normative understandings commonly benefited men at the expense of women – for example by associating housework "naturally" with childbearing.

Feminist theory argued that material equality would be hard to achieve so long as cultural categories remained biased against women. This left open a major question, though. Did the elimination of bias necessarily mean seeing men and women as essentially the same? Or could it mean recognizing gender differences but valuing men and women equally? The issue was similar to that of whether the elimination of ethnic and racial discrimination necessarily depended on the assimilation of immigrants into host cultures – or, in the case of US race relations, on making blacks more like whites. An influential strand of theory in both racial and gender studies argued that such assimilationist thinking was a further reflection of inequality and power, not a way around it. Why should women need to become more like men in order to gain equivalent political or economic rights? While much of the empirical research in sociology continued to focus on material dimensions of gender inequality – in workplaces, political institutions, and families – a major strand of feminist theory focused more on questions of the cultural construction of difference. This was influenced by both the critical theory tradition and French poststructuralist theory. Feminist theory of this sort also influenced the development of critical theories of sexuality. Linking these theories was a concern to avoid assuming that there was one correct model for human identity or social life. Rather, theorists suggested that theory needed to address the ways in which differences could be recognized without unjust discrimination.

Intersectionality

The terms class and stratification are both used usually to focus on inequality as such and by implication as characteristic of a whole population. But until recently, studies of class and stratification commonly looked at white men and ignored women and people of color (including immigrants). This was true not only of sociology but also of government statistics and the approaches of business and trade unions.

Since the 1960s, there has been more and more effort to include race and gender as variables in quantitative analyses. We may measure income, for example, and find out that on average US women are paid about 18% less than men – and Black men are paid 27% less than White men (though Asian men earn 17% more). Of course, some of this has to do with differences in education and jobs, but not all. We can quantify how much more housework and childcare women do than their male partners. We can study the lower rates of pay in disproportionately female occupations. We can quantify racial segregation in housing and schools. Taking race and gender seriously requires not only adding a variable but also rethinking what questions to study. Availability of childcare and rates of imprisonment immediately become prominent questions. So do who is allowed to speak in different settings, and who listens and a whole series of questions about visibility and invisibility.

Moreover, it is crucial to take race and gender seriously together, not only separately. The experience and pay of women are different from those of men. But, the experience and pay of Black women are different from those of white women. Women had different roles and representation in the Civil Rights movement; Black women had different roles and representation in the mostly white feminist movement. From observations like these came the theme of "intersectionality." The term was coined in 1989 by the Law professor and social theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (excerpted here).[26] It reflected and helped to focus attention on the ways in which race and gender were connected in discrimination and could be better connected in feminist and antiracist response.

Crenshaw credited a number of predecessors in Black women's thought, including the 19th century sociological pioneer Anna J. Cooper and the contemporary critical theorist Angela Davis, with developing the concept before the term. Though he did not use the word, W.E.B. Du Bois had something related in mind in 1903 when he wrote of the "double consciousness" involved in being simultaneously Black and American.[27] Patricia Hill Collins (excerpted here) has developed the concept as a dimension of critical theory focused both on analyzing discrimination and providing tools for emancipatory struggles.[28]

Greater inclusivity was a primary motivation for attention to intersectionality. But, the concept is also important to call attention to processes – including symbolic interactions – by which intersectional identities are managed. And as Har Yeon Choo and Myra Marx Ferree show, intersectionality is systematically organized in institutions and social structure. It appears at many different levels of analysis and is relevant to different projects in contemporary sociological theory.

Race and racialization are not, of course, limited to Black and white. Intersectionality is also not limited to race and gender. Rocio Gracia (excerpted here) shows how the experiences of Latinas are commonly erased from accounts of Latin migrations that focus mainly on men. Indeed, as soon as one starts asking about intersectionality, of course, it becomes evident that almost every dimension of discrimination and inequality potentially combines with the others. Intersectionality is not limited to the dimensions of race and gender. Sexualities – lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, postbinary or cis (conventionally straight) – intersect with race and gender. So do disabilities, immigrant status, and indeed class. Individuals may suffer discrimination or claim identity on several dimensions at once.

Being Black, female, and disabled multiplies disadvantages in many areas of life. But not all intersectionalities multiply disadvantages, though they have been the primary focus of intersectionality research. One may be disable or gay (or both) but also white and rich. Intersectionality may limit rather than multiply a potential disadvantage.

Moreover, intersectionality is a challenge to movement organization. It can undermine the solidarity of all Blacks with each other, of all women in feminist struggle, or of workers in class struggle. Immigrant status may divide Hispanic Americans or disabled Britons after Brexit. Not all "people of color" identify with each other or with that category. Every category of identity and potential solidarity also divides into various dimensions. There is no automatic rule as to which identity will dominate – either in explaining discrimination or in forging collective struggles. This is why intersectionality is always an issue and also a challenge for contemporary sociological theory and contemporary struggles for justice and social transformation alike.

Modernity, Crisis, and Change

Since its origins, sociology has always been engaged with the idea of modernity. Its focus was the societies that emerged out of long processes of social change. In Western Europe, there was a Renaissance in culture, Reformation (and resistance) in religion, political revolutions seeking greater representation and rule of law, industrial revolution transforming work and economies. Where there had been a shifting mosaic of kingdoms and empires, nation states tried to enforce clear borders and pursued projects of national integration. Family life and local community changed as cities grew; transportation and communication knit people together across long distances; and advances science and medicine meant that for the first time almost all children lived into adulthood and adults lived long enough and had enough resources or social support to retire. Societies grew more complex with a range of new institutions: universities, business corporations, and government agencies. Individuals gained more capacity to choose aspects of their futures, from different careers to different places to live. Women gradually gained full recognition as individuals and citizens.

Changes spread through countries Europeans colonized, building new societies and transforming old. Both slavery and empire brought struggles for liberation and self-determination in response. Spanish, French, and English became global languages. Markets extended ever-more widely and organized more and more lives. The world's population multiplied, and life became overwhelmingly urban. Migrations were ubiquitous.

As many classical sociological theorists argued, modernity was always a contradictory reality pulled in different directions by state power, capitalism, rising individualism, and new kinds of inequality. During the 20th century, tensions turned into devastating world wars. Total wars depended on industry as well as armies. Battles were not confined to fields of clear engagement; civilians were attacked; cities were bombed. And at an extreme, millions of civilians were murdered in gas chambers. Some suggested that the Holocaust was somehow a throwback to premodern, but as Zygmunt Bauman argued persuasively, it was, sadly and centrally, a product of modernity.[29]

Social transformations continued. Capitalism and states both expanded. New technologies transformed work, communication, and everyday life. Prosperity returned after the devastation of war – though the new Cold War between capitalist and communist alliances kept alive the fear of even more total war with nuclear weapons.

There was also optimism that the benefits of modernization could be shared throughout the world. Modernization theory drew on the actual social conditions of the richer Western European countries and the United States to construct a broadly functionalist model of modernity. They imagined former colonies following the paths of "successful modernizers" such as Britain and the United States. Modernization theory guided a range of important research projects that did indeed produce useful knowledge. However, especially in and after the 1960s, it was challenged on several fronts. Among the most important was the unilinear concept of social change widespread within it. Modernization was understood as a process moving in one predetermined direction. Closely related was the criticism that modernization theory neglected power, including the power by that some societies dominated others and also the power by which elites within societies shaped the course of their growth and change. The third was the argument that

modernization theory lumped all manners of very different cultural and social formations together into the category of "traditional" or premodernity. Fourth came the argument that modernity could take different forms. Chinese, Indian, or Islamic modernity might not resemble that of the West.

Domination by the US and global capitalism was central to political economy throughout Latin America and movements to change it. Again, transnational linkages were central, symbolized by Che Guevara, a hero of the Cuban Revolution, who was killed in Bolivia in 1967 with CIA assistance. And again, the struggle was intellectual as well as material. Sociological theorists like Fernando Henrique Cardoso, influenced by Max Weber and Alain Touraine, played a leading role questioning dominant theories of modernization and showing how capitalist development was a path to dependence, not autonomous flourishing, for the postcolonial countries of the Global South.

Four thinkers who worked together in Africa expanded this perspective into a theory of the "modern world system." Walter Rodney, from Guyana, showed how the underdevelopment of Africa was produced by Europe's growth, domination, and exploitation, not merely a matter of lagging behind.[30] The Egyptian Samir Amin coined the term "Eurocentric" to describe the perspective that world-system theory sought to replace.[31] An American student of C. Wright Mills, Immanuel Wallerstein (excerpted here), developed the most complete theorization of the "modern world system" as a product of capitalist globalization organized through a hierarchy of nation states – a richer and more powerful core, a semiperiphery trying to move up, and a periphery left nearly without power and capital. Wallerstein argued that transformations of the modern world system were inevitable. The Italian fourth founder of world-system theory, Giovanni Arrighi, analyzed the rise of China and the decline of US hegemony as just such a transformation of the modern world system.

By the 1960s and 1970s, there were widespread movements questioning whether modernity had taken a wrong turn. None fully succeeded in its attempt to correct course, though they had major impacts nonetheless. World peace was not established, but human rights and humanitarian action became prominent projects to mitigate suffering. Social justice was not established, but there was new recognition of the rights of women and racial minorities.

The 1970s saw an almost perfect storm to mark the end of one era and the launch of a new set of debates. The 1973–75 economic crisis was the biggest between the Great Depression and the still unresolved financial crisis of 2009–11. The rise of neoliberalism changed ideology. The rise of OPEC changed global power structures and, creating great reserves of investable cash in some countries, helped to launch an era of dramatic financialization. This supported growth in Asia though China's transformative entry into global capitalist trade was still a decade away.

In the West, deindustrialization decimated old industrial heartlands and the working class organized through trade unions. "Postindustrial society" was shaped by new technologies for both the production and distribution of things and for communications and cultural creation. This transformation came with more jobs in the service sector, often filled throughout the previously industrialized countries by women, minorities, and immigrants – but mostly at lower wages than the industrial jobs that were lost. Inequality grew to levels not seen in a century.

For many people, the changes that came in the 1980s and after brought more disruption than progress. Deindustrialization is a prime example. Factory closings led to wider unraveling of towns through America's "rust belt" or England's once industrial Midlands. This was a demonstration that functional integration matters, even if it is not all that matters. It was proof that intentional action has unintended consequences, as the functionalist Robert Merton had argued.[32] And it was a reminder that while the ability to guide change is part of the idea of agency, it is hard to achieve at large scale and in relation to social structure.

A growing range of thinkers, including contemporary sociological theorists, challenged the very idea of modernity. Jean-Francois Lyotard argued that the "master-narratives" of modernity, the great stories of progress, revolutions, and Western culture were obsolete, and we had entered a "postmodern" era.[33] One of the most influential contemporary sociological theorists, Bruno Latour (excerpted here), argued rather that we had never been "modern." Modernity for Latour was not so much an era shaped by observable social transformations as a problematic intellectual project. One of its hallmarks was trying to draw sharp lines and clear distinctions where reality was messy and mixed. Drawing such lines between eras was an example of this. Lines between nature and culture, humans and animals, people and things were all similarly misleading. The modern project – or culture or attitude – encouraged environmental disaster and overuse of the planet's resources.

Other contemporary sociological theorists argued that for all its disasters, modern social change was both real and sometimes positive. We should build on its strengths not give up on it. Jeffrey Alexander (excerpted here) emphasized in particular that modernity had given us not only ever-larger markets, corporations, and states but also a "civil sphere." This is composed of independent institutions and settings for public debate and free formation of culture; it allows us freedom to pursue our values not just respond to necessity. Democratic social integration depends on the civil sphere, and when it is weakened – as it has been lately – we should shore it up. Likewise, Michele Lamont (excerpted here) suggests that efforts to reverse stigmatization and reduce inequality represent modern tendencies, not just quixotic projects. Successful modern societies involve important levels of mutual recognition across lines of difference. This complements Norbert Elias's account of "the civilizing process" that helped to forge modernity (excerpted here). Learning to interact politely with strangers went along with learning good manners and helped to produce a culture of civility. Life in Alexander's civil sphere is not just a matter of institutions or debates but also norms about how we should interact; these are crucial equally to Lamont's projects of destigmatization. Uncivil politics and personal interactions are linked to polarized divisions, and civility is linked to solidarity.

The most important contemporary sociological theorist of modernity and its social transformations has been Jürgen Habermas (excerpted here). He was part of a new generation in Frankfurt School critical theory. Like Adorno and Horkheimer, he combined a broad philosophical background with strong influences from Weber and Marx. Distinctively, he drew on the classical sociology of George Herbert Mead and the pragmatist tradition more generally to develop a theory of communication action. He saw this as the basic source of social life. But it was a capacity improved through learning, which accounted for evolution and the possibility of error correction.

Habermas contributed to many of the key developments in contemporary sociological theory from the early 1960s to the present. In dialog with Niklas Luhmann, he explored the role of technology in modern society, enabling radical advances in productivity and creating depersonalized systems. He addressed the tension embedded in what Weber called "rationalization" – the relationship of growing opportunities for reasoned choice to both freedom and the development of bureaucratic and economic systems experienced as oppressive.

Concerned to defend a robust idea of the human, Habermas challenged technological transformations such as cloning and gene editing. He also sought to move beyond simplistic secularism to a "postsecular" recognition of the rights of religious citizens. Not religious himself, he nonetheless thought religious ideas could be important to counteracting the dominance of technical rationalism – and the threat of Weber's "iron cage" – in contemporary culture.

Against theorists of power and capitalism who were tempted to give up on democracy, he makes a strong case for how democracy not only embodies citizen voice but also enables a valuable process of learning. This is grounded in public debate and also in the development of free associations in civil society. Habermas presents analyses of how democracy – and democratic use of law – can remake problematic institutions. He has been a forceful critic of nationalism and advocate for the European Union, which he thought embodied potential for cosmopolitan justice. For all his criticisms of the actually existing state of modernity, Habermas argues that the project of modernity still offered positive potential.

Globalization

From the 1970s, understanding modernity became inseparable from accelerating globalization. Financialization, agreements to reduce trade barriers, and new technologies each played a role. This was disruptive but also created opportunities. There were more billionaires than ever before, not just in the United States but around the world. Asia enjoyed dramatic growth, lifting millions out of poverty and bringing the rise of a new middle class. Asian countries assumed new stature in global affairs. The United States remained central to the global capitalist economy, and it continued to engage actively in international politics. But from the era of the Vietnam War and its end without victory through repeated wars in the Middle East, the shock of 9/11 and an attack in the United States itself, through a long war in Afghanistan, again with victory, US global hegemony declined. The United States remained the world's most powerful country, both economically and politically, but by the 21st century, the rise of China – and other Asian economies – limited US action. The end of the Cold War – and the Soviet Union – gave Americans a brief sense of triumph in the 1990s. But it also became clear that the United States could not afford the economic costs of continual war abroad and was unwilling to accept the loss of lives.

So far, the 21st century has brought terrorism, financial crises and austerity programs, pandemics of increasing scale, and the threat of climate change. The German sociologist Ulrich Beck captured a mood as well as a trend by writing that modern society has become a risk society.[34] Risks are global even when politicians respond with nationalist calls to

close borders. The coronavirus pandemic revealed just how globalized economies were as it disrupted supply chains that stretched across continents to supply components to computers, cars, and air conditioners. The virus itself spread throughout the world. Coping with it was complicated by a wave of populist political mobilizations and problematic use of social media expressing suspicion of authorities – governmental or scientific, resentments of elites, and desires for security. Climate change poses a quintessential global challenge, but it has proven difficult to coordinate action in response.

Globalization is not all economics, politics, and risk. It is also culture: world music, dance crazes, TikTok (Douyin), Instagram, Weibo, Twitter and films from not just Hollywood but also Bollywood and Nollywood. It is global Islam and global Buddhism. It is money organized through cybercurrencies not based on any national government. It is migrations that have helped to make all the world's richer and more developed countries increasingly multicultural. It is media that provide instant information about distant events – even if we do not always have the capacity to act on what we know. And it is social movements – both calls from young activists to see the urgency of responding to climate change and less positive networking on the far right.

Globalization does not erase nation states but does show the limits of a purely national perspective. Levitt and Schiller (excerpted here) show, for example, that transnational migration is not just a matter of moving from one nation state to another but that migrants maintain transnational ties. New spaces of social connection and identity are created. Still, as Calhoun suggests, as problematic as they may be, nations remain important units of solidarity. And for all the ways in which contemporary culture, economy, and migration cross national boundaries, nations continue to be reproduced in standard social imaginaries. We look at maps that fail to show the global flows but clearly demarcate borders among countries with colors. In an example of what Beck called "methodological nationalism," social science uses statistics collected by nation states to try to understand global patterns.

Conclusion

Contemporary sociological theory is enormously diverse and multifaceted. It includes macroscopic studies of the structures of power, production, and trade that link and separate countries. It includes studies of interpersonal relations that emphasize both the process of communication and the formal structure of networks. And, it includes a variety of levels of analysis in between.

No single theory or perspective is dominant. Contemporary sociological theory includes a variety of contending but also often complementary perspectives and is informed by work in various neighboring disciplines and interdisciplinary fields. While any particular sociologist may make more use of feminist theory or rational choice theory or some other specific approach in his or her analyses, almost all draw on several theoretical traditions. These include both classical and more recent theoretical writings. Indeed, all contemporary theories draw on some combination of classical influences, though some of today's theorists follow more in the line of Marx, others Weber, and still others Durkheim or Mead.

That different theories can complement each other does not mean that they always fit neatly together. On the contrary, theories often start with different assumptions about human nature or about the nature of knowledge (epistemology); they frequently focus on different levels of social reality. These differences mean that fitting them together in any specific analysis always requires creative work and decisions. Theory is something to do, not simply to read. The theoretical resources available to today's sociologists are enormous, but this does not mean that theoretical work can stop.

NOTES

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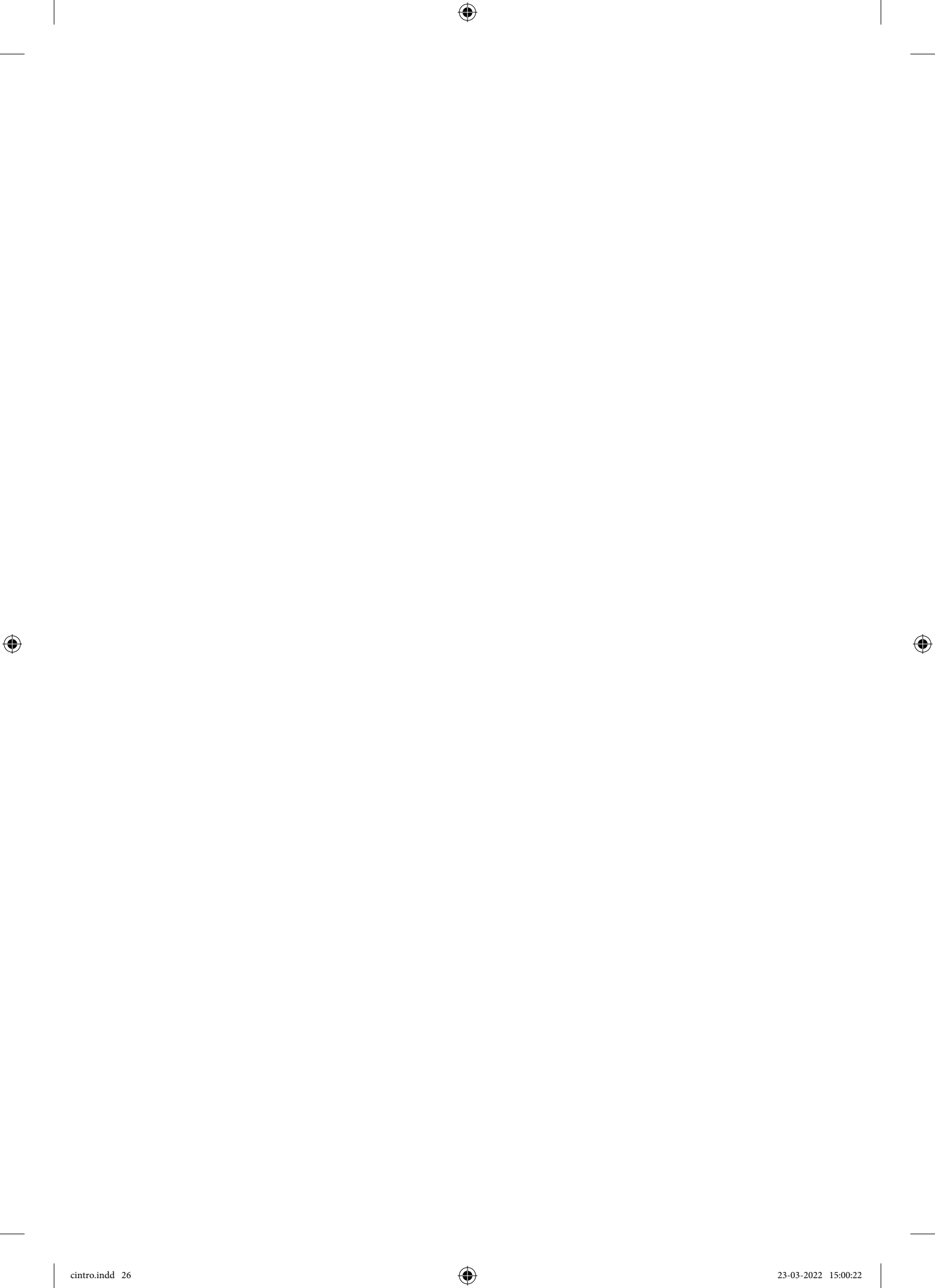
Part I

Symbolic Action

Introduction to Part I

Social life is part of every individual and every interaction – not only of the large-scale affairs of governments, economies, and complex organizations. Sociology that focuses primarily on persons and interpersonal relations is called "micro-sociology." This can be relevant on a large scale: for example, how members of a corporation's board of directors interact can determine whether 10,000 people lose their jobs or an entire country experiences an economic crisis. Micro-level decisions are the basis for many macro-sociological phenomena; individual decisions – each small in themselves – can also be aggregated to have huge effects. Consider how decisions to have children, to migrate, to invest in education, or about what and how much to buy combine to produce population crises, "brain drains," burgeoning of college enrollments, or recession, respectively. Even without attention to their large-scale effects, micro-sociological phenomena matter because their effects can be seen on people involved in everyday life. Indeed, it is often easiest for us to see ourselves in the "micro" part of sociology where symbolic action occurs. In other words, these everyday micro-sociological interactions through the use of commonly shared symbols or language allow us to make sense of the actions of others and to be part of society.

There are many different approaches to micro-sociological analysis. Perhaps, the most prominent is symbolic interactionism, which was developed on the basis of work by George Herbert Mead in the early twentieth century and pioneered by Herbert Blumer. This approach emphasizes that people develop their identities and their senses of how society works and what constitutes fair play in the course of their interaction with each other. It is linked theoretically to the pragmatist school of American philosophy, which emphasizes the ways that not only social order but also all knowledge is achieved in practically situated action.

A second major line of micro-sociological analysis is rooted in the European philosophical tradition called phenomenology. This emphasizes close observation of

human experience and especially the ways that the basic categories of understanding are formed. This has been developed directly in the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz and followers like Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (see Part VIII in Vol. 1), and has been a major influence on "ethnomethodology" – an approach developed especially by Harold Garfinkel and colleagues in California. Ethnomethodology refers to the methods ordinary people use to construct their own everyday understandings of social life, confronting practical challenges and shaping reality through the ways in which they conceptualize it. In this sense, it is a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach to the study of culture (*ethnos*).

Still, a third approach reveals some similarities to each of the others; however, it is also distinct. This is the idiosyncratic, but highly influential, sociology of Erving Goffman. Goffman built his approach to micro-analysis on the basis of Durkheim's social theory, trying to show how the sort of large-scale phenomena Durkheim analyzed was produced and reproduced in interpersonal interaction. Much interaction is ritualized, he suggested, in ways that make it reinforce the social order and prevent it from becoming highly disruptive. Goffman also developed theoretical approaches to aspects of communication, institutional analysis, and perhaps most famously the presentation of self in everyday life, that is, how we show ourselves to others (and simultaneously determine which aspects are visible and which hidden).

Challenges of Micro-Sociological Analysis

Micro-sociological theory grew, in large part, as a counterpoint to the dominance of structural functionalism in the mid-twentieth century, although its antecedents had been present in sociological theory, and in philosophy, far earlier. Structural functionalism, and the Durkheimian tradition in sociology more generally, focused on the social system as a whole, its functional requirements, and the ways that these requirements are met (see *Classical Sociological Theory* – the sister volume to this reader). In doing so, it tended to treat human agents as cogs in the machine of social forces. Even the early work of Talcott Parsons, which was greatly concerned with social action, was more clearly about action *systems* than about *actors* and their subjective orientation to the action at hand and to the other actors it involved.

Micro-sociologists, by contrast, emphasized the other side of social existence. Just as humans are shaped by the social system in which they act, the micro-sociologists emphasized that the social system was also a human creation. Rather than order being imposed on individuals by the system, micro-sociologists see social order as produced either from an emergent phenomenon formed through human interaction or as the result of discrete, self-interested action and exchange. It is created and maintained, they claim, by the institutions that we actively produce, even when we are not aware of them. Because of this, society itself rests on the ability of human agents to communicate with one another through the use of symbols to signify particular meanings. This highly evolved capacity for communication based on complex, abstract symbolic systems is, in fact, one of the features that distinguish humans from other species. Although there are different theoretical traditions in

micro-sociology, some of which will be discussed more fully in the following text, in a general sense, it can be said that micro-sociology is characterized by at least three common elements.

First, micro-sociologists place emphasis on the face-to-face social interaction of human agents rather than on the workings of the social system as an abstract entity. It is not quite correct to say that they focus on individuals since it is really the creation and maintenance of stable systems of meaning *between* individuals that micro-sociologists find fascinating. However, it is true that micro-sociologists generally focus on the interactions of concrete human agents or sets of agents rather than abstract social units, such as classes.

Second, micro-sociologists place emphasis on meanings rather than functions. Here, the influences of Max Weber and George Herbert Mead are evident in later micro-sociology. For Weber, sociology was the study of social action. Because it is individuals who carry on social action, Weber stressed that sociology had to be an interpretive science. That is, we should strive to provide *objective* accounts of the *subjective* motivations of the actions of individuals. Doing this necessarily involved taking into account the meanings that people assigned to their actions. However, Weber's own empirical analyses tended to examine highly routine forms of social action. Later, micro-sociologists began to examine the way that even everyday interactions are supported by the meanings produced and maintained in social interaction. Here, Mead's emphasis on the role of verbal and non-verbal symbols in the creation of meaning becomes central to micro-sociology. Although we are all born with the capacity to interpret symbols, it is only through the use of such symbols in interaction that humans acquire a "self" – a sense of who we are in the world. In this way, micro-sociologists stress the *intersubjective* aspects of human existence.

Third, micro-sociologists emphasize lived experience rather than an abstracted (or reified) concept of "society." The authors in this section generally grant that social institutions, once produced, do confront us as external and "objective" realities. Nevertheless, they focus on the way that human agents experience regularized patterns of social interaction (or "institutions") and how they support them in both big and small ways. The exchange of symbols allows forming solidarity with others by letting us come to common definitions of the world. Even seemingly banal social institutions, such as greeting rituals, have important symbolic meanings. As the sociologist Harold Garfinkel showed, we rarely recognize the importance of such institutions until they break down.[1] When we cannot take such minor routines for granted in our interactions, we have to do a great deal of interpretive work to figure out how to understand each interaction we face. Additionally, as the readings in the following text will argue, our past experiences matter in how we interpret the world. This is why people who meet for the first time, especially when they come from very different backgrounds, have to spend so much more energy to understand one another than do people who see each other every day.

The Development of Micro-Sociological Analysis

Micro-sociology did not develop all at once, nor in the same way. While the core concerns of the authors presented in the following text are common enough to warrant including them in one section, we must take some care to note some of the different traditions of

micro-sociological analysis as well. Loosely speaking, the authors in this section represent symbolic interactionism and the "dramaturgical" approach of Erving Goffman.

The major tradition of micro-sociology represented in this section is known as symbolic interactionism – a term coined by Herbert Blumer (1900–1987). For much of his career as a professor at the University of Chicago, Blumer's work was deeply indebted to Mead, as well as to his colleagues Robert E. Park and W.I. Thomas. Particularly important for Blumer was Mead's emphasis on the role of symbols in the maintenance of social interaction and the constitution of the self as a social process. In the same manner as Schutz's phenomenology, symbolic interactionists place a strong emphasis on empiricism rather than on the social realism typified by Durkheimian and functionalist sociology.

The reading included here is from Blumer's best-known work, *Symbolic Interactionism* (1969). Blumer begins by defining symbolic interaction as an approach that studies the "natural world of human group life and human conduct." The reading uses this concept of "naturalistic" studies of social life to issue an extremely sharp critique of functionalist methods. Nestled within this critique is Blumer's statement about how social analysis ought to be done. Blumer lays out four central claims: people act (in relation to things and each other) on the basis of the meanings attached to them; human interaction ("association") is necessary for the making of meaning; social acts are necessarily embedded, therefore, in an interpretive process; and because of this, social networks, institutions, and other things are inherently fluid and are always being renegotiated to some extent.

The work of Erving Goffman (1922–1982) is often considered to be part of the tradition of symbolic interactionism (and, indeed, "symbolic interactionism" is often used misleadingly as a term for almost all micro-sociological analysis). Goffman's graduate work at the University of Chicago overlapped with the last part of Blumer's stay there, and Goffman later joined Blumer as a colleague at the University of California, Berkeley.[2] Nevertheless, Goffman built a body of work distinct from that of Blumer, and indeed distinct from just about everything else in the discipline. His work emphasized how people used symbols in the performance of their social roles. This is often called the "dramaturgical approach" because it suggests that people are always staging their performances for others and analyzes how such performances play out to others. A central concern of Goffman's work is the tactical repertoire that actors develop in order to manage their social identities and to defend themselves from unwanted scrutiny and the negative appraisal of others. Sometimes, this leads them to act together, as when members of a group put on a team performance to gain what they want from others or when those sharing a common "stigma" (or a marker of an undesirable social identity) frame themselves in less damaging terms.

Like the other authors in this section, Goffman focused on the way that human social interaction makes the social possible. However, in contrast to the other authors in this section, Goffman had a certain affinity with the work of Durkheim. He saw himself as a sort of Durkheimian working on the "micro" side of the social equation. More than any of the other authors in this section, Goffman emphasized the importance of integration in the social process. To be an actor on the social stage requires not only that one claim a role, but it also requires that others recognize the claim, grant it, and act accordingly. Goffman also emphasized the fact that social performances serve broader functional needs. Our

performances are done in such a way as to keep social life going smoothly. For example, even when we fail in our performances, others are likely to overlook our mistakes so as not to disrupt everyone's performances.

The reading included here is from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. One of the central concepts in the reading is that of "front" – the part of a person's performance that serves to define a relevant context for the "audience." Therefore, it includes the props that go along with the physical setting, as well as the clothes, manners, and other symbols that can be used to corroborate the impression that one wishes to convey. The concept is important for pointing out not only the way that performances are realized, but also the degree to which they are situational. For example, it is easy for a person to put on a convincing performance as a serious professor or a diligent student in the context of a classroom – but it is difficult and awkward to maintain the same relation when the professor and a student notice each other in a supermarket or in a tavern.

The contemporary vitality of micro-sociological theory is reflected well in the work of Randall Collins (b. 1941) – one of today's leading sociologists. Collins has made a number of important contributions to sociological theory, particularly in studies of social order, conflict, historical sociology, and social change. Recently, Collins has proposed a bold theoretical synthesis that builds upon Durkheim's theory of moral integration through ritual and Goffman's situational analysis. In his book, *Interaction Ritual Chains* (2004), from which a reading is taken, Collins contends that rituals are powerful because they instigate social interaction based on bodily co-presence and mutual emotional attunement. When engaged in rituals, individuals feel solidarity with one another and imagine themselves to be members of a common undertaking; they become infused with emotional energy and exhilaration; they establish and reinforce collective symbols, moral representations of the group that ought to be defended and reinforced; and they react angrily to insults toward or the profanation of these symbols. Yet this is not a functional account of social order; drawing on Goffman, Collins shows how actors are obliged to perform in chains of ritual encounters which they can attempt to manipulate but which may also fail to produce emotional energy and attachment.

In analyzing a diverse range of social behaviors from the veneration of the 9/11 "Ground Zero" site, to the enactment of social status differences, to drug consumption to sexual intercourse, Collins observes similar features of common emotional entrainment, the production of symbolic focal objects that become invested with the emotional energy of ritual participants, and the continuation or transformation of social relations as rituals either link performances into chains of interaction into the future or produce dissonant emotions that lead social relations to decay. Ritual participation does not always perpetuate social order – Collins observes that formal rituals sometimes fail, or decay over time, such that they produce "little or no feeling of group solidarity; no sense of one's identity affirmed or changed; no respect for the group's symbols; no heightened emotional energy" (2004, p. 51). The decay of rituals provokes a sense of stale ceremonialism, inappropriateness, or even "strong abhorrence." When rituals are felt imposed, rather than spontaneously joined, they usually provoke resentment and disgust. The rejection of imposed rituals and the destruction of symbols associated with them seems to be a typical element in the collapse of social orders – a violent reaction to a "kind of formality that one wishes never to go through again" (p. 51).

Legacy of Micro-Sociological Analysis

All the different approaches to micro-sociological analysis presented here remain active in contemporary sociology. They are sometimes joined together with each other or with various macro-sociological theories. For example, Jürgen Habermas relies significantly on symbolic interactionism in his theory of communicative action and how it shapes modern law and politics (see Part VIII of this volume). Pierre Bourdieu has drawn on ethnomethodology and especially the work of Erving Goffman in his theory of social practice (Part VI). The various micro-analytic approaches have also influenced theories that are not specifically either macro or micro. For example, feminism and gender studies have benefited from symbolic interactionism and especially the analysis of "otherness" developed in that tradition (Part VII).

Micro-sociological theories are especially influential in the tradition of qualitative sociology. This refers mainly to methodological approaches that emphasize direct communication with social actors and observation of everyday social life. Ethnography, participant observation, interviews, and other methodological strategies are all examples. A key link to the micro-sociological theories presented in this Part is that these methods are used most often when sociologists want to develop analyses that make sense of the ways in which ordinary people understand their lives and the social world. This need not mean claiming that everyone already understands social interaction adequately or that everyday concepts can serve without modification as scientific ones. However, it does mean trying to grasp how everyday understanding and concepts work and how actors help to shape the reality in which they act.

NOTES

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2   George Ritzer, *Modern Sociological Theory*, 4th edn. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1996, p. 74).

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Goffman, Erving. 1982. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. New York: Pantheon. (Contains several of Goffman's most famous studies of the ways interpersonal interaction is socially organized.)

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Chapter 1

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life [1959]

Erving Goffman

Masks are arrested expressions and admirable echoes of feeling, at once faithful, discreet, and superlative. Living things in contact with the air must acquire a cuticle, and it is not urged against cuticles that they are not hearts; yet some philosophers seem to be angry with images for not being things, and with words for not being feelings. Words and images are like shells, no less integral parts of nature than are the substances they cover, but better addressed to the eye and more open to observation. I would not say that substance exists for the sake of appearance, or faces for the sake of masks, or the passions for the sake of poetry and virtue. Nothing arises in nature for the sake of anything else; all these phases and products are involved equally in the round of existence.
George Santayana, *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies*
(New York: Scribner's, 1922), pp. 131-2

Belief in the Part One is Playing

When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be. In line with this, there is the popular view that the individual offers his performance and puts on his show "for the benefit of other people." It will be convenient

to begin a consideration of performances by turning the question around and looking at the individual's own belief in the impression of reality that he attempts to engender in those among whom he finds himself.

At one extreme, one finds that the performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality. When his audience is also convinced in this way about the show he puts on – and this seems to be the typical case – then for the moment at least, only the sociologist or the socially disgruntled will have any doubts about the "realness" of what is presented.

At the other extreme, we find that the performer may not be taken in at all by his own routine. This possibility is understandable, since no one is in quite as good an observational position to see through the act as the person who puts it on. Coupled with this, the performer may be moved to guide the conviction of his audience only as a means to other ends, having no ultimate concern in the conception that they have of him or of the situation. When the individual has no belief in his own act and no ultimate concern with the beliefs of his audience, we may call him cynical, reserving the term "sincere" for individuals who believe in the impression fostered by their own performance. It should be understood that the cynic, with all his professional disinvolvement, may obtain unprofessional pleasures from his masquerade, experiencing a kind of gleeful spiritual aggression from the fact that he can toy at will with something his audience must take seriously.

It is not assumed, of course, that all cynical performers are interested in deluding their audiences for purposes of what is called "self-interest" or private gain. A cynical individual may delude his audience for what he considers to be their own good, or for the good of the community, etc. For illustrations of this we need not appeal to sadly enlightened showmen such as Marcus Aurelius or Hsun Tzǔ. We know that in service occupations practitioners who may otherwise be sincere are sometimes forced to delude their customers because their customers show such a heartfelt demand for it. Doctors who are led into giving placebos, filling station attendants who resignedly check and recheck tire pressures for anxious women motorists, shoe clerks who sell a shoe that fits but tell the customer it is the size she wants to hear – these are cynical performers whose audiences will not allow them to be sincere. Similarly, it seems that sympathetic patients in mental wards will sometimes feign bizarre symptoms so that student nurses will not be subjected to a disappointingly sane performance. So also, when inferiors extend their most lavish reception for visiting superiors, the selfish desire to win favor may not be the chief motive; the inferior may be tactfully attempting to put the superior at ease by simulating the kind of world the superior is thought to take for granted.

I have suggested two extremes: an individual may be taken in by his own act or be cynical about it. These extremes are something a little more than just the ends of a continuum. Each provides the individual with a position which has its own particular securities and defenses, so there will be a tendency for those who have traveled close to one of these poles to complete the voyage. Starting with lack of inward belief in one's role, the individual may follow the natural movement described by Park:

> It is probably no mere historical accident that the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role … It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves.[1]

In a sense, and in so far as this mask represents the conception we have formed of ourselves – the role we are striving to live up to – this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be. In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality. We come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons.[2]

This may be illustrated from the community life of Shetland. For the last four or five years the island's tourist hotel has been owned and operated by a married couple of crofter origins. From the beginning, the owners were forced to set aside their own conceptions as to how life ought to be led, displaying in the hotel a full round of middle-class services and amenities. Lately, however, it appears that the managers have become less cynical about the performance that they stage; they themselves are becoming middle class and more and more enamored of the selves their clients impute to them.

Another illustration may be found in the raw recruit who initially follows army etiquette in order to avoid physical punishment and eventually comes to follow the rules so that his organization will not be shamed and his officers and fellow soldiers will respect him.

As suggested, the cycle of disbelief-to-belief can be followed in the other direction, starting with conviction or insecure aspiration and ending in cynicism. Professions which the public holds in religious awe often allow their recruits to follow the cycle in this direction, and often recruits follow it in this direction not because of a slow realization that they are deluding their audience – for by ordinary social standards the claims they make may be quite valid – but because they can use this cynicism as a means of insulating their inner selves from contact with the audience. And we may even expect to find typical careers of faith, with the individual starting out with one kind of involvement in the performance he is required to give, then moving back and forth several times between sincerity and cynicism before completing all the phases and turning-points of self-belief for a person of his station. Thus, students of medical schools suggest that idealistically oriented beginners in medical school typically lay aside their holy aspirations for a period of time. During the first two years the students find that their interest in medicine must be dropped that they may give all their time to the task of learning how to get through examinations. During the next two years they are too busy learning about diseases to show much concern for the persons who are diseased. It is only after their medical schooling has ended that their original ideals about medical service may be reasserted.

While we can expect to find natural movement back and forth between cynicism and sincerity, still we must not rule out the kind of transitional point that can be sustained on the strength of a little self-illusion. We find that the individual may attempt to induce the audience to judge him and the situation in a particular way, and he may seek this judgment as an ultimate end in itself, and yet he may not completely believe that he deserves the valuation of self which he asks for or that the impression of reality which he fosters is valid. […]

Front

I have been using the term "performance" to refer to all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers. It will be convenient to label as "front" that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general

and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance. Front, then, is the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance. For preliminary purposes, it will be convenient to distinguish and label what seem to be the standard parts of front.

First, there is the "setting," involving furniture, decor, physical layout, and other background items which supply the scenery and stage props for the spate of human action played out before, within, or upon it. A setting tends to stay put, geographically speaking, so that those who would use a particular setting as part of their performance cannot begin their act until they have brought themselves to the appropriate place and must terminate their performance when they leave it. It is only in exceptional circumstances that the setting follows along with the performers; we see this in the funeral cortège, the civic parade, and the dream-like processions that kings and queens are made of. In the main, these exceptions seem to offer some kind of extra protection for performers who are, or who have momentarily become, highly sacred. These worthies are to be distinguished, of course, from quite profane performers of the peddler class who move their place of work between performances, often being forced to do so. In the matter of having one fixed place for one's setting, a ruler may be too sacred, a peddler too profane.

In thinking about the scenic aspects of front, we tend to think of the living room in a particular house and the small number of performers who can thoroughly identify themselves with it. We have given insufficient attention to assemblages of sign-equipment which large numbers of performers can call their own for short periods of time. It is characteristic of Western European countries, and no doubt a source of stability for them, that a large number of luxurious settings are available for hire to anyone of the right kind who can afford them. […]

If we take the term "setting" to refer to the scenic parts of expressive equipment, one may take the term "personal front" to refer to the other items of expressive equipment, the items that we most intimately identify with the performer himself and that we naturally expect will follow the performer wherever he goes. As part of personal front we may include: insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age, and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures; and the like. Some of these vehicles for conveying signs, such as racial characteristics, are relatively fixed and over a span of time do not vary for the individual from one situation to another. On the other hand, some of these sign vehicles are relatively mobile or transitory, such as facial expression, and can vary during a performance from one moment to the next.

It is sometimes convenient to divide the stimuli which make up personal front into "appearance" and "manner," according to the function performed by the information that these stimuli convey. "Appearance" may be taken to refer to those stimuli which function at the time to tell us of the performer's social statuses. These stimuli also tell us of the individual's temporary ritual state, that is, whether he is engaging in formal social activity, work, or informal recreation, whether or not he is celebrating a new phase in the season cycle or in his life-cycle. "Manner" may be taken to refer to those stimuli which function at the time to warn us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the oncoming situation. Thus a haughty, aggressive manner may give the impression that the performer expects to be the one who will initiate the verbal interaction and direct its course. A meek, apologetic manner may give the impression that the performer expects to follow the lead of others, or at least that he can be led to do so.

We often expect, of course, a confirming consistency between appearance and manner; we expect that the differences in social statuses among the interactants will be expressed in some way by congruent differences in the indications that are made of an expected interaction role. […] But, of course, appearance and manner may tend to contradict each other, as when a performer who appears to be of higher estate than his audience acts in a manner that is unexpectedly equalitarian, or intimate, or apologetic, or when a performer dressed in the garments of a high position presents himself to an individual of even higher status.

In addition to the expected consistency between appearance and manner, we expect, of course, some coherence among setting, appearance, and manner. Such coherence represents an ideal type that provides us with a means of stimulating our attention to and interest in exceptions. […]

Dramatic Realization

While in the presence of others, the individual typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure. For if the individual's activity is to become significant to others, he must mobilize his activity so that it will express *during the interaction* what he wishes to convey. In fact, the performer may be required not only to express his claimed capacities during the interaction but also to do so during a split second in the interaction. Thus, if a baseball umpire is to give the impression that he is sure of his judgment, he must forgo the moment of thought which might make him sure of his judgment; he must give an instantaneous decision so that the audience will be sure that he is sure of his judgment.

It may be noted that in the case of some statuses dramatization presents no problem, since some of the acts which are instrumentally essential for the completion of the core task of the status are at the same time wonderfully adapted, from the point of view of communication, as means of vividly conveying the qualities and attributes claimed by the performer. The roles of prizefighters, surgeons, violinists, and policemen are cases in point. These activities allow for so much dramatic self-expression that exemplary practitioners – whether real or fictional – become famous and are given a special place in the commercially organized fantasies of the nation.

In many cases, however, dramatization of one's work does constitute a problem. An illustration of this may be cited from a hospital study where the medical nursing staff is shown to have a problem that the surgical nursing staff does not have:

> The things which a nurse does for post-operative patients on the surgical floor are frequently of recognizable importance, even to patients who are strangers to hospital activities. For example, the patient sees his nurse changing bandages, swinging orthopedic frames into place, and can realize that these are purposeful activities. Even if she cannot be at his side, he can respect her purposeful activities.
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> Medical nursing is also highly skilled work. […] The physician's diagnosis must rest upon careful observation of symptoms over time where the surgeon's are in larger part dependent on visible things. The lack of visibility creates problems on the medical.
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> A patient will see his nurse stop at the next bed and chat for a moment or two with the patient there. He doesn't know that she is observing the shallowness of the breathing and