



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

CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY FOURTH EDITION

WILEY Blackwell

Contemporary Sociological Theory

Fourth Edition

Edited by

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

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2022
© 2022 John Wiley & Sons Ltd

Edition History

First Edition @ 2002 Blackwell Publishing Ltd
Second Edition @ 2007 Blackwell Publishing Ltd
Third Edition © 2012 John Wiley & Sons Ltd
Fourth Edition © 2022 John Wiley & Sons Ltd

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by law. Advice on how to obtain permission to reuse material from this title is available at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

The right of Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk to be identified as the authors of the editorial material in this work has been asserted in accordance with law.

Registered Offices

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA
John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Office

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, customer services, and more information about Wiley products visit us at www.wiley.com.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some content that appears in standard print versions of this book may not be available in other formats.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty

While the publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this work, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives, written sales materials, or promotional statements for this work. The fact that an organization, website, or product is referred to in this work as a citation and/or potential source of further information does not mean that the publisher and authors endorse the information or services the organization, website, or product may provide or recommendations it may make. This work is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a specialist where appropriate. Further, readers should be aware that websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. Neither the publisher nor authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages,

including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Calhoun, Craig J., 1952- editor. | Gerteis, Joseph, 1970- editor. | Moody, James W., editor. | Pfaff, Steven, 1970- editor. | Virk, Indermohan, editor. | John Wiley & Sons, publisher.

Title: Classical sociological theory / edited by Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, Indermohan Virk.

Description: Fourth edition. | Hoboken, NJ : John Wiley & Sons, 2022. | ncludes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021055635 (print) | LCCN 2021055636 (ebook) | ISBN 9781119527244 (paperback) | ISBN 9781119527275 (pdf) | ISBN 9781119527237 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Sociology--History--20th century. | Sociology--Philosophy.

Classification: LCC HM447 .C66 2022 (print) | LCC HM447 (ebook) | DDC 301.01--dc23/eng/20211207

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021055635>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021055636>

Cover Images: © The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle/Artists Rights Society (ARS),

New York and DACS, London 2021.

Cover Design by Wiley

Set in 10.5/13pt Minion by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd, Pondicherry, India

Contents

[Cover](#)

[Title page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Notes on the Editors](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[General Introduction](#)

[Part I Symbolic Action](#)

[Introduction to Part I](#)

[1 The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life \(from The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life\) Erving Goffman](#)

[2 Symbolic Interactionism \(from Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method\) Herbert Blumer](#)

[3 Interaction Ritual Chains \(from Interaction Ritual Chains\) Randall Collins](#)

[Part II Structure and Agency](#)

[Introduction to Part II](#)

[4 A Theory of Group Solidarity \(from Principles of Group Solidarity\) Michael Hechter](#)

[5 Metatheory: Explanation in Social Science \(from Foundations of Social Theory\) James S. Coleman](#)

[6 Catnets \(from Notes on the Constituents of Social Structure\) Harrison White](#)

[7 Some New Rules of Sociological Method \(from New Rules For Sociological Method\) Anthony Giddens](#)

Part III Institutions

Introduction to Part III

8 Economic Embeddedness Mark Granovetter

9 The Iron Cage Revisited Paul J. DiMaggio and
Walter W. Powell

Part IV Power and Inequality

Introduction to Part IV

10 The Power Elite (from The Power Elite) C.
Wright Mills

11 Durable Inequality (from Durable Inequality).
Charles Tilly

12 Power: A Radical View (from Power: A Radical
View) Steven Lukes

13 Societies as Organized Power Networks (from
The Sources of Social Power, Vol I. A History of
Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760) Michael
Mann

Part V The Sociological Theory of Michel Foucault

Introduction to Part V

14 The History of Sexuality (from The History of
Sexuality, Vol I: An Introduction) Michel Foucault

15 Discipline and Punish (from Discipline and
Punish: The Birth of the Prison) Michel Foucault

Part VI The Sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu

Introduction to Part VI

16 Social Space and Symbolic Space (from “Social
Space and Symbolic Space: Introduction to a
Japanese Reading of Distinction”) Pierre Bourdieu

17 Structures, Habitus, Practices (from The Logic
of Practice) Pierre Bourdieu

[18 The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed Pierre Bourdieu](#)

[19 Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field \(from Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field\) Pierre Bourdieu](#)

Part VII Race, Gender, and Intersectionality

[Introduction to Part VII](#)

[20 The Theory of Racial Formation \(from Racial Formation in the United States\) Michael Omi and Howard Winant](#)

[21 Intellectual Schools and the Atlanta School \(from The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology\) Aldon D. Morris](#)

[22 The Paradoxes of Integration \(from The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in Americas "Racial" Crisis\) Orlando Patterson](#)

[23 The Conceptual Practices of Power \(from The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge\) Dorothy E. Smith](#)

[24 Black Feminist Epistemology \(from Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment\) Patricia Hill Collins](#)

[25 Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex Kimberle Crenshaw](#)

[26 Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research Hae Yeon Choo and Myra Marx Ferree](#)

[27 The Politics of Erased Migrations Rocio R. Garcia](#)

Part VIII The Sociological Theory of Jürgen Habermas

[Introduction to Part VIII](#)

28 Modernity: An Unfinished Project (from Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity). Jürgen Habermas

29 The Rationalization of the Lifeworld (from The Theory of Communicative Action Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason). Jürgen Habermas

30 Civil Society and the Political Public Sphere (from Between Facts and Norms: Contribution to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy). Jürgen Habermas

Part IX Modernity

Introduction to Part IX

31 The Social Constraint towards Self-Constraint (from The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization). Norbert Elias

32 We Have Never Been Modern (from We Have Never Been Modern) Bruno Latour

33 The Civil Sphere (from The Civil Sphere). Jeffrey C. Alexander

34 Addressing Recognition Gaps: Destigmatization and the Reduction of Inequality (from American Sociological Review) Michèle Lamont

Part X Crisis and Change

Introduction to Part X

35 The Modern World-System in Crisis (from World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction) Immanuel Wallerstein

36 Conceptualizing Simultaneity Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller

37 Nationalism (from Nationalism) Craig Calhoun

[38 The End May Be Nigh, But For Whom? \(from Does Capitalism Have a Future?\) Michael Mann](#)

[Index](#)

[End User License Agreement](#)

List of Figures

Chapter 3

[Figure 3.1 Interaction ritual.](#)

Chapter 5

[Figure 5.1 Macrosocial proposition: Calvinism encourages capitalism.](#)

[Figure 5.2 Marco- and micro-level propositions: effects of...](#)

Chapter 6

[Figure 6.1 Relation between pairs in a triad.](#)

[Figure 6.2 Venn diagram showing membership in three classes.](#)

[Figure 6.3 Mapping a neighborhood system.](#)

Chapter 12

[Figure 12.1 A conceptual map of Power and its Cognates.](#)

Chapter 13

[Figure 13.1 Forms of organizational reach.](#)

Chapter 16

[Figure 16.1 The space of social positions...](#)

Chapter 18

[Figure 18.1 Diagram of the artistic field...](#)

Chapter 29

[Figure 29.1 Contributions of reproduction processes...](#)

[Figure 29.2 Manifestations of crisis when reproduction...](#)

[Figure 29.3 Reproductive functions of action oriented...](#)

Chapter 32

[Figure 32.1 What is retained and what is rejected.](#)

[Figure 32.2 Modern/nonmodern constitution.](#)

Chapter 34

[Figure 34.1 Cultural Resources and Actors...](#)

List of Table

Chapter 6

[Table 6.1 Tabular representation of...](#)

Notes on the Editors

Craig Calhoun is University Professor of Social Sciences at Arizona State University. He was previously Director of the London School of Economics, President of the Social Science Research Council, and a professor of sociology at NYU, Columbia, and UNC Chapel Hill. Calhoun's newest book is *Degenerations of Democracy* (Harvard 2022) with Dilip Gaonkar and Charles Taylor.

Joseph Gerteis is Professor of Sociology and Co-Principal Investigator of the American Mosaic Project at the University of Minnesota. He is author of *Class and the Color Line* (Duke University Press). His work explores issues of race and ethnicity, social boundaries and identities, and political culture. It has appeared in *The Sociological Quarterly*, *Sociological Forum*, *American Sociological Review*, *Social Problems*, and elsewhere.

James Moody is Professor of Sociology at Duke University and Director of the Duke Network Analysis Center. He has published extensively in the field of social networks, methods, and social theory with over 70 peer reviewed publications. His work focuses theoretically on the network foundations of social cohesion and diffusion, with a particular emphasis on building tools and methods for understanding dynamic social networks. He has used network models to help understand organizational performance, school racial segregation, adolescent health, disease spread, economic development, and the development of scientific disciplines.

Steven Pfaff is Professor of Sociology at the University of Washington. He is the author of *Exit-Voice Dynamics and the Collapse of East Germany* (Duke, 2006) and, with Mimi

Goldman, *The Spiritual Virtuoso* (Bloomsbury, 2007/17), and with Michael Hechter, *The Genesis of Rebellion* (Cambridge, 2020). He has been awarded the Social Science History Association's President's Award and the best book award from the European Academy of Sociology.

Indermohan Virk is the Executive Director of the Patten Foundation and the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions at Indiana University Bloomington, and she works in the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs. She was previously a lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Indiana University.

Acknowledgements

The editors and publisher gratefully acknowledge the permission granted to reproduce the copyright material in this book.

PART I

Chapter 1

Erving Goffman, pp. 17-25 from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday, 1959. © 1959 Erving Goffman. Reproduced with permission of Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc. and Penguin Books, UK.

Chapter 2

Herbert Blumer, pp. 46-8, 50-2, 78-89 from *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*, 1st edn. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969. Reproduced with permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Chapter 3

Randall Collins, pp. 3-4, 5, 15, 42-5, 47-54, 55-61, 62-3, 81-3, 87 from *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton University Press, 2004. © 2004 Princeton University Press. Reproduced with permission of Princeton University Press.

PART II

Chapter 4

Michael Hechter, "A Theory of Group Solidarity," pp. 40–54 from *Principles of Group Solidarity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987. Reproduced with permission of University of California Press.

Chapter 5

James S. Coleman, "Metatheory" from *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990. © 1990 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Reproduced with permission of Harvard University Press.

Chapter 6

Harrison White, "Catnets," from "Notes on the Constituents of Social Structure," unpublished manuscript, 1966. Reproduced with permission of Prof. Peter S. Bearman.

Chapter 7

Anthony Giddens, "Some New Rules of Sociological Method," pp. 155–162 from *New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretive Sociologies*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993. Reproduced with permission of Polity Press and Stanford University Press.

PART III

Chapter 8

Mark Granovetter, "Economic Embeddedness," pp. 481-2, 482-8, 488-9, 490-2, 492-3, 508-10 from "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness," *American Journal of Sociology* 91: 3 (November 1985). © 1985 American Journal of Sociology. Reproduced with permission of University of Chicago Press.

Chapter 9

Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited," pp. 147-60 from "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48: 2 (1983). © 1983 American Sociological Review. Reproduced with permission of the author and the American Sociological Association.

PART IV

Chapter 10

C. Wright Mills, pp. 3-4, 6, 7-11, 287-9, 296 from *The Power Elite*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956. © 1956 Oxford University Press Inc. Reproduced with permission of Oxford University Press.

Chapter 11

Charles Tilly, pp. 6-10, 81-91, 95-99 from *Durable Inequality*. University of California Press, 1998. Reproduced with permission of University of California Press.

Chapter 12

Steven Lukes, pp. 16-17, 19-21, 25-30, 34-8, 58-9 from *Power: A Radical View*, 2nd edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

Chapter 13

Michael Mann, "Societies as Organized Power Networks," pp. 1-11, 22-28, 32 from *The Sources of Social Power*, Vol. I. Cambridge University Press, 1986. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.

PART V

Chapter 14

Michel Foucault, pp. 135–50 from *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, translated from French by Robert Hurley. English translation © 1978 Penguin Random House LLC.

Reproduced with permission of Pantheon Books, an imprint of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

Chapter 15

Michel Foucault, “Panopticism,” pp. 200–2, 215–16, 218–24 from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated from French by Alan Sheridan. English translation © 1978 Alan Sheridan. Reproduced with permission of Pantheon Books (an imprint of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC) and Penguin Books Ltd.

PART VI

Chapter 16

Pierre Bourdieu, pp. 627–38 from “Social Space and Symbolic Space: Introduction to a Japanese Reading of Distinction,” *Poetics Today* 12: 4 (1991). © 1991 The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, Tel Aviv University. Reproduced with permission of Duke University Press.

Chapter 17

Pierre Bourdieu, “Structures, Habitus, Practice,” from *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990. English translation © 1990 Polity Press. Originally published in French as *Le Sens Pratique* by Les Éditions des Minuit. Original French text © 1980 Les Éditions des Minuit. Reproduced with permission of Polity Press, Stanford University Press and Les Editions de Minuit S.A.

Chapter 18

Pierre Bourdieu, pp. 312–13, 315–16, 319–26, 341–6, 349–50, 353–6 from “The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed,” *Poetics* 12: 4–5 (1983). Reproduced with permission of Elsevier.

Chapter 19

Pierre Bourdieu, pp. 1–5, 12–18 from “Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field,” translated by Loïc J. D. Wacquant and Samar Farage. *Sociological Theory* 12: 1 (March 1994). Reproduced with permission of the author and American Sociological Association.

PART VII

Chapter 20

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "The Theory of Racial Formation," pp. 105–112, 124–130 from *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd edition. Routledge, 2015.

Reproduced with permission of Taylor & Francis Group.

Chapter 21

Aldon Morris, "Intellectual Schools and the Atlanta School," pp. 174–189, 192–194 from *The Scholar Denied: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology*. University of California Press, 2015. Reproduced with permission of University of California Press.

Chapter 22

Orlando Patterson, "The Paradoxes of Integration," pp. 15–6, 64–6, 68–74, 76–7 from *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's "Racial" Crisis*.

Reproduced with permission of Civitas Books, an imprint of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

Chapter 23

Dorothy E. Smith, pp. 12–19, 21–7 from *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1990. © 1990 Dorothy E. Smith. Reproduced with permission of Dorothy E. Smith.

Chapter 24

Patricia Hill Collins, "Black Feminist Epistemology," pp. 251–6, 266–71 from *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd edn. New York: Routledge, 2000. Reproduced with permission of Taylor & Francis Group.

Chapter 25

Kimberlé Crenshaw, pp. 139-140, 150-152, 154-60 from "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum 1 (1989), Article 8.

Chapter 26

Hae Yeon Choo and Myra Marx Ferree, "Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research," pp. 129, 131-6, 146-7 from *Sociological Theory* 28: 2 (2010). Reproduced with permission of the author and American Sociological Association.

Chapter 27

Rocio R. Garcia, "The Politics of Erased Migrations: Expanding a Relational, Intersectional Sociology of Latinx Gender and Migration," pp. 4-6, 8, 14-17 from *Sociology Compass* 12: 4, e12571 (2018). Reproduced with permission of John Wiley & Sons.

PART VIII

Chapter 28

Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," pp. 39-40, 42-6, 53-5 from *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, edited by Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996. Reproduced with permission of The Polity Press and Suhrkamp Verlag.

Chapter 29

Jürgen Habermas, "The Rationalization of the Lifeworld," pp. 119-26, 136-45, 147-8, 150-2 from *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2: Lifeworld and System*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. English translation © 1987 Beacon Press. Originally published as *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, Band 2: Zur Kritik der funktionalistischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981). Reproduced with permission of Beacon Press.

Chapter 30

Jürgen Habermas, "Civil Society and the Political Public Sphere" from *Between Facts and Norms, Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, translated by William Rehg," pp. 331-333, 360, 362-364, 365-367, 368-370, 371, 372, 373-374, 378-379, 381-382, 385-387. © 1996 MIT Press. Reproduced with permission of MIT Press and Polity Press.

PART IX

Chapter 31

Norbert Elias, "The Social Constraint towards Self-Constraint," pp. 443-8, 450-6 from *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978. Originally translated by Edmund Jephcott. © 1978 Norbert Elias. Reproduced with permission of John Wiley & Sons.

Chapter 32

Bruno Latour, pp. 130-45 from *We Have Never Been Modern*, translated by Catherine Porter. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993. English translation © 1993 Harvester Wheatsheaf and the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Reproduced with permission of Harvard University Press.

Chapter 33

Jeffrey C. Alexander, pp. 3-9, 53-62, 64-67 from *The Civil Sphere*. Oxford University Press, 2006. Reproduced with permission of Oxford University Press.

Chapter 34

Michele Lamont, "Addressing Recognition Gaps: Destigmatization and the Reduction of Inequality," pp. 420-436 from *American Sociological Review* 83: 3. Reproduced with permission of the author and American Sociological Association.

PART X

Chapter 35

Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Modern World-System in Crisis," pp. 76-90 from *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004. Reproduced with permission of Duke University Press.

Chapter 36

Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller, "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society," pp. 1002-1039 from *International Migration Review* 38: 3 (2004). Reproduced with permission of Sage Publications.

Chapter 37

Craig J. Calhoun, pp. 1, 3-7, 37, 39, 40, 42, 43, 66, 92-93, 94, 99, 103, 123, 125-126 from *Nationalism*. Open University Press, 1997. Reproduced with permission of McGraw-Hill Education (UK) Ltd.

Chapter 38

Michael Mann, "The End May Be Nigh, But For Whom?" pp. 71-76, 83-97 from Immanuel Wallerstein, Randall Collins, Michael Mann, Georgi Derluguian, Craig Calhoun, *Does Capitalism Have a Future?* Oxford University Press, 2013. Reproduced with permission of Oxford University Press.

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