

Introduction

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Sociology, like human society, is varied, contested and constantly changing. It is hard to capture from a single perspective, and hard to describe with finality. This does not mean there are no regular patterns, no enduring features, or no basis for science. But it does mean that as a science sociology faces a distinctive challenge. Its object of study – society or social relations – is more subject to historical change and human choice than the objects of the physical and biological sciences. It is also broader and more complex than the specific dimensions of social life singled out by the narrower, more specialized social sciences like politics, economics, and geography. And precisely because human society is open to choice and historical change, and social life is so internally complex, it is always possible to see things a little differently by looking again or looking from a different perspective. Not least of all, sociological findings – even when very clearly confirmed – are liable to be contested not only by other scientists with different theories but by people with political or personal commitments to certain views of the social world.

All of this makes sociology hard, but also exciting. Likewise, it makes editing a Handbook that attempts to give an overview of the field a daunting but stimulating task. When Sage last published a major Handbook of Sociology, in 1988, the social world itself was different. That earlier Handbook came at the tail end of a period of consolidation after the upheavals of the 1960s and in the midst of a high moment for global conservatism signalled by the overlapping tenures of Margaret Thatcher and

Ronald Reagan. Although Reagan had actually been an undergraduate sociology major, as a president his views, like Thatcher's, tilted away from social concerns towards an idealization of individualism. Thatcher famously asserted, in fact, that there was no such thing as society. By this she meant, it seems, that there is nothing distinct about society as a whole that is not contained in the wills of individual members. Reagan, similarly, focused on the freedom of choice that citizens of Western capitalist democracies enjoyed and that was denied to citizens of Soviet communist societies. But he was not much interested in the economic or social conditions on which active citizenship rested.

Reagan and Thatcher both contributed to changes in global society, not least to the rise of neoliberalism, an ideology of free markets and economic individualism. But they also missed important things that were happening. The crisis of the Soviet Union and East European communism did not simply bring peace or freedom, it brought nationalist wars and ethnic cleansing. The intensification of global capitalism did not simply bring new prosperity – though for a time it did, at least in the world's rich countries. It also brought a sharp backlash. So too did the position of the United States as the world's unrivalled superpower. The two converged in the attacks of 11 September 2001. Islamic radicals flew hijacked airplanes into symbols of global capitalism – the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York – and of American power – the Pentagon in Washington, DC. At about the same time the high-tech bubble collapsed, bringing global

stock markets down from their unrealistic highs. Suddenly, anxieties about globalization were as much in fashion as enthusiasms. And of course there were also a host of other social issues that demanded attention, including many that had been obscured while neoliberalism, high-tech and American power seemed clearly ascendant.

One of the basic goals of this new Handbook has been to reflect the new reality of social life and the processes of change that have produced it and are still at work – from globalization to shifting gender relations. Another goal is to reveal the continuities that persist in the face of change – from the long-term trend towards urbanization to the deep patterns of inequality. A third goal is to indicate the methodological and substantive improvements in sociological knowledge, the new knowledge that has been created. And finally, a fourth central goal has been to do justice to the internal diversity of the field. Some of that diversity involves differences of theory and intellectual perspective, some is the product of different research methods and some grows out of emphasis on different topics – science studies, for example, compared to family or popular culture. And of course, different perspectives also reflect the identities and social locations of authors.

The 1988 Handbook was written entirely by Americans and reflected mainly American research on American society. Smelser (1988: 15) himself recognized that '[t]his volume is ... predominantly a book on sociology as it stands in the United States'. We have tried to reduce this bias. Although globalization has become a major aspect of contemporary sociology, national differences in research topics and forms of sociological theory clearly persist. In editing this Handbook we have been conscious of the growth of globalization, but we have also been concerned to reflect national differences. Smelser's Handbook was assembled in the context of a long-standing debate about the professionalization and institutionalization of sociology in American higher education. It is clear that Smelser was in part responding to Talcott Parsons's essay of 1959 on 'Some remarks of confronting sociology as a profession' and

also thinking about Robert E. Lee Faris's (1964) *Handbook of Modern Sociology*. Parsons's article had been relatively optimistic about the consolidation of sociology and Faris's Handbook had contained outstanding contributions from leading sociologists. By contrast, the tone of Smelser's introduction was more defensive. He (1988: 12) noted that sociology had experienced 'increased specialization of inquiry, diversification of both perspectives and subject matter studied, and considerable fragmentation and conflict'. In addition, he pointed to a range of new areas of specialization and growth such as the sociologies of medicine, gender and age stratification. Our Handbook recognizes that these trends identified by Smelser in the 1980s have, if anything, intensified. Sociology lacks an integrative theoretical paradigm and the topics it addresses continue to multiply. We can mention such topics as the globalization of society, the sociology of the body, queer theory, risk sociology, environmental sociology, the sociology of animals and many more. Once more there is a clear difference between American sociology, which has a strong and active professional association, and the sociology elsewhere in which professional development is generally much weaker. Opinion is divided about both the benefits and drawbacks of academic professionalization. Some would argue that diversity, fragmentation and conflict are healthy consequences of a discipline engaged with controversial issues in contemporary society. Professionalization is clearly a process of social closure. By contrast, it can be argued that sociology in Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and particularly the UK, where professionalization is relatively underdeveloped, has suffered from encroachment and dilution from interdisciplinarity as represented by cultural studies, gender studies, film studies and so on.

Trying to reduce the American bias that was evident in Smelser's Handbook does not mean eliminating the United States from the picture – American society is important and American sociology perhaps the largest and most influential national branch of the discipline. But it does mean complementing American perspectives

with many more international ones. We are not perfect in that regard; our contents are still biased towards English-language sociology. And sociology itself is not perfect, for it is still disproportionately produced in the global north. But we hope this volume does bring out the increasingly global character of twenty-first-century sociology.

GLOBAL SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS

There is always both continuity and change in social life. Even the most stable and most traditional social orders reveal patterns of change. There is change within a more or less consistent overall structure as new individuals are born or as some families prosper and others suffer. There are external shocks like plagues and crop failures that may decimate the population of a society near the subsistence level. Wars can do the same – and also lead to more centralized power and the dominion of some groups over others. But in none of these cases is change built in to a social order.

These cyclical and episodic changes contrast with long-term trends of more cumulative change. Population growth, technological innovation, early urbanization and long-distance trade all show a pattern of gradual increase over millennia. They have been central concerns for evolutionary approaches to social change, from nineteenth-century founders like Spencer (1885) to contemporary leaders like Lenski (Lenski and Nolan, 2004). Two major generalizations come from such studies. First, the overall pattern is one of increasing scale and differentiation. Through this long pattern of historical change societies grew larger as their economies, communications infrastructures and political systems gained in capacity. And as they grew larger they were also subdivided into more complex arrangements of subunits. At first these were relatively similar to each other, as families, or farming villages may be similar within a society. But eventually there were also differentiations of occupations, of farming from craft production and different crafts from each other, of military and religious

specialists from primarily economic producers, of rulers from subjects, and so forth. These changes were crucial to the several dichotomous contrasts that great nineteenth-century sociologists elaborated. Spencer wrote of the more differentiated industrial society by comparison to ‘militant’ societies in which armed power was basic. Durkheim (1893) wrote of the more complex patterns of organic solidarity that united people across lines of difference, by contrast to the mechanical solidarity that united people in relatively similar groups. Toennies (1886) contrasted community to association, emphasizing the more abstract structures and formal organizations necessary to organize large-scale, internally differentiated societies by contrast to the sentiments of commonality and face-to-face relations adequate to smaller, less complex societies.

Second, there are some ‘tipping points’ where quantitative change produces qualitative transformation. The rise of agriculture with its capacity to support cities and literate civilizations is one example. The industrial revolution another. In each case, a long pattern of changes eventually cumulated in far reaching transformations. We are arguably living through another of these qualitative changes as capitalism becomes more truly global and economic activity increasingly a matter of control over ‘information’ rather than only material production (Bell, 1973; Castells, 1996; and David Lyon’s chapter in this Handbook). Although there are debates about just how to analyse contemporary global transformations of society, there is little doubt that they are dramatic.

Many sociologists would reject evolutionary theories, suggesting that they exaggerate the extent to which the patterns of change are the same all over the world and tend in the same directions. Rather than an explanation in terms of a single evolutionary mechanism like survival of the fittest, they would suggest that a variety of historical processes overlap. Michael Mann (1986) argues that the central pattern is one of cross-cutting circles of power, state formation, and growing capacity both to keep domestic peace and to manage inter-state relations. Tilly (1990) links the growth of coercive power to capital as well as state capacity, at

least taking a long view of European history. Other historical sociologists place greater emphasis on cultural or on economic factors (drawing on thinkers from Foucault to Marx). But they concur that evolutionary theories build too much presumption of 'progress' and necessity into patterns of historical change that bring evil as well as good and reveal the results of purposive human action even if the results are not always what actors intend. Indeed, one of the major transformations in global sociology during the last third of the twentieth-century was the rise of historical sociology, in part as a renewal of classical sociology, asking questions with roots in Marx, Weber, Tocqueville and Durkheim but answering them on empirical as well as theoretical grounds and for the most part rejecting those evolutionary theories that assumed monocausal, unidirectional courses of change.

It was not evolutionary theory in general that was typically monocausal and unidirectional – there is nothing in Darwin to suggest this and many evolutionary sociologists like Lenski were careful to avoid such assumptions. This was more specifically true of modernization theory, developed as an offshoot of the dominant functionalist sociology of the 1950s. The ideas that there was one way to be modern, and that developing societies could and should follow the examples of Western Europe and the United States to achieve this were enormously influential, not only in sociology but throughout the social sciences (e.g., Inkeles and Smith, 1974; Parsons, 1977). But by the late 1960s this approach was being challenged both by sociological research and by the manifest problems of the approaches to development it encouraged. Dependency theory revealed the extent to which early leaders in economic development retained power over other countries (including their former colonies) (Cardoso and Faletto, 1978; Frank, 1980). World systems theory demonstrated the importance of position within a global structure to shaping the options open and chances for economic growth in any country (Wallerstein, 1974, 1988).

As problematic as a unidirectional, Western-biased modernization theory was revealed to

be, there remained a widespread consensus that one of the most important of the large-scale, qualitative transformations in world history was the transition to modernity. This involved multiple different factors – capitalism and/or markets, state formation and science to name just three. Different theories emphasized different combinations of these and other factors – secularization, nation-building, proactive social movements and individualism. This suggested different patterns within the modern era, as for example communist countries formed strong states but without market economies, while others attempted to modernize government and economics without limiting religion by secularization. More recently, many sociologists have argued that instead of speaking of a single modernization we should recognize 'multiple' or 'alternative' modernities (Eisenstadt and Schluter, 1998; Gaonkar, 2001).

None of this reduces the importance of the transition to modernity, it only complicates the picture of what modernity means. Rather than one ideal model to which different societies approximate more or less, contemporary theorists see a range of different forms of modern societies co-existing with each other. And modernity is not only a characteristic of each society (or of the culture or character of its members). It is a characteristic of the whole era. What is common to this era, even as different societies produce different forms of modernity? Four transformations are crucial:

- 1 An increasing scale and intensity of inter-connection, for which globalization is the most common shorthand. Events in one place can have unprecedentedly rapid repercussions around the world – as was revealed on 11 September 2001, or earlier in the Asian monetary crisis of 1997.
- 2 A 'disembedding' of individuals from close local communities and traditional, face-to-face cultures – accomplished by media, education, migration, economic choices and citizenship in large-scale societies.
- 3 A concentration of effective power, not necessarily in the hands of individuals as in the kings and emperors of the past, but in

powerful bureaucracies and social elites. A medieval king could order a subordinate killed, but if the unfortunate vassal was not close at hand it could take weeks to reach remote corners of even a small kingdom. Today few rulers can yell 'off with her head', but state capacities for surveillance and effective action reach effectively throughout whole countries and into individual lives and households – for good or ill, and ranging from tax collection to mandating school attendance to requiring vaccinations or persecuting religious minorities.

- 4 A process of self-sustaining change. Perhaps the single most distinctive feature of modernity has been its embrace of both the idea of progress and a set of institutional and organizational features that encourage continual and often dramatic social change. Capitalist competition, for example, means that businesses must constantly innovate or lose their market edge to other firms. Science continues not only to add to knowledge but to technology, which not only solves the problems inventors had in mind but enables a range of new activities (and often creates new problems). The idea of free and equal citizenship encourages claims for equal recognition on the part of a variety of lifestyles, sexual orientations, ethnic groups and social movements that might have been repressed in earlier eras. If modernity is about one thing, it is about the latest thing, the new, the idea of change as a virtue, as progress, growth and the struggle to get ahead.

A strange feature of modernization theory had been its tendency to treat the former colonies of European powers as though they were simply separate societies competing on a level playing field rather than societies constructed in part through and on the basis of colonial domination – and societies dealing not only with the domestic implications of colonization but the continuing international power of former colonial rulers. To give blunt examples, Jamaicans and Indians do not migrate to the UK just because they happen to like the former colonial power, but because the

UK remains relatively rich and offers a range of economic opportunities.

Understanding the nature of modernity took on new prominence in the sociological agenda because of the critique of modernization theory, and also because of the growing interconnection of different kinds of societies in a common global order. But instead of being seen as simply a goal for all societies, modernity was subjected to critical examination. Zygmunt Bauman (1991), for example, prominently showed that the Holocaust was possible only in and because of modernity. While rulers exercised ruthless power in all historical periods, the idea of totalitarianism, with its ambition not just to dominate but to control and even change the conditions of individual existence, was shown to be distinctively modern. And a range of dark sides to modernity and globalization continue to worry us: AIDS and other infectious diseases, the development of ever-deadlier weapons based on science and their global trade in illegal but still active capitalist markets, threats to privacy from the surveillance capacity of new electronic technologies.

Surprisingly few of these issues were prominent when the previous Handbook was published (Smelser, 1988). A few might have been emerging, and one could wish they had been included. But though the Handbook produced its own, highly contestable, account of where the centre of the discipline lay, the issue was not just the selectivity of the editor but the dramatic social changes that were launched – many in the symbolically famous year, 1989.¹

Before asking how sociology itself has changed, it may be worthwhile – however schematically – to indicate the recent global social transformations to which it has responded and which shape its current context. Some of the most important changes (at least centred if not contained in the past 15 years) include the following.

- 1 The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. This set in train a range of other transitions, including a range of civil wars and nationalist upheavals from the former Yugoslavia through Central Asia to parts of Africa and the enlargement of

the European Union as formerly communist societies were invited to join. Inside the former Soviet Union there were new freedoms – in personal life, in religion, and in business. But there were also crises. Division of the USSR into newly independent national states created unstable borders and unhappy minority populations. There was a troubling brain drain as skilled workers from the former state sector sought better-paying jobs in the West. The health care systems of Russia and many other states largely collapsed. State industries were privatized in corrupt deals that created a new class of extremely wealthy individuals but did little to help ordinary workers. Some turned to right-wing nationalism, some became nostalgic for communism. But while crisis remained deep in Russia and Central Asia, more successful transitions to market economies and democracy were accomplished in parts of Eastern Europe.

- 2 The ascendancy of the United States as an unrivalled but not unchallenged global power. Some called it empire, some a new global hegemony, some simply a unipolar world but there was widespread agreement that the US wielded an unprecedented level of power both economically and militarily. And at least under President George W. Bush it was prepared to exert this power unilaterally, bypassing the United Nations and other multilateral organizations and partnerships. The US invaded Iraq twice, and on the second occasion, in 2003–4, did so in defiance of its long-standing allies. American dominance made the US the target of terrorist attacks, most famously on 11 September 2001 ('9/11'). But terrorists also attacked Spain and other countries that supported the US.
- 3 The intensification of globalization. In a host of ways the interconnection of the entire world became more visible and the flows of money, people, information and even disease more powerful. This was simultaneously as a matter of international markets, the organization of production and business corporations on a global scale, the availability of new communications technologies, the development of international organizations, and the spread of English as a global language. Markets for financial instruments – including the huge global market for 'derivatives' (including 'hedge funds') – both fuelled speculation and reduced the fiscal autonomy of individual countries. Risk management became big business as international financial markets tried to anticipate shifts in currency valuations and other events. But a sense of shared risk affected many without much money as they worried about the possibilities of environmental or other catastrophes on a global scale. The 1990s and early twenty-first century saw a wave of emergencies and humanitarian crises and a dramatic expansion of global NGOs and philanthropy as ways of dealing with these. Nationalist struggles, ethnic cleansing, civil wars and genocides each produced flows of refugees. Humanitarian organizations like Médecins sans Frontières became increasingly prominent.
- 4 The dramatic expansion of mass communication which made the events of 1989 and thereafter simultaneously visible throughout the world. If this was true of the Tiananmen Square massacre and the fall of the Berlin Wall, it was almost as true of the horrors of ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia and Rwanda and two successive American invasions of Iraq. CNN became a global media source, alongside the BBC, and was joined by SkyNews and other Western-dominated networks. But the hegemony of these was eventually challenged by Al-Jazeera among others. While access to information was unequal, it was increasingly global. Films from 'Bollywood' in India circulated at least as widely as those from Hollywood. Latin American telenovellas were eagerly watched in China. Egyptian soap operas were popular throughout the Middle East and in Africa. World music became a popular taste category in the West, but in fact a range of musical styles enjoyed global support. The Internet fuelled globalization of cultural consumption. Its chat rooms joined virtual

communities based on shared interests from sports to illnesses to politics. That pornography was among its most popular offerings worried many traditionalists; that it helped political dissenters organize worried many governments. And communications technologies continued to proliferate as cell phones not only spread but merged with computing for text messages.

- 5 A demographic division characterized more than anything else by the ageing of the advanced industrial societies (especially with immigration not taken into account) and the relative youth of less developed societies. The 'greying' of the world's richer countries is becoming a major issue as life expectancy grows – and with it demand for care. This contributed to migration – as for example an ageing Europe imported workers for its service industries – and to economic divisions. Those with the money to purchase care were often racially, ethnically, and nationally distinct from those providing care. The demographic division also helped sustain international economic inequalities, impeding economic development. And it was complicated as AIDS became a global pandemic. As AIDS has struck increasingly hard at women, this further changes gender structures – and in many countries selection of male over female babies (before or after birth) has substantially altered sex ratios.
- 6 The crisis of the Western welfare state and the ascendancy of neoliberalism. The latter refers both to a domestic ideology focused on reduction in entitlements and dependency within relatively rich societies and an international ideology promoting 'free markets' and a reduced role for governments as a path towards development for less rich societies. To many, neoliberalism seemed to be the imposition of an American (or Anglo-American) model by means of global market pressure. Workers were often told there was no choice but to accept lower wages or reduced benefits or an elimination of job security because that was the only way to keep jobs from moving to less developed countries. Both private pension funds and government social security systems have been financially challenged and many have collapsed. Health care systems have become increasingly expensive and in many countries both the services provided and the structure of who pays for them have changed. A growing privatization of education has reversed a long-term trend of growing state support for equal access.
- 7 Upheavals in the global and domestic labour markets. Old patterns of secure, sometimes lifelong employment began to erode – even in Japan, where this had been so developed many regarded lifetime jobs as a right. Productivity-enhancing technologies reduced demand for some kinds of labour, international economic competition forced firms to look for ways to cut costs, and a wave of mergers and acquisitions led to consolidations and loss of jobs in many industries. 'Outsourcing' moved some jobs from wealthy countries to mid-level ones, as for example corporate 'call centres' in Ireland and India answered queries from customers around the world for firms based in the United States. A growing 'casualization' of labour meant that workers often had to move from job to job, and frequently lost benefits in each transition.
- 8 Dramatic new technologies fuelled economic growth but also speculative boom and bust cycles. They also changed everyday life. Information technology and biotechnology are the most visible. Not only did computers spread to nearly every desktop, they became wearable, played music and videos, facilitated a growing proportion of purchases, and recorded a wealth of personal data on nearly everyone in the world's richer societies, raising concerns about privacy and surveillance. At the same time, biotechnology yielded genetically modified crops – to the enthusiasm of some and the fear of others (both over the effects on humans and the potential for environmental damage). New drugs prolonged life, enhanced sexual performance, controlled moods, and led to deep ethical concerns.

- 9 Social movement activity grew stronger than it had been since the 1960s and 1970s, challenging corporations and governments and focusing attention on a variety of issues. In some cases, like controversies over abortion rights, there were active mobilizations on both sides. In other cases, like the widespread opposition to global neoliberalism, activism was the tactic of those not represented on corporate boards of directors and in elite government circles. The movement against corporate-dominated globalization brought together environmentalists, advocates for indigenous peoples, anarchists worried about the centralization of power, citizens worried about the loss of sovereignty for their countries, and labour unions facing the loss of hard won rights for workers. Social movements also demanded better responses to AIDS, equal recognition for gay men and lesbians, rights for ethnic minorities and provisions for the disabled.
- 10 A resurgence of religion in the public sphere. While an older sociology had often suggested that secularization, was a normal part of modernization, it became increasingly apparent that religion did not always fade. The United States has long retained high rates of religious participation and in recent years has seen a boom in fundamentalist churches and engagement of both evangelical Protestants and conservative Catholics in politics. Church attendance is lower in much of Western Europe, but religious commitments became an important tension between new and old members of the European Union. But Christianity has seen its most rapid growth in Africa, Asia, and Latin America – and the new Christian communities are often more conservative than the old, both on theological matters and on lifestyle questions like gay rights. At the same time, immigration has changed the character of religion around the developed world. Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism are all now American religions alongside Christianity and Judaism. Large Islamic minorities are a major issue in many

European countries that have thought of themselves as Christian even if largely secular, and where secular traditions are challenged by a desire for public religious recognition (as for example the French government banned Muslim girls from wearing headscarves to school). And Islam has itself become a global religion, with increasing flows of communication joining Muslims from the Middle East to those in South and South-East Asia, the former Soviet Union, Europe, America and Africa. Often stigmatized as anti-modern, Islam is better seen as resurgent among those seeking ways of dealing with modernity. And the same goes for Hinduism, increasingly organized as both a religious and a political force among Indians.

TRANSFORMATIONS OF GLOBAL SOCIOLOGY

Sociology has not been standing still as the world changed. On the contrary, the past 15 years have seen exciting new perspectives on earlier social changes and also important advances in methods and theory. Equally, however, sociology continues to engage the social world around it. In a sense, the late 1980s were a low time for sociology, well after the enthusiasms of the 1960s – and indeed, reeling from some backlash – and not yet focused on the post-Cold War world. During the past few years sociology has enjoyed a remarkable renewal. This is reflected both in the intellectual excitement of the discipline and in the numbers of new students. One simple indicator was the American Sociological Association annual meeting for 2004 – which drew the biggest crowd of any such meeting ever. The International Sociological Association has been undergoing a similar renewal as well. The reason is straightforward: the sense of how crucial sociology is to understanding what is going on in the world today.

So what are the big changes in sociology since the previous Handbook? Obviously there are scientific advances in every sub-field. Our

list focuses, however, on those that have influenced the discipline as a whole. These are themes brought out by the chapters in this new Handbook, even while they also update readers on developments in specific sub-fields.

- 1 *Globalization as topic and engagement.* Trying to understand globalization in general has become an increasingly central concern for sociologists. One of the pioneers in this pursuit, Roland Robertson, writes with Kathleen White on both the patterns of globalization and the ways in which they change sociology's relationship to other disciplines. But globalization figures in other ways. It is a major reason for the resurgence of comparative sociology, discussed by David Apter. It is a crucial reason why sociological analyses of money and finance have grown in importance, as Geoffrey Ingham shows. Stewart Clegg analyzes the globalization of business, Jan Pieterse the structures of global inequality, and Siniša Malešević and John Hall the ways in which citizenship and the nation-state fare in a global era. Globalization is also an important dimension of issues in communication (discussed by Roger Silverstone), information (discussed by David Lyon), health and illness (discussed by Gary Albrecht), demography (discussed by Charles Hirschman), and higher education (discussed by Gerard Delanty).
- 2 *The 'cultural turn'.* One of the most dramatic changes in sociology in recent years was the resurgence of culture as a topic for sociological attention. This included both 'cultural sociology' (signalling a cultural approach to all sociological issues) and 'sociology of culture' (signalling a specialization of inquiry focused on cultural production, including especially art, music, literature and film). Wendy Griswold addresses culture in both senses. But like globalization, this is a theme that has shaped work across the discipline. This is apparent in Richard Sennett's account of 'the culture of work', Bryan Turner's analysis of the sociology of religion, Karin Knorr Cetina's examination of science

and technology, Don Slater's chapter on consumption and lifestyle and Chris Rojek's on leisure and recreation.

- 3 *Economic sociology.* If there is another sub-field of sociology which has grown as dramatically as the sociology of culture, and with comparable implications for the discipline as a whole, it is economic sociology. From roots mainly in the sociology of organizations, this has become one of the most influential parts of the discipline and an important field in business schools as well as sociology departments. Geoffrey Ingham, Stewart Clegg, Don Slater and Richard Sennett all address aspects of economic sociology. But it is a notable perspective in other fields as well, visible for example in Saskia Sassen's chapter on cities, Mike Savage's on stratification and power, and Dalton Conley's on poverty.
- 4 *Identity.* One of the features of the recent unsettled era in global society has been the destabilization of identities that were in the past often treated as relatively fixed – like race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and nationality. These have been the focus of social movements and campaigns for both change and recognition. This has changed the nature of sociological research. Work on inequality between men and women and on sex roles, thus, has been complemented by examination of gender identities – and indeed the recognition that gender is a central category for sociology in general (not simply a special topic). This is a focus of Sylvia Walby's chapter, most centrally, but also an important theme for Patricia Hill Collins, who shows the way in which gender and race interrelate, for Bryan Turner, who considers changes in the sociology of the family, and for Nick Crossley who examines the development of the new field of the sociology of the body. Obviously gender issues also overlap with sexuality as well, examined in Elspeth Probyn's chapter. Gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality all inform patterns of consumption and lifestyle (analysed by Don Slater), shape issues of health and illness

(addressed by Gary Albrecht), inform the way deviance and social exclusion operate (as Heinz Steinert shows) and indeed figure in a range of fields.

- 5 *Renewal of public sociology.* Sociology has always had a voice in public affairs, and sociological research has informed both government policy-making and debates among citizens. During much of the postwar era, however, there was also a notion of 'pure science' that suggested sociology was most appropriately produced for other sociologists, and minimized or treated as mere popularization efforts to introduce sociology into broader public debates. This was challenged in the 1960s and early 1970s with calls for research and teaching focused on issues of greater 'relevance' and in the past few years it has been challenged again. In the United States, where the ideology of 'pure science' was perhaps stronger than in most other countries, Michael Burawoy used his 2004 term as president of the American Sociological Association to promote 'public sociology'. In Europe similar trends were evident, as Pierre Bourdieu in the last years of his life focused on the struggle against neoliberal globalization, as Alain Touraine pursued action research in relation to social movements and citizenship, and as Boris Kagarlitsky struggled to revitalize public discourse in post-Soviet Russia. Anthony Giddens not only wrote about the Third Way and helped to inform New Labour policies in the UK but also helped to remake the London School of Economics as a publicly engaged scientific institution. Jürgen Habermas, the most prominent theorist of the public sphere, has been a publicly prominent sociologist throughout his career and most recently a key voice on European unification. Around the world, indeed, the growth of attention to 'civil society' has made sociological research more prominent. And throughout almost every chapter in the present book readers will find not only sociological knowledge relevant to public debates, but evidence of the ways in which sociology is shaped by its engagements with public issues.

These transformations of sociology are of basic importance. But each builds on long-standing strengths of the discipline, renews parts of its tradition, and represents an ongoing scientific effort to improve knowledge of society and social change. It is appropriate, thus, that in the first section of the Handbook we consider some of the new directions in basic development of theory and method. We make no effort to survey all that is available – this would produce a completely different (and much larger) book. Rather, we have asked authors to focus on major changes and issues that have informed recent work and are the basis for new research now. Adrian Raftery analyses the growth and transformation of quantitative methods in sociological research. Paul Atkinson and Sara Delamont focus on the qualitative research traditions. In each case, the authors reveal that more is at stake than mere technique; method is a matter of structuring intellectual inquiry. Randall Collins examines the relationship between sociology and philosophy which is basic to sociological theory and also to sociology's reflexive self-understanding of what it means to be a science. Charles Crothers demonstrates both the diversity of sociological traditions and the need for more effort to overcome the insularity of many in order to take advantage of what the field as a whole offers. David Apter reviews the revitalization of comparative sociology that has been especially important in an era of globalization.

Sometimes, the desire to succeed in various practical projects encourages the illusion that it is easier to change the social world than it really is. Revolutionaries, for example, may find more followers if they can persuade people that the risks of revolution are low. Those who promote the restoration of traditional values, by contrast, may find more supporters if they can convince people that traditions are undermined just by individual choices to deviate and not by the capitalist economy with its search for new products, new markets, and advertising techniques to make people feel new needs. Most generally, the truth that human beings have some choice over the social conditions under which they live – and

indeed more choice in modern societies than in most of history – and the fact that people would like even more often leads to individualistic ideologies that underestimate the power of social structure. At the very least, sociology continually reminds us, abstract freedom of individual choice is different from concrete capacity to make one's choices effective. It is easier for an individual to choose what candidate to vote for in an election than to choose what kind of political system to live under. The latter is subject to laws, immigration controls, economic resources, the cooperation of others and power relations. Changes can be made to political systems, but they are made only through social processes and they usually work well only when other aspects of social life change in reinforcing ways.

At other times, the speed of social change encourages the sense that social life is so unstable as to be completely unpredictable. This too is an illusion. Even while many features of social life undergo dramatic changes, others may be highly stable. The past 20 years, for example, have seen the breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, dramatic changes in information technology, and a major wave of international migration that has made many societies more multicultural. Part of the job of sociology is to make sense of these historically specific transformations (and indeed, chapters in this Handbook help to do so). But just as we need to be clear what has changed, we also need to recognize that many things did not. Conflict and competition between political powers are still basic to world affairs, even if reorganized. Capitalist corporations are still more powerful than some countries, and the collapse of communism only made this more true in some cases. The control of information is still a fundamental source of power. And immigration is still a source of both tension and creativity, the growing prominence of minorities still challenged by prejudice and helped by understanding.

In sum, sociology is needed as much today as ever to make sense of the possibility for choice and change and the pressures that

reproduce existing structures. Sociology is enjoying a renewal, revitalized as it rises to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. This Handbook offers an introduction to a wide range of themes, theories, research methods and empirical topics. They do not exhaust the subject, but they should whet the appetite for more.

NOTE

¹ The editor claimed that establishing a sociological 'canon' was not his intention, but the Handbook was widely perceived as offering an 'orthodox' account of the discipline. For a symposium of review essays discussing it, see Calhoun and Land (1989).

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