Introduction

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Sociology is one of the most peculiar of the social sciences in the current intellectual marketplace, mixing together a unique set of features. Different from both Political Science[1] and Anthropology is the centrality of theory and theorizing, especially when it comes to linking theory to fundamental or classical works, all-encompassing worldviews, perspectives, or foundational set of questions or problems (Abend 2008; Selg 2013). Most top journals' contributions are judged by their conversation with theory or sets of theoretical concepts or principles. A significantly sized section of the American Sociological Association (ASA) and one of its most impactful journals (*Sociological Theory*) are devoted to sociological theory and theorizing.[2] Nearly every department makes mandatory at least one theory course (Lamont 2004). Unlike Economics, and to a lesser extent, Psychology, theory in sociology is a big tent full of competing axiomatic, epistemological, and ontological perspectives. Unlike these behavioral sciences, sociology features wide methodological variety and competition between and within methodological traditions. This methodological diversity is deeply entwined with this theoretical heterodoxy (Bourdieu 1988).[3]

Perhaps, though, what makes sociology most peculiar, is its intensely "historicist" theoretical approach, one built on a conception of the "classics" molded after the (old fashioned, pre-post-modern) humanities (Alexander 1987a; Seidman 1998). Essentially a small *canon* of big books and foundational authors, everyone is expected to be familiar with. All sciences have their "great figures:" Newton, Einstein, and Curie; Freud, Darwin, and Goodall. But, sociology has canonized its classics and devoted decades, entire careers, and endless inkwells to rehashing, revisiting, reexamining, reinvigorating, rediscovering, and reassessing its foundations (Chafetz 1993; Stinchcombe 1982). In addition to all of this activity, in-depth

[1] While putatively housed in political science departments, political theory is by all accounts an independent discipline.

[2] In addition to *Sociological Theory*, several other outlets regularly feature theoretical work in sociology. These include *Theory & Society*, *Journal of Classical Sociology, European Journal of Social Theory* and *Theory, Culture, and Society*.

[3] Although what we have to say is mostly confined to the problems and prospects of sociological theory in a single national field (The U.S.), it is important to observe that similar dynamics (albeit with significant differences of emphasis) can be observed in other settings (Guzman and Silver 2018; Outhwaite 2009; Rangel 2018)

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exegetical analysis sits beside intensely critical arguments for who belongs in the canon, to begin with (see, for instance, Chap. 5), what criteria of belonging are essential, and whether or not classics are even necessary (Abrutyn 2013; Baehr 2017; Connell 1997).

At a time in which the idea of theory has few consensual meanings (Abend 2008) and the idea of active "theorists" is questionable (Lizardo 2014), this Handbook is perhaps needed most urgently. However, its very existence must be actively defended and justified, rather than taken as par for the course. In what follows, we first review what "classical" is usually intended to mean, why this is slippery and problematic, and, then, lay out the broader goals of this *Handbook*. Following these discussions, we will provide the map for the sections and chapters related to the preceding section's overarching vision.

1.1 The "Classics"

At the risk of telling a story that has been told one too many times, classical sociological theory refers to a loosely bound temporal distinction of the foundations of sociology that is taken to begin sometime in the nineteenth century and ended sometime in the early 20th. As the story usually goes, Europe and, later the U.S., experienced profound structural changes as political and social revolutions ushered—at very different tempos—democracy and liberalism (Seidman 1983). The industrial revolution and attendant urbanism dramatically changed the economic and social structure of the emerging European nation-states (Nisbet 1993). The enlightenment contributed to the push of liberalism, humanism, secularism, and, importantly, a rise in the scientific method being applied to once prohibited and taboo things like religion, human nature, and the like (see, also, Chap. 2, X, X). Alternative or additional elements of this story underscore the role colonialism, othering, and white supremacy played in the construction of sociology and the selection of what went into the canon (Connell 1997).

The story often begins, though there is some variation, with a quick examination of Auguste Comte, a move first pioneered by Comte himself (Levine 1995, p. 13ff), and later repeated by Chicago sociologists Park and Burgess (1921) in the first "classic" introductory sociology textbook (Levine 1995, p. 17). Comte coined the term sociology, weirdly combining Latin (*socius*) and Greek (*logos*),[4] in a lecture delivered in 1839 because his previously preferred moniker (dating back to an essay written in 1822), *social physics*, was found to have been already staked out by the Belgian statistician Adolphe Quetelet, of "Homme Moyenne" fame (Levine 1995, pp. 14, n. 4). After the brief review of Comte and his descent into phrenology, misogyny, and madness, professors and textbooks usually follow functionalism to its logical end, hitting Herbert Spencer's quasi-Darwinian combination of biologistic naturalism and English individualism and then Emile Durkheim's collectivist critique of this last figure (Lizardo 2009). Next, Marx, Weber, and maybe Simmel are discussed as the course moves to "conflict" sociology (Collins 1975).

Once the Saints of Sociology (Durkheim, Marx, Weber) are covered, the professor likely introduces American sociology by way of the Chicago school. This is done with a heavy emphasis on social philosopher George Herbert Mead's (1934) social behaviorism and the atmosphere of pragmatism preceding and surrounding him, giving birth to sociology's other paradigm, symbolic interactionism. From there, the professor is given almost complete leeway to explore whatever, though Aldon Morris' (2017) recent essential and cogent historical corrective has compelled many to add Du Bois and the Atlanta school to the must-teach of classical sociology.

However, there is no simple formula besides the canonized Saints. Going back as far as Plato or medieval Muslim scholar, Ibn Khaldun is as possible as mining the Scottish Moralists and, especially Adam Smith, the German Idealist philosophers, the existential phenomenologists, and their sociological epigone Alfred Schutz,

[4] Not being shy to tell us what he really thought, Robert Merton (1968, pp. 2, n.2) once referred to the term as "the horrible hybrid that has ever since designated the science of society."

French enlightenment scholars like Condorcet and Montesquieu, less well-established "minor" figures like Veblen, de Tocqueville or Pareto (Aron 1965), neglected and marginalized women scholars like Gilman or Martineau (Lemert 2016), and any number of Chicago school folks like Park or Addams (Abbott 2017). Indeed, the classical theory may even stretch to one of the more conventional markers of classical-contemporary: Talcott Parsons, Erving Goffman, and Robert Merton's (1968) main works.

Though with many variations, each of these scholars attempted to impose scientific logic on understanding social action and organization. Often compelled to do so by the apparent differences between traditional social organization and that of the urban metropolis that threw much of the old into sharp relief. Deep philosophical issues underlay these treatises surrounding human nature, the future, the "good" society, and the like. However, most, if not all, classical theorists were committed to the scientific study of societies, even if they differed on epistemological and ontological issues.

1.2 The Problems with "Classical" Theory

There are several more compelling and exhaustive critiques of the canon and its formation (Connell 2018, 1997; Giddens 1976; Levine 1995, pp. 13–82; Seidman 1983; Zeitlin 1968). Thus, we would prefer to think about the problems that beset the "classical" theory commitment the discipline makes and its consequences for teaching and research. We organize this discussion via a series of questions: "What is 'classical'?" "What should we get from classical theory"? and "Are there alternatives to how we currently do it?"

1.2.1 What Is "Classical?"

We take this question literally and not metaphorically. While many disciplines have a central figure or set of figures that make their way into an introductory course or whose name adorns a still-used law or set of principles, sociology is beholden to an entire (chronologically gerrymandered) era as foundational (c. 1860s–1920s). To be sure, we would be remiss in tossing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. Many of the specific classics associated with this era, like Durkheim's *Suicide,* Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Du Bois's *The Philadelphia Negro*, or Simmel's *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations* endure because they remain insightful and inspirational. Classic texts are, therefore, ones produced by the classical figures (however defined) and are meant to be returned to, poured over, and reinterpreted ad infinitum.

Yet, it remains an open question of whether or not a discipline needs an entire course devoted to its intellectual history or the explanation of a select number of texts. Economics lacks such a course in their training, Political Science has shed political theory as a separate discipline, and Psychology is blissfully innocent of its early history (Cole 1996). One easy criticism is that what was deemed classical made sense when it was first invoked as a reference point for what was contemporary at the time. For instance, in the immediate post-functionalist period of the 1970s and even more earnestly in the 1980s, the splitting of theory into two chronologically defined courses became institutionalized in American sociology curricula. Classical was pre-Parsons, and contemporary encompassed the explosion of post or anti functionalist theory since the 1960s that was eclectic, multi-level, and ever-expanding (Alexander 1987b).

Before that, during the era of functionalist (Parsonian) supremacy, the theory was theory except for small islands of critics like George Homans (1950) in Talcott Parsons' backyard or Herbert Blumer (1986) in Chicago. Most theorists, even those like Mills (1959), who criticized Parsons' grand theorizing, accepted the systems language and the underlying architecture of the theory. Before Parsons, the theory was taken for granted in the formative years at Chicago and, seemingly, in Atlanta. Theory and methods, like the "true" classical theorists, were

inseparable. The discipline seemed far more separated into substantive areas like political or economic sociology, urban or historical-comparative, and so forth. Big overarching questions cut across these areas, like those concerning action, social change, the color line, and integration.

1.2.2 What Should We Get from Classical Theory?

In 2020, this splitting of theory and method was far less sensical. The heavyweights of most contemporary theory courses—e.g., C. Wright Mills, Michel Foucault, Niklas Luhmann, Pierre Bourdieu, Erving Goffman, and Harold Garfinkel—are deceased, and all (perhaps except Luhmann) would not have accepted the separation of theory from method. Others, like Peter Berger and Howard Becker, may still be alive but far less active in producing new sociological knowledge (but Jürgen Habermas, 91 at the time of this writing, is still kicking and producing heaps of writings, although mostly in abstract philosophy and ethics). Ironically, as these titans have increasingly taken a backseat and the last generation of anglophone throwbacks to theorists of the past like Jonathan Turner, Randall Collins, Anthony Giddens, and so forth move closer to being legends and myths instead of present forces of the discipline, the role of the theorist has become attenuated or become untenable in the current organization of the discipline (Lizardo 2014; Turner 2012).

Nonetheless, with the gradual decline in theorists, space has opened up for a wealth of younger scholars who are doing theory in novel and rigorous ways. Indeed, we might even argue sociology is amidst a golden age of theorizing, but in a way that "returns to the classics" (Chafetz 1993), in rejecting the idea of pure theory and accepting the fundamental unity of theory and method (Abend 2019; Reed 2011; Tavory 2018). However, what passes for contemporary remains beholden to what is, for all intents and purposes, increasingly "classical." As such, a trichotomy has grown: history of social or sociological thought (from the ancients through the nineteenth century), classical theory (from the mid-nineteenth century through early twentieth), and contemporary theory (post-war through the present). In an age of austere college budgets and the near-total decline of sociology as a meaningful public policy actor, adding a third required class would be impossible. However, we all seem to agree on what we want from deeming a course, a theory, or an idea "classical." We want some generative guidelines, a productive guidepost that can spark further ideas, reflect, and directly inform our research. We think that this version of "classical" is both necessary and continues to exist, but it is poorly served by the way we organize the teaching and production of theory.

1.2.3 Are There Alternatives to How We Currently Do it?

What we have done so far is not useful. Instructors arbitrarily choose favorites, sometimes relying heavily on textbooks that are not really theory texts but mixtures between biographies and social histories with some oversimplifications about theoretical ideas. A large swath of sociology is being sucked into a black hole as classical theory grows both more inclusive and ever-backward looking, while contemporary theory tries to balance new stuff being written with what are now seminal pieces of theory (Abrutyn 2013). Critical theories challenge the whole endeavor, continuing to question whether theory and sociology are scientific or utterly oppressive hegemonic regimes (Connell 1997). Precious time and ink are spilled over who belongs in the canon but not on how putatively classical theories contribute to contemporary research.

We continue to fight long-dead battles (Was Weber an idealist and Marx a materialist?) at the expense of isolating the best ideas and moving forward. Exegetical work pours over newly discovered manuscripts, re-translations, marginal comments made by the authors, and letters sent to colleagues and acquaintances in hopes of

unlocking some new ideas. All the while, old ideas are lost or forgotten only to be "discovered" by contemporary sociologists looking for concepts or processes to explain the data they have collected. In short, we reinvent the wheel, pour old wine into new bottles, and sweat philosophical issues instead of celebrating just how much we know about the social world and how right the classics were about a lot of things.

We believe there is a place for situating and discussing the people and *big ideas* the discipline was built on and continues to draw upon. As Nisbet (1993: 3) put it, ideas should not be "treated as extensions or shadows of single individuals;" instead, they are "distinguishable structures of meaning" that have "independent relationships and continuities, and it is only too easy to lose sight of these when we focus attention on biographies." This is not to say that we are unsympathetic to the effort to highlight the racism and misogyny of the early American sociological profession and the need to incorporate work by scholars from excluded and marginalized groups into the sociological canon (Chap. 5; also, Morris 2017). But, we also question the wisdom of devoting elevating this historical or biographical material to a must-know level.

The counterargument, often, is that sociology is a big tent and, as such, has no center upon which we can socialize and professionalize neophytes into that tent besides Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Du Bois, and whoever else (Alexander 1987a). If we really are held together by a few theorists who are long dead and whose works are uneven and partially useful, then that raises more questions than it answers. Our argument is that the discipline would be better off putting these debates to rest and moving on to more critical matters. We believe that rather than being held together by allegiance to a particular set of authors and texts written during a unique 50-year span, the discipline is held together by a set of conceptual concerns, an essential set of preoccupations and notions that are seen as central to understanding and explaining core social dynamics. If these are set apart (in Durkheim's (1995) sense of techniques for the production of sacredness) by being deemed "classical," so be it. The only problem with the moniker, as we see it, is that "classicism," implies a backward-looking, traditionalist, antiquarian, exclusionary, canonizing perspective, but now extended from people and texts to notions. We depart from this approach (best exemplified by Nisbet 1993). In our view, the core ideas and concerns of the discipline hardly represent a static, ahistorical "closed set." Instead, what the core ideas and concerns are, how they should be formulated, and the relationship between them should be precisely the core job of theorizing in the twenty-first century. We see this *Handbook* as our contribution to this endeavor.

1.3 A Path Forward?

While our vision will undoubtedly be met by skepticism, we put it forth as the best way forward. The first thing to do, we believe, is to begin the painful process of shedding the "great man," the history of social thought approach. For a discipline committed to *social forces*, we have crystallized a backward gaze upon individuals' achievements, implying to those reading them that theory is something only individuals can do. To be sure, these individuals provided some of the most significant insights possible with, in many cases, limited data. Yet, all sciences have pioneers who made significant advances, but those advances only became advances through their application and development within a community of scholars.

Classical theory should not be confined to people. Instead, what is classical should be tethered to central *thematic* concerns that inspire research, enliven debates, and shape the discipline's collective identity. In this vein, Chap. 5 on Du Bois, instead of merely reproducing this type of classification, critiques the canonization approach. It is a push for a reconsideration of a significant community of scholars (namely, the Atlanta school) whose exemplary work on what had been mainly marginalized and ignored through the first half century of American sociology. The themes not only overlap in many ways, with some of the more prevalent themes, but also speak to a set of

themes that are central to the discipline's identity today.

A second move we advocate for is to shift away from the tendency to categorize sociological theory via the Merton (1967) category of "the middle range." On the one hand, Merton's vision of sociology broken down into smaller specialized units (sociologies of "x" or "y") created the type of circumscribed and specialized scholarly communities capable of advancing the study of various phenomena at the core of the discipline. On the other hand, the atomization of the study of sociological phenomena has led to the sort of anomic division of labor Durkheim (1964) described as abnormal in its capacity to integrate. Indeed, it is plausible to even suggest overspecialization directly led to the canon-method of teaching and conceptualizing classical theory, as the core of the discipline either deemed the realm of grand theorists (who were "bad" (Chafetz 1993)) or a matter of philosophic debate.

Accordingly, we did not ask authors to write a sociology of economy or a sociology of law but to think big. What was it about these spheres of social action that so fascinated many of the classical theorists? What has survived? What died? Why did it die? Are there any threads worth picking back up? Ultimately, the goal was to revive a thematic approach to the study of sociological theory's foundations without reifying the unnecessary boundaries between sections or subfields. We do not believe this book or any book will dissolve these boundaries, nor are we making a political statement and arguing for the discipline's de-Mertonization. Instead, we the primary driving force behind the decisions made herein, and the vision we crafted pertain to the pedagogical "dead-end" classical theory has become for the field. This last is a point that allows us to transition to talking about the organization of the chapters and sections, which serve more practically to elucidate the path forward.

1.4 Organization of the Handbook

Since graduate school, we have learned from our own experiences, in discussions with colleagues, as instructors charged with designing courses. As faculty members of departments tasked with training neophytes, that classical theory—as conventionally taught and conceptualized—was sorely lacking. The focus on *theorists*, set in motion by Lewis Coser's (1971) *Masters of Sociological Thought*, obscures the generic processes and concepts many of them developed, even when providing much-needed insight on the circumstances and social context in which the ideas came to fruition.[5] The celebration of a personality-based canon unnecessarily marginalizes the works of women and people of color (see Chap. 5 in this Handbook) as well as forcing productive insights of "minor" figures to slip through the cracks.

Further, fretting about canonization as "masters" invites (unnecessary) debates that ultimately detract from the job of teaching *theory* for the sake of sociological research. When we reflect on Classical Theory, as a course, we see 13 to 15 weeks devoted to teaching the history of our discipline more so than a course devoted to enduring principles. No other social or natural science spends an entire semester teaching students a history of ideas. To be sure, knowledge is socially situated, but we would argue that the endurance of specific texts and concepts point to their generalizability and enduring relevance.

So, we began to formulate a *Handbook* that was not a review or theorist-oriented text. Instead, we sought a balance between backward and forward-looking, offering fresh new takes on the foundational elements of sociology. Before the 1970s/1980s, sociology had not crystallized the three textbook paradigms (functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism) heuristic for introductory courses or the "great men" of social thought theory courses. We found some inspiration in general sociological texts and edited series that helped us design the *Handbook's*

[5] A focus on people is qualitatively different from a focus on *traditions* fruitfully exploited by Levine (1995) and Collins (1994), or even more appositely a focus on core notions or *ideas* pioneered by Nisbet (1993), like the latter we also find more productive a focus on core sociological ideas.

organization. Concomitantly, we sought to balance the voices we recruited to reflect on the old material in creative new ways.

Six significant themes quickly sedimented: Overarching Concerns, Central Dynamics, Spheres of Social Life, New Social Forms, Interactions, Symbols, and Psyche, and Conceptual Threads. As organized, the Handbook can be used in many ways. One might choose to pick and choose readings that supplement primary sources, or one may choose to pair individual chapters with preferred overarching themes. Either way, each of the sections may also stand alone as units or even encompass whole courses. For instance, the *Spheres of Social Life* section retrains the sociological lens on the fundamental domains or "spheres" of social life (Weber 1946). These are ubiquitous to all human societies and vary according to how differentiated roles and organizations embedded within them are from other types of roles and organizations. For instance, in foraging societies, religion, and polity still exist even if they are deeply entwined with kinship. Yet, in industrial societies phenomenologically, structurally, and culturally, we can begin to discern some boundaries between these three institutions and, therefore, the types of goals that are religious or political; the differences in feeling, thinking, and doing across each sphere; and, the differing logics. Below we briefly describe each section and its chapters.

1.5 Overarching Concerns

In the first section, we examine some of the most essential concerns found across the classical sociological tradition (as traditionally defined). Guillermina Jasso's opening chapter orients the reader to the fact that theory and methods were united in what became canonized as the classics. Indeed, as was often the case, the construction of theory was part and parcel of the methodological approaches each of the traditional classical theorists used. Cesare Silla and Brandon Vaidyanathan (Chap. 2) return to a critical problem in classical theory: The question of modernity, how the idea mattered to the foundation of sociology, and what the consequences are of the splitting of "types" of societies into modern and pre-modern (and postmodern)? Another common thread of classical theory—the use and misuse of evolutionary principles—is elucidated by Turner and McCaffree. Here they make a case for what was useful, theoretically and analytically, in the classical period and how these strands have influenced contemporary evolutionary sociology.

Keeping with the spirit of taking a well-worn topic or phenomenon and breathing new life into it, Erika Summers-Effler reexamines the self, reconciling two branches of social psychology that split in the 1960s. Summers-Effler traverses this old terrain by refracting these ideas through insights drawn from cognitive neuroscience in what can only be described as a path towards a more dynamic sociology of the self.

The final chapter in this section, by Aldon Morris, Michael Schwartz, and José Itzigohn, sets out to make the "old" new again. Like Silla and Vaidyanathan's take on modernity and Jonathan Turner and Kevin McCaffree's take on evolution, the authors critically assess the foundations of the discipline. However, instead of examining underlying assumptions or analytic strategies, their chapter looks at the profession's formation as an extension of powerful political and economic forces that marginalized minority scholars, even those who were as or even more productive and distinguished as any contemporary like W .E. B. Du Bois. The chapter is both an excursus in the sociology of knowledge geared to accounting for the exclusion of a deserving figure from the classical canon of "sociological masters" (Morris 2017) and a corrective that contributes to our argument that the canon version of sociology is long past its due date. What follows is a delineation of the key conceptual, methodological, and substantive contributions of Du Bois and the broader Atlanta school to the sociological enterprise that is important and timely. Du Bois has left us with a treasure trove of concepts, ideas, and themes that are rife for further development and exploitation by interested scholars seeking to understand central dynamics in the social world.

1.6 Central Dynamics

The second section of the book takes up dynamics that were key to the classics, hoping to give new life to them by extracting them from specific texts and stale debates. Seth Abrutyn opens this chapter with the fundamental dynamic of classical theory: *differentiation*. The title of his chapter asks whether or not the concept and process have lost its utility. Still, he stakes out a position that (a) what has been criticized most about differentiation was the structural-functionalist version of Parsonian sociology, and (b) differentiation remains as central, even if implicitly, to the sociological enterprise as any other idea the classics offered.

Abrutyn's chapter is followed by two pieces on a dynamic found predominantly in the British (Spencer), Italian (Mosca, Pareto), and German (Marx; Weber; Simmel) traditions: power. Risto Heiskala and Peeter Selg's chapter brings political theory into an explicit dialo with social theory. At the same time, Isaac Reed, Abigail Moore, and Vasfiye Toprak think through the various ways power has been conceptualized and used to understand and explain the social world of politics and the politics of social worlds. These chapters provide an expansive contemporary view of how sociologists use and improve our use and development of one of the most central and generative notions in the discipline.

Chap. 9 shifts from macro-level dynamics to meso-level dynamics. Sophie Mützel and Lisa Kressin provide a detailed and engaging look at how relational network theory today emerged from Simmelian sociology. Arguing against the commonplace idea of Simmelian sociology as eclectic and unsystematic, they persuasively argue for the thesis that "relational sociology" represents a coherent, unifying, and promising research tradition spanning more than a hundred years. This tradition encompasses both theoretically penetrating reflections and methodologically sophisticated applications while cutting across the traditional sociological distinction between action, structure, and culture (Lizardo 2019).

Finally, Patricia Hill Collins and Rachel Guo tackle the problem of conceptualizing class inequality and stratification from the perspective of the contemporary intersectionality theory. An innovative and groundbreaking essay, Collins and Guo begin by arguing the classics were consumed by class as the principal dimension of inequality, which makes sense when put into the context of Silla/Vaidyanathan and Morris/Itzigsohn/Schwartz's chapters (2 and 5, respectively), as well as the usual metropolis-centered, race-blind narrative of classical theory (Connell 1997). They followed this thread into the 1970s/1980s, where scholarship on inequality split into specific camps like gender, was fused back together with intersectionality but remained separated from class. Linking these two sets of concerns, Collins and Guo set the agenda for the next generation of sociologists, one in which intersectionality takes seriously class analysis, and class scholarship takes seriously other dimensions of inequality, rather than treat them as control or secondary variables to a given scholar's predispositions.

1.7 Spheres of Social Life

The third section of the book takes an in-depth look at what is arguably the central substantive material for the classical theorists: the dominant spheres of social action that were ubiquitous to human societies (Weber 1946). These chapters also implicitly refer back to the methodological questions raised by Jasso (Chap. 1), Silla/Vaidyanathan's work on modernity (Chap. 2), and by Turner/McCaffree on evolution (Chap. 3), as well as differentiation (Chap. 6) and power (Chaps. 7 and 8). The section kicks off with Alexandra Maryanski's erudite and exhaustive review of kinship in the social sciences (Chap. 11). Up until the 1950s, kinship was primary to the sociology of the family. It was comparative, historical, and interested not only in contemporary American dynamics, but in vital long-standing issues kinship organizes like where newlyweds live, how family members are

named and recognized, how property is inherited and why, and so forth; all key factors that tend to be obscured in bilateral, neolocal systems like the U.S. system.

Chap. 12 turns to one of the earliest sources of differentiation in human societies: religion. Michal Pagis and Daniel Winchester's approach departs from the usual macro-historical focus characteristic of Weber and Spencer to a more phenomenological, practice-oriented take running through the classics and into the contemporary era. In particular, the emphasis on embodiment adds a rich new dimension to an old subject, consistent with cutting-edge trends in the field (Ammerman 2020; Astor and Mayrl 2020).

Chapters 13 and 14 tackle the two great spheres of modernity: polity and economy. In the former, Elisabeth Clemens returns to questions raised by Heiskala/Selg and Reed/Moore/Toprak in their essays on power. Still, the focus is on what the classical theorists were up to when they spoke of polities and the state as the primary organizational actor. The latter chapter on the economy also offers a fresh take on an old subject. Stephanie Mudge and Christopher Lawrence take up the debate between Marxist political economy and liberal economics, exploring how these debates shaped the evolution of the sociology of economic life. Abandoning the usual approach, they posit that this debate can be supplemented and extended by adding a wide range of scholars who are often excluded from traditional economic sociology—e.g., feminist or decolonial scholars. In doing so, a new agenda for a new generation of economic sociology is laid bare.

The last three chapters in this section revisit central spheres but are often seen as autonomous subfields. Eduardo Cornelius and Sida Liu (Chap. 15) revisit the sphere of law, reminding the reader just how important it was to all classical theorists. Using the three conceptual themes of *coercion*, *ideology*, and *change*, the authors offer a compelling logic for why law matters to all sociological endeavors.

In Chap. 16, Jeffrey Guhin asks the question: what if the sociology of education returned to Durkheim, Dewey, and Du Bois, mining their interests in oft-forgotten or peripheral issues in schooling such as internal goods versus the usual emphasis on external goods or on responsibilities vis-à-vis the more typical focus on rights. The result is a fascinating return to classics generally relegated to dusty shelves in favor of the explosion in theoretical treatises in the 1970s. The chapter links to themes of reconstruction and reclaiming of neglected core ideas (Chap. 5) and of using portable concepts linked to the study of morality to make linkages across areas (Chap. 29) while calling for a reorientation of research in a central field in sociology around new ideas and concerns.

Finally, Ben Merriman (Chap. 17) offers an extensive and much-needed discussion of art and esthetics. Usually omitted from classical courses, Merriman engages the reader by making a compelling argument for why we should take the sphere of art far more seriously than we have so far; and why it is worth rethinking how the classical theorists understood esthetic forms as it informs cultural sociology today as well as offers relatively unmined research areas that demand a more in-depth investigation.

1.8 New Social Forms

The fourth section turns our attention to many structural and organizational changes wrought by modernity (Chap. 2) and differentiation (Chap. 6). Each of those subjects presages Chap. 18, which explores one of the ultimate forces of social change—both as the cause of many cherished conceptual ideas of sociology [think alienation, anomie, or the "mental life" of cities]: urbanization. Terry Clark and Cary Wu examine how urbanity, cities, and density inform the classics and how it remains essential to the sociological project, especially as humans increasingly live in urban areas. The next three chapters have some key relationships but highlight three essential phenomena—one of which has only recently become interesting again to sociology.

In Chap. 19, Christian Borch and Bjørn Schiermer return to the old studies of crowds and, more extensively, collective behavior. This makes the case that by adding Durkheim—whose work was strangely omitted from critiques in the 1960s and 1970s—we can retain some ideas of the classical era. Finally, in doing so, a powerful sociological lens for understanding a range of vital processes in the contemporary world, including the explosion of social media and other digital phenomena, the rise of the "influencer," and the ubiquity of automated trading algorithms in modern financial markets.

Closely related, Chap. 20 looks to make explicit and clear the threads in the classical traditions that have deeply informed modern social movement theory. McAdam and Tarrow examine the Marxian, Durkheimian, Weberian, and, more broadly, comparative-historical traditions, pointing out how they influenced, noting which ones have lost some purchase, and arguing why some of these lost elements might be worth incorporating back in. Finally, Fligstein traces the vibrant, contemporary sociology of organizations (Chap. 21) to the classics. This chapter teases out three critical traditions: the Weberian tradition most readers will be familiar with, but then the chapter traces both the influence theorists in business schools and their interests in management and work and the industrial organization literature in economics. Fligstein shifts to the 1970s, illustrating how these three threads converged into formal organizations' modern study.

The section is rounded out with a nod to Simmel's formal sociology, noting that the classics—implicitly and explicitly—were engaged with real, imagined, and political Others (Chap. 23). Decoteau picks up where the chapters on Modernity (Chap. 2), Du Bois (Chap. 5), differentiation (Chap. 6), and stratification/inequality (Chap. 10) leave off. In particular, Decoteau explores how several well-known strands run from Simmel, Marx, and Mead to contemporary sociology, arguing several strands deserve to be acknowledged as influential (Du Bois) or more explicitly engaged with (Freud).

1.9 Interactions, Symbols, and Psyche

The fifth section turns to issues intimately related to microsociology, social psychology, and a core problem in sociological theory: meaning. In the first chapter of this section (24), Ruiz-Junco expands on the insights of Cooley/Mead's theory of the self by tracing the role of empathy in the production of an intersubjective self. After exploring the early threads found in Cooley and Mead, Ruiz-Junco shifts to how empathy informs contemporary sociology. Chap. 25 shifts from the self to the materials from which social life is made possible: symbolic systems and their structural edifices. Leschziner and Brett reconstruct Marx, Weber, and Simmel's thoughts about the relationship between our inner life and social structure, eventually settling on Durkheim's contributions as central to setting an agenda for the sociology of knowledge and meaning. In exploring Durkheim's legacy in field theory, neo-institutionalism, and the culture/cognition perspectives, the authors can both isolate the central theoretical and methodological advances and point to new frontiers for future research. Following this, Chancer and Shapiro (Chap. 26) explore consciousness and, in particular, the unconscious, its role in classic sociology, and its eventual marginalization. Making a case for carefully returning to ideas about consciousness and, primarily, the unconscious, Chancer, and Shapiro present one of the most creative and needed chapters in the Handbook. In an explicit return to the "hard" psychoanalytic tone of some Frankfurt school sociologists (Fromm 1965) and, implicitly, to the "soft" tone of Parsons (1951) inclusion of Freudian dynamics of the self, a meaningful but oft-ignored question of what value psychoanalysis may hold for sociology today is engaged.

1.10 Identifying Conceptual Threads

The final section is devoted to chapters making connections across some of the concerns, ideas,

and domains of inquiry discussed in the previous chapters. A number of the chapters here have a historical component, but the history is used to make a more significant analytic point aimed at clarifying fundamental notions. In Chap. 28, Omar Lizardo uses cognitive linguistics and cognitive semantics to tackle one of the fundamental conceptual issues in the production and evaluation of theoretical concepts; that of the seemingly perennial ambiguity of theoretical ideas (Levine 1988). Using the core notion of "structure" in social science, Lizardo comes up with a principled distinction between *ambiguity* (when different sharply defined but incompatible versions of the concept become entrenched) and *vagueness* (when an overarching but not very specific version of a concept encompassing various sub-concepts is dominant). Lizardo concludes that structure is an ambiguous notion in the current intellectual marketplace while tracing the *usage events* that led to that state of affairs through the twentieth century.

In Chap. 31, John Levi Martin and Alessandra Lembo trace the history of the concept of "interest" in early German and American sociology (for a companion argument, see Martin and Lembo 2020), showing how fundamental distortions of this idea in the functionalist tradition led to Parsons proposing the seemingly opposed ideas of "values" to the analytic job that interests were supposed to do. Martin and Lembo show how this led to aporias in theorizing action (leading to such conundra as motivated but "disinterested" action) and suggesting that refurbished concept of interest provides the best way moving forward.

Chapters 30 and 32 deal with a somewhat neglected (but currently resurgent given the rise of the cognitive neurosciences) theme, namely the role of cognitive and "the cognitive" as fundamental analytic categories in classical social theory. Both argue, in distinctive ways, for the centrality of cognitive notions for understanding the classics and their projects, and by implication, for the centrality of cognitive notions for substantive theorizing today.

Michael Strand documents various key appropriations of the notion of cognition, which, beginning with Kant's fundamental rupture with both empiricist and Aristotelian/Scholastic accounts of cognition (that saw cognition as a reflection of the world and grounded in habit and practice) argued for the autonomy and primacy of a "pure" cognitive element, in which the world adapted to cognitive forms. This approach has been taken up in different ways by many theorists, some doubling down on the purity aspect (e.g., Levi-Strauss) while others (partially) returning to empiricist (Durkheim) and Aristotelian (Marx) approaches to "empirical cognition" as a way to both historicize the cognitive, while grounding it on activity and praxis as a way to account for collective phenomena.

Stephen Turner traces the deep interest in the (neuro) cognitive displayed by foundational thinkers of the "pre-classical" era, namely Comte and Spencer. Turner's point is that the earlier thinkers, freed from the influence of Kant, were able to develop accounts of the cognitive that seem more copacetic with modern work in cognitive neuroscience emphasizing the adaptive, evolutionary bases of cognition, than the blend of Kantianism and "culturology" of subsequent theorists, referred here as "The Standard Social Science Account of the Mind." Turner shows how this standard model seeped into early empirical sociology, especially in the construction of the notion of "attitude," and its link to the measurement apparatus of modern survey research.

Finally, in Chap. 29, Steve Hitlin provides a *tour de force* account of the various guises that the category of morality has appeared in social theory. From being the defining feature of social life and the key to cracking the social order problem in Durkheim and Parsons to providing a justification for the historical comparison of different societies (or the same society over time). The category of morality is Protean, cutting across macro and micro levels of analysis in the work of Cooley, Mead, and the Chicago interactionists, becoming one of the core roots of the social self and our connection to others via empathy. Today work on morality is a multidisciplinary (some say transdisciplinary) affair, with ironically old "grand" theories of morality developed in sociology reappearing outside of

sociology. The issue of morality butts against the question of the status of the "cognitive" (and the neural) in sociology as various disciplines look for a neurocognitive basis of moral behavior. Overall, this leaves the sociological contribution to this project uncertain, taking the form of an opportunity yet to be taken, but one worth considering given the centrality of the notion for pretty much every social scientific study domain.

1.11 In Closing

What we hope, ultimately, is to present the reader with three different tools. The first is pedagogical. We sincerely hope sociology is ready to turn the corner on (tired) debates about canons that are more suited for a history of social thought course than a social science course aimed at the core of the discipline's diverse array of research. Second, a means of "unfreezing" the classics. Durkheim, Marx, Du Bois, and so forth were not bound by disciplinary memory or peer-reviewers or other trappings; they exercised the sociological imagination at its purest, taking from whom they felt was worth taking and inventing how they saw fit to invent. The contributors to this volume were charged with breathing life into classical *theory* and not into *theorists*. To do so, we asked them to toss out the well-worn reviews and rehashings and to distill the essential contributions that drive contemporary research. Third, we hope each chapter and each section motivates theoretical and empirical work, not in retesting old theses or engaging in old debates, but in inspiring a new wave of sociology that leverages the incredible insights each chapter highlights.

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