

third
edition

CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

GEORGE RITZER

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THIRD EDITION

George Ritzer

University of Maryland



Boston Burr Ridge, IL Dubuque, IA Madison, WI New York San Francisco
St. Louis Bangkok Bogotá Caracas Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City
Milan New Delhi Seoul Singapore Sydney Taipei Toronto

McGraw-Hill Higher Education 

A Division of The McGraw-Hill Companies

CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOC/DOC 9 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

ISBN 0-07-229606-2

Editorial director: *Phillip A. Butcher*

Sponsoring editor: *Sally Constable*

Developmental editor: *Katherine Blake*

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Freelance design coordinator: *Gino Cieslik*

Photo research coordinator: *Sharon Miller*

Photo researcher: *Sarah Evertson*

Compositor: *GAC Indianapolis*

Typeface: *10/12 Times Roman*

Printer: *R. R. Donnelly & Sons Company*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ritzer, George

Classical sociological theory / George Ritzer. — 3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 0-07-229606-2 (acid-free paper)

1. Sociology — History. 2. Sociology — Methodology — History
3. Sociologists — Biography. I. Title.

HM19.R48 2000

301'.09 21—dc21

99-045912

<http://www.mhhe.com>

PERMISSIONS ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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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 editions of Dr. Ritzer's *Sociological Theory* and the fifth edition of his *Modern Sociological Theory*.

**TO MOTHER,
with Appreciation
and Love**

PREFACE

With this third edition, *Classical Sociological Theory* moves into its second decade and its second century. In preparing this revision I have, once again, been impressed with the continued relevance of classical theorists and the importance of the continuing work devoted to them and their ideas.

The biggest change in this edition is the addition of a chapter (Chapter 10) devoted to Thorstein Veblen. Veblen had a grand theory of the relationship between business and industry that rivals in scope and ambition the other grand theories of classical theory. However, his work is made even more important by the fact that he also was able to avoid the “productivist” bias of most classical social theorists and to develop a theory of consumption that is of growing importance in a society in which consumption shows every sign of becoming more important than production. It is in his thinking on consumption that one finds the ideas—especially conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption—for which he is so famous.

Beyond the new chapter, there are innumerable minor changes to the text designed either to bring it up to date or to clarify an argument. And many 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 not been so much to expand the text (although that has occurred in some places), but 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. I have also tried to make the book easier to read, primarily by adding many headings and subheadings.

Once again, I want to thank Patricia Lengermann and Jill Niebrugge-Brantley for revising their important Chapter 9: Early Women Sociologists and Classical Sociological Theory: 1830–1930. That chapter not only has made this book much stronger, but has laid the groundwork for their recently published text/reader, *The Women Founders: Sociology and Social Theory, 1830–1930* (McGraw-Hill, 1998). 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 a number of people at McGraw-Hill including 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.

George Ritzer

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