

The Cambridge Handbook of Social Theory

This ambitious two-volume handbook of social theory consists of forty original contributions. The researchers take stock of the state of social theory and its relationship to the canon, exploring such topics as the nature, purpose, and meaning of social theory; the significance of the classics; the impact of specific individuals and theory schools; and more. Both volumes reflect a mixture of what intellectual historian Morton White distinguished as the “annalist of ideas” and the “analyst of ideas,” locating theoretical thought within the larger sociohistorical context that shaped it – within the terrain of the sociology of knowledge. Exploring the contemporary relevance of theories in a manner that is historically situated and sensitive, this impressive and comprehensive set will likely stand the test of time.

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The Cambridge Handbook of Social Theory

*Volume II: Contemporary Theories and
Issues*

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Preface

Social theory has a discovered and discoverable past and a complex, contested, dynamic, and anxious present. All of these adjectives save the last one – anxious – are reflected in various ways and with differing emphases throughout this handbook. I will say something about “anxious” below, but before doing so will offer a rationale for producing this multi-authored, two-volume overview reflecting the diversity of theory work in sociology and offering a sense of both how far the discipline has come and where it is today.

There is no univocal answer to the question, “What does social theory mean?” Since the institutionalization of sociology in the academy and its development of subfields, theory has found a place in the overall educational structure of the discipline, in a manner akin to the way that methodology has. That is to say, both theory and methodology have been viewed in some fashion as essential to sociological inquiry, and thus relevant to all of the substantive subfields within it. At the same time, it became clear early on that consensus regarding the meaning of theory has proven elusive. As World War II came to an end and the rapid expansion in higher education was about to commence, Robert K. Merton (1945), the protégé of Talcott Parsons, claimed that six types of analysis had come to be described as sociological theory. Over six decades later, Gabriel Abend (2008) identified seven distinct though sometimes overlapping meanings attributed to theory – a figure that Omar Lizardo (2014) thinks is at the lower end of the actual number of different meanings.

One way of understanding why this is the case is to turn to Jeffrey C. Alexander’s (1982: 40) early work on theoretical logic in sociology. At the outset of his four-volume study, Alexander offers a diagram of the intellectual space in which theory happens, a capacious space located between two polar boundaries. He identifies one boundary as the nonempirical “metaphysical environment” characterized by an antiscientific relativism. The other boundary is the empirical physical environment, which is where positivism is drawn. Those who identify as theorists occupy the space between, where they can tilt, given their predispositions, either toward increased generality (the metaphysical boundary) or greater specificity (the physical environment boundary). The former move from definitions through concepts, models, and ideological orientations to the presuppositional. The latter move from definitions through classifications, laws, complex and simply propositions, methodological assumptions, to observational statements.

It is at key points along the continuum that the major debates over theory occur. While there are clearly debates at the definitional, conceptual, classificatory, and

law-formulation nodes, Alexander points elsewhere to locate where the action – and the heat – can be found. Whereas the types of contestation headed toward specificity can take the form of debates over conflict versus equilibrium or within the realm of the philosophy of science, the types of contestation headed toward greater generality include systems debates, ideological critiques, and debates over order and action.

The inevitable question arising when confronted with this intellectual landscape is of whether this is good or bad for theory. Or is it neither? This question was first confronted in American sociology in the interwar years of the past century, coincidental with the waning of influence of the University of Chicago in the post–Robert Park era and the parallel rise in influence of the Department of Social Relations at Harvard under the direction of Parsons, along with sociology at Columbia University, shaped by Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld. Parsons, concurring with his mentor, Harvard biochemist L. J. Henderson, answered the question by forcefully contending that all sciences required a unified theoretical framework (Turner, 2009: 551–552). To that end, he set out to construct that framework, pursuing a two-step strategy. He had entered a discipline – a field – that had a history dating to the nineteenth century, without however having developed a singular theoretical framework.

The first step called for shaping the sociological canon, identifying who was important and dispensing with others. As *The Structure of Social Action* famously asks at its opening, “Who now reads Spencer?” (Parsons, 1937 [1968]: 3). In Parsons’s view, Spencer, a widely read thinker during his lifetime, could be ignored, whereas the discipline could ill afford to ignore Émile Durkheim or Max Weber. The key to Parsons’s work was to discover presumably heretofore hidden commonalities linking these two scholars. In the immediate postwar period more and more of their work was translated into English and they became the core of the sociological classics taught in theory courses. It is worth noting, however, that *Structure* included two other scholars also deemed to be important – Alfred Marshall and Vilfredo Pareto – whose subsequent reputations look more like that of Spencer than those of Durkheim and Weber. Despite not being entirely successful in his effort to stamp the canon with his imprimatur, Parsons did manage to convince many in the discipline of the ongoing value of engaging with the classics. I suspect my experience in an undergraduate theory course at the University of Michigan during the late 1960s was rather typical of elite public universities: we read and engaged in exegetical examinations of *Capital*, Volume 1, *Suicide*, and *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. It is worth noting that, at least in Ann Arbor circa 1968, Marx had entered the canon.

The second step was more ambitious, calling as it did for the formulation of that unified theoretical framework the discipline was presumed to be in need of if it was to become a genuine science. With generous funding from the Carnegie Corporation, Parsons and Edward Shils brought together a group of scholars from not only sociology, but also psychology (Gordon W. Allport) and anthropology (Clyde Kluckhohn) in producing *Toward a General Theory of Action* (Parsons and Shils, 1951). And with evangelistic fervor Parsons sought to promote his theory, which as the subtitle made clear, was an attempt to provide the needed “theoretical

foundations for the social sciences.” In the same year that this book was published, Parsons’s major theoretical scheme was published as *The Social System* (1951). He pushed and would continue to push what was pejoratively described as “grand theory” (Mills, 1959: 25–49), clearly dispositionally inclined toward Alexander’s metaphysical boundary. His effort to shape the discipline at large was aided by the simultaneous move toward the physical environment boundary at Columbia, reflected in Merton’s advocacy of middle-range theory and Lazarfeld’s efforts to bring theory and methodology into dialogue.

Parsonian theory did not win over everyone in the discipline. Within his own department, George Homans suspected that Parsons was intent on making *Toward a General Theory of Action* (which in draft form was known colloquially as the “Yellow Book”) the “official doctrine of the department,” and forcefully spoke out against it. According to Homans, from that moment on the issue was no longer raised in departmental meetings (Homans, 1984: 303). Parsons’s correspondence with Alfred Schutz, the Austrian émigré phenomenological sociologist at the New School for Social Research, revealed the gulf between their understandings of the meaning of theory (Grathoff, 1978). Likewise, Herbert Blumer, the major spokesperson for symbolic interactionism, remained unpersuaded by Parsons’s entreaties. Located in elite Ivy League institutions, Parsons and his followers were far from successful in getting sociologists in other regions of the country to embrace structural functionalism. Stephen Turner (2014: 42) has pointed out that this was true in the Midwest, including the University of Chicago, where symbolic interactionism was strong. Turner also concluded that it did not gain traction in Southern Sociological Society, the largest of the regionals, writing that, “Many more sociologists were simply indifferent to this elite project.”

Nevertheless, Parsons had a profound impact on sociology at the elite level, training a generation of students who would become prominent theorists and powerful disciplinary operatives. And he pursued his theoretical ambition to the end, as reflected in his posthumously published *American Society: A Theory of the Societal Community* (Parsons, 2007). And some prominent sociologists shared a similar vision for the sociological enterprise, as when Lewis Coser (1975: 691), in his American Sociological Association Presidential Address, decided to throw down the gauntlet, beginning his address as follows: “I am perturbed about present developments in American sociology which seem to foster the growth of both narrow, routine, activities and of sect-like, esoteric ruminations [the latter referring to ethnomethodology].”

During the last quarter of the past century grand theoretical ambitions, linked to the belief that a sociological center or mainstream was about to emerge as the discipline matured, gave way to increased fragmentation and persistent talk that in fact Alvin Gouldner’s (1970) “coming crisis” had come to pass. What this meant for theory was that it became commonplace to refer to the discipline as a multiple paradigm science (Ritzer, 1975). This would be translated at the level of introductory sociology textbooks by informing the undergraduate audience that sociology was composed of three major theory schools: structural functionalism, conflict, and symbolic interaction. The situation was different among those who identified with

and worked in the theory field. For them, two stark choices presented themselves. Either theorists could hunker down in their particular paradigmatic bunker and work to advance and deploy that theory while ignoring competing paradigms, or they could seek ways to overcome fragmentation and facilitate dialogue among competing theory camps. This was made all the more complicated by the internationalization of theory development and the emergence of new modes of theorizing, including but not limited to feminist theory, critical race theory, structuralism and post-structuralism, and postmodernism. These developments introduced new topical foci and, especially with efforts to theorize globalization, theorists were forced to reconsider the often implicit treatment of society as a synonym for nation-state.

The difficulty in pulling off an overcoming of the fractured state of theory was evident in the attempt to promote “metatheory,” which George Ritzer (1990: 4) contended could accomplish three objectives. First, it could serve as a “means of attaining a deeper understanding of theory.” Second, it could be a “prelude to theory development,” and third, it could result in “the creation of an overarching metatheory.” From the beginning, the call to metatheory was challenged, leading a frustrated Ritzer (1990: 3) to complain that it had barely been given a chance to develop before it was condemned – and often by leading lights in theory. What was clear was that theorists continued to go about their business. This included engaging with the classics, delving ever deeper into the work of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, but expanding the range of classic figures deemed worthy of scholarly attention. Indeed, this period constituted something of a golden age in the Anglo-American world for scholarship in the history of sociological theory – with scholars describing their work in terms of intellectual history, the sociology of knowledge, exegetical examinations, hermeneutical inquiries, and the like. In short, they did what Ritzer’s first objective of metatheory called for, but without a felt need to give it that label. Likewise with the second objective of metatheory. Parsons served as a model for subsequent theory developers who began with a period of exegetical work as a prelude to theory building. Two examples suffice: Jeffrey Alexander’s early work paving the way first for his foray into neo-functionalism and later into cultural sociology, and similarly Anthony Giddens’s exegetical preparation for his articulation of structuration theory. These examples are testament to the existence of a sociological theory tradition that theorists are expected not simply to be versed in, but to have a command of, and upon which they build their own theories – in an age more deferential to our predecessors, one might have said “on the shoulders of giants” (Merton, 1965).

But what about the grander objective of constructing an overarching theoretical perspective? To speak of this in the singular rather than the plural implies that the goal is to pursue the agenda of forging a univocal, all-encompassing theoretical scaffolding that could unite everyone who saw their vocation as theory, as well as informing the research agendas in sociology’s substantive subfields. Did this mean that the multiple paradigm description advanced by Ritzer was to be overcome, rather than celebrated? Metatheory was framed in such a vague, imprecise way that it was difficult to know what its advocates had in mind. Stephen Turner and Jonathan Turner (1990: 170) summarized the situation near the *fin de siècle* by writing that “metatheorists talk primarily to each other, and so metatheorizing has not succeeded

as an integrating effort.” Thus, a more accurate assessment of the state of social theory at the cusp of the new century is reflected in Alan Sica’s introduction to *What Is Social Theory? The Philosophical Debates* (1998). In this invited collection, he recognized that the diverse visions of theory represented in the book included some he did not find convincing given his own theoretical predilections. But the conclusion he drew from this situation is worth noting:

However, since theory has always been a contentious business, this is hardly surprising, nor necessarily unfortunate. In fact, one might argue quite the contrary. . . . each [theory perspective] is argued with passionate regard for its own merit, yet none so dogmatically as to rule out the efficacy of other approaches. It is this happy confusion, this Babel-like quality, that will [prove valuable] for those interested in theory’s immediate prospects, particularly as it positions itself with regard to philosophical problems. (Sica, 1998: 12)

An example of what Sica had in mind can be seen in Jeffrey C. Alexander’s (1995) collection of essays from the same era in which he assesses contemporary currents of theorizing in terms of, as the subtitle indicates, “relativism, reduction, and the problem of reason.” The goal of this project, despite being fiercely argued, was not to erase competing theoretical visions, but rather to serve as a corrective by highlighting the philosophical shortcomings he detected.

If this was the state of the field two decades ago, what has changed in the intervening two decades? For one thing, the deleterious implications of neoliberalism’s intrusion into the university system – with its demand for market-driven metrics concerning efficiency, productivity, and real-world payoffs and with an assault on the professional autonomy of the professoriate – are now deeply imbedded in higher education. This is true not only of the United States, but to various degrees in all advanced capitalist societies. Combined with demographic shifts, the growth era in higher education has come to an end. This yields anxiety and uncertainty in both the humanities and in the social sciences most closely associated with the humanities – including sociology. Theory work has been especially hard-hit, as funding agencies and academic administrators look to empirical research that can have what they see as tangible external results – action being valued at the expense of contemplation, researching rather than theorizing.

Secondly, this is occurring along with the graying of the generation of theorists who came of age during the tumultuous decade of the 1960s, shaped by the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, the woman’s movement, and the cultural revolution. This “disobedient generation” (Sica and Turner, 2005) is gradually leaving the academy (though several members are represented herein). A new generation of theorists has emerged and are beginning to assume vaunted positions in theory at elite institutions, and are poised to set the agenda going forward. As an indication of their growing presence, a recent book edited by Claudio Benzecry, Monika Krause, and Isaac Ariail Reed (2017) reflects the generational shift underway, while offering a clear indication that they face the same challenge as their senior colleagues or former colleagues in determining the fundamental meaning(s) of theory.

That they do so is evident in the work of two younger theorists mentioned at the outset, Gabriel Abend and Omar Lizardo. Abend's (2008) effort to get at the meaning(s) of theory meant that he entered the territory previously trod by Merton and Ritzer, confronting the same issues but arriving at an assessment of the situation and a sketch of a path forward that is at odds with both. He takes as a given that the discipline comprises a multiplicity of theories and of ways in which doing theory is conceived. This is as it has always been. Abend is clear that this will not change, nor should it. What concerns him is the risk that theorizing is being and will continue to be done in a balkanized environment where different theory camps do their own thing, unconcerned about what others are doing. Abend wants to facilitate communication by focusing on what he calls the semantics question, one in which different approaches to theory need not be seen as disputes about what is and what isn't theory, but rather should be understood as a consequence of being interested in making sense of different social things. To accomplish this, he proposes the implementation of "semantic therapy," the application of practical reason, and the principle of ontological and epistemological pluralism (Abend, 2008: 192–195). This is not the place to unpack his ideas, merely to note that theorists continue to wrestle with what theory is and what it means to do theory. To date his article has provoked one sympathetic critique, that offered by Peeter Selg (2013: 1), who provides an alternative to what he sees as Abend's "deliberative-democratically oriented vision" of the community of theorists with an agonistic politics view.

The anxiety voiced by theorists, noted at the outset, is evident most clearly in Lizardo's (2014: 1–2) state-of-the-field lecture in which he confronts the changing conditions of theory production, which he frames in generational terms, writing, "If you are a theory person under the age of 45 you currently live and will live in a different theory world than your predecessors." Among the factors working against theory production, Lizardo identifies the deinstitutionalization of the teaching of theory, the devaluation of theory work in terms of career advancement, and a "rudderless heterodoxy, with various claimants for the title of preferred mode of doing theory but very little agreement as to the 'rules' of the theoretical game." If Abend's proposal amounts to a strategy to be conducted within the world of theory, Lizardo suggests that theorists need to rethink how they are connected to the rest of the discipline. Pointing to the role philosophers are playing in the realm of cognitive science, he sees a potential parallel for social theorists. Both are generalists whose capacity for generalization can assist more narrowly focused specialists due to their capacity to "detect, diagnose, and propose incipient solutions to common conceptual and substantive issues across seemingly disparate domains of inquiry" (Lizardo, 2014: 15).

Theorizing is a learned skill, a trained capacity to think like a theorist, the role of which, according to Lizardo (2014: 5), "essentially means engaging in the routine exploitation of the cultured capacities for consuming and producing theory." The acquisition of those cultured capacities requires developing knowledge of the history of social theory and its wide-ranging contemporary articulations. To that end, guides such as this two-volume collection are intended to assist in the process of becoming and being a theorist. In *Literature and Bibliography of the Social Sciences*, a book

that is little known today, its editor, Thelma Freides, offered the following succinct rationale for handbooks, writing, “In the effort of the scholarly enterprise to synthesize a body of knowledge . . . it is sometimes useful to pause and take stock of the accomplishments of the past and the foreseeable tasks of the future” (Freides, 1973: 1). This is precisely what this project sets out to accomplish. It is intended to reflect on the origins of modern social theory – the canon – and take stock of current developments, which includes locating these developments in terms of their respective relationships to a tradition of theorizing about what Charles Lemert (1997) would call “social things.”

This is obviously not the first such stocktaking, and after surveying many previous efforts, it is clear that in a fundamental way the editors of those collections would agree with the general sense of what this enterprise is all about. That being said, not everyone necessarily sees eye to eye with my understanding about what makes the handbook a distinctive type of guide. In the landscape of reference books, one can find three basic types: handbooks (sometimes called something else, such as a “companion”), encyclopedias, and dictionaries. While all would agree that dictionaries are intended to offer relatively short definitions, sometimes the length of those definitions is similar to shorter encyclopedia entries. If there is one rule of thumb for dictionary editors, it is that the entries should be as ecumenical and impartial as possible, and that authorial voice should be muted. While the entries in encyclopedias generally call for more information and greater in-depth treatment, it is my understanding that they adopt a similar ecumenical and impartial style in which authors are more concerned with providing an overview of the topic than entering into sustained critiques and position taking. I note this because it is my sense that handbooks are – or should be – different. Specifically, they differ from encyclopedias in two ways. First, handbook articles should be significantly longer than those in encyclopedias. Second, authors enter into contested terrain where, while they must be as fair to competing sides as possible, they should nonetheless see their task as that of laying out an argument that tips one way or the other in the debates of the moment. In other words, while civility, fairness, comprehensiveness, and so forth are essential – facilitating mutually beneficial dialogue rather than winner-takes-all debate – the authors of handbook essays should be expected to articulate their own positions in terms of the issues they deem relevant to the topic at hand. The contributors whose work is presented in the following pages were encouraged to proceed accordingly and were permitted to write somewhat longer entries than is typical.

Volume I is concerned with the canon, that body of work that had received general – never universal – consensus as having built the foundation upon which contemporary theorizing proceeds, which is the topic of Volume II. Volume I begins with two framing chapters. Johan Heilbron presents an insightfully constructed historical account of the pre-disciplinary period of social theory, while Alan Sica, with his characteristic erudition and panache, explores the meaning of being a classic. This sets the stage for the remainder of Volume I, which begins by devoting six chapters to the three figures for whom there is little dispute about their classical or canonical status: Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber. For each of these

figures, a chapter is devoted to issues pertaining to intellectual biography: Kevin Anderson's chapter on Marx, Peter Kivisto's on Durkheim, and Lawrence Scaff on Weber. These are coupled with explorations of aspects of their subsequent legacies. Peter Beilharz's concise and engaging account examines the contradictory legacy of Marx. Durkheim's legacy differs insofar as in many respects it was not fully acknowledged by those influenced by his thought compared to those of Marx and Weber. This is clear in Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi's account of the ambiguous relationship that members of the Collège de sociologie had with the Durkheimian legacy. Finally, Austin Harrington traces the myriad ways in which Weber's protean thought has resonated with contemporary thinkers within sociology and beyond.

Georg Simmel's status in the canon is less secure than that of the preceding trio. This was evident in the 1930s when Talcott Parsons drafted a chapter on Simmel for *The Structure of Social Action*, but decided not to include it. Vincenzo Mele's chapter on the metropolitization of social life reveals the originality of Simmel's thought, concluding with a brief analysis of his intellectual inheritance as reflected in the Chicago School. Parsons's reputational trajectory differs from Simmel, for once he looked secure in the canon, but subsequently critics would ask, "Who now reads Parsons?" A. Javier Treviño offers a forceful defense of Parsons and a rebuttal of his critics in an attempt to rectify an unfortunate tendency to ignore his ongoing, consequential, and problematic contribution to social theory.

The distinctly American (indeed, Midwestern) theoretical orientation known as symbolic interactionism is discussed by Lawrence Nichols, tracing its history from George Herbert Mead to the present. Though symbolic interactionists would like to claim his as their own, as Philip Manning makes clear, Erving Goffman was very much a theorist *sui generis* – and it is perhaps for that reason that his dramaturgical sociology has not resulted in a distinctive school founded by acolytes. Sandro Segre and Thomas Szanto responded to the parallel daunting challenges of providing overviews of the capacious theorizing associated respectively with structuralism and phenomenology – doing so in both cases by managing to be both concise and comprehensive. Sandwiched between these two chapters is the more focused topic of Norbert Elias and his approach to theory. Barbara Górnicka and Stephen Mennell provide readers with compelling accounts of Elias's theorizing of civilizing processes, but also explore the impact of his figurational sociology, particularly among British and Dutch sociologists.

The final four chapters rounding out Volume I focus on four prominent theorists. In the case of Pierre Bourdieu, David Swartz offers a broad overview of his work, linking it to the varied ways in which his legacy is shaping currents of contemporary theoretical work in fields such as, but not limited to, culture and education. Anne Rawls sets out to clarify the much misunderstood theoretical project of Harold Garfinkel that he defined as ethnomethodology, illustrating the impact of his earliest research projects on the theoretical work that would follow. Jürgen Habermas's work straddles the divide between social theory and philosophy, and Simon Susen provides readers with an instructive guide to the underlying philosophical grounding of Habermas's distinctive efforts in theory building. Finally, Rob Stones argues on

behalf of the structuration theory developed by Anthony Giddens, using the theory to critique Giddens's political engagements on behalf of the "third way."

The twenty-one chapters contained in Volume II are meant to offer a broad overview of various currents of contemporary social theory, focusing both on particular theory schools and on a range of topical foci that preoccupy theorists today. The first two chapters examine respectively rational choice theory and network theory. It is instructive to contrast the two, given that the former tends to elicit polemical debates whereas the latter does not. Karl-Dieter Opp has produced a commendable overview of what rational choice theory purports to be and how it has been productively put to use – yielding light rather than heat. For their part, Mark Pachucki and Ronald Breiger present an instructive guide to the differing network traditions before turning to new developments in both the social and biological sciences.

The following three chapters – on cultural theory, identity, and emotions – focus on topics that have witnessed increased attention, and current theorizing often reflects cross-fertilization between and among them. Michael Strand and Lyn Spillman provide readers with an analysis of the basic components of cultural theory followed by an account that promotes a synthesis of competing perspectives advanced by theorists who have made the "cultural turn." Donileen Loseke and Margarethe Kusenbach wrestle with competing definitions of and approaches to emotions, shifting from there to in-depth analyses of two competing theory types, one stressing the individual and the other emphasizing culture. The two chapters that follow are also interrelated: Shelley Budgeon's on feminist social theory and Patricia Hill Collins on intersectionality. If the focus of Budgeon's chapter is on the sex/gender distinction, a singularly central concern to feminist theorizing, she indicates the ways in which feminist theorists have pushed past that point, as well. One such point is located in the development of what is Collins's topic: the emergence of intersectionality not simply as a definition of nodal points of inequality, but as the basis for a critical social theory.

Modernity has been a central topical focus of sociology from the beginning, but with the passage of time what we mean by the term has become increasingly clouded. Peter Wagner's engagement with the literature is both refreshing and original, pointing to a more tempered and conceptually productive way forward. Addressing the topic of realism – known more familiarly to many as critical realism – Timothy Rutzou's account of how those engaged in promoting this approach conceive theory is sympathetic, while raising questions about what it might mean for doing social theory – and indeed, doing sociology in general. Writing at a moment when various unsavory currents of nationalism have taken hold among authoritarian populists, Sheila Croucher's perceptive assessment of globalization offers a salutary viewpoint. Globalization, she argues, is a given that will not be wished or forced away. Rather, what is needed is a reckoning with the reality of the situation, which is that it is not an unmitigated good, but nor is it altogether bad. Related to the preceding chapter, Kevin Fox Gotham's exploration into time/space comprehensively and engagingly surveys the ways time/space has been conceptualized in social theory over time. If there is one area of sociology that has remained woefully – and inexplicably – undertheorized, it is ecology. Robert J. Antonio and Brett Clark have

produced a historically grounded theoretical inquiry into the ecological crisis, rooted in the dynamics of capitalist development that has thus far stymied nation-states and transnational political bodies in their attempts to adequately address the potential shadow of catastrophe that looms over our future.

One consequence of sociology's distancing itself from biology is that the body has not been given its due in social theory. Chris Shilling offers an account of how this came to be in Western intellectual thought, before pointing to recent attempts by theorists to rectify this long-standing tendency, seeking to bring the body back in. Stephen Valocchi's topic is sexualities, locating it in such theoretical approaches as social constructionism, feminist theory, intersectionality, and queer theory.

Christian Joppke is one of the most original theorists of multiculturalism as a mode of incorporation. In this essay, his distinctive views on the subject are on display, complemented by judicious assessments of major theorists whose work diverges from his own. Associated in particular with the work of Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, risk has grown as a crucial topic within social theory. Klaus Rasborg traces the significance of risk as a concept from the distant past through the rise of private insurance – and with it actuarial tables, forecasting, and so forth in efforts to measure risk – before locating it in contemporary efforts to theorize risk. Barbara Misztal addresses the topic of trust. Rather than delving into it in terms of deep history or outside of social theory, she instead examines the various ways differing theoretical traditions have addressed the topic. The divide between sociology and biology emerged over a century ago. Recently various voices in the discipline at large have called for initiating efforts to bridge the divide. Douglas Marshall takes up that call in his chapter, which seeks to indicate the potential role of biosociology and evolutionary sociology in forging a sociology that recognizes the biological foundations of human social life. Civil society has had a long history in philosophy and sociology, with a burgeoning interest in it commencing near the end of the twentieth century. Aware of competing definitions of the term, Simon Susen is intent on clarifying what we talk about when we talk about civil society, doing so by tracing the term's use over time before developing the elements to be considered in constructing a critical theory of civil society.

Some sociological subfields have proven to offer distinctively dynamic programs in theorizing compared to other specialty areas. The final two chapters examine two subfields rich in theoretical work – immigration and social movements (one might add that economic sociology is another such subfield). Ewa Morawska, a theorist and historical sociologist of migration, looks at theorizing in immigration studies from both the micro and macro levels before engaging in sustained analyses of assimilation theory and transnationalism. Kevin Gillan's examination of theory development in social movements research is tightly focused on the varied ways social movement theorists have grappled with the temporal dimension inherent in social movements – a crucial consideration since movements have finite temporal parameters in which to accomplish their stated goals.

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