

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGICAL
THEORY

Creating Sociological Theory

Defining Sociological Theory

Creating Sociological Theory: A More Realistic View

Overview of the Book

Summary

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Everyone theorizes about the social world (and many other things—natural events, supernatural possibilities) virtually all of the time. Most generally this means that people think about, speculate on, social issues. We might think about our parents' relationship with each other or speculate about the chances that our favorite team will win the league championship or whether China will go to war with Taiwan. On the basis of such speculation, we are likely to develop theories about our parents (e.g., they get along well because they have similar personalities), our team (they will not win the championship because they lack teamwork), or the possibility of war (China will not go to war because war would threaten China's recent economic advances). These theories deal with social realities and social relationships—for example, the personalities of our parents and how those personalities affect the way they relate to each other, teamwork and the ability to win a championship, and the nature of China and its relationship to other nations in an era in which national economies are increasingly tightly intertwined with the global economy.

CREATING SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Social theorists, including those discussed in this book, do much the same kind of thing—they speculate and develop theories, and their theories deal with social realities and social relationships. Of course, there are important differences between everyday theorizing and that of social theorists:

1. Social thinkers usually theorize in a more disciplined and self-conscious manner than do people on an everyday basis.
2. Social thinkers usually do their theorizing on the basis of the work of social thinkers who have come before them. Thus, virtually all social theorists have carefully studied the work of their forebears, whereas most laypeople operate largely, if not totally, on their own. To paraphrase Isaac Newton and, more recently, the sociologist Robert Merton, if social theorists have developed better theories, it is because they have been able to build upon the ideas of those thinkers who came before them.
3. In addition, social theorists also often rely on data, either gathered by themselves or collected by others, on the social realities or relationships of interest to them. Laypeople may have some data at their disposal when they theorize, but these data are likely to be far less extensive and to be collected much less systematically.
4. Unlike laypeople, social theorists seek to publish their theories (major examples of such writings will be examined in this book) so that they can be critically analyzed, more widely disseminated, used as a basis for empirical research, and built upon by later theorists. The rigors of the review process help ensure that weak theories are weeded out before they are published.
5. Most important, social theorists do not, at least professionally, think about specific relationships involving their parents, their favorite teams, or even particular nations. Social theorists generally think in a more inclusive manner about broad social issues, whereas the layperson is more likely to speculate about much narrower, even personal, issues. Thus, in terms of the three examples already mentioned, although a layperson is likely to speculate about the relationship between their parents, the social theorist thinks about the more general issue of, for example, the changing nature of spousal relations in the early 21st century. Similarly, the layperson who thinks about the chances of success of their favorite team contrasts with the social theorist who might be concerned with issues such as the unfairness of competition between sports teams in the era of large salaries and budgets. Finally, rather than theorizing about China, a social theorist might think about the contemporary nation-state in the era of global capitalism (see Chapter 11).

Although social theorists think in general terms, this is not to say that the issues of concern to them are only of academic interest. In fact, the issues that theorists choose to examine are often of great personal interest to them (and many others) and are frequently derived from issues of import in their personal lives. Thus, the stresses and strains in their parents' marriage, or even in their own, might lead a sociologist to theorize about the general issue of the modern family and the difficulties that abound within it. The best sociological theories often stem from the deep personal interests of theorists.

However, this poses an immediate dilemma. If the best theory stems from powerful personal interests, isn't it likely that such a theory could be biased and distorted by those interests and personal experiences? The bad experiences that a theorist had as a child in their own home, or their own marital problems, might bias them against the nuclear family and give them a distorted view of it. This, in turn, might lead them in the direction of a theory critical of such a family. This is certainly possible, even likely, but theorists must and usually do manage to keep their personal biases in check. Yet bias is an ever-present danger that both theorists and those who read theory must keep in the forefront of their thinking.

Balancing this is the fact that feeling strongly about an issue is a powerful motivator. Sociologists with strong feelings about the family or any other topic are likely to do sustained work on it and to feel driven to come up with useful theoretical insights. As long as biases are kept in check, strong personal feelings often lead to the best in social theory. For example, in this volume we will have a number of occasions to mention Karl Marx (1818–1883) and his pioneering work on capitalism (see Chapter 2). In many ways, Marx's theory of capitalism is one of the best in the history of social theory, and it was motivated by Marx's strong feelings about the capitalist system and the plight of the workers in such a system. It is true that these feelings may have blinded Marx to some of the strengths of the capitalist system, but that is counterbalanced by the fact that these feelings led to a powerful theory of the dynamics of capitalism.

One can theorize about any aspect of the social world, and social theorists have speculated about things we would expect them to think about (politics, family) as well as others that we might find quite surprising (e.g., one of the authors of this textbook, George Ritzer, has done work on things like fast-food restaurants, credit cards, and shopping malls). Every aspect of the social world, from the most exalted to the most mundane, can be the subject of social theory. Individual social theorists find different aspects of the social world important and interesting, and it is in those areas that they are likely to devote their attention. Some might find the behavior of kings and presidents interesting, whereas others might be drawn to that of homeless persons and sex workers. Furthermore, still others, often some of the best social theorists, are drawn to the relationship between highly exalted and highly debased behavior. For example, Norbert Elias (1897–1990) focused on the period between the 13th and 19th centuries and how mundane behaviors such as picking one's nose at the dinner table, blowing one's nose, and expelling wind were related to changes in the king's court (see Chapter 5). In terms of mundane

behaviors, he found that over time people grew less and less likely to pick their noses at the table, to stare into their handkerchiefs at the results of blowing their noses, and to noisily and publicly expel wind. These shifts in behavior were linked to changes in the king's court that were eventually disseminated to the rest of society. Basically, the members of the king's court became dependent on a wider and wider circle of people with the result that they became more sensitive about the impact of at least some of their behaviors (e.g., violence against others) and more circumspect about those behaviors. Eventually, as circles of dependence widened, this greater sensitivity and circumspection made their way to the lower reaches of society, and to put it baldly, people generally stopped picking their noses at the dinner table and noisily expelling wind in public. (The exceptions are now quite notable.)

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE (1805–1859)

A Biographical Vignette

There are several ironies associated with the work of Alexis de Tocqueville. First, he was a French scholar, but his best-known work deals with the United States. Second, he was an aristocrat, but he is famous for his work on democracy. Third, he is most often thought of as a political scientist, but he made important contributions to sociology and sociological theory (see, e.g., the Key Concept box “Civil Society” in Chapter 11). His best-known work, Volume 1 of *Democracy in America* (published in 1835), is largely political in nature. It deals with the American political system and how it compares to others, particularly the French political system. The second volume of that work (published in 1840) is less well-known and was less well received, but it is far more sociological. Among other things, it deals broadly with culture, social class, “individualism” (Tocqueville is often credited with having invented the term, now popular in sociological theory), and social change.

Finally, by the time of his later work *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (published in 1856), Tocqueville had grown nostalgic for the aristocratic system (he wrote of the “catastrophic downfall of the monarchy”) and increasingly critical of democracy and socialism. He saw both as involving far too much centralization of decision making. He felt that in his younger years aristocrats were freer and made more independent decisions. Such aristocrats served as a counterbalance to the power of centralized government. In spite of this, Tocqueville was enough of a realist to understand that there was no going back to an aristocratic system. Rather, he argued that “associations of plain citizens” should form bodies that would serve to counter the power of centralized government and protect freedoms. Such bodies are close to those that make up what we now think of as civil society.

Social thinkers may focus on particular behaviors because they find them important and interesting, but they also may do so because such study provides them with a point of entry into the social world. This idea is based on the perspective of Georg Simmel (1858–1918) that the social world comprises an endless series of social relationships (see Chapter 3). Each social act, in this view, is part of a social relationship, and each relationship, in turn, is ultimately related to every other social relationship. Thus, a focus on any given act or relationship can serve as a way of gaining a sense of the entirety of the social world, even the essential aspects and meanings of that world. Thus, Simmel chose to concentrate on money and relationships based on money as a specific way of gaining insight into the entirety of modern society.

Although there is a great gap between the theories discussed in this book and the theories we all create every day, the point is that there is *no* essential difference between professional and lay theorizing. If, after you read this book, you study previous theorizing and then theorize in a more systematic and sustained manner about general social issues, you will be a social theorist. Of course, being a social theorist does not necessarily mean that you will yield high-quality theories. Your first efforts are not likely to be as good as the theories discussed in this book. In fact, the theories discussed in the following pages are the best of the best. Further, the work of many social theorists, some quite well-known in their time, is not discussed here because it has not stood the test of time, and the resulting social theories are no longer considered important. Thus, many have tried but only a few have succeeded in creating high-quality and important social theories.

DEFINING SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Standing the test of time is one characteristic of the theories discussed in this book. Another is that they have a wide range of applicability. For example, they explain behavior not simply in your family but in a large number of similar families in the United States and perhaps even in other nations around the world. Still another characteristic of these theories is that they deal with centrally important social issues. For instance, climate change (see Chapter 12) and the impact that human society has on planetary systems is a key issue that has attracted the attention of a growing number of theorists. Finally, the theories discussed in this book were created either by sociologists or thinkers in other fields whose work has come to be defined as important by sociologists. For example, we devote a great deal of attention to feminist sociological theory in this book, but although some feminist theorists are sociologists (e.g., Dorothy Smith, Patricia Hill Collins), the vast majority are social thinkers from a wide variety of other fields, such as philosophy and literary theory. Whether or not they were created by sociologists, the theories discussed here have been built upon by others who have refined them, expanded on them, or tested some of their basic premises in empirical research.

Sociological theory can be more formally defined as a set of interrelated ideas that allow for the systematization of knowledge of the social world, the explanation of that world, and predictions about the future of that world. Although some of the theories discussed in the pages that follow meet all of these criteria to a high degree, many others fall short on one or more of them. Nonetheless, they are all considered full-fledged sociological theories for purposes of this discussion. Whether or not they meet all the criteria, all the theories discussed here are considered by large numbers of sociologists (as well as scholars in many other fields) to be important theories. Perhaps most important, all of these are big ideas about issues and topics of concern to everyone in the social world.

CREATING SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY: A MORE REALISTIC VIEW

Up to this point, we have offered an idealized picture of sociological theory and the way it is created. In recent years a number of sociological theorists have grown increasingly critical of this image and have sought to create a more accurate picture of theory and theory creation. They point out that at least some theorists are undisciplined (if not downright casual): they don't always study the work of their predecessors in detail, they aren't always careful about collecting data that bear on their theories, their work is not always reviewed rigorously prior to publication, they allow their personal experiences to distort their theories, and so on. Overall, the point is made that the creation of sociological theory is far from the perfect process described previously.

In addition to critiquing the work of individual theorists, the critics have also attacked the general state of sociological theory. In the past, like many other academic disciplines, sociological theory has been organized around a series of canonical texts. This **sociological canon** is made up of those theories, ideas, and books that are considered to be the most important in the field of sociology. Critics have pointed out that the canon is not necessarily a neutral or unbiased creation. It has favored some kinds of social theory over others. Thus, the best theories are not necessarily the ones that survive, become influential, and are covered in books like this one. They contend that sociological theory is not unlike the rest of the social world—it is affected by a wide range of political factors. What does and does not

sociological theory—A set of interrelated ideas that allow for the systematization of knowledge of the social world, the explanation of that world, and predictions about the future of that world.

sociological canon—The theories, ideas, and texts that at least in the past, have been considered the most important in the field of sociology. Critics have argued that the canon is not a neutral construction; rather, it is affected by political factors.

come to be seen as important theory (as part of the canon) is the result of a series of political processes:

1. The work of those who studied with the acknowledged masters of sociological theory—people (historically, men) who came to occupy leadership positions within the discipline—is likely to be seen as more important than the work of those who lacked notable and powerful mentors.
2. Works reflecting particular political orientations are more likely to become part of the canon than those done from other perspectives. Thus, in the not-too-distant past in sociology, politically conservative theories (e.g., structural functionalism; see Chapter 4) were more likely to win acceptance than those that were radical from a political point of view (e.g., theories done from a Marxian perspective; see, especially, Chapter 5).
3. Theories that lead to clear hypotheses that can be tested empirically are more likely to be accepted, at least by mainstream sociologists, than those that produce grand, untestable points of view.
4. Theories produced by majority group members (i.e., white males) are more likely to become part of the canon than those created by minorities. Thus, the works of black theoreticians have rarely become part of the canon (for one exception, see the discussion of Du Bois in Chapter 3). The same has been true, at least until recently, of the work of female theorists (see Chapter 8). The theoretical ideas of those associated with cultural minorities (e.g., members of the LGBTQ+ community) have encountered a similar fate.

Thus, sociological theory has not, in fact, always operated in anything approaching the ideal manner described earlier in this chapter. However, in recent decades there has been growing awareness of the gap between the ideal and the real. As a result, a number of perspectives that previously were denied entry into the heart of sociological theory have come to attain a central position within the field. Thus, Marx's theory (see Chapter 2) and a variety of neo-Marxian theories (Chapter 5) have become part of the canon. Similarly, feminist theory and queer theory have become powerful presences, as reflected in Chapters 8 and 10 of this book. Finally, although sociologists have for a long time conducted research on questions of race and racism, it is only in recent years that sociological theories about processes such as racialization and colonization (see Chapter 9) have become important to social theory.

This expansion of the sociological canon has also influenced the ways in which sociologists define theory. For example, in the past theory was often thought of in scientific terms, as the description of laws of social behavior. From this perspective, it was possible to use the scientific method to develop broad,

universal theories that could be applied to explain and predict the behavior of all people, irrespective of their unique histories and life circumstances. This is sometimes referred to as the positivist approach to science and theory. Although this approach continues to shape some contemporary theories (see, e.g., the discussion of exchange theory and rational choice theory in Chapter 6), the perspectives that are newer to the canon frequently challenge the assumptions of traditional theory and theory creation. For example, standpoint theorists (Chapter 8), queer theorists (Chapter 10), some postmodern theorists (Chapter 10), and Indigenous theorists (Chapter 9) often

- reject universalistic theories and focus on theories that reflect local, experience-based accounts of social life;
- develop theories that take into account the perspectives of those without power;
- seek to change social structure, culture, for the betterment of all persons but especially those on the periphery of society;
- try to disrupt not only the social world but also the intellectual world, seeking to make it far more open and diverse;
- exhibit a critical edge, both self-critical and critical of other theories and, most important, the social world; and
- recognize that their work is limited by the particular historical, social, and cultural contexts in which they happen to live.

In other words, alongside a range of more traditional approaches to theory, the current canon includes perspectives that regularly question the foundations of knowledge creation. These perspectives encourage theorists to ask: How are ideas and theories made? Who makes these theories? Whose point of view do these theories represent? The goal is to develop sociological theories that address the diversity of experiences and social forms that make up the contemporary world.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Although this book is primarily about contemporary sociological theory, no single date can be named as the point of separation between clearly classical sociological theory and contemporary sociological theory, and no particular characteristics can be said to separate the two definitively. Nonetheless, we can take as the starting point of classical sociological theory the early 1800s, when Auguste Comte, the French social thinker who coined the term *sociology* (in 1839), began theorizing sociologically. (By the way, thinkers long before that time, in both Western and

non-Western cultures, developed idea systems that had many elements in common with sociological theory; see, e.g., the discussion of Ibn Khaldun in Chapter 9.) The 1920s and 1930s mark the close of the classical period. By that time virtually all the great classical thinkers had passed from the scene, and new theorists were beginning to replace them. Thus, the beginnings of the contemporary theories discussed in this book can be traced back many decades, although most were produced in the last half of the 20th century and remain important, and continue to be developed, in the early years of the 21st century.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the major theories and theorists of sociology's classical age—roughly the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Chapter 2 covers three thinkers—Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber—who are often acknowledged as the major figures in the history of sociological theory. Chapter 3 begins with a theorist—Georg Simmel—who is often included with the other three in the pantheon of classic theorists. This chapter also deals with three American thinkers, each of whom adds a unique focus to classical theory (Durkheim was French; Marx, Weber, and Simmel were German). Thorstein Veblen, like the others mentioned to this point, had a broad social theory. His theorizing has received increasing recognition in recent years for the fact that whereas all of the above focused on issues related to production, he also concerned himself with, and foresaw, the increasing importance of consumption (especially in his famous idea of “conspicuous consumption”) in the 20th and early 21st centuries. Unlike the other theorists addressed to this point, George Herbert Mead focused more on everyday life and less on broad social phenomena and social changes. Finally, W. E. B. Du Bois was an African American sociologist. He argued that race and racism were the most important problems facing the 20th century and constructed a social theory that explained the significance of race for social life. His ideas also anticipate those now addressed by theorists working in the area of critical theories of race and racism.

Chapters 4 and 5 shift the focus to our main concern with contemporary sociological theories. These two chapters deal with contemporary grand theories (as contrasted to the contemporary theories of everyday life, discussed in Chapter 6). A **grand theory** is defined as a vast, highly ambitious effort to tell the story of a great stretch of human history and/or a large portion of the social world. In fact, all of the theorists discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 can be seen as doing grand theory. However, our focus in Chapters 4 and 5 is more contemporary grand theories. In Chapter 4 we deal with two of the best-known contemporary theories—structural functionalism and conflict theory—along with systems theory, a perspective developed by a contemporary German thinker, Niklas Luhmann. Chapter 5 deals with both another well-known contemporary theory, neo-Marxian theory, and

grand theory—A vast, highly ambitious effort to tell the story of a great stretch of human history and/or a large portion of the social world.

three of the more specific contemporary efforts at grand theory: the civilizing process (Norbert Elias), the colonization of the lifeworld (Jürgen Habermas), and the juggernaut of modernity (Anthony Giddens).

Whereas Chapters 4 and 5 deal with grand theories involving large-scale structures and changes, Chapter 6 focuses on the major contemporary varieties of **theories of everyday life**: symbolic interactionism (building heavily on the work of Mead discussed in Chapter 3), dramaturgy (especially the contributions of Erving Goffman), ethnomethodology (shaped most heavily by Harold Garfinkel), exchange theory (with a focus on the contributions of George Homans), and rational choice theory (especially that of James Coleman).

In Chapter 7 we address the major efforts to integrate the kinds of large-scale concerns discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 with the everyday (small-scale) issues that are the focus of Chapter 6. We start with the efforts to create an exchange theory that goes beyond the micro-issues covered in Chapter 6 to integrate more macro-level issues (primarily in the work of Richard Emerson). We then move on to a series of more encompassing integrative efforts, including structuration theory (Anthony Giddens's most general theoretical contribution to sociology), an attempt to integrate culture and agency (Margaret Archer), and Pierre Bourdieu's ambitious integration of what he calls habitus and field.

Many of the concerns detailed in Chapter 7 are evident in Chapter 8 (authored by Patricia Madoo Lengermann and Gillian Niebrugge) on feminist theory, but that theory is so wide-ranging, involves so many thinkers, and is so important that it requires a chapter to itself. Four broad types of contemporary feminist theories are covered in the chapter: theories of gender difference, gender inequality, gender oppression, and structural oppression.

Chapter 9 introduces theories of race and colonialism. This chapter introduces theories that describe the central role that race has played in the development of modern societies. To provide context for the development of the concept of race, we start by discussing colonialism. First, we look at Frantz Fanon's work on colonial consciousness and anticolonial movements; we then turn to postcolonial theory, in particular Edward Said's concept of Orientalism. Next, we address specific theories of race and racism, such as critical race theory, Michael Omi and Howard Winant's social constructionist theory of racial formation, and Mustafa Emirbayer and Matthew Desmond's theory of the racial order. The chapter ends with a review of theories developed by Indigenous scholars and theorists from the Global South. In contrast to most of the theories covered in this book, which are based on Western knowledges, these theories are based in the lived experiences and knowledges of Indigenous peoples.

theories of everyday life—Theories that focus on such everyday and seemingly mundane activities as individual thought and action, the interaction of two or more people, and the small groups that emerge from such interaction.

Chapter 10 deals with some of the most exciting theoretical developments of the late 20th century, grouped under the heading of postmodern grand theories. Included here is Daniel Bell's work on the transition from industrial to postindustrial society, Michel Foucault's thinking on increasing governmentality, Zygmunt Bauman's work on postmodernity as the coming of age of modernity, the inter-related work of Jean Baudrillard on the rise of consumer society, and George Ritzer on the new means (or cathedrals) of consumption, and finally a section on queer theory that includes discussion of important queer theorists such as Michel Foucault, Eve Sedgwick, and Judith Butler.

Chapter 11 deals with a theory of particular importance for an understanding of the late 20th and early 21st centuries—globalization theory. We begin by looking at the thinking of several important contemporary theorists on globalization—Anthony Giddens, Zygmunt Bauman, and Ulrich Beck. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to three broad types of theorizing about globalization. The first is cultural theory, which itself is subdivided into three subtypes. Cultural differentialism sees lasting, if not eternal, differences among cultures that are little affected by globalization. A major example of this approach is Samuel Huntington's work on civilizations. Cultural convergence focuses on areas in which cultures are becoming increasingly alike. We use Ritzer's work on McDonaldization as a global force and the increasing "globalization of nothing" to exemplify this approach. Finally, cultural hybridization sees globalization as characterized by unique mixtures of the global and the local. Arjun Appadurai's work on globalization in general, and especially his thinking on disjunctures among what he calls "landscapes," is a good and important example of this approach. The second type of theorizing about globalization is economic theory. Although there is a wide array of work under this heading, the focus here is on neoliberalism as well as on two neo-Marxian approaches—Leslie Sklair on transnational capitalism and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri on empire—that represent critiques of neoliberalism and alternatives to it. Finally, we discuss political approaches to globalization with a special focus on the decline of the nation-state in the global age.

Chapter 12 looks at theories that address the relationships among society, technology, and nature. It also considers how contemporary theorists are using ideas from the natural sciences to develop their ideas about society. Although historically sociologists have drawn on evolutionary theories, in recent years social theorists have engaged with systems theories, neuroscience, climate science, and other natural science disciplines. In this chapter we look at some of the most prominent among these perspectives. Affect theory is an outgrowth of poststructuralism and postmodernism. Poststructuralism and postmodernism emphasize the role that language and culture have played in constructing society. Although they share many of the assumptions of the earlier poststructuralists, affect theorists also describe the role that biological bodily energies (affect) play in the construction of social life. This chapter also talks about science and technology studies, especially the work of actor-network theorist Bruno Latour and feminist science

studies scholar Donna Haraway. Both of these theorists point out that science and technology play central roles in the organization of contemporary social life. In particular they share the view that societies are constructed not only through relationships among humans, but also through relationships between humans and nonhumans (animals, technology, natural objects, etc.). The final section of this chapter introduces one of the newest developments in social theory—theories of the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene is a term used to describe a new geological era in which human societies have an unprecedented impact on planetary ecosystems. Sociologists and social theorists consider how this development affects our understanding of what society is, especially how we conceive of our relationship to nature.

SUMMARY

1. We all theorize, but a number of characteristics distinguish the theorizing of sociologists from that of laypeople.
2. The issues of interest to sociological theorists are usually of great personal *and* social concern.
3. Every aspect of the social world, from the most exalted to the most mundane, can be the subject of social theory.
4. Social thinkers may focus on particular behaviors because they find them important and interesting, but they also may do so because these behaviors offer them points of entry into the larger social world.
5. The theories discussed in this book have a number of characteristics in common, including having stood the test of time and having a wide range of applicability, dealing with centrally important social issues, and being created by sociologists or those who have come to be defined as important by sociologists.
6. Sociological theory may be formally defined as a set of interrelated ideas that allow for the systematization of knowledge of the social world, the explanation of that world, and predictions about the future of that world. It must be acknowledged, however, that few theories measure up to this definition fully.
7. Although there is an idealized image of the way in which sociological theory operates (e.g., the best ideas become part of the canon), the fact is that reality is different and political factors play critical roles in theory.

8. Criticisms of the ideal model and revelations about the real world of sociological theory have made it possible for a number of perspectives that were previously marginalized (e.g., Marxian, feminist, and queer theories) to gain attention and even become part of the canon.
9. This book deals with contemporary sociological theory (and its classical roots) under several general headings: classical theories, grand theories (including postmodern), theories of everyday life, integrative theories, feminist theories, theories of race and colonialism, theories of globalization, and theories of science technology and society.

SUGGESTED READINGS

SYED FARID ALATAS and VINEETA SINHA. *Sociological Theory Beyond the Canon*.

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. A set of essays about classical theorists and theories from a wider set of backgrounds than is typically represented in mainstream textbooks, including essays about women theorists (Martineau, Nightengale, Sarswati) and essays about theories developed by scholars from North Africa (Ibn Khaldun), the Philippines (Rizal), and India (Sarkar).

GEORGE RITZER, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Social Theory*. 2 vols. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005. The first full encyclopedia of social theory that covers most of the major topics and theorists, both classical and contemporary. The entries are written by well-known experts from around the world.

GEORGE RITZER and BARRY SMART, eds. *The Handbook of Social Theory*.

London: Sage, 2001. A compendium of essays dealing with many of the most important people and issues in the history of social theory.

GEORGE RITZER and JEFFREY STEPNIISKY, eds. *The Wiley-Blackwell*

Companion to Major Social Theorists. 2 vols. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. A collection of 41 essays on leading classical and contemporary theorists authored by widely recognized scholars.

GEORGE RITZER and JEFFREY STEPNIISKY *Sociological Theory*. 10th ed.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018. Deals with classical and contemporary sociological theory much more widely and in greater detail than this volume.

MARY ROGERS, ed. *Multicultural Experiences, Multicultural Theories*. New York:

McGraw-Hill, 1996. Includes many examples of, and original contributions to, theories from a diversity of cultural backgrounds.

STEVEN SEIDMAN *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*. 6th ed. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017. Most recent edition of an influential sociological theory textbook. Covers theories from the traditional sociology canon but also excels in its presentation of critical theoretical perspectives.

A. JAVIER TREVIÑO, ed. *The Development of Sociological Theory: Readings From the Enlightenment to the Present*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2017. A cutting-edge collection of original writings, from diverse perspectives, by classical and contemporary theorists.

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