

fifth
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MODERN SOCIOLOGY

GEORGE RITZER

MODERN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

FIFTH EDITION

George Ritzer

University of Maryland



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MODERN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

GEORGE RITZER is Professor of Sociology at the University of Maryland. His major areas of interest are sociological theory and the sociology of consumption. He has served as Chair of the American Sociological Association's Sections on Theoretical Sociology (1989–1990) and Organizations and Occupations (1980–1981). Professor Ritzer has been Distinguished Scholar-Teacher at the University of Maryland and has been awarded a Teaching Excellence award. He has held the UNESCO Chair in Social Theory at the Russian Academy of Sciences and a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship. He has been Scholar-in-Residence at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study and the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences.

Dr. Ritzer's main theoretical interests lie in metatheory as well as applied social theory. In metatheory, his contributions include *Metatheorizing in Sociology* (Lexington Books, 1991), *Sociology: A Multiple Paradigm Science* (Allyn and Bacon, 1975, 1980), and *Toward an Integrated Sociological Paradigm* (Allyn and Bacon, 1981). His major works in the application of social theory, especially to consumption, include *The McDonaldization of Society* (Pine Forge Press, 1993, 1996), *Expressing America: A Critique of the Global Credit Card Society* (Pine Forge Press, 1995), *The McDonaldization Thesis* (Sage, 1998), and *Enchanting a Disenchanted World: Revolutionizing the Means of Consumption* (Pine Forge Press, 1999). Professor Ritzer's work has been translated into many different languages; there are a dozen translations of *The McDonaldization of Society* alone.

In 1997 McGraw-Hill published the first edition of Professor Ritzer's *Postmodern Social Theory*. In 2000 McGraw-Hill will publish the fifth edition of Dr. Ritzer's *Sociological Theory* and the third edition of his *Classical Sociological Theory*.

To Jeremy, with Love

PREFACE

With this fifth edition, *Modern Sociological Theory* moves into its third decade and its second century. In preparing this revision I have, once again, been impressed with the vibrancy of the field. The biggest change in this edition is the return of systems theory (a portion of a chapter was devoted to it in the third edition of this book) to which Chapter 5 is devoted. This is made necessary by the increasing international visibility of, and attention to, the work of the leading German systems theorist, Niklas Luhmann. The bulk of the chapter is dedicated to his thinking. Other substantial changes include the addition of sections on applying postmodern ideas, criticisms of postmodernism, the rise of post-postmodernism (Chapter 13), and a discussion of the new means of consumption as well as Manuel Castells's thinking on the informational society (Chapter 12). Then there innumerable minor changes to the text either to bring it up to date or to clarify an argument. And literally hundreds of recent citations have been added to the text (and bibliography) so that the book reflects the latest scholarship.

However, with the book already well over 500 pages, the goal here has been not so much to expand the text (although that has occurred in a number of places) as to prevent it from growing too much longer and perhaps even to shorten it a bit. I'm not sure I've succeeded in the latter, but there have been substantial cuts throughout the text, especially in sections dealing with theories that are not as lively as they once were. An effort has also been made to cut text that does not materially advance the argument. I have also tried to make the book easier to read, primarily by adding many headings and subheadings.

This is the least dramatic of the revisions of this book, in part because of the need not to lengthen the book, but also as a reflection of a hiatus, a period of consolidation, in social theorizing at the approach of the new millennium. That is not to say that there is not much new theorizing going on, but in the main it is within extant categories and there have been no new theoretical creations of overwhelming import since the last edition. To put it another way, there has been nothing in the last few years to rival the emergence of micro-macro and agency-structure theories, as well as postmodern social theory, in the 1980s and early 1990s. Some theories have grown "hotter" (e.g. rational choice theory, as well as systems theory), while others (neofunctionalism, metatheorizing) have "cooled," at least for the time being. But these changes do not constitute a radical alteration of the theoretical landscape. This may be the beginning of a longer period of consolidation, or it may be a lull before the efflorescence of a new set of social theories.

Once again, I want to thank Patricia Lengermann and Jill Niebrugge-Brantley for revising their path-breaking chapter on contemporary feminist theory. Not only has their chapter made this book much stronger, it has had a strong influence on theorizing independent of this book. I also thank Douglas Goodman and Matthias Junge for coauthoring the section on Niklas Luhmann's systems theory. Were it not for the presence of Dr. Junge at the University of Maryland on a post-doc from the University of Chemnitz (with his native-speaking knowledge of German), and the combined expertise of Goodman and Junge, that section would not have been written. Thanks also to a long list of reviewers—Maboud Ansari, David Ashley, J. I. ("Hans") Bakker, Keith Gotham, Peter Kivisto, J. Knotterus, James Marshall, Neil McLaughlin, Martin Orr, Robert Perrin, Jane A. Rinehart, Susan Roxburgh, Teresa L. Schied, and Peter Singelmann. I would also like to thank the people at McGraw-Hill, especially Sally Constable, Kathy Blake, and Carrie Sestak. Thanks, also, to my assistants, Jan Geesin and Zinnia Cho, who did the library work that made this book possible and to my son, Jeremy Ritzer, who did the index.

George Ritzer

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